

SHORT TAKES

HC halts work on forest near UoH

Hyderabad: Students of the University of Hyderabad (UoH) Wednesday continued protests against the state government's plans to develop the 400-acre land parcel bordering the varsity land, even as the Telangana High Court directed the Congress dispensation to halt all the works in this regard until April 3. Meanwhile, the Union Environment Ministry wrote to the Telangana government, seeking a factual report on the state's "illegal clearing of vegetation on 400 acres of forest land" near the UoH. **P9**

Parl passes new Immigration Bill

New Delhi: Parliament approved a Bill to regulate immigration, entry and stay of foreigners in India, with the Rajya Sabha giving its nod Wednesday. The Immigration and Foreigners Bill, 2025 was passed in Lok Sabha March 27, 2025. The Rajya Sabha passed the Bill by voice vote Wednesday. Replying to the discussion on the Bill, Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai attacked the previous Congress government and the TMC dispensation in West Bengal for aiding illegal immigrants enter the country and facilitating their stay by including their names in voters' list and ration cards. This was strongly objected to by the Congress and TMC members. **P8**

Red rebels keen for peace talks

Raipur: Ahead of Union Home Minister Amit Shah's scheduled visit to Bastar in Chhattisgarh, the Maoists have expressed their willingness to engage in peace negotiations. Reportedly, a spokesperson of the Maoist central committee issued a pamphlet, printed in Telugu language, in Chhattisgarh capital Raipur. The spokesperson affirmed that they are prepared to enter peace talks, provided the government is ready to cease ongoing operations.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



AUGUST INITIATION: As part of launch of 'Sishu Vatika', Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi helps a kid write 'sunya' (zero) on her slate at Badagada High School in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday **OP PHOTO**

US man held for entering North Sentinel Island

Port Blair, April 2: A US national was arrested in Andaman and Nicobar Islands for allegedly entering the prohibited tribal reserve area of the North Sentinel Island, police said Wednesday. Mykhailo Viktorovych Polyakov (24), arrested by the CID March 31, had allegedly entered the North Sentinel Island without any authorisation, they said. He arrived in Port Blair March 26 and ventured to North Sentinel Island from

the Kurma Dera beach, they said. He launched his boat from Kurma Dera beach at around 1am March 29, carrying a coconut and a can of cola as offerings for the Sentinelese, police said. Polyakov reached the northeastern shore of North Sentinel Island by 10am. Using binoculars, he surveyed the area but saw no inhabitants, they said. He remained offshore for an hour, blowing a whistle to attract attention, but received no response. He landed briefly for about

five minutes, left the offerings on the shore, collected sand samples, and recorded a video before returning to his boat, police said. At 1 pm, he started his return journey and reached Kurma Dera Beach by 7pm, where he was spotted by local fishermen, they said. An FIR was registered against him under the Foreigners Act, 1946, along with sections of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands (Protection of Aboriginal Tribes) Amendment Regulation, 2012, on the basis of a com-

plaint lodged at the Ograbraj police station by the Tribal Welfare Officer of Tirur, Pronab Sircar. The Sentinelese, who inhabit the North Sentinel Island, are designated as a particularly vulnerable tribal group. They are hostile to outsiders and have killed people who approached or landed on the island. American missionary John Chau was killed in November 2018 when he attempted to contact the Sentinelese, considered the world's last pre-Neolithic tribe.

₹3,966cr mining fine unrecovered

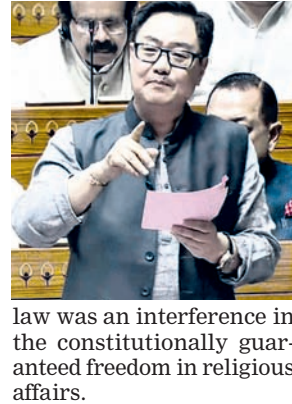
Bhubaneswar, April 2: The Odisha government has not taken effective steps to recover a fine of ₹3,966.34 crore (with interest) imposed by Supreme Court for illegal mining in the state, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) said in a report tabled in the Assembly Wednesday. In its performance audit report on 'Management of Odisha Mineral Bearing Areas Development Corporation (OMBADC) Funds' for the year ended March 2022, the CAG said the top court in August 2017 had directed the Odisha government to impose fines on mineral iron ore and manganese, extracted either without an Environment Clearance (EC) or without Forest Clearance or without both. The court ruled that 100 per cent of the price of the

illegally mined minerals should be compensated by the mining lessees. The report said the court ordered that the amounts due from all mining lessees be deposited with the OMBADC by December 31, 2017. Accordingly, the SC-appointed Central Empowered Committee (CEC) in its report dated January 17, 2018 recommended collection of compensation, amounting to ₹19,174.38 crore, from 131 mining lease holders, who had violated FC and or EC, it said. During scrutiny of records of the Director of Mines and Geology, the CAG found that as of December 2017, 82 out of 131 mining lease holders had paid ₹8,289.87 crore, against the total demand of ₹19,174.38 crore, leaving the balance of ₹10,884.51 crore unrecovered. Following SC's further directives to take coer-

cive action, the Director of Steel and Mines, Odisha, instructed district collectors of Sundargarh, Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj in February 2018 to initiate certificate cases under the Odisha Public Demand Recovery (OPDR) Act, 1962. As of January 2023, the government had recovered ₹7,371.12 crore, including interest for delayed payments. However, the report highlighted that the department had failed to take effective recovery measures, such as the attachment of immovable properties belonging to defaulting mining lessees, to recover the remaining ₹3,966.34 crore (with interest)—even though six years had passed since the SC's order. The CAG report pointed out that the lack of prompt action has resulted in a significant shortfall in recovery, raising concerns over the government's efficiency in enforcing Supreme Court directives.

Lok Sabha debates Waqf Bill

New Delhi, April 2: The ruling NDA Wednesday launched a feisty defence of the Waqf (Amendment) Bill in the Lok Sabha amid the Opposition's charge that it was unconstitutional and targeted Muslims, as Home Minister Amit Shah asserted that the government had no intention of interfering in their religious matters and was solely driven by the aim of transparent administration of Waqf properties. Shah's intervention came during the day-long debate that witnessed a fierce exchange between the two sides, with Congress Deputy Leader Gaurav Gogoi alleging that the Bill was an attempt to attack the basic structure of the Constitution, defame minorities, disenfranchise them and divide the society. Minorities Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju in his opening remarks rejected the allegation that the proposed



law was an interference in the constitutionally guaranteed freedom in religious affairs. The Bill has nothing to do with religion, but deals only with properties, he said tabling the Bill, which was examined and redrafted by a joint committee of Parliament. "The government is not going to interfere in any religious institution. The changes made in the Waqf law by the UPA government gave it overriding effect over other statutes, hence the new amendments were required," Rijiju said amid noisy opposition protests.

"You (Opposition) tried to mislead the people on issues which are not part of the Waqf Bill," he said to the Opposition. Both ministers asserted that the proposed reforms would ensure the welfare of poor Muslims and women. The BJP was bolstered by a show of support from its key allies like the TDP, JD(U), Shiv Sena and Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas), while the INDIA bloc put up a united show in opposing the Bill. Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav claimed that the bill is a BJP's ploy for polarisation following its reverses in the Lok Sabha polls, alleging that it will send a wrong message to the world denting the country's secular image. The Bill will prove to be a "waterloo" for the BJP as some of its allies might be claiming to support the Bill but inside they are not happy about the development, he said.

Booker delivers record 25-hour Senate speech

Washington, April 2: In a feat of determination, New Jersey Democratic Sen. Cory Booker held the Senate floor with a marathon speech that lasted all night and into Tuesday evening, setting a historic mark to show Democrats' resistance to President Donald Trump's sweeping actions. Booker took to the Senate floor Monday evening, saying he would remain there as long as he was "physically able." It wasn't until more than 25 hours later that the 55-year-old senator, a former football tight end, finished speaking and walked off the floor. It set the record for the longest continuous Senate floor speech in the chamber's history, though Booker

was assisted by fellow Democrats who gave him a break from speaking by asking him questions on the Senate floor. It was a remarkable show of stamina as Democrats try to show their frustrated supporters that they are doing everything possible to contest Trump's agenda. Yet Booker also provided a moment of historical solace for a party searching for its way forward. By standing on the Senate floor for more than a night and day and refusing to leave, he had broken a record set 68 years ago by then Sen.

Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, a segregationist, to filibuster the advance of the Civil Rights Act in 1957. "I'm here because as powerful as he was, the people are more powerful," said Booker, who spoke openly on the Senate floor of his roots as the descendant of both slaves and slave-owners. House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries, the first Black party leader in Congress, slipped into the Senate chamber to watch Booker Tuesday afternoon. He called it "an incredibly powerful moment because Booker had broken the record of a segregationist and was "fighting to preserve the American way of life and our democracy."

Val Kilmer dies



Los Angeles, April 2: Val Kilmer, the brooding, versatile actor who played fan favourite Iceman in 'Top Gun', donned a voluminous cape as Batman in 'Batman Forever' and portrayed Jim Morrison in 'The Doors', has died. He was 65. Kilmer died Tuesday night in Los Angeles, surrounded by family and friends, his daughter, Mercedes Kilmer, said in an email to The Associated Press. Val Kilmer died from pneumonia. He had recovered after a 2014 throat cancer diagnosis that required two tracheotomies. **MORE P2**

धरित्रि | OrissaPOST

BUSINESS EMINENCE AWARDS

5th Edition

5 April 2025 Bhubaneswar

www.dharitri.com | DharitriLive | Dharitrinews | DharitriLive | DharitriLive1

SPONSORS

MGM MINERALS LTD. | MCL | AM/NS INDIA | Paradeep Phosphates | SST DEVELOPERS | imfa

JSL JINDAL STAINLESS | NARAYANI MOTORS (P) Ltd | DRIEMS | चालको | NALCO

SBI | YONO | SAI SABURI COLLEGE | CHIRAG INDUSTRIES Furniture Factory | WEFE Internet | Ajanta ADVERTISERS

leisure



FLANAGAN JOINS HOUSE OF THE DRAGON CAST

Actor Tommy Flanagan, who is known for his work in *Gladiator*, *Alien vs. Predator*, *Sin City*, *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2*, has joined the cast of the hit streaming show *House of the Dragon*. The production commenced on the eight-episode third season of the drama series in the United Kingdom.

HAILEY CLEARS AIR OVER HER UNFOLLOWING HUBBY JUSTIN

Hailey Bieber, the wife of singer-songwriter Justin Bieber, has issued clarification on the reports of her unfollowing her husband on the photo-sharing app Instagram. Her husband's account got deactivated, then reactivated and in the wake of that, Hailey appeared to unfollow the singer from her own profile.



FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshSpeaks.com
accuracy • reliability • trust
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

ARIES

You are not so much in a mood to socialise today. Something unsavoury may also be hard to overcome. Although you are industrious, Ganesh advises you not to bite off more than you can chew. A bit of faith in providence can go a long way in your life.

TAURUS

In the more morning you are due to be gripped by an urge to acquire a fresh look, a complete make over. You will probably visit a beauty parlour for necessary treatment. Ganesh says that you will be desperate to make an impression on the people around you. In the evening you are likely to be vexed and puzzled by some particular issue.

GEMINI

You will feel some measure of loneliness today. You will need the company of someone close to you for reassurance. The evening will see you plagued by rapid mood swings. Meditative techniques can help calm your mind, says Ganesh.

CANCER

Your imagination and creativity will surpass new heights. You will try to find easy answers to the most difficult riddles. Your creativity will be beneficial. A favourable day for investors and traders, says Ganesh.

LEO

You need to be extremely wary in the morning, because there are chances that a major confrontation with someone very close to you may occur. In the afternoon, your good fortune will bring you the solutions to most of your current issues. Your plans for travel may get postponed, says Ganesh.

VIRGO

You enjoy a strong position, but its foundations will be rattled today. In all probability you may have to encounter some unwanted problems which will be a cause for worry. However, Ganesh says you may still end up doing something beneficial if you get out of the rut and attempt to do something unusual.

LIBRA

Ganesh says this is a time for a new romantic relationship to develop. Due to that you will be extremely happy and joyous today. Small issues cropping up will sully your good mood today. Your happy go lucky attitude will come to the fore and you will be able to put aside all the issues and worries and move ahead in life.

SCORPIO

A series of events will keep you occupied, physically and mentally. You will enjoy meeting like-minded people and intellectual discussions with them. You are charged up and look forward to soiree and merry making with loved ones. However, make sure that too much enthusiasm and over-exertion does not deteriorate your health.

SAGITTARIUS

Work, work and more work will be your day's agenda. A power-packed performance is expected from you. Though hectic, the day will be easy going as your bosses are likely to be lenient on you. Love and affection from family is on the cards as well.

CAPRICORN

You don't shy away from working hard and today, at your work you will do everything to improve upon your performance. But, perfection seems distant no matter how hard you try, says Ganesh. Your mind is making creative plans, but you are unable to put them on paper and get them executed. You will not get off the track by a minor bump on the track. With the same positive approach like before, you will march ahead for success.

AQUARIUS

It is not only important to ideate, but also to get those ideas executed is equally important. Don't worry though, you are good at both, assures Ganesh. Icing on the cake will be your communication skill which gets you through the door every time. For students, it will be an amazing day.

PISCES

You are sensitive and considerate and that is the core of your charming attitude which will help you win over the opposite sex today. There is also a good chance that you will be getting into a long term relationship, feels Ganesh. You will find the time today to take some tough decision that will determine your future. There might be some tension or mental disturbances but nothing that might slow down your heart beat.

'Fashion helped me embrace my true self'

Mumbai: Actress Bhumi Pednekar has shared how fashion has played a pivotal role in her journey of self-discovery. In a candid conversation, the actress opened up about how experimenting with different styles has helped her embrace her true self and express her individuality. Bhumi shared how fashion has become a powerful form of self-expression for her, allowing her to explore and embrace her true identity. The *Badhaai Do* actress told this agency, "Fashion, for me, is a form of self-expression. I have gone through a lot of self-discovery because of my fashion choices. And I have come to realize that in life, what I enjoy and who I am is when I do things that are unconventional. So, my fashion choices, my film choices, and the kind of life I want to live are different than normal, I would say. But that's me." Bhumi, who walked the ramp for fashion designer Amit Aggarwal's collection at Lakmé Fashion Week in Mumbai, was speaking at the Magnum Lounge during the fashion gala. At the event, Pednekar made a style statement in a Banarasi saree with a corset paired with balloon pants. Bhumi was last seen in *Mere Husband Ki Biwi* alongside Arjun Kapoor and Rakul Preet Singh.



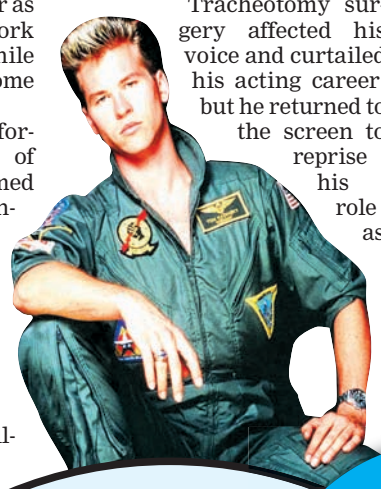
Samantha reignites dating rumours

Hyderabad: Samantha Ruth Prabhu has been enjoying a break in Sydney, sharing glimpses of her trip on social media. However, what was meant to be a relaxing vacation quickly turned into a topic of discussion among fans and netizens. A particular photo from her Sydney Opera House visit has led to rumors about her personal life, leaving everyone curious about whether she was alone on this trip. In a post featuring multiple candid snaps of her exploring Sydney's iconic landmarks, the 16th picture from her post caught fan's attention. The photo showed a hand gently cupping Samantha's face, which many speculated belonged to a man. This subtle yet intimate gesture led fans to wonder if she is in a new relationship. The speculation was further fueled by ongoing rumors about her alleged connection with director Raj Nidimoru. Samantha has collaborated with Raj Nidimoru on two projects and is set to work with him again soon. While neither has confirmed any romantic involvement, their frequent public appearances together have kept the rumor mill running. Fans are eager to know if there is truth to these speculations, but both parties have maintained silence on the matter.

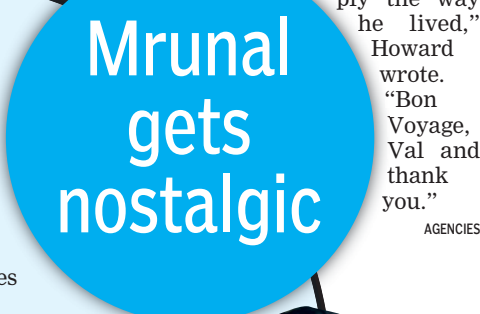


HOLLYWOOD MOURNS KILMER'S EXIT

Los Angeles: Directors including Ron Howard, Francis Ford Coppola and Michael Mann have paid tribute to actor Val Kilmer, following his death aged 65. Coppola described Kilmer as "a wonderful person to work with and a joy to know", while Howard praised his "awesome range as an actor." Singer Cher, a former girlfriend of Kilmer's, summed him up as "funny, crazy, pain in the ass, GREAT FRIEND" and "brave" during his illness. Kilmer died of pneumonia Tuesday here, his daughter Mercedes told US media. She said her father had been diagnosed with throat cancer in 2014 but later recovered. Tracheotomy surgery affected his voice and curtailed his acting career, but he returned to the screen to reprise his role as fighter pilot Iceman alongside Tom Cruise in 2022's *Top Gun: Maverick*. Paying tribute on Instagram, *Heat* director Mann said: "While working with Val I always marvelled at the range, the brilliant variability within the powerful current of Val's possessing and expressing character. "After so many years of Val battling disease and maintaining his spirit, this is tremendously sad news," he said. Coppola, who directed Kilmer in 2011's *Twist*, said in a statement: "Val Kilmer was the most talented actor when in his High School, and that talent only grew greater throughout his life." "His art extended to his poetry, artworks, filmmaking and simply the way he lived," Howard wrote. "Bon Voyage, Val and thank you."



Mumbai: Actress Mrunal Thakur took to social media to relive her precious childhood memories with her father, Udaising B Thakur. Taking to her Instagram handle, the Jersey actress posted a sweet video of herself on the swing, with her doting dad standing close by. Sharing this sweet moment, Mrunal wrote in the caption, "Memories of childhood! Hi Papa Love you papa." Notably, Mrunal often shares photos and videos with her dad, giving fans a glimpse of their close bond. Whether it's celebrating special occasions or just enjoying everyday moments, her posts reflect the deep love and warmth they share. Mrunal wrote, "Papa, you're my world, my inspiration, my pillar of strength, my happy place and my very own cheerleader. I wish every dad is as incredible and amazing as you. You've always believed in me and pushed me to be the best version of me and I could spend a lifetime thanking you for all that you do, but even that wouldn't be enough." On the professional front, Mrunal is gearing up for the release of her upcoming actioner *Dacoit*, where she will star opposite Adivi Sesh in a romantic role.



PEANUTS



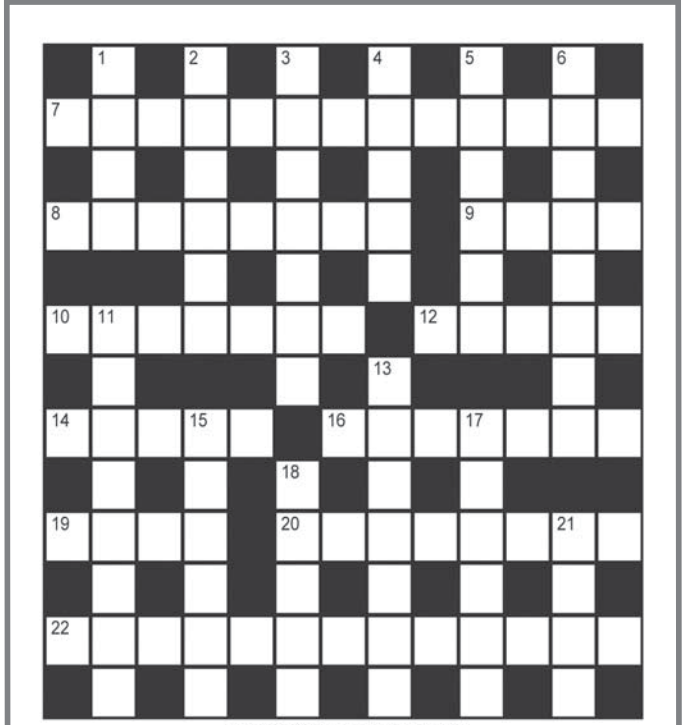
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



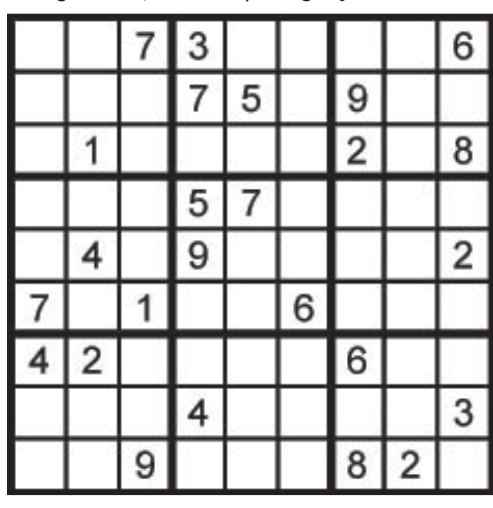
CROSSWORD



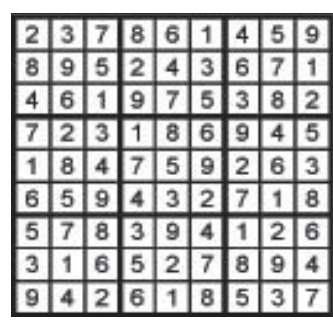
- Across**
- 7 Air spring (5,8)
 - 8 Italian biscuits flavoured with almond
 - 9 Extinct flightless bird
 - 10 Port city in southern Kenya
 - 12 Brawny
 - 14 Perfect
 - 16 Of extreme importance
 - 19 Buzzing pest
 - 20 Fragmentise
 - 22 Bomb carrier (6,7)
- Down**
- 1 Impulse
 - 2 Egyptian beetle
 - 3 Valletta native
 - 4 On the move
 - 5 Plod
 - 6 Blood feud
 - 11 Average
 - 13 Like a coded message
 - 15 Accomplish
 - 17 Shade of red
 - 18 Poplar tree
 - 21 Cash drawer

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

Ravenshaw University students stage a sit-in on the institution premises in Cuttack, Wednesday, demanding restriction on entry of non-students into varsity campus



downtown

CM launches 'Sishu Vatika' 391 people, 27 elephants died due to electrocution: Singh Deo

Accord 2nd language status to Kosali: BJD



The state government has taken disciplinary action against 107 officials responsible for the deaths from 2020-21 to 2024-25

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, April 2: Deputy Chief Minister Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo Wednesday in-

formed the Assembly that 391 people and 27 elephants died due to electrocution in the state during the last five financial years.

In a written statement in the Assembly, Singh Deo said the electrocution death cases were reported in the areas of four power distribution companies in the state from 2020-21 to 2024-25.

Maximum of such deaths were reported in the Tata Power Western Odisha Distribution Limited (TPWODL) areas. "A total of 178 people, including employees, and 17 elephants were electrocuted during the period in TPWODL area," he said.

Similarly, 106 human beings and nine elephants died due to electrocution in TP North Odisha Distribution Limited (TPNODL) areas, said Singh Deo, who holds the Energy portfolio.

'No plans to provide 300 units free electricity'

Deputy Chief Minister Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo Wednesday said the government has no plans to provide 300 units of free electricity in the state.

The Deputy CM, who also holds the Energy portfolio, made this written statement in the Assembly while responding to a question by BJD legislator Sarada Prasad Nayak.

Singh Deo's statement comes in the wake of allegations from Opposition parties accusing the BJP of failing to fulfil its election promise of providing 300 units of free electricity to consumers.

However, the Deputy CM highlighted that domestic consumers interested in reducing their power costs can produce their own electrici-

ty by installing rooftop solar panels under the PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana. "Under the scheme, the Central government provides a subsidy of ₹78,000, while the state government offers ₹60,000 for the installation of solar plants up to 3 KW on rooftops," he added.

He added that by leveraging this scheme, consumers can generate nearly 300 units of solar power per month. The state government has allocated a budget of ₹1,800 crore for the implementation of the scheme over three financial years, from 2024-25 to 2026-27, Singh Deo informed.

So far, a total of 97,128 people have applied to benefit from the PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana, with solar projects already installed on the rooftops of 3,124 households.

Singh Deo further emphasised that the adoption of solar power under this scheme will help mitigate load shedding and address the power crisis in the state.

The demand was made by BJD's deputy leader in the Assembly, Prasanna Acharya, during Zero Hour. He claimed that over 1.5 crore people of the state's 4.5 crore population speak Kosali in about 11 of the 30 districts.

"Therefore, it is essential to grant second language status to the language spoken by people in the western region of the state," Acharya said.

The BJD leader also underscored the rich literary heritage of the Sambalpur Kosali language. "Numerous short stories, poems and books are produced in this language, which even has its own dictionary," he said, adding that many dramas and theatrical performances are also written and performed in Kosali every year.

"This further strengthens the case for its official recognition," Acharya added, citing the contributions of renowned personalities such as Satyanarayan Bohidar and Haldar Nag. Bohidar, he said, was the author of 'Koshali Bhasakosh', a dictionary and grammar book in Kosali, while Nag is a Padma Shri awardee recognised for his folk songs.

Acharya also pointed to the widespread popularity of Kosali songs such as 'Rangabati' and 'Chi Chi Chi Re Nani Chi', which have gained recognition beyond Odisha, as well as the global popularity of Sambalpur handloom sarees.

Bhubaneswar, April 2: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Wednesday launched the 'Sishu Vatika' initiative to extend pre-school education to children in the age group of 5-6 years in all schools in Odisha under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

Little kids, who began their life's journey in education, were welcomed in a traditional manner at 'Sishu Vatikas' opened in all government-run schools through 'Prabesh Ustav' or entry festival. Later, during 'Khadi Chhuan', they attempted to write something on slate for the first time in their life.

After launching the programme, the Chief Minister, who was a teacher by profession, was seen sitting on the floor of a classroom at Badagada High School here and holding the hand of a kid, enabling her to write 'sunya' (zero) on her slate.

On the occasion, Majhi distributed learning materials among children.

The 'Sishu Vatika' was introduced to provide quality education under NEP 2020. Under the initiative, children in the age group of 5-6 years can take admission in the pre-school.

Majhi later served food to the students of Class IX and X. The state has launched the mid-day meal (MDM) scheme for students of Class IX and X from April 2025.

Later, the CM flagged off awareness chariot on 'Prabesh Ustav' and 'Khadi Chhuan'.

"The state government is committed to providing quality education to the students of Odisha. Therefore, we have implemented NEP 2020 and started 'Sishu Vatikas' in schools across the state. To encourage students, who are beginning their educational journey, 'Prabesh Utsav' and 'Khadi Chhuan' are being organised," Majhi said, adding that the 'Si-

shu Vatika' initiative will play a crucial role in building a modern, self-reliant, and empowered future of children.

"Let us all join this programme and build a bright future for children," Majhi said, adding that the 'Sishu Vatika' launch was also a part of the 'Odia Pakshya' being celebrated to highlight the state's language, literature, culture, tradition, food, dress and other aspects of Odia life.

Stating that efforts are being made to make the first day in school memorable, he said the children were welcomed at the 'Sishu Vatika' with flowers and by applying the customary 'chandan tikas' on their foreheads.

Ekamra-Bhubaneswar MLA Babu Singh, Khurda MLA Prasanta Kumar Jagadev and Bhubaneswar Mayor Sulochana Das were among the dignitaries who attended the programme in City organised by the School and Mass Education department.

Woman kidnaps live-in partner with help of sister's boyfriend, arrested

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 2: A 23-year-old woman was arrested in the City here Wednesday along with four people for allegedly kidnapping her live-in partner following a fight, police said.

A call was received at Kharavel Nagar police station Tuesday night that Somnath Swain, 28, was kidnapped, and his family was asked to pay ₹10 lakh for his release, they said.

The call was made by Somnath's sister, Anjita Nayak, who told the police that his partner, Prapti Sharma, might have knowledge about it, they added.

Commissioner of Police S Dev



Datta Singh said the case was solved within six hours with the help of CCTV footage, mobile phone data, and five persons, including Prapti who hails from Jamshedpur, were arrested. Somnath had been staying with Prapti in Jharpada area for the last three years.

He had a quarrel with her March 30 as he suspected her of having an affair with another man. Amid the heated exchange, Somnath assaulted Prapti, who then informed her elder sister about the incident, police said.

Her elder sister narrated the incident to her boyfriend Akash, who, along with three of his associates, arrived at Somnath's house in a car and abducted him, they said.

They kept him in a hotel and called his sister, demanding ₹10 lakh for his release.

Apart from arresting the five people, the police seized two cars used in the crime along with eight mobile phones, a wooden stick and a wooden plank.

BJD to oppose Waqf Bill: Patra

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, April 2: As the Parliament begins a debate on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, Odisha's Opposition party Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Wednesday said it will oppose the contentious legislation.

The party said it had made some suggestions to be incorporated into the Bill which were rejected. The BJD, which has seven members in the Rajya Sabha, will oppose the Bill, BJD's Rajya Sabha MP and national spokesperson Sasmit Patra told PTI.

The regional party, headed by former chief minister Naveen Patnaik, however, has no member in the Lok Sabha. Stating that BJD Rajya Sabha member Muzibulla Khan will speak on behalf of the party in Parliament during the debate on the matter, Patra said the party is not satisfied with the Bill.

The Centre has amended certain points in the Bill after the JPC, he said. The BJD leader said the Bill grants sweeping powers to the state government in determining the status of Waqf land, which could lead to undue interference.

Patra also claimed that the absence of legal and institutional support for Waqf bodies exposes them to bureaucratic delays and mismanagement.

Ghibli trend: Experts warn of privacy risks



MANOJ KUMAR JENA, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 2: At a time when social media users are caught up in the frenzy of Ghibli-style AI image, cyber security experts have warned of privacy and data risks associated with the new image generator.

The viral trend is all about converting images with an anime-inspired touch with the help of ChatGPT's latest Artificial intelligence (AI) image maker. The feature is also available to ChatGPT users, including ChatGPT Plus, Team, and Pro. However, this has shot off several questions like is it safe to share personal data/photos on an AI platform? Does it pose any risk to our privacy which we are unaware of?

Cyber security experts have raised concern over the issue as Open AI is getting free and easy access to the user's personal or private images; worse, when a user allows access to his mobile phone.

Cyber security expert Lingaraj Sethi

said, "The 'Ghibli-style' trend has a major drawback. When we upload an image to convert it into a Ghibli-style picture, the AI Company stores it in its database. As crores of people are following the same practice, the AI companies are capturing the data to use them for data analytics."

He also said the AI companies will later conduct data mining. "Access to huge amount of data will help the AI firms to learn and work more proficiently. Besides, there is no assurance from these companies as to what will they do with the large number of photos the users share in the AI platforms," he added.

"Chances are there that users might be the victims of 'identity theft' if the cyber fraudsters get hands on these data. They might use the images to create 'deepfake content'. India has maximum number of social media users and it is one of the most favourable places in the world to test any application and capture data. Through the process of analytics, the AI companies can predict the interest of the youth and get their hands on countries secrets," Sethi added.

He advised people not to trust any AI tool or blindly upload any data on these platforms. "We need to be responsible for our own security and privacy. A small mistake can harm our privacy and even our life," he concluded.

BIJU PATNAIK INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY & MANAGEMENT STUDIES, BHUBANESWAR

Approved by AICTE, GOVT. OF INDIA | AFFILIATED TO BPUP, ODISHA | NAAC ACCREDITED | ISO 9001:2015

SHAPE YOUR
future
with BIITM

University Gold Medalists
MBA / IMBA

 MBA, GOLD MEDALIST, BATCH - 2014-16 NATIONAL BUSINESS HEAD, SOFTWARE & SERVICE (SSSI), CHENNAI	 MBA, GOLD MEDALIST, BATCH - 2017-19 HEAD-HR & FINANCE SAFFRON SUITES, RANCHI	 MBA, GOLD MEDALIST, BATCH - 2018-20 DIGITAL MARKETING MANAGER DITEK SOLUTIONS, BHUBANESWAR	 MBA, GOLD MEDALIST, BATCH - 2019-21 RECRUITING COORDINATOR AMAZON, BANGALORE	 MBA, GOLD MEDALIST, BATCH - 2020-22 RESEARCH ANALYST MORDOR INTELLIGENCE, HYDERABAD	 MBA, GOLD MEDALIST, BATCH - 2019-20 RESEARCH ANALYST MATRIX 4 ANALYTICS PVT.LTD.
--	--	--	--	---	--

BIITM Offers

2 Year

MBA

(BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION)

5 Year

IMBA

(BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION)

2 Year

MBA

(WORKING PROFESSIONAL)

121 COMPANIES | 461 OFFERS | RS. 16.22 LAKHS HIGHEST PACKAGE

PROMINENT PLACEMENT OFFERS - 2024

 Rs. 16.22 LPA FEDERAL BANK	 Rs. 9.00 LPA IntelliPaat	 Rs. 7.94 LPA Berger	 Rs. 7.75 LPA BIRLA	 Rs. 7.5 LPA asiainpoints
 Rs. 7.0 LPA saveex	 Rs. 6.31 LPA MRF	 Rs. 6.6 LPA jkcement	 Rs. 6.5 LPA BIRA	 Rs. 6.24 LPA BIRLA

F/4, CHANDAKA INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, NEAR INFOCITY, PATIA, BHUBANESWAR-751024, ODISHA
ADMISSION CELL : 9040003344 | 8018305333 | 9938310444 | 7438000111 |
E-mail: admission@biitm.ac.in | Website : www.biitm.ac.in

Capital gears up for grand 77th Foundation Day celebrations



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 2: The state government has meticulously planned a grand celebration to mark the 77th Foundation Day of Bhubaneswar, scheduled for April 13 and 14. A high-level meeting, chaired by Development Commissioner-cum-Additional Chief Secretary Anu Garg, was held at Lok Seva Bhavan Wednesday to finalise arrangements and ensure seamless coordination among various departments.

During the meeting, Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Commissioner Rajesh Prabhakar Patil presented a detailed proposal outlining the schedule of events.

The celebrations will feature a ceremonial flag hoisting, a ci-

vilian parade, cultural performances, and a range of competitions for students, making it a vibrant and engaging event for citizens.

Bhubaneswar, which was officially declared the Capital of Odisha April 13, 1948, completes 77 years this year. This milestone will be commemorated with special programmes aligned with the ongoing "Odia Paksha" (Odia Fortnight), which runs from April 1 to 14.

Notable highlights of the festivities include "A Day for Odia Cuisine" April 13 and the observance of "Odia New Year" April 14, reflecting the City's cultural essence.

The celebrations will commence April 13 with a floral tribute at the foundation stone plaque near the Odisha Legis-

lative Assembly, followed by a flag-hoisting ceremony led by the chief guest.

A parade featuring student contingents and musical bands will march from Rabindra Mandap to Soochana Bhawan, adding grandeur to the occasion. In the evening, a cultural programme will be organised at Utkal Mandap, showcasing traditional Odia art and performances.

A significant highlight of this year's event is a photo exhibition at Soochana Bhawan, displaying Bhubaneswar's historical journey and evolution over the decades. Government and private buildings across the City will be illuminated, and statues of prominent figures will be cleaned and adorned with garlands as a tribute to their contributions.

Authorities have also planned stringent traffic management measures to ensure a smooth flow of events. Senior officials from Tourism, Culture, Works, Higher Education, School & Mass Education, and police administration attended the preparatory meeting, emphasising a collective effort to make this year's celebrations grander, inclusive, and culturally enriching for the people of Bhubaneswar.



EXPLORING INVESTMENT
 French Ambassador Thierry Mathou meets Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday, to discuss investment opportunities in education, tourism, and conservation. The talks aim at strengthening India-France ties, with a focus on wildlife and forest conservation.

Sri Sri University joins hands with Laurentian varsity, Avaan Intellect

The collaborations aim to enhance student opportunities through international academic exposure and industry-driven education, bridging the gap between theoretical learning and practical expertise

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, April 2: Sri Sri University has expanded its global and industry collaborations by signing two significant Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) on Wednesday—one with Laurentian University, Canada, and another with Avaan Intellect Systems Limited, Telangana.

The MoU with Laurentian University focuses on academic exchange, providing new opportunities for management students.

A three-member delegation from Laurentian, led by the dean of the Faculty of Business Dr Parvinder Arora, along with Strategy, Recruitment, and Partnerships manager Biren Singh and Aarti Rawat, joined Sri Sri University officials, including vice chancellor Prof Tej Partap, director of Operations Swami Satyachaitanya, and dean of Faculty of Management Studies, Prof Biplab Kumar Biswal, for the signing.

The event also featured an interactive session where



students gained insights into international education, with Laurentian reaffirming its support for those aspiring to study in Canada.

In parallel, Sri Sri University formalised a partnership with Avaan Intellect Systems Limited to enhance logistics management education.

This collaboration will introduce a specialised BBA programme in logistics management, integrating academic excellence with industry-relevant skills to enhance employability.

The signing was attended by key university officials along with Avaan Intellect Systems President Khunjamayun David Singh and Operations Head H Swaroop Kumar.

These partnerships reflect Sri Sri University's dedication to bridging the gap between academia and industry, offering students global exposure and practical learning opportunities. Through such initiatives, the university continues to strengthen its role as a centre of excellence in education and skill development.

SAI hosts 18th nat'l chess championship for visually challenged

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 2: SAI International Residential School, in collaboration with the All India Chess Federation for the Blind (AICFB), hosted the prestigious 18th National Chess Championship for the visually challenged Wednesday at the School's campus in Cuttack. The championship, which will run until April 6, has attracted 54 skilled players from across India.

The inaugural ceremony saw the presence of several dignitaries, including chief guest and SAI International Education Group chairperson Silpi Sahoo. Asian Para Games gold medalist Soundarya Kumar Pradhan delivered an inspiring speech to kick off the event, accompanied by AICFB officials.

The competition gathered 54 chess players—52 men and 2 women—from 15 states and union territories, who are competing in a 9-round individual championship format.



CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

I, Narendra Behera, S/o-Late Jadunath Behera, resident of Plot No-449, Krishnapuri, PO- Malipada, P.S- Chandaka, Dist.- Khordha, PIN- 751003, Odisha declare by this affidavit C.F No.55 dated 12.11.24 that henceforth I shall be known as Narendra Kumar Behera for all future purposes.

I, Manjulata Behera, W/o-Narendra Kumar Behera, resident of Plot No-449, Krishnapuri, PO-Malipada, P.S- Chandaka, Dist.- Khordha, PIN-751003, Odisha declare by this affidavit C.F No.56 dated 12.11.24 that henceforth I shall be known as Manjulata Pandit for all future purposes.

I, NIRANJAN SAMANTARAY, S/o : Gagan Chandra Samantray, resident of At. Flat No. 303, Block-A, Nageswar Residency, Kalarahanga, Bhubaneswar Urban, Odisha, India, PIN- 751024 declare by this affidavit No. 656 dtd. 02.04.2025 that now onwards I shall be known as NIRANJAN SAMANTRAY for all future purposes.

I, Jena Amartya, S/o- Pravakar Jena, resident of Ward No.-18, Pandara Square, Rasulgarh, P.O./P.S.- Mancheswar, Dist.- Khordha, PIN- 751025 Odisha declare by this affidavit No.- 82 Dtd.- 02.04.2025 that now onwards I shall be known as J Amartya for all future purposes.

Advanced Burn Unit opens at City Manipal Hospitals



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 2: Manipal Hospitals, Bhubaneswar launched a state-of-the-art six-bed Burn Unit, designed to provide comprehensive care for patients with severe burns. Equipped with the latest technology and staffed by a multi-disciplinary team of specialists, the unit was inaugurated by Group Chief Operating Officer Karthik Rajagopal.

The event was attended by Manipal Hospitals associate vice president (Marketing) Madhur Gopal, hospital director Saktimaya Mohapatra, cluster director Sudhakar Kantipudi, consultant plastic surgeon Biswajit Mishra, and associate consultant - plastic and cosmetic surgery Kir-tiketana Pradhan.

Speaking on the occasion, Rajagopal said, "The inauguration of the advanced Burn Unit reflects Manipal Hospitals' commitment to providing world-class healthcare services. Our aim is to offer the highest level of care to burn patients,

from initial treatment through long-term rehabilitation." Mohapatra stated, "The unit represents a significant advancement in treating complex burn injuries. With the latest technology and a dedicated team, we are setting a new benchmark for burn care in the region."

The Burn Unit is equipped to handle severe burn cases, offering emergency treatment, surgery, intensive care, and rehabilitation.

It includes private isolation wards to reduce infection risks and features both positive and negative pressure rooms for enhanced patient safety.

Staffed by a team of plastic surgeons, critical care specialists, nurses, therapists, and psychologists, the unit specialises in treating third-degree burns, electrical injuries, chemical exposure, and inhalation trauma.

This advanced Burn Unit marks a significant step forward in specialised burn treatment, providing comprehensive care throughout the recovery process.

FICCI FLO Bhubaneswar chapter celebrates Utkal Divas

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 2: The FICCI FLO Bhubaneswar Chapter celebrated Utkal Divas here recently. Newly appointed chairperson and committee members joined the event on the occasion.

FICCI FLO is South Asia's largest women's chamber of commerce. The event was marked by insightful discussions on the significance of Utkal Divas and the rich heritage of the state.

The celebration commenced with the ceremonial lighting of the lamp by office bearers—Pragyan Paramita Mishra, Panchmi Manoo Ukil, Biyot



Projna Tripathy, founding chairperson Dharitri Pattnaik, former chairpersons Sunita Mohanty, Namrita Chahal, and Poonam Mahapatra and mentor Ratnamala Swain.

On the occasion, Tripathy delivered an inspiring address on

the formation of Odisha and the indomitable Odia spirit. Ukil captivated the audience with readings from her books, narrating the divine glory of Lord Jagannath's 'Gopanailla'.

Chairperson of the chapter Pragyan Paramita Mishra out-

lined her vision and agenda for the coming year, setting the stage for impactful initiatives. Committee members Mamasa Jena, Chitra Garg, and Tanvi Hans also shared their thoughts on the importance of Utkal Divas.

FICCI FLO Bhubaneswar Chapter was launched in 2020 and presently has 125 members who are entrepreneurs and professionals from various sectors.

The celebration concluded with networking and high tea, fostering camaraderie and enthusiasm for the year ahead.

Tackling challenges & enhancing support for Autism

The event brought together experts, advocates, and government officials who call for stronger rehabilitation of individuals with autism

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 2: On World Autism Awareness Day, the department of Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (SSEPD), in partnership with the Institute of Health Sciences (IHS), hosted the National Convention on Autism here Wednesday.

The event brought together experts, advocates, and government officials to discuss the growing challenges faced by individuals with autism and the urgent need for enhanced rehabilitation and support systems.

IHS founder, Satya Mahapa-

tra, who has over 26 years of experience in disability rehabilitation, delivered the welcome address. Mahapatra spoke passionately about the rising prevalence of autism in India, underscoring the importance of building stronger support structures.

He emphasised that early detection, coupled with a multidisciplinary approach to treatment, can significantly improve outcomes for children with autism and their families. According to Mahapatra, this approach is key to addressing the multifaceted needs of individuals on the autism spectrum.

WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY



The Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) chairperson Sharanjeet Kaur, highlighted the pressing issue of a global shortage of trained professionals in the medical rehabilitation sector.

She stressed the urgent need for more educational programmes in rehabilita-

tion sciences, both to meet the growing demand for qualified professionals and to offer meaningful career opportunities in this crucial field.

Kaur reassured the audience that RCI will collaborate closely with state governments to enhance the availability and quality of rehabilitation services. She

passionately stated, "Together, we can create a future where no one is left behind."

Development Commissioner Anu Garg, who presided over the event, delivered a message of hope and reassurance. She reiterated the government's ongoing commitment to improving infrastructure for individuals with disabilities, particularly in the field of rehabilitation. "NGOs play an invaluable role in service delivery," Garg acknowledged, recognising their contributions. "However, it is the collective effort of all stakeholders—government bodies, NGOs, and the community—that will truly make a lasting difference," she said.

WEATHER		
	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	35.0°	34.5°
Min Temp	23.6°	23.5°
Humidity	73%	75%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
FORECAST Mainly clear sky		

MARKET WATCH		
INDEX	VARIATION	
SENSEX	76617.44	▲ 592.93
NIFTY	23332.35	▲ 166.65
DOLLAR	85.43	▼ 0.13
EURO	92.81	▲ 0.39
GOLD	₹90,570	▲ ₹17
SILVER	₹1,00,009	▲ ₹56

FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS

Acharya Vihar-Dayal Agency-9437135727, A.P. Tours and Travel, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur-9861301598, Aurobindo Market-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, Airport Road-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, Anish Infotech- Tankapani Road-9861341488, Bapuji Nagar- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, Baramunda Rental Colony-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, Baramunda Housing Board Colony-Pappu Varya Store-9040500106, Cuttack Road-Alishan Snacks-8984236754, District Centre (Chandrasekharpur)-Sai Google Mart-9776056507, Forest Park-DTDC Ramchris & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, IRC Village-Bapi Xerox-9090090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816, Janpath-Krupajal Book Store-7978646669, Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, Jagannath Mobile Point- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-8260697560, Khandagiri- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, KIIT Road-Jugad Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Sagar-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, Lewis Road-Spider Web-7809186415, Metro Satellite City-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, Madhusudan Nagar-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, Maa Santoshi travels- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, Nayapalli- The Cake Room- 7873660137, Near Mayfair Lagoon-Cookiemann-9439491273, Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels-9668284823, Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, Net Square- Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, Priyadarshini Market-Astro Point-9938134346, R.N. General Store-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, Sahid Nagar-8093449515, Saheed Nagar-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, Siripur-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-9777682449, Sushree fashion- Jagmara-9938714347, Shree Vision- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, Unit-3-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, Unit-7- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, VSS Nagar-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, XIMB Square-LD Books-9658061373.

FOCUS LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

ADMINISTRATOR RAJ



It is clear that we have a long way to go to implement in letter and true spirit, genuine decentralisation and the strengthening of local democracy

troller and Auditor General of India in November 2024, in nearly 60% of urban local bodies elections have been delayed.

In a recent PIL filed in the Supreme Court by ISHAD, a citizens' organisation, about 85,000 of the 1.5 lakh local bodies across 17 states have not held elections. This is too widespread and looks like a deliberate pattern. As per a study by Janagraha, the elections to the city council were delayed in Bangalore by 62 months, in Chennai by 84 months and in Kolkata by 15 months. On top of this, even after elections, there is an egregious delay in the formation of elected councils, mayors or chairpersons of standing committees. On an average, there was a delay of 11 months across major cities. During these long periods the governance is in the hands of the state government and local governments are powerless and people are representative less.

In Maharashtra, all major civic bodies have been without representatives for more than three years. This is ostensibly due to the case in Supreme Court regarding OBC reservations. But the legal logjam has meant that the true democratic functioning of local government is denied to the people of Maharashtra. Similar is the fate of the people in other states facing delays in local elections.

The inordinate delay in conducting local body elections is anti-constitutional. It is a severe blot on our democracy. It leads to several undesirable develop-

ments, even called a "disease of dysfunctional democracy" as articulated recently by Bhim Raskar, a civil society leader from Maharashtra. Firstly, it encourages "administrator raj" rather than people's rule. As such the marginalised sections feel intimidated in approaching the administration for their grievances and would rather approach a local representative. But thanks to delayed elections, we have a representative less functioning so-called democracy. Secondly, governments run by administrators appointed by the state government machinery are more likely to be captured by the gentry. So, they tend to be less responsive to grassroots concerns. Thirdly, the local bodies tend to degenerate into "service centres" or "sewa kendras" delivering various schemes and missions, that originated in the state capital or in Delhi. Thus, the element of local decision making is robbed, and they become executors of welfare schemes. This phenomenon is seen even when elections are held on time. The gram panchayat has become a conduit for large funds flow, including for example, the employment guarantee scheme, tap water mission or affordable housing scheme. This means that the local government is not majorly a decision making and deliberative body, especially in the absence of elected representatives.

Another important casualty is the role of social audits. The impact of a scheme is verified only with people's participation and

independent evaluation. In the absence of local governments who can appoint such independent audits, the administration machinery ignores the aspect of measuring implementation score cards. The "administration raj" also increasingly becomes risk averse to trying out experiments at the local level, to deal with local realities. This means there is less learning and blockage of useful feedback mechanism. The lack of locally elected representatives also means that civil society and NGOs are kept away by the administration run local government. Such NGOs are not always nosy busy bodies but are often partners to locally elected governments, in improving governance, making it more accountable and effective. But administrators and bureaucrats usually have a distrust of such civil society organisations and would rather keep them away.

How can you have representative less local self-governments? That is a contradiction in terms. The empowering of people at the grassroots level requires regular and timely elections to all local bodies, fulfilling all conditions as stated in the landmark constitutional amendments, including one third reservation for women. Not only is the delay in elections experienced across many states a serious disease, but there are also other troubling trends too. Such as encouraging unopposed elected bodies with cash awards from the state government. As if getting a panchayat in place is like bagging a commercial deal. Among other well-known disorders in local body elections, is that of the female elected representative simply being a rubber stamp and proxy for male power wielders. Thus, it is clear that we have a long way to go to implement in letter and true spirit, genuine decentralisation and the strengthening of local democracy. This at the very least is holding elections in a time-bound manner without any delay. Else running thousands of local governments by remote control, and by unelected administrators is against the people and the Constitution.

The writer is a noted economist.
©THE BILLION PRESS

Thirty-two years ago, the 73rd amendment to the Constitution, called the Panchayati Raj bill came into force on 24 April. Two months later on 1 June, the 74th amendment, called the Nagar Palika bill also came into force. Together these two landmark bills were to ensure true democratic decentralisation. People would have the power to elect their representatives at the third tier of government, namely village councils i.e. panchayats and city councils i.e. municipal corporations. The decentralisation was to happen by devolution of powers, i.e. transfer of funds, functions and functionalities. For all citizens the immediate and most relevant interface with government is the local government, whose job is to provide water and sanitation, roads and traffic management, garbage disposal, running of government schools, health clinics and services like birth and death certificates and land transfers. There is a well-defined list of functions described in the eleventh and twelfth schedule to the Constitution, which came as part of the amendments. The panchayats were to be devolved with 29 functions and the municipal councils with 18 functions. These functions need the appointment of proper functionaries, which in turn require funds.

Even after three decades, the status of decentralisation of genuine power and functions is distressingly low. The writ of the state government is large on the running of municipalities and panchayats. Most significantly the two important institutions of the State Election Commission (SEC) and State Finance Commission (SFC) in many states are ineffectual. The recommendations of the SFC about the transfer of funds are more in the breach, and there is no penalty. The elections to local bodies are delayed, and sometimes even the appointment of the SEC is done with lethargy. For instance, there are nearly 5000 urban local bodies across India covering 40% of the population. As per an audit of the performance of the 74th amendment by the Com-



Ajit Ranade

THE INORDINATE DELAY IN CONDUCTING LOCAL BODY ELECTIONS IS ANTI-CONSTITUTIONAL



Daron Acemoglu

If the tech industry mainly pursues autonomous AI agents, the likelihood of automating more human jobs will increase substantially



The only work that spiritually purifies us is that which is done without personal motives

SRI AUROBINDO



Agentic AI

AI "agents" are coming, whether we are ready or not. While there is much uncertainty about when AI models will be able to interact autonomously with digital platforms, other AI tools, and even humans, there can be little doubt that this development will be transformative – for better or worse. Yet despite all the commentary (and hype) around agentic AI, many big questions remain unaddressed, the biggest being which type of AI agent the tech industry is seeking to develop?

Different models will have vastly different implications. With an "AI as adviser" approach, AI agents would offer individually calibrated recommendations to human decision-makers, leaving humans always in the driver's seat. But with an "autonomous AI" model, agents will take the wheel on behalf of humans. That is a distinction with profound and far-reaching implications.

Humans make hundreds of decisions every day, some of which have major consequences for their careers, livelihoods, or happiness. Many of these decisions are based on imperfect or incomplete information, determined more by emotions, intuitions, instincts, or impulses. As David Hume famously put it, "Reason is and ought only to be the slave of the passions." Humans may make most decisions without systematic reasoning or due attention to the full implications, but as Hume recognised with the "ought" part of his statement, this isn't all bad. It is what makes us human. Passion reflects purpose, and it may also play a key role in how we cope with a complex world.

With AI advisers that provide customised, reliable, context-relevant, useful information, many important decisions can be improved, but human motives will remain dominant. But what's so bad about autonomous AIs making decisions on our behalf? Couldn't they improve decision-making even further, save time, and prevent errors?

There are several problems with this perspective. First, human agency is critical for human learning and flourishing. The very act of making decisions and contemplating outcomes – even if the inputs and advice come from nonhuman agents – affirms our own sense of agency and purpose. Much of what humans do is not about computation or collecting inputs to decide on an optimal course of action; rather, it is about discovery – an experience that will become increasingly rare if all decisions are delegated to an AI agent.

Moreover, if the tech industry mainly pursues autonomous AI agents, the likelihood of automating more human jobs will increase substantially. Yet if AI becomes primarily a means of accelerating automation, any hope of widely shared prosperity will be dashed.

Most importantly, there is a fundamental difference between AI agents acting on behalf of humans and humans acting for themselves. Many settings in which humans interact have both cooperative and conflictual elements. Consider the case of one company providing an input to another. If this input is sufficiently valuable to the buyer, a trade between the two companies is mutually beneficial (and typically also benefits society).

But for there to be any exchange, the price of the input must be determined through an inherently conflictual process. The higher the price, the more the seller will benefit relative to the buyer. The outcome of such bargaining is often determined by a combination of norms (such as about fairness), institutions (such as contracts that will impose costs if violated), and market forces (such as whether the seller has the option of selling to somebody else). But imagine that the buyer has a reputation for being completely uncompromising – for refusing to accept anything but the lowest feasible price. If there are no other buyers, the seller may be forced to accept the low-ball offer.

Fortunately, in our day-to-day transactions, such uncompromising stances are rare, partly because it pays not to have a bad reputation and, more importantly, because most humans have neither the nerve nor the aspiration to act in such aggressive ways. But now imagine that the buyer has an autonomous AI agent that does not care about human niceties and possesses nonhuman steely nerves. The AI can be trained always to adopt this uncompromising stance, and the counterparty will have no hope of coaxing it toward a more mutually beneficial outcome. By contrast, in an AI-as-adviser world, the model might still recommend an uncompromising position, but the human would ultimately decide whether to go down that path.

In the near term, then, autonomous agentic AIs may usher in a more unequal world, where only some companies or individuals have access to highly capable, credibly hard-nosed AI models. But even if everyone eventually acquired the same tools, that would not be any better. Our entire society would be subjected to "war-of-attrition" games in which AI agents push every conflictual situation to the brink of breakdown.

Such confrontations are inherently risky. As in a game of "chicken" (when two cars accelerate toward each other to see who will swerve away first), it is always possible that neither party will cave. When that happens, both drivers "win" – and both perish.

An AI that has been trained to win at "chicken" will never swerve. While AI could be a good adviser to humans – furnishing us with useful, reliable, and relevant information in real time – a world of autonomous AI agents is likely to usher in many new problems, while eroding many of the gains the technology might have offered.

The writer, a 2024 Nobel laureate in economics, is Institute Professor of Economics at MIT.
©PROJECT SYNDICATE

WISDOM CORNER

By three methods we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is noblest; Second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest

CONFUCIUS

We are what our thoughts have made us; so take care of what you think. Words are secondary. Thoughts live; they travel far

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Appreciation is a wonderful thing: It makes what is excellent in others belong to us as well

VOLTIRE

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1879: Sofia, liberated from the Ottoman Empire by Russian troops, was named the capital of Bulgaria.
- 1922: Joseph Stalin became secretary-general of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, a position that provided the power base for his dictatorship.

SPECTRUM ECONOMY

(Un)usual indicators of recession



Shivaji Mohinta

SO, IF YOU NOTICE A RISE IN NIP SALES OR DEMAND OF PARLE-G OR A DROP IN TEMPLE DONATIONS, BRACE YOURSELF— THERE COULD BE ROUGH ECONOMIC WATERS AHEAD!

There has been growing speculation that the global economy is facing a slowdown or possibly heading towards a recession. But how do experts make these predictions? While economists rely on conventional leading and lagging indicators, some lesser-known (and often amusing) signs can also signal economic downturns.

A recession is typically defined as two consecutive quarters of declining GDP growth. In simpler terms, businesses see lower sales and profits, households tighten their budgets, loan defaults rise, and overall financial stress increases. As consumers cut back on discretionary spending and seek cheaper alternatives, certain quirky trends emerge. Here are some unusual yet telling indicators of a looming recession:

1. The Nip Sales Surge: When times get tough, tippers downsize. Instead of splurging on full-sized liquor bottles, many opt for smaller "nip" bottles to save money. Reports sug-

gest an uptick in demand for these nip sized bottles serves as an early warning for some gloomy times.

2. The Single Cigarette Shift: Like liquor sales, cigarette buyers switch from full packs to single sticks, a sign of pinched wallets and short-term financial caution.

3. Gold & Silver Boom: When stock markets stumble due to economic uncertainty, investors flock to safe-haven assets like gold and silver. With gold prices soaring to record levels, even gold loan advertisements have seen a surge, signalling financial distress. Have you seen a spike in Muthoot Gold Loan Ads lately?

4. The Lipstick Index: Originally coined by Estée Lauder, this theory suggests that lipstick sales rise during economic downturns. When women cut back on expensive fashion items like jewellery and clothing, they still indulge in smaller luxuries like lipstick to feel good. (Though this trend didn't hold during COVID for obvious reasons!)

5. The Instant Noodle Index: A spike in instant noodle sales—also known as the Ramen Noodle Index—suggests that consumers are switching to cheaper food options, which is not a great sign for the economy.

6. Men's Underwear Index: Former Federal Reserve Chair Alan Greenspan once noted that men tend to delay underwear purchases during recessions since it's not a publicly visible item. A drop in underwear sales could mean an economic downturn is underway.

7. The Parle-G Index: In some regions, sales of budget-friendly biscuits rise during economic slowdowns as consumers opt for more affordable snacks instead of costlier condiments or snacks. Consumers prefer to buy more of ₹5/-Parle G biscuits over premium packs.

8. Drop in Temple Donations: When financial uncertainty looms, people cut back even on charitable giving, leading to a noticeable dip in religious donations or in hundi. This is a subtle sign of cash

conservation amongst the general public.

9. The Cardboard Index: A decline in orders for cardboard boxes and cartons suggests lower shipments and reduced consumer demand—potentially signalling economic trouble ahead.

10. The Cutting Chai Index: Office-goers, students and gig workers cut back on pricier café visits and shift towards roadside chai stalls. A surge in sales of "cutting chai" (half-cup tea) could indicate economic stress, as people look for affordable refreshments instead of expensive beverages.

While these unconventional indicators may seem humorous, they offer valuable insights into consumer behaviour during financial downturns. So, if you notice a rise in nip sales or demand of Parle-G or a drop in temple donations, brace yourself—there could be rough economic waters ahead! Can you spot anything yet?

The writer is a business consultant

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, Rasulgardi Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Frequent mishaps

Sir, It is heart-breaking to learn about the tragic death of many workers and their family members in a firecracker blast in Gujarat ("Gujarat: 21 killed, 6 hurt in cracker blast," Orissa POST, April 2). Many such incidents are happening in the country time and again but no concrete measures have been taken by the administration to crack down on illegally operated firecracker units. According to data, nearly seven firecracker factory explosions have taken place in the country in the last two years. Apart from fines, maximum punishment should be awarded to those who operate those units without proper permission. The government should thoroughly scrutinise and inspect before awarding licences to operate to such units. Stringent measures will only help to avoid future mishaps..

S Sankaranarayanan, CHENNAI

Reckless behaviour

Sir, This refers to "Bulldozer hits SC roadblock" (Orissa POST, April 2). I must thank the apex court for making the Prayagraj Development Authority liable for payment of due compensation to those whose houses were demolished by the UP government without following the due process of law. But the pertinent question arises whether by this order of the apex court the Uttar Pradesh government will henceforth follow the rule of law or will it continue to be reckless as before? Also, how can a statutory authority under the control and command of the chief minister behave so irresponsibly?

Arun Gupta, KOLKATA

Wasted time

Sir, If we love our country in its true sense, what we need is to stop the blame game and sink the political differences and unite with the machinery in force to help it run smoothly keeping in the best interest of the people and its country at large. We cannot avoid the fact that there should be healthy debates/deliberations on a topic of importance concerning our people and the country. Sadly, our precious time and efforts are wasted in the game of uproars in Parliament in arriving at a workable solution for problems that our country faces today.

CK Subramaniam, NAVI MUMBAI

Mundakkai, Chooralmala remain ghost towns

Once a bustling hub of tourist activity, this beautiful valley in Meppadi, Wayanad, is now devoid of residents or visiting tourists

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Wayanad (Kerala), April 2: Suhara Joseph, 56, was taking a respite from the scorching heat under the shade of a shop in Chooralmala in Wayanad district, blankly looking across the Bailey bridge at the rubble where her house once stood.

She had just returned from the spot where her home had been completely wiped away, with not even a trace left, as huge boulders swept it away July 30 last year in the worst landslide Kerala has ever witnessed.

She reluctantly returned to the shade, as she was alone and afraid of fainting in the scorching sun.

"I am least concerned about the house and the properties we lost, but I can't get over the fact that the people who were so close to us are all gone," Suhara told PTI, choking with emotion as tears rolled down her cheeks.

Suhara survived because she was at a hospital for her husband's treatment. All the neighbours who had visited them at the hospital the previous night perished.

Eight months after the disaster, the Mundakkai and Chooralmala regions resemble a ghost town, with an eerie silence surrounding them.



EIGHT MONTHS ON

Once a bustling hub of tourist activity, this beautiful valley in Meppadi, Wayanad, is now devoid of residents or visiting tourists.

Even nature itself seems to be standing still, as the mud- and boulder-covered area remains brown, with no new plant life sprouting from the rubble.

When night falls, wild animals take over the region, and elephants often wander through the rubble.

"I am just going to see the place where my uncle and aunt lived. We have lost everyone—friends, family. This

Even nature itself seems to be standing still, as the mud- and boulder-covered area remains brown, with no new plant life sprouting from the rubble

silence is unbearable," said Faisal, who often visits the disaster site, still unable to fathom the quietness of the place, as he told PTI.

For many like Faisal, who often visit the places where their loved ones once lived, it is a journey to connect with their past, their memories, and often a homage to those who lost their lives in the landslides.

"Many of them still remain buried deep somewhere here. This place is like a tomb for our relatives, and visitors may not respect it," Faisal said with deep sorrow, fully aware that there would be a barrage of visitors to the site if it were opened for tourism.

The local people had given a memorandum to the Chief

Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, requesting him not to open the place for tourist.

In the three wards of Meppadi Panchayat—Punchirimmattam, Mundakkai, and Chooralmala—there are no residents left. Even the houses that remained intact after narrowly escaping nature's fury remain closed.

In the partially damaged houses, all that can be found are broken household items, books, and other belongings—once woven so closely with the vibrant life that thrived here—now standing as sorrowful reminders of what happened in the early morning hours of July 30.

The flood marks on these houses remain intact, a stark reminder of how furious the nature's assault was on these hapless people. In most of the remaining areas, only iron bars and pieces of concrete serve as evidence that houses once stood there, sheltering the families.

"I have been working on a farm here for over a decade. Every morning, I used to take the road we lost to the landslides. I knew everyone here, and now there is no one. Now, when I ride along the other road to the farm, memories constantly replay in my mind—it is very difficult," said an estate worker in Mundakkai.

Dalai Lama receives Gold Mercury Award



The award was presented by Gold Mercury International, a globally recognised think tank and international non-governmental organisation (INGO) dedicated to promoting peace, governance and sustainable development

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dharamshala, April 2: Tibetan spiritual leader The Dalai Lama was awarded the prestigious Gold Mercury Award for Peace and Sustainability at a special ceremony held at his residence in Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh Monday.

The award was presented by Gold Mercury International, a globally recognised think tank and international non-governmental organisation (INGO) dedicated to promoting peace, governance and sustainable development.

Nicolas De Santis, president and secretary general of Gold Mercury International, who presented the award to the Dalai Lama at his residence in Dharamshala said, "Dalai Lama is a leader whose wisdom, compassion and unwavering dedication to peace have inspired the world. As we celebrate His Holiness' 90th birthday, we reflect on your extraordinary legacy.

"For decades, he has championed non-violence, human

dignity, interfaith dialogue and environmental stewardship, always reminding us that true peace begins within. Your message of universal responsibility teaches us that we are all connected -- not just as nations but as one human family, sharing one fragile planet" he said.

Santis said Dalai Lama has defended the rights of the Tibetan people through non-violent means and is a global voice for sustainability, warning of the urgent need to protect the environment long before climate change became a worldwide concern.

The Gold Mercury International Award, originally established in Italy, has evolved into a globally recognised honour for individuals and organisations making significant contributions to world peace, good governance and international commerce. Over the years, the award has been presented in major cities such as Brussels, Moscow, Madrid and Washington, celebrating visionary leaders who shape the future with courage and integrity.

Gold Mercury International, now headquartered in London, continues its mission under the leadership of Santis, son of the organisation's founder, Eduardo De Santis.

The Dalai Lama joins a distinguished list of past laureates who have demonstrated extraordinary dedication to global peace and sustainability, further cementing his enduring legacy as a guiding force for ethical leadership and universal harmony, a statement said.

Kerala declares 1,021 local bodies 'waste-free'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, April 2: Kerala Minister for Local Self-Governments MB Rajesh Monday announced that 1,021 out of 1,034 local self-government institutions in the state have been declared 'waste-free'.

In a Facebook post, Rajesh stated, "We are pleased to share that out of 19,489 panchayats and municipal wards in Kerala, 19,093 have been declared as waste-free. Likewise, 1,021 out of 1,034 local self-government institutions have achieved the same milestone."

According to the minister, this shows that 97.96 per cent of wards and 98.47 per cent of local self-government institutions successfully attained 'waste-free' status.

The achievement was secured on International Zero Waste Day (March 30).

"The milestone we achieved yesterday (Sunday) gives Kerala the confidence that nothing is impossible," he wrote in his post.

"On International Zero Waste Day, 934 gram pancha-

yats, 82 municipalities, and five corporations were declared waste-free after meeting 80 per cent progress in all 13 government-mandated criteria," Rajesh said.

A panel of experts from various fields assessed the progress of each local body before certifying them as 'waste-free'.

As a result, 99.26 per cent of grama panchayats and 94.25 per cent of municipalities have been declared as 'waste-free', the post stated.

"We congratulate all the local self-government institutions that have reached this milestone and extend our sincere gratitude to everyone who contributed to this initiative on behalf of the government," Rajesh, who also handles the Excise and Parliamentary Affairs portfolios, said.

Building on the success of the People's Planning initiative and the Total Literacy campaign, the Waste-Free Kerala campaign has become one of the state's most widely participated movements, he added.

Thiruvananthapuram, April 2: The Kerala Women and Child Development Department is organising a training programme to create awareness about the POSH Act among those working in the film industry.

The Prevention of Sexual Harassment at the Workplace (POSH) Act is a central legisla-



Security personnel try to stop people staging a protest against Samajwadi Party MP Ramji Lal Suman over his remarks against Rajput ruler Rana Sanga, outside Himachal Pradesh Secretariat, in Shimla

Training programme for film industry

The Prevention of Sexual Harassment at the Workplace (POSH) Act is a central legislation enacted in 2023 to address the issues of sexual harassment being faced by women in the workplace

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, April 2: The Kerala Women and Child Development Department is organising a training programme to create awareness about the POSH Act among those working in the film industry.

The Prevention of Sexual Harassment at the Workplace (POSH) Act is a central legisla-

tion enacted in 2023 to address the issues of sexual harassment being faced by women in the workplace.

State Health Minister Veena George will launch the awareness programme being implemented with the support of the state-run Gender Park, April 3 here, an official statement said Tuesday.

As many as 60 people from various sectors of the film industry will take part in the initial phase of the awareness event, in which Chief Secretary Sarada Muraleedharan would be the chief guest.

Stressing the significance of the programme, the Department in the statement said that this is a time when women are entering the workforce in greater numbers.

The Constitution guarantees

POSH ACT AWARENESS



equality and equal rights for men and women, it said.

To achieve this objective and to make workplaces safe and secure for women, the state gov-

ernment has already initiated various activities through the Department. It also initiated steps to bring the film industry under the purview of the POSH Act.

In January 2023, a portal was launched to coordinate and monitor activities under the POSH Act to prevent sexual harassment against women in workplace.

Steps have also been taken to set up internal committees, as prescribed by the POSH Act in all institutions with more than 10 employees in 95 government departments in the state, it further said.

The safety of women in workplaces has been given greater importance by the state government and the upcoming programme is part of that, the statement added.

Water supply to get dearer in Shimla

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shimla, April 2: Consumers in the state capital and surrounding areas will have to shell out more for water consumption, as Shimla Jal Prabandhan Nigam Limited (SJPNL) has hiked the tariff by ten per cent.

The revised rates will be applicable to all consumer categories, including domestic, commercial and religious institutions.

As per the notification issued by the government, the tariff would be different for consumers within the Shimla Municipal Corporation (SMC) area and outside the SMC area, officials said Wednesday.

The revised water charges will be ₹21.23 per kilo litre on 0-20 KL slab, ₹36.61 per KL on 20-30 slab and ₹69.89 for consumption above 30 KL for consumers within the municipal limits. The minimum maintenance charges have been raised to ₹121 per month while the faulty meter rate would be ₹488.48 per month.

The tariff for consumers outside the SMC area would be ₹48.31 for consumption up to 20KL, followed by ₹73.21 for 20-30 KL slab and ₹102.49 for above 30 kilo litres while the minimum maintenance charge for domestic water connections outside the limits of the Shimla MC will be ₹242 per month. The faulty meter rate would be ₹1,948.58 per month.

The charges per kilo litre for water supply connections for establishments like hotels and restaurants within and outside the SMC limits will be ₹116.93 for consumption up to 20 KL, ₹155.88 for 30-75 KL and ₹214.34 for consumption above 75 KL.

Further, ₹242 per month will be charged in case of plugged connections and ₹8,557.67 per month for faulty meters.

Himachal's first CA store to be built in Kinnaur

Geothermal cooling utilises Earth's relatively constant below-surface temperatures to cool buildings and the heat from indoors of the building will be transferred to the cooler ground and back in a closed loop system

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shimla, April 2: The Himachal Pradesh Horticultural Produce Marketing and Processing Corporation (HPMC) is planning to build a controlled atmosphere (CA) store with geothermal technology in collaboration with an Iceland company, horticulture minister Jagat Singh Negi said Tuesday.

He said the pilot project would start in Tapri in Kinnaur district soon. Talking to reporters after the 217th meeting of the Board of Directors of HPMC, Negi said this would be the first such

store in the state. Geothermal cooling utilises Earth's relatively constant below-surface temperatures to cool buildings. The heat from indoors of the building will be transferred to the cooler ground and back in a closed loop system.

Negi said the HPMC has already established a fruit and vegetable dryer, which has started working on a small scale -- 500 kg per day -- and the results were good.

He said use of geothermal technology could be an eye opener; it could be used to generate electricity and keep homes centrally heated in



the coming times.

Citing that the corporation has attained the highest ever production of 2,000 tonnes of apple concentrate, the minister said he hoped it would earn the highest-ever profit of up to ₹5 crore this financial year.

He said the HPMC apple juice is in demand since it contains no added sugar. The corporation has also started manufacturing of apple cider, vinegar and wines, which are now being sold in several metros, including Delhi and Jaipur.

The minister said the HPMC land lying idle would

be utilised to earn revenue. Around ₹100 crore is expected upfront, with an annual rent revenue of ₹2 crore.

He said the Board of Directors has decided to give the controlled atmosphere stores and the grading packing centres in the state to private people through a tender process.

Negi said HPMC has been working for the gardeners and farmers of Himachal Pradesh for a long time. Apart from this, it also holds the responsibility of procurement of apples under the Market Intervention Scheme.

national



The previous UPA government started this model. We have to carry forward that. She was very much part of that government. She could have prevailed upon then

JAGDEEP DHANKHAR | RS CHAIRMAN

DELHI COURT JUNKS MEDHA PATKAR'S PLEA

A Delhi court Wednesday dismissed activist Medha Patka's plea against her conviction in a defamation case filed by Delhi LG V K Saxena 23 years ago, when he was heading an NGO in Gujarat, and said she was "rightly convicted". Additional sessions judge Vishal Singh was hearing Patkar's appeal against a magisterial court order, which held her guilty under IPC Section 500 (defamation) May 24 last year



INS Tarkash seizes 2,500 kg of drugs

SAYAN CHATTERJEE

New Delhi, April 2: In a major anti-drug operation, the Indian Navy's warship INS Tarkash intercepted a smuggling vessel in the Western Indian Ocean, seizing 2,500 kg of narcotics. The operation, conducted under Combined Task Force (CTF) 150, reinforces India's commitment to maritime security. The Indian Navy's P-8I reconnaissance aircraft March 31 detected suspicious vessels. Acting swiftly, INS Tarkash pursued and intercepted a dhow suspected of drug trafficking. Deploying its integral helicopter for surveillance, a Marine Commandos (MARCOS) boarding team secured the vessel without resistance. A search revealed 2,386 kg of hashish and 121 kg of heroin, marking one of the largest drug seizures in recent history. The detained crew is under investigation. This successful crackdown sends a strong message to global smuggling networks, highlighting India's growing naval capabilities and intelligence-driven missions. The Indian Navy remains committed to eliminating maritime threats and ensuring security in international waters.

of the day quote

As we conclude Fiscal Year (FY) 2024-25, we are pleased to report significant financial achievements reflecting strong fiscal discipline and effective resource management

As previously mentioned, we urgently seek your time to convey our united stance on this critical issue for our people. Awaiting your earliest response

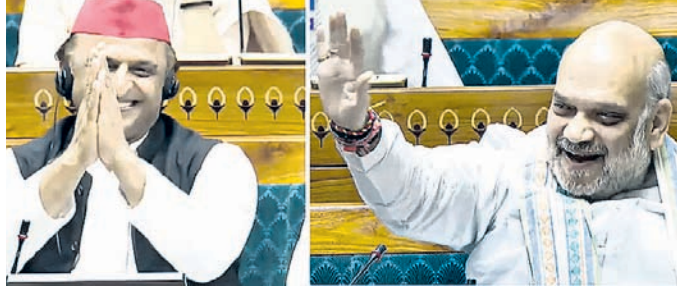
The objective of the pension adalat is to provide on-the-spot resolution of unresolved and chronic grievances received in CPENGRAMS (Centralised Pensioners Grievance Redress And Monitoring System)

Shah, Akhilesh banter adds humour to feisty Waqf debate

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 2: The day-long debate on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill was enlivened by moments of banter involving Home Minister Amit Shah and Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav, as the BJP leader fired ripostes at the rival's bid to play at the ruling party's internal developments.

The ruling NDA Wednesday launched a feisty defence of the Waqf (Amendment) Bill in the Lok Sabha amid the opposition's charge that it was unconstitutional and targeted Muslims, as Home Minister Amit Shah asserted that the



government had no intention of interfering in their religious matters and was solely driven by the aim of transparent administration of Waqf properties. Yadav humorously asked Shah, who had just retorted to

Trinamool Congress MP Kalyan Banerjee's jibe during his intervention on the bill, to say something about Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath as well. "He is also going to be repeated (in the next elec-

tions)," Shah said, triggering laughter all around.

The former Uttar Pradesh CM has often sought to make political points over Adityanath's alleged differences with BJP's central leaders and the internal affairs of the ruling party.

Earlier in the day, the SP chief had said in the Lok Sabha during his address that a big party like the BJP was unable to elect its national president.

"The BJP claims to be the largest party in India but it still has not decided on its leader," he said. Shah rose to say that since Yadav had spoken with a smile, he would reply in the

same spirit. He then added, "In some parties, only five members of a family have to choose the president so it is easy and quick, but we have to elect (a president) following a process that involves crores of members, so it takes time."

He said it would not take much time in Yadav's party. "Let me state that you will remain president for 25 more years," Shah said amid laughter from the members.

Yadav then cited social media buzz to wonder if a recent trip was linked to extending the 75 years of retirement age, an apparent reference to the BJP. He, however, did not elaborate.

Parl passes Immigration and Foreigners Bill with RS nod

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 2: Parliament approved a Bill to regulate immigration, entry and stay of foreigners in India, with the Rajya Sabha giving its nod Wednesday.

The Immigration and Foreigners Bill, 2025 was passed in Lok Sabha March 27, 2025. The Rajya Sabha passed the Bill by voice vote Wednesday after various amendments moved by Opposition members were negated. Replying to the discussion on the Bill, Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai attacked the previous Congress government and the TMC dispensation in West Bengal for "aiding" illegal immigrants enter the country and "facilitating" their stay by including their names in voters' list and ration cards.

This was strongly objected to by the Congress and TMC members, who along with other opposition parties' MPs, staged a walkout from the Upper House. One of the key provisions in the Bill is that anyone found to be using a forged passport or visa for entering India or staying in or exiting from the country will be punishable with a jail term of up to seven years and a fine which could extend to ₹10 lakh. The Bill also seeks to ensure a close monitoring of everyone who visits India. The proposed legislation also provides for mandatory reporting of in-



The Immigration and Foreigners Bill, 2025 was passed in Lok Sabha March 27, 2025

The Rajya Sabha passed the Bill by voice vote Wednesday after various amendments moved by Opposition members were negated

Replying to the discussion on the Bill, Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai attacked the previous Congress government and the TMC dispensation in West Bengal for "aiding" illegal immigrants enter the country and "facilitating" their stay by including their names in voters' list and ration cards

formation about foreigners by hotels, universities, other educational institutions, hospitals and nursing homes to enable tracking of overstaying foreigners. During the discussion, Rai said, "As many as 26 members expressed their views on the Bill. It was necessary to bring this Bill to make our universities, education system and economy world class level."

About the suggestion on referring the Bill to the standing committee, he stated that this Bill was brought after deep study of three years. Rai stated that the Immigration Bureau is already in existence which was questioned by members. The bureau will be the only agency to deal with issues related

to immigration and this is the system which is being followed worldwide, he said.

The minister said that all those people are welcomed in the country who come here for education, research and development work. He also stressed that there is a need to deal with all those foreign nationals who are indulged in anti-national activities. Rai said that the Bill provides for mandatory reporting of information about the admission in hospitals or their place of residence. He also clarified that there is no provision of appeal against the order of an immigration officer and few countries have this provision only after the immigrant returns to his country.

BIHAR BRIDGE COLLAPSE

Officers suspended, brought back after furore settled: SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 2: The Supreme Court Wednesday pulled up the Bihar government observing its officials were suspended after incidents of bridge collapse but brought back after the furore died down.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar made the observation and transferred to the Patna High Court a PIL raising concerns about the safety and longevity of bridges in Bihar while claiming the collapse of several such structures in the recent months. "Certain officers were duly suspended after the bridge collapse incident only to be brought back after the furore over the incident died down," the bench observed. The top court was also critical of the voluminous reply filed by the state government and its authorities to the PIL

filed by lawyer petitioner Brajesh Singh. The counter affidavit of the state government contains a long list of schemes, policies and does not provide any reason for the incidents, the bench said.

Transferring the PIL, the bench said the Patna High Court could monitor, preferably on a monthly basis, the steps taken to ensure structural and safety audits

of bridges in Bihar. The bench asked the petitioner, state authorities and the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) to appear before the high court on May 14 when a future hearing date would be fixed there. In a brief hearing, the state government said it had inspected around 10,000 bridges in the state. "We have gone through the counter (affidavit). We are transferring the case to Patna (High Court). In the counter affidavit, they (state authorities) have given details of what they are doing..." the bench said.

Ten incidents of bridge collapse were reported in Bihar's Siwan, Saran, Madhubani, Araria, East Champaran and Kishanganj districts from May to July last year

Many claimed heavy rainfall to be the probable cause behind these incidents

The PIL raised concerns about the safety and longevity of the bridges in the state that usually witnesses heavy rains and floods during the monsoon

SHORT TAKES

Man slits throats of woman, daughter

Visakhapatnam: A 25-year-old man 'attacked' a woman by slitting her throat and injured her daughter—whom he is said to be in love with—at their residence Wednesday, said a police officer. The accused, identified as Naveen, allegedly slit the throats of Lakshmi (43) and her daughter, Deepika Gayatri (20). Lakshmi died on the spot, while Deepika was hospitalised in critical condition.

Massive fire at warehouse

Gurugram: A massive fire broke out at a garment warehouse in Saraswati Enclave Industrial area here and soon spread to two adjoining warehouses of liquor and shoes, prompting a 12-hour operation to douse the blaze, officials said Wednesday. While no one was reported injured despite the intensity of the fire that started late at night Tuesday, there was extensive damage to goods in the warehouses. More than 20 fire tenders and over 200 firefighters had to be deployed to control the fire.

3 killed in collision with goods carrier

Morigaon (Assam): Three bikers were killed in a collision with a goods carrier in Assam's Morigaon district Wednesday, the police said. The three were heading towards Morigaon when their motorbike collided with a fish-laden pick-up van at Dalbari, killing two persons on the spot and critically injuring the third. The injured youth was taken to the Gauhati Medical College Hospital but he died on the way, police said. The deceased have been identified as Shabid Ali, Dipamoni Ali and Sazidul Islam and they hailed from Mari Muslim village in the district.

NSEL: ED attaches assets

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) Wednesday said it has attached fresh assets worth ₹116 crore of some alleged defaulters linked to the National Spot Exchange Limited (NSEL) as part of an ongoing money laundering investigation. A provisional order was issued on March 31 under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) to attach 15 immovable properties located in Mumbai, Delhi and some cities of Rajasthan, the federal probe agency said in a statement.

SNIPPETS

5 dead in MSRTC bus-SUV collision

Buldhana: Five persons were killed and 12 others injured after a bus collided with a sports utility vehicle (SUV) in eastern Maharashtra's Buldhana district in the early hours of Wednesday, police said. A bus of the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC) collided with a Bolero on Khamgaon-Shegaon highway between 4 am and 5 am. Soon thereafter, a private bus collided with the state-run bus, he said. "The SUV carrying five persons, including the driver, was going to Kolhapur when it rammed into the MSRTC bus that was coming to Paratwada (in Amravati district) from Pune," the official said. The driver of the SUV survived the accident while four other occupants died, he said.

IAF jet crashes; one pilot missing

Jamnagar: A Jaguar fighter jet of the Indian Air Force crashed at a village near Jamnagar IAF station in Gujarat Wednesday night while on a training mission with one of the pilots ejecting safely, police officials said. The second pilot was missing, they said. The fighter jet crashed in an open field at Suvarda village, nearly 12km from Jamnagar city and caught fire, said District SP Premshukh Delu. The cause of the crash was not immediately known. "While one pilot safely ejected before the crash, another one is still missing. The aircraft caught fire after the crash landing. Police and firefighters have rushed to the spot and started searching for the missing pilot," said Delu.

Assam panchayat polls to be held in 2 phases

Guwahati: Panchayat elections will be held in two phases May 2 and May 7 in Assam's 27 districts for the first time after the delimitation of constituencies, State Election Commissioner Alok Kumar said Wednesday. The scrutiny of nomination papers and the list of validly nominated candidates will be held April 12, while the last date of withdrawal of candidature is April 17 till 3 pm. The publication of the final list of contesting candidates is scheduled for the same day after 3 p.m. Polling will be held on both days from 7:30 am to 4:30 pm and repoll, if any, for the first phase will be held May 4 and for the second phase May 9, Kumar said.

Delhi govt tightens pollution control measures

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 2: Chief Minister Rekha Gupta announced in the Assembly Wednesday that the Delhi government will introduce a new policy for issuing Pollution Under Control (PUC) certificates to vehicles from other states, in a bid to tackle air pollution.

The move comes in response to the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report titled "Vehicular Air Pollution in Delhi," which flagged lapses in the national capital's pollution control mechanisms.



Gupta also announced a significant expansion of electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure in Delhi, stating that by 2026, the city will have 48,000

charging points—18,000 government-operated and 30,000 semi-private. A new Electric Vehicle Policy will also be introduced soon to push EV adop-



Devotees arrive to offer prayers at Haji Ali Dargah in Mumbai, Maharashtra

PTI PHOTO

The move comes in response to the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report titled "Vehicular Air Pollution in Delhi," which flagged lapses in the national capital's pollution control mechanisms

tion in the national capital. Additionally, six new air quality monitoring centres will be set up to improve pollution tracking and enforcement. The Chief Minister revealed plans to establish a new eco-park dedicated to processing electronic waste, aiming to curb air pollution caused by

improper disposal of e-waste. To strengthen the public transport system, Gupta said that 5,500 buses will be maintained by the end of this year, and 11,000 buses will be on the roads by 2026. The routes of public buses will also be re-evaluated to address loopholes in the system.

Furthermore, the Delhi government plans to file litigation to reclaim the shares of DIMTS (Delhi Integrated Multi-Modal Transit System) that were previously sold to a private player.

Commenting on the CAG report, Assembly Speaker Gupta stated, "The Public Accounts Committee should examine this report thoroughly and identify the persons who failed to perform their duties. As per the contents of the report, there seem to have been serious lapses on the part of the government."



I am shocked at the decision to hike prices of medicines as well as GST (rate) on medical insurance. It cannot be accepted. I call for immediate withdrawal of the price rise. Let good sense prevail

MAMATA BANERJEE | WB CM

CONTROL ROOM SET UP TO MONITOR TRUMP'S TARIFF CALL

The government has set up a control room to monitor the announcements by US President Donald Trump regarding the imposition of reciprocal tariffs against key trading partners including India at 1.30 am (India time), source said. Senior officials from ministries including commerce and industry will be present in the control room for close watch of the announcements, they said



of the day quote

TMC supremo (Mamata Banerjee) is leading this drive ever since her party's public meeting at Netaji Indoor Stadium, sensing defeat if free and fair polls are held in 2026 with genuine voters casting their votes

Transfer/Postings/Deputation of railway employees including postings in Railway Reservation Centres is done as per prevailing guidelines/norms considering administrative, operation requirements and available vacancies

We reiterate our demand that the Prime Minister take the people into confidence on this issue of critical national importance and explain why we are normalising relations with China and deepening our economic dependence on them even as our territorial integrity remains so gravely compromised

HC halts work on 400-acre land in Hyderabad till Apr 3

Meanwhile, the Union Environment Ministry wrote to the Telangana government, seeking a factual report on the state's "illegal clearing of vegetation on 400 acres of forest land" near the University of Hyderabad in the biodiversity-rich Kancha Gachibowli area

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hyderabad, April 2: Students of the University of Hyderabad (UoH) Wednesday continued protests against the state government's plans to develop the 400-acre land parcel bordering the varsity land, even as the Telangana High Court directed the Congress dispensation to halt all the works in this regard until April 3.

Meanwhile, the Union Environment Ministry wrote to the Telangana government, seeking a factual report on the state's "illegal clearing of vegetation on 400 acres of forest land" near the University of Hyderabad in the biodiversity-rich Kancha Gachibowli area. The ministry also directed the additional chief secretary (forests), Telangana, to take legal action under forest and wildlife laws as applicable.

"The ministry has come to know about the illegal felling and removal of vegetation in Kancha Gachibowli Village, Ranga Reddy district of Telangana by the Telangana State Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (TGIIIC).

"There have also been various news reports in the print and social media in this regard alleging damage to the wildlife found in the said land, its lakes and the unique rock formations in the area," the ministry said in a letter Wednesday.

A protest rally by students and University of Hyderabad Teachers Association (UHTA) was stopped by the police earlier in the day.

The UHTA led a rally from Ambedkar auditorium to East



Campus (the site of 400 acres of the disputed land) in solidarity with the agitating students. The procession was stopped by the police and some of the protesting students were "lathi-charged" by the police, UHTA said in a statement.

However, a police official denied the claims and said, "They were prevented from taking out the rally." The procession then moved towards the University main gate of the campus.

The University of Hyderabad Students' Union (UoHSU) and other unions and parties aligned with it have launched an indefinite protest and announced a boycott of classes from April 1, demanding withdrawal of police personnel from the campus and removal of earth-moving machinery from the land. The student groups and environmental activists have voiced opposition to the proposal to undertake development work at the site, citing ecological conservation concerns. The student groups protests intensified March 31 with

the government maintaining that the land parcel belonged to it and not the varsity. However, the UoH Registrar contradicted the government's claim that the boundary of the land in question was finalised.

The Telangana High Court Wednesday directed the state government to suspend all work on the 400-acre land parcel adjacent to the UoH, for a day. A bench comprising Acting Chief Justice Sujoy Paul and Justice Renuka Yara was hearing a batch of PILs seeking a directive from the court to stop the uprooting of trees and land clearing at the Kancha Gachibowli site.

Reacting to the HC's direction, UoHSU in a social media post described it as one step towards victory of the students to claim this land as theirs.

The petitioners also challenged the state government's decision to allot the land to the Telangana Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (TGIIIC), claiming it violated the Forest Conservation Act.

Man gets 2-year jail term for threat call to harm PM, Adityanath

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 2: A Mumbai court has sentenced a man to two years in jail for making a threat call to police and claiming underworld don Dawood Ibrahim was offering him money to kill PM Narendra Modi and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, noting showing sympathy to the accused was not justified.

In a verdict delivered on March 29 in the 2023 case, First Class Judicial Magistrate (Esplanade Court) Hemant Joshi dismissed the defence's argument that the accused, Kamran Khan, was mentally unstable.

The magistrate noted no evidence was produced by the accused to support his claim on mental health.

The court found Khan guilty of offences under sections 505(2) (statements creating or promoting enmity, hatred or ill-will between classes) and 506(2) (criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). Besides handing him two years imprisonment, the court has imposed a fine of ₹10,000 on him. As per the prosecution, the accused made a call to the Mumbai police's main control room in November 2023, wherein he threatened that he would blow up the state-run J J Hospital.

The accused further said "There is a threat to Modi's life, Dawood Ibrahim is giving ₹5 crore, he has asked (him) to eliminate Modi," the complainant in the case told the court.

The person also stated that men of Ibrahim, designated as a global terrorist, were offering ₹1 crore to him to blow up UP Chief Minister Adityanath with a bomb, the court was told. As per police, the accused made the call to the control room when he was at J J Hospital in central Mumbai and his medical check-up by doctors was getting delayed due to a long queue of patients.

Pak Army violates ceasefire along LoC

While the Indian Army made no mention of any casualty on the Pakistan side, the sources said five enemy soldiers were injured in the explosion and the subsequent firing between the two sides



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, April 2: Pakistani troops violated the ceasefire by resorting to unprovoked firing after a mine exploded along the Line of Control (LoC) in Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir, a defence spokesman said Wednesday.

He said the Indian army responded "effectively" to the ceasefire violation and continues to dominate the LoC where the situation is under control. Official sources said the violation took place at 1.10 pm Tuesday. While the Indian Army made no mention of any casualty on the Pakistan side, the sources said five enemy soldiers were injured in the explosion and the subsequent firing between the two sides. "On 01 Apr 2025, a mine blast occurred in Krishna Ghati Sector while the Pakistan Army was patrolling along the LoC. This was followed by unprovoked firing and ceasefire violation by Pakistan Army," Jammu-based defence PRO Lt Col Suneel Bartwal said.

"Own troops responded effectively. The Indian Army continues to dominate the LoC. The situation is under control," he said. The earlier statement had mentioned that "a mine

blast occurred in Krishna Ghati Sector due to Pakistan Army intrusion across LoC".

On February 21, India and Pakistan military held a flag meeting along the LoC in Poonch district in an effort to de-escalate tension after several incidents of cross-border firing and an IED attack. The brigade-commander level flag meeting, lasting 75 minutes, had taken place in the Chakkan-Da-Bagh crossing point area with both sides highlighting the need to maintain peace along the borders. The ceasefire violations along the borders of Jammu and Kashmir have been rare since the two countries renewed an agreement February 25, 2021.

However, several incidents were reported on the LoC in Poonch-Rajouri sector in February. Two Indian Army personnel, including a captain, were killed and another injured in an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) attack carried out by suspected terrorists in the Akhnoor sector of the Jammu region February 11. Two army personnel were also injured in separate incidents of small arms firing from across the LoC in Rajouri and Poonch districts, while two more army personnel were injured in separate landmine explosions in Poonch in February.

POST OF THE DAY

Propaganda Rahul Gandhi didn't speak on #WaqfAmendmentBill Truth He was with the Paan (SC) community, hearing their struggles. Gaurav Gogoi fought against the bill in Parliament. RG lifts people; BJP only spreads hate. Trolls will never understand the difference

@Politicx2029

SHORT TAKES

Police shoot crime kingpin dead

Cuddalore (Tamil Nadu): The kingpin of a gang that was targeting truck drivers here and robbing them was shot at by police, after he assaulted police personnel who attempted to arrest him here, and he succumbed to his injuries, police said Wednesday. Based on a tip-off, a special police team surrounded the head of the criminal gang, Vijay alias Mottai Vijay, belonging to Pudukcherry, who was hiding in a grove here and asked him to surrender. However, in order to escape, he assaulted two police personnel using a machete one after the other, despite warnings of a police inspector, who led the team.

Chilean Prez Gabriel Boric Font visits Taj

Agra: Chilean President Gabriel Boric Font visited the iconic Taj Mahal Wednesday. Font, who was accompanied by a delegation, spent around an hour exploring the monument. "During his visit, he was captivated by the Taj Mahal's intricate details and posed numerous questions about the structure," his guide Nitin Singh said.

HC grants bail to 10 PFI members

Kochi: The Kerala High Court Wednesday granted bail to 10 accused PFI members in the 2022 murder case of RSS leader Srinivasan in Palakkad district. A bench of Justices Raja Vijayaraghavan and P V Balakrishnan granted the relief to Shefeek, Jafar B, Nassar, Jamsheer H, Abdul Basith, Muhammed Shefeek K, Ashraf K, Jishad B, Ashraf Moulavi and Sirajudheen.

Gujarat warehouse blast: Govt forms SIT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Deesa/Ahmedabad, April 2: The Gujarat government has formed a Special Investigation Team to probe the warehouse explosion that killed 21 persons the previous day, while forensic examination found a small container of aluminium powder, one of the ingredients to make firecrackers, at the spot, officials said.

The SIT, headed by IAS officer Bhavin Pandya, will submit its report to the state government in 15 days after probing various aspects, stated a notification issued by the state home department Wednesday.

Pandya serves as a Secretary (Land Reforms) in the Revenue Department. Three other members of the SIT include Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Vishal Kumar Vaghela, Director of Fo-

rensic Science Laboratory, HP Sanghavi, and Chief Engineer of the Road and Building Department, JA Gandhi.

The notification stated that the SIT would probe various aspects such as the exact cause of the explosion, whether the warehouse owner had permission to manufacture firecrackers and provisions of labour laws, The Factories Act and The Explosives Act were followed.

Apart from aluminium powder, a team from the forensic science laboratory (FSL) also found yellow dextrin powder from the warehouse where firecrackers were stored, Banaskantha district Superintendent of Police Akshayraj Makwana told reporters earlier in the day.

Though the SP admitted that both substances are used for making firecrackers.



Leopards seen in their enclosure at Sarthana Nature Park in Surat, Gujarat

PTI PHOTO

'Even a criminal enjoys safeguards to protect dignity'

THE SUPREME COURT'S OBSERVATIONS CAME AFTER A MAN ALLEGED HE WAS HELD BY HARYANA POLICE IN VIOLATION OF THE LAW ON ARREST ASIDE FROM BEING SUBJECTED TO PHYSICAL ABUSE DURING HIS DETENTION AND INSIDE THE POLICE STATION

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 2: Observing even a criminal enjoyed certain protections, the Supreme Court has directed the director general of police (DGP) of all the states and UTs to strictly adhere to all safeguards available to persons in custody.

A bench comprising Justices Ahsanuddin Amanullah and Prashant Kumar Mishra called the police a very vital part of the state machinery, having a direct bearing on the safety and security of the society at large and individuals in particular. "The need, therefore, for maintaining the confidence of individuals and society-at-large in the police is paramount," it added.

The court referred to a checklist shown by the counsel for Haryana under Section 41(1)(b)



(ii) of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973. "Perusal of the same prima facie does not inspire confidence. Rather, it appears that only as a formality, the same has been submitted. We express our strong reservations with regard to filling-up of

the checklist in a mechanical manner," the bench's March 26 order said.

The top court's observations came after a man alleged he was held by Haryana Police in violation of the law on arrest aside from being subjected to physi-

cal abuse during his detention and inside the police station. In support of such argument, the petitioner's counsel referred to an e-mail sent by his brother at around 11.24 am on the same day to the superintendent of police concerned over his brother's alleged arrest.

The counsel alleged physical torture in the police station was only after the e-mail was sent to the higher officials "as a knee jerk reaction" and an FIR was lodged two hours later at around 1.30 pm. The top court observed there appeared to be "evident high-handedness" on the part of the police.

"Even if a person may be a 'criminal', the law requires that he be treated in accordance therewith. Even a 'criminal', under the law of our land, enjoys certain safeguards in order to ensure protection of his

person and dignity. In this case, the petitioner, when picked up by the police, was at best an accused," the court said. "It is possible to state that a common man can be expected to exceed his limits (whereafter appropriate action in law shall ensue), but not the police," the bench said. The apex court cautioned the police officers concerned to be careful in future.

"The director general is also directed to ensure that such type of occurrences do not recur and there should be zero-tolerance on behalf of the senior officer(s) with regard to any alleged transgression of authority by any subordinate officer(s)," it added. The court was "confident" that the DGP was "appropriately sensitised" and the "transgressions of the nature alleged" would not happen again.

Vote bank being created by intimidating minorities: Shah in LS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 2: Union Home Minister Amit Shah Wednesday asserted that vote bank is being created by intimidating minorities and confusion being spread in the country in the name of the Waqf Bill.

Making an intervention in Lok Sabha during a debate on the Waqf amendment Bill, he also said that non-Muslims in Waqf council and boards are meant purely for ensuring administration of properties in accordance with stated aims. In a hard-hitting speech, Shah said if there had not been an amendment in the Waqf Act in 2013, there would have been no need to bring this legislation. "Elections were due in 2014 and in 2013, the extreme Waqf law was made overnight for the purpose of appeasement. As a result, 123 properties in Delhi's Lutyens zone were handed over to the Waqf just 25 days before the elections," he said.

"The Narendra Modi government runs on a very clear principle that we will not bring any law for vote bank because law is for justice and welfare of people," he said, adding, "Everyone has the right to follow their religion, but conversion cannot be done for greed, temptation and fear."

He stressed that it has become a fashion to create fear among the people of the minority community.

"It is the resolve of the Modi government that no citizen of this country, irrespective of his religion, will be harmed," Shah said.

He said vote bank is being created by intimidating minorities and confusion is being spread in the country by creating an atmosphere of fear among the minorities.

There was no provision earlier to include any non-Muslim person among those who run religious institutions, nor is the NDA government going to do so, he said.



I believe we have reached the point where stronger sanctions are needed, because I believe the Russians are breaking the promises they made to America
VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY | PRESIDENT, UKRAINE

MUSK WILL LEAVE SOON: TRUMP
 US President Donald Trump has told members of his Cabinet and other close contacts that his billionaire ally Elon Musk will soon step back from his government role, Politico reported Wednesday, citing three people close to Trump. Trump has tasked the Tesla and SpaceX CEO to lead efforts to cut government funding and dismantle various US agencies as a special government employee



international

of the day quote

It has my deepest respect how the Greenlandic people and the Greenlandic politicians handle the great pressure that is on Greenland
METTE FREDERIKSEN | PRIME MINISTER, DANISH

It is a violation of international law, the interference in the internal affairs of one country in another. We are under constant attack, and the ministry is taking all necessary steps to defend our confidential information
RUBÉN RAMÍREZ LEZCANO | FOREIGN MINISTER, PARAGUAYAN

Luigi Mangione's murder of Brian Thompson — an innocent man and father of two young children — was a premeditated, cold-blooded assassination that shocked America
PAM BONDI | US ATTORNEY GENERAL

SHORT TAKES

Niger's junta frees dozens of ex-officials

Niamey (Niger): Niger's military junta has freed dozens of former government officials and military officers detained after a coup in 2023 as part of what military authorities have described as efforts to reform the country. The officials were released from prisons with immediate effect "in accordance with recommendations from the national reform conference," according to a statement read on state television late Tuesday, referring to a recent conference that also set out how the country may transition to democratic rule. Some of the officials had worked in the cabinet of the deposed administration of President Mohamed Bazoum.

PIO drug dealer jailed for 18 years

London: A 49-year-old Indian-origin drug dealer who masterminded the import and sale of cocaine and heroin worth more than 4 million pounds has been jailed for 18 years, after National Crime Agency (NCA) investigators identified him from secret phone messages. Heemal Vaid, of Cheam, used EncroChat — an encrypted phone service for criminals — to broker deals, not knowing that in 2020, an international law enforcement team would crack EncroChat's encryption. Thousands of unattributed messages exchanged by Vaid under the pseudonym "Starkcake" were passed to the NCA, which led Operation Venetic.

Nepal to compensate families of protest victims

Kathmandu: Nepal's government has decided to provide Rs 1 million each to the families of the two individuals killed in the violent pro-monarchy protest in Tinkune last week. During Friday's protest, a protester, identified as Sabin Maharjan, was killed in firing. In a separate event, photojournalist Suresh Rajak was killed during the demonstration while he was covering the event. The Ministry of Home Affairs has decided to provide Rs 1 million each to the families of both victims, a ministry source said. The ministry has already asked the Ministry of Finance to release the funds. Meanwhile, police have arrested 25 more people in connection with the arson, vandalism, anti-state crimes, and violence in the Tinkune area.

Israel to seize parts of Gaza

Jerusalem, April 2: Israel announced a major expansion of military operations in Gaza Wednesday, saying large areas of the enclave would be seized and added to its security zones, accompanied by large-scale evacuations of the population. In a statement, Defence Minister Israel Katz said evacuations would take place from areas where there was fighting, while urging Gazans to eliminate Hamas and return Israeli hostages as the only way to end the war. He said the operation would clear out militants and infrastructure "and seize large areas that will be added to the security zones of the State of Israel".

The Israeli military had already issued evacuation warnings to Gazans living in some southern districts and Palestinian radio reported that the area around Rafah was almost completely empty following the evacuation orders.

Gaza's Health Ministry said 53 people were killed in Israeli strikes Wednesday, with 19 people including children killed in a strike at a UN clinic being used to house displaced people.

Israel's military said it had struck a building previously used as a clinic that it said was serving as a Hamas command and control centre to plan attacks, and that the military had used surveillance to mitigate the risk to civilians. Hamas denied using the building and called the Israeli accusation it did so a "blatant fabrication".

BUFFER ZONE

Katz's statement did not make clear how much land Israel intended to seize or whether the move represented a permanent annexation of territory, which would add further pressure on a population already living in one of the most crowded areas in the world.

According to the Israeli rights group Gisha, Israel has already taken control of some 62 square kilometres or around 17% of the total area of Gaza, as part of a buffer zone around the edges of the enclave.

At the same time, Israeli leaders have said they plan to facilitate voluntary departure of Palestinians from the enclave, after US President Donald Trump called for it to be permanently evacuated and redeveloped as a coastal resort

Katz's remarks came after Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu repeated calls for Hamas to disarm and said the application of military pressure was the best way to get back the remaining 59 hostages.

WAR EXPANDS

Israel resumed airstrikes on Gaza last month and sent ground troops back in, after two months of relative calm following the conclusion of a US-backed truce to allow the exchange of hostages held by Hamas for Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails.

Hundreds of Palestinians have been killed since the resumption of the strikes and Israel has also cut off aid to the enclave, saying much of it was taken by Hamas. Efforts led by Qatari and Egyptian mediators to get talks aimed at ending the war back on track have so far failed to make progress and the military's return to Gaza has fuelled protests in Israel by families and supporters of some of the hostages.

Under US control. Katz's remarks came after Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu repeated calls for Hamas to disarm and said the application of military pressure was the best way to get back the remaining 59 hostages.



Gaza Health Ministry says 53 killed in Israeli strikes

OPERATION COULD EXPAND AREA SEIZED AS PART OF BUFFER ZONE

ISRAEL ENCOURAGED BY SIGNS OF PROTEST AGAINST HAMAS

Netanyahu heads to Hungary, defying ICC arrest warrant

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu begins a four-day visit to Hungary Thursday, defying an International Criminal Court arrest warrant over allegations of war crimes in Gaza as Israel has expanded its military operation in the enclave. As a founding member of the ICC, Hungary is theoretically obliged to arrest and hand over anyone subject to a warrant from the court but Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban made clear when he issued the invitation that Hungary would not respect the ruling. Netanyahu, who is battling a political storm at home over an investigation into suspected ties between Qatar and three of his aides, is due to meet Orban ahead of a press conference at around 1000 GMT.

Israel resumed airstrikes on Gaza last month and sent ground troops back in, after two months of relative calm following the conclusion of a US-backed truce to allow the exchange of hostages held by Hamas for Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails.

Hundreds of Palestinians have been killed since the resumption of the strikes and Israel has also cut off aid to the enclave, saying much of it was taken by Hamas. Efforts led by Qatari and Egyptian mediators to get talks aimed at ending the war back on track have so far failed to make progress and the military's return to Gaza has fuelled protests in Israel by families and supporters of some of the hostages.

Under US control. Katz's remarks came after Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu repeated calls for Hamas to disarm and said the application of military pressure was the best way to get back the remaining 59 hostages.

China concludes military drills around Taiwan

Beijing, April 2: China concluded its two-day high-intensity military drills around Taiwan Wednesday, saying that it completed all designated tasks of the joint exercises.

The Strait Thunder-2025A drills in the central and southern Taiwan Strait focussed on blockade enforcement of the estranged island. China claims Taiwan as part of its mainland. The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Eastern Theatre Command has successfully completed all designated tasks of the joint exercises carried out on Tuesday and Wednesday, a spokesperson for the theatre command, Senior Colonel Shi Yi, was quoted as saying by the state-run Xinhua news agency.

The drills tested the troops' integrated joint operation capabilities, Shi said, adding that the troops of the theatre command remain on high alert at all times and will continue to strengthen combat readiness with intensive training to resolutely thwart all separatist activities seeking "Taiwan independence."

The PLA said earlier that drills, which began Tuesday, were aimed at showing Beijing's anger against separatist statements by Taiwan President Lai Ching-te.

The drills serve as a "stern warning and forceful deterrence" against those seeking the island's independence. China has been angered by Lai's move to prevent China's infiltration and espionage activities in the self-ruled territory, categorising China as a "foreign hostile force" last month.

Turkey denounces Opposition calls for a day of no shopping

Several cabinet ministers and pro-government celebrities, including former Germany and Real Madrid soccer midfielder Mesut Ozil, used the hashtag #BoycotDegilMilliZarar ("Not a Boycott, but National Damage") to emphasize their stance

Ankara, April 2: Turkey's government denounced Opposition calls for a mass commercial boycott following the arrest of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu that sparked nationwide protests, describing them Wednesday as an economic "sabotage attempt". After the mayor was detained two weeks ago, the main Opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) had called for a boycott of goods and services from companies with perceived ties to President Tayyip Erdogan's government. That call widened Wednesday

to include a halt to all shopping for one day, prompting some shops to close in solidarity with those criticising the arrest as an anti-democratic attempt to hurt the Opposition's electoral prospects. Imamoglu is Erdogan's main political rival and the CHP's presidential candidate for any future election. Trade Minister Omer Bolat said boycott calls posed a threat to economic stability and accused those advocating them of seeking to undermine the government. They "are an attempt to sabotage the economy and include unfair trade and competition elements. We see this as a futile attempt by circles who consider themselves the masters of this country," Bolat said. Bolat gave an interview to state broadcaster TRT Wednesday, focusing solely on the boycott. "I have a call for our citizens. If you have any shopping plans for today, tomorrow, the day after, or in the coming days, we strongly encourage you to make your purchases and conduct your business today," he said, before appearing on other TV channels to repeat the same messages. Several cabinet ministers and pro-government celebrities, including former Germany and Real Madrid soccer midfielder Mesut Ozil, used the hashtag #BoycotDegilMilliZarar ("Not a Boycott, but National Damage") to emphasize their stance. The calls have been led by CHP chairman Ozgur Ozil, who has encouraged the street protests that have swollen to the largest in Turkey in more than a decade. Erdogan



A dead humpback whale lies on the shore at Foelle Strand in Loegten Bay, Denmark, Wednesday. PTI PHOTO

With US absent, China steps in for quake-hit Myanmar

Bangkok/Beijing, April 2: After a 7.7 magnitude earthquake shook Myanmar Friday, killing more than 2,800 people, international rescuers rushed into the devastated Southeast Asian country. The most ubiquitous among them have been Chinese relief workers, whose blue and orange uniforms appear across videos circulating on social media. The posts are often accompanied with expressions of gratitude toward Beijing, whose first responders - as well as their Indian and Russian colleagues - have pulled dazed survivors and bodies out from the rubble of hotels, schools, and monasteries. The reaction marks a change in the negative reception China often receives on Myanmar's social media because of its support for the unpopular military junta. America's chief geopolitical rival has so far pledged to deliver 100 million yuan (\$13.76 million) worth of supplies. The first batch of aid, including tents, blankets and first aid kits arrived in Yangon Monday, Beijing has said. The United States, which was until recently the world's top humanitarian donor, has offered a relatively modest \$2

million. Washington also said it would send a three-member assessment team, though their arrival has been delayed by problems obtaining visas from the military regime. In past years, when tsunamis, earthquakes and other disasters struck around the world, the US had regularly and rapidly deployed skilled rescue workers to save lives. The American absence shows how President Donald Trump's moves to slash the size of the US government has hobbled its ability to act during disasters, three current and former US officials told Reuters. With Trump's blessing, billionaire Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency has enacted huge funding cuts and contractor terminations across the federal bureaucracy in the name of targeting wasteful spending.

China's relief efforts improve its image in Myanmar, which had suffered from backing the military junta

Beijing quickly sent first responders and pledged \$13.76 million in aid, surpassing US contribution

US assistance hindered by Trump's government cuts



Pak Prez Zardari tests positive for Covid-19, placed in isolation

Karachi, April 2: Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari has tested positive for coronavirus and is currently in isolation, his physician said Wednesday. Zardari, 69, was flown from Nawabshah to Karachi and admitted to a private hospital Tuesday, following complaints of respiratory issues and fever. Dr Asim Hussain, the President's physician, told the media that Zardari has contracted coronavirus. "This was confirmed after multiple tests, and he has now been placed in isolation and his health is being monitored round the clock," he said. "A team of experts is taking care of the president and his condition is improving," Hussain added.

we strongly encourage you to make your purchases and conduct your business today," he said, before appearing on other TV channels to repeat the same messages. Several cabinet ministers and pro-government celebrities, including former Germany and Real Madrid soccer midfielder Mesut Ozil, used the hashtag #BoycotDegilMilliZarar ("Not a Boycott, but National Damage") to emphasize their stance. The calls have been led by CHP chairman Ozgur Ozil, who has encouraged the street protests that have swollen to the largest in Turkey in more than a decade. Erdogan

has called the protests "evil" and said they would not last. In Istanbul and Ankara, empty tables lined usually busy cafes, and several shops reported a significant drop in customers. Hayrettin, a shopowner in central Istanbul who didn't want to give his surname, defended the boycott, saying it was necessary to send a message to the government. "The boycott is the right decision. It should have happened sooner. It's something we need to do, people need to show their reaction. If they (the government) continue this way, the country is getting worse," he said, adding that his neighbouring shops heeded the call. Turkey's economy has been hit by a years-long cost of living crisis and series of currency crashes, with growth having slowed and inflation still lofty at 39% in February.

Empty tables in cafes in Ankara and Istanbul

Economy struggling with high inflation and currency crashes

Trade Minister Bolat warns boycott threatens economic stability

Opposition boycott call expands to halt shopping for one day

we strongly encourage you to make your purchases and conduct your business today," he said, before appearing on other TV channels to repeat the same messages. Several cabinet ministers and pro-government celebrities, including former Germany and Real Madrid soccer midfielder Mesut Ozil, used the hashtag #BoycotDegilMilliZarar ("Not a Boycott, but National Damage") to emphasize their stance. The calls have been led by CHP chairman Ozgur Ozil, who has encouraged the street protests that have swollen to the largest in Turkey in more than a decade. Erdogan

has called the protests "evil" and said they would not last. In Istanbul and Ankara, empty tables lined usually busy cafes, and several shops reported a significant drop in customers. Hayrettin, a shopowner in central Istanbul who didn't want to give his surname, defended the boycott, saying it was necessary to send a message to the government. "The boycott is the right decision. It should have happened sooner. It's something we need to do, people need to show their reaction. If they (the government) continue this way, the country is getting worse," he said, adding that his neighbouring shops heeded the call. Turkey's economy has been hit by a years-long cost of living crisis and series of currency crashes, with growth having slowed and inflation still lofty at 39% in February.

we strongly encourage you to make your purchases and conduct your business today," he said, before appearing on other TV channels to repeat the same messages. Several cabinet ministers and pro-government celebrities, including former Germany and Real Madrid soccer midfielder Mesut Ozil, used the hashtag #BoycotDegilMilliZarar ("Not a Boycott, but National Damage") to emphasize their stance. The calls have been led by CHP chairman Ozgur Ozil, who has encouraged the street protests that have swollen to the largest in Turkey in more than a decade. Erdogan

There is immense wealth below the earth. India has the best geology in the world, but 60 per cent of our imports are on account of natural resources like oil and gas, gold, copper, diamonds among others

ANIL AGARWAL | CHAIRMAN, VEDANTA GROUP

POONAM GUPTA NEW RBI DY GUV

The government has approved the appointment of NCAER Director General Poonam Gupta as Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India for a period of three years, according to sources. The post of the Deputy Governor of RBI fell vacant after M D Patra demitted office in January



of the day quote

The imposition of higher tariffs by the US may change the global trade flows, increasing the chances of India becoming more vulnerable to steel imports

AMARENDU PRAKASH | CHAIRMAN, SAIL

Businesses must build trust in AI systems by addressing concerns about errors, bias, and data quality through strong governance

MOUMITA SARKER | PARTNER, DELOITTE INDIA

By partnering with Reliance, a market leader with unparalleled expertise and reach in India, we have a unique opportunity to elevate the local esports scene to new heights

ROBBIE DOVEK | CEO, BLAST

US tariffs to hurt multiple sectors

According to experts, Indian exporters may get some relief if the US will impose similar tariffs on competitor countries



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

BILATERAL TRADE DATA: From 2021-22 to 2023-24, the US was the largest trading partner of India. The US accounts for about 18% of India's total goods exports, 6.22% in imports, and 10.73 per cent in bilateral trade. With America, India has a trade surplus, of \$35.32 billion in goods in 2023-24. It was \$27.7 billion in 2022-23, \$32.85 billion in 2021-22, \$22.73 billion in 2020-21 and \$17.26 billion in 2019-20.

New Delhi, April 2: Goods from sectors, including agriculture, precious stones, chemicals, pharma, medical devices, electricals, and machinery may get impacted if the US will go ahead with imposing reciprocal tariffs on Indian products, according to experts.

They said that these sectors could face additional customs duties from the Trump administration because of the high tariff differential or gap, which is the difference between the import duties imposed by the US and India on a product.

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.

"The higher the tariff gap, the worse affected a sector could be," an exporter said.

US President Donald Trump has said that the tariff an-

nouncements, scheduled for early morning Wednesday (India time), will amount to a 'Liberation Day' for the US.

According to an analysis of the think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI), the hardest-hit sector in agriculture would be fish, meat, and processed seafood, with \$2.58 billion in exports in 2024, facing a 27.83 per cent tariff differential.

Shrimp, a major export to America, will become significantly less competitive due to the imposition of the US tariffs.

"Already our exports have antidumping and countervailing duties in the US. The additional hike in tariffs will make us uncompetitive. Out of India's total shrimp exports, we ship 40 per cent to America," Kolkata-based seafood exporter and MD of Megaa Moda Yogesh Gupta said.

India's processed food, sugar, and cocoa exports may also face

heat as the tariff gap is 24.99 per cent. Its exports stood at \$1.03 billion last year.

Similarly, cereals, vegetables, fruits, and spices (\$1.91 billion shipments) have a tariff differential of 5.72 per cent between.

Dairy products, with exports worth \$181.49 million, could be "severely" affected by a 38.23 per cent differential, "making ghee, butter, and milk powder costlier and reducing their market share in the US," GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said.

The other products which can be affected include edible oils (\$199.75 million exports and 10.67 duty gap); alcohol, wines, and spirits (\$19.2 million exports and 122.10 per cent tariff differential); live animals and animal products (\$10.3 million exports and 27.75 per cent gap).

Srivastava said that tobacco and cigarettes, whose exports are valued at \$94.62 million in 2024, may remain unaffected, as the US already imposes 201.15 per cent tariffs, creating a negative tariff differential (-168.15 per cent).

In the industrial goods segment, sectors could be impacted by American duties, including pharmaceuticals, jewellery, and electronics.

The pharmaceutical sector, India's largest industrial export, worth \$12.72 billion in 2024, faces a 10.90 per cent tariff differential, increasing costs for generic medicines and specialty drugs.

Diamonds, gold, and silver, with \$11.88 billion in exports, may see a 13.32 per cent tariff hike, raising jewellery prices and reducing competitiveness.

Similarly, electrical, telecom, and electronics exports worth \$14.39 billion face a 7.24 per cent tariff.

Be adaptive to changes in external world: Sultania

Established in 1947, Infinity Ventures is a Jharsuguda-based company that started its operations in FMCG sector but later entered automobile sector in 2015. It is a premium Hyundai car dealership that takes pride in its customer-centric approach and top-of-the-line servicing. The man behind this successful venture is **Pawan Kumar Sultania, Managing Director**, who is also the Odisha Chairman for Federation of Trade & Industry. In an exclusive interaction with **Orissa POST**, Sultania shares his entrepreneurial experience. Excerpts...



were selected. We officially started our operations in the automobile industry in 2015.

■ The car market in India is on a roll. Are you also witnessing the surge in sales in Odisha market?
■ Car industry in Odisha is in moderate growth but there has been a shift in customer demand from hatchback to SUVs. People are increasingly adopting SUV and buying preferences have changed, especially after Covid-19. People are now choosing electric vehicles, cars with ADAS safety feature, infotainment options and more selection of vibrant colours.

■ Being a prominent dealer in state, what are the leading challenges that you think the industry is facing?
■ The automobile industry is in dire need of skilled manpower as number of dealerships has grown quite evidently in the last couple of years. More manpower needs to be infused and trained.

■ What role do you believe electric vehicles play in sustainable mobility?
■ The electric vehicle adaptation is still in its nascent stage. Challenges such as charging infrastructure and

range anxiety persist, but it is definitely a very good alternative to fossil fuels. Now, the products have long range, which can run up to 473 kms on a single charge. Also, the manufacturers are giving good warranty of 8 years or 1.6 lakh kms (whichever is earlier). This poses a good confidence in buyers' decision.

■ How important is customer satisfaction in this line of business?
■ Customer satisfaction is top priority in our line of business. If our customers are satisfied, we get good referrals for both sales and services. It also helps us to retain customers within our same brand.

■ As a successful entrepreneur, do you have any advice for the new entrants?
■ Firstly, the coming generation needs to have customer centricity at the core of their organisations' heart. Secondly, employees play the most important role in customer satisfaction; so hire skilled employees, provide good training and keep them happy. Also be adaptive to changes in external world and update your team continuously as per the changing customer expectations and environment.

SECOND TIME IN 2025 Maruti Suzuki to hike prices by up to ₹62K

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 2: The country's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki India Wednesday said it will increase prices of various models by Rs 2,500-62,000, from April 8.

The company has planned to increase car prices due to rising input costs, operational expenses, regulatory changes and feature additions, the auto major said in a regulatory filing.

While the company is committed to optimising costs and reducing the impact on its customers, it is constrained to pass on some of the increased expenses to the market, it added.

The company said it will hike price of compact SUV Fronx by Rs 2,500, Dzire Tour S by Rs 3,000, and that of multipurpose vehicles XL6 and Ertiga by Rs 12,500.

The company also plans to increase the price of compact model Wagon R by Rs 14,000 and Ecco van by Rs 22,500.

Besides, the price of SUV Grand Vitara will go up by Rs 62,000 from April 8, the company said.

Maruti Suzuki sells models ranging from the entry-level Alto K-10 to multiple purpose vehicle Invicto in the domestic market.

In January, the company had announced increasing prices by up to Rs 32,500 across various models from February 1.



Equities rebound ahead of US tariff announcements

SENSEX RISES 593 PTS, NIFTY ENDS ABOVE 23,300

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 2: Stock markets rebounded Wednesday with benchmark Sensex closing higher by nearly 593 points on strong macro data and value buying in banking and auto shares after recent free fall, even as investors awaited US tariff announcements that are expected later in the day.

The 30-share BSE Sensex rebounded 592.93 points or 0.78 per cent to settle at 76,617.44. During the day, it surged 655.84 points or 0.86 per cent to 76,680.35.

The NSE Nifty climbed 166.65 points or 0.72 per cent to 23,332.35.

Value buying in select auto, banking and IT shares, and India's manufacturing sector growth rising to an eight-month high in March powered the recovery in the domestic stock markets. Sensex had tanked 1,390 points or 1.80 per cent and Nifty plunged by 353 points Tuesday due to FII selling ahead of US tariff announcements Wednesday.

From the Sensex pack, Zomato jumped nearly 5 per cent, followed by Titan which climbed almost 4 per cent.

IndusInd Bank, Maruti, Tech Mahindra, Adani Ports, Bharti Airtel and HDFC Bank were also among the gainers.

However, Nestle, Power Grid, UltraTech Cement, Bajaj Finserv and Larsen & Toubro were among the laggards.

"This optimism was largely driven by expectations that the tariffs would have a minimal impact on the domestic economy, given the positive progress in India-US trade negotiations. Sentiments were further reinforced by India's manufacturing



Stock	Change (%)
ZOMATO	+4.92%
TITAN	+3.77%
INDUSIND BANK	+2.88%
TECH MAHINDRA	+2.11%
MARUTI	+2.09%
ULTRATECH CEMENT	-1.05%
NESTLE INDIA	-0.95%
POWER GRID	-0.88%
BAJAJ FINSERV	-0.46%
LT	-0.41%

Equity investors became richer by ₹ 3.54 lakh crore Wednesday as markets staged a strong comeback after facing drubbing in the previous trading session

■ Trump's decision on reciprocal taxes introduces a new wave of uncertainty in global trade dynamics. For India, this could mean short-term volatility in equity markets, especially in export-driven sectors like Automobile, Pharma and IT

AMIT JAIN | CO-FOUNDER, ASHIKA GLOBAL FAMILY OFFICE SERVICES

PMI for March, which reached an eight-month high, hinting at a recovery in Q4FY25 corporate earnings," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

The BSE midcap gauge jumped 1.38 per cent and small-cap index climbed 0.99 per cent. All BSE sectoral indices ended higher. Realty index surged the most by 3.62 per cent, followed by consumer durables (2.62 per cent), consumer discretionary

Factory growth hits 8-month high

In Feb, India's manufacturing PMI fell to a 14-month low amid softer increase in new orders and production

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 2: India's manufacturing sector growth rose to an eight-month high in March, driven by quicker increases in factory orders and production amid buoyant demand conditions, a monthly survey said Wednesday.

The seasonally adjusted HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) was at 58.1 in March, up from 56.3 in February, indicating a substantial improvement in the health of the sector that was above its long-run average.

In PMI parlance, a print above 50 means expansion, while a score below 50 denotes contraction.

Manufacturing sector growth in India recovered the ground lost in February, largely driven by a stronger contribution from its largest sub-component: the New Orders Index.

"March saw total sales expand to the greatest extent since July 2024, with companies remarking on positive customer interest, favourable demand conditions and successful marketing initiatives," the survey noted.

Accordingly, firms scaled up production volumes at the end of the 2024/25 fiscal year. The rate of expansion was sharp, above its historical average and the strongest in eight months.

Although new export orders continued to increase strongly

in March, the pace of growth retreated to a three-month low. Panelists cited gains from Asia, Europe and the Middle East in terms of international sales.

"Although international orders slightly slowed, overall demand momentum remained robust, and the new orders in dex recorded an eight-month high of 61.5. Strong demand prompted firms to tap into their inventories, causing the fastest drop in finished goods stocks in over three years," said Pranjul Bhandari, Chief India Economist at HSBC, said.

Buoyant demand led companies to tap into their inventories to meet increased client appetite, resulting in the most rapid decline in finished goods stocks since January 2022.

The survey participants under-pinned upbeat forecasts for output levels in the coming 12 months on favourable demand conditions, better customer relations and projects pending approval.

"Going ahead, business expectations remained fairly optimistic, with around 30 per cent of survey participants foreseeing greater output volumes in the year ahead, compared to less than 2 per cent that anticipate a contraction," Bhandari said.

The HSBC India Manufacturing PMI is compiled by S&P Global from responses to questionnaires sent to purchasing managers in a panel of around 400 manufacturers.



SHORT TAKES
Jaiswal's shock switch

Mumbai: India opener Yashasvi Jaiswal has decided to make a shock switch to Goa from Mumbai due to personal reasons, leaving a domestic powerhouse that laid the foundation for the left-hander's blossoming international career. Jaiswal wrote to the Mumbai Cricket Association Tuesday, expressing his wish to leave Mumbai for Goa, and the governing body has accepted his request. Jaiswal's shock move will see the left-handed 23-year-old play for Goa from the 2025-26 season. "Yes, it is surprising. He must have thought of something to make such a move. He has requested us to relieve him and we have accepted his request," an MCA official told PTI Wednesday. Jaiswal last played for Mumbai against Jammu and Kashmir in their Ranji Trophy Group A league round match from January 23-25 following the strict implementation of the BCCI directives that all India players should play domestic cricket if not on national duty.

Samson to lead Royals

Bangalore: Sanju Samson is set to return as Rajasthan Royals captain after receiving clearance from the National Cricket Academy to keep wickets in the Indian Premier League. Samson had undergone surgery on his right index finger after being hit by former RR teammate and England pacer Jofra Archer during India's T20 series against England in February. He had played in the first three games for Rajasthan Royals only as a specialist batter with Riyan Parag leading the side.

Kiwis hammer Pakistan

Hamilton: Ben Sears took 5-59 as New Zealand bowled out Pakistan for 208 to win the second one-day cricket international by 84 runs Wednesday, taking an unassailable 2-0 lead in three-match series. Faheem Ashraf top-scored for Pakistan with 73 and put on 60 for the ninth wicket with Naseem Shah, who made 51. Both posted their maiden ODI half centuries as Pakistan was dismissed in 41.2 overs. Will O'Rourke softened up the Pakistan batters with an outstanding opening spell of 1-8 from six overs on a lively pitch at Seddon Park.

Coach fired over abuse

New York: The US Olympic and Paralympic Committee has fired a coach and a director after The Associated Press reported that the coach was accused of sexually abusing a young biathlete, causing her so much distress that she attempted suicide. "Following our thorough internal evaluation, we can confirm that Gary Colliander and Eileen Carey are no longer affiliated with the USOPC," spokesman Jon Mason told the AP. He refused to provide a reason, saying only that Colliander was put on

Fiery Siraj, Buttler sink RCB

Gujarat Titans defeat Royal Challengers Bengaluru by eight wickets at home



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, April 2: Jos Buttler made a fifty marked by creativity and sustained aggression to support the impeccable spell of Mohammed Siraj as Gujarat Titans carved a smooth eight-wicket win over Royal Challengers Bengaluru in their IPL match here Wednesday. Buttler (73 not out, 39b, 5x4, 6x6) and B Sai Sudharsan (49, 36b) added 75 runs off 45 balls for the second wicket, as the Titans ended up at 170 for two in 17.5 overs, while chasing RCB's 169 for eight. However, the Gujarat side's



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

chase did not start as they would have liked, losing skipper Shubman Gill for a laboured 14. The Titans' skipper clobbered Bhuvneshwar Kumar for a six but fell in the very next ball to the pacer, lobbing him to Liam Livingstone in the deep. But it brought together Sudharsan and Buttler, who extracted runs off the RCB bowlers in contrasting style. Sudharsan's innings was an antithesis to the modern T20 ethos, as it was all about elegantly timed shots such as a wristy flick for a boundary off Yash Dayal or a square cut for

four off the same bowler. There was a touch of impishness too to the innings when he moved across and scooped pacer Josh Hazlewood for a six over the stumper's head. However, a second attempt to play a similar shot off the Australian ended his stay, giving a simple catch to Jitesh Sharma. But Sudharsan's dismissal, which came in the immediate aftermath of RCB taking the second ball in the 13th over, was a minor jitter in Gujarat's chase, which was marshalled so effectively by Buttler. The Englishman was slightly jittery to begin with but once he

found the right gears, he was unstoppable, fetching those thunderous shots off the shelf regularly. Buttler and Impact Sub Sherfane Rutherford (30 not out, 18b) added 63 runs for the third wicket as Gujarat strolled home. Earlier, Siraj led a group of fired-up GT bowlers as they limited the vaunted RCB batting unit to 169 for eight despite a providential 54 by Livingstone. Once the Titans decided to bowl first, they would not have envisioned such a domination over a potent batting line-up even considering a rather unexpectedly slow and grippy pitch. The slip-down started with the wicket of Virat Kohli (7), who began with a lovely cover driven four off Siraj (4-0-19-3). Thereafter the RCB top-order was poleaxed by GT bowlers led by Siraj, who joined the side after a seven-season stint in the red and gold jersey ahead of IPL 2025.

SCORECARD

Royal Challengers Bengaluru: Philip Salt b Siraj 14, Virat Kohli c Prasad b Arshad Khan 7, Devdutt Padikkal b Siraj 4, Rajat Patidar lbw b Ishant 12, Liam Livingstone c Jos Buttler b Siraj 54, Jitesh Sharma c Rahul Tewatia b Sai Kishore 33, Krunal Pandya c and b Sai Kishore 5, Tim David b Prasad 32, Bhuvneshwar Kumar not out 1. **Extras:** (LB-4,W-3) 7; **Total:** 169; **Fall of wickets:** 1-8, 2-13, 3-35, 4-42, 5-94, 6-104, 7-150, 8-169. **Bowling:** Mohammed Siraj 4-0-19-3, Arshad Khan 2-0-17-1, Prasad Krishna 4-0-26-1, Ishant Sharma 2-0-27-1, Ravishrinivasan Sai Kishore 4-0-22-2, Rashid Khan 4-0-54-0.

Gujarat Titans: Sai Sudharsan c Jitesh Sharma b Hazlewood 49, Shubman Gill c Livingstone b Bhuvneshwar 14, Jos Buttler not out 73, Sherfane Rutherford not out 30. **Extras:** (lb-3, w-1) 4; **Total:** 170/2 in 17.5 overs; **Fall of wickets:** 32-1, 107-2. **Bowling:** Bhuvneshwar Kumar 4-0-23-1, Josh Hazlewood 3-5-0-43-1, Yash Dayal 3-0-20-0, Rasikh Dar Salam 3-0-35-0, Krunal Pandya 3-0-34-0, Liam Livingstone 1-0-12-0.

Highest-scoring triple-double: Jokic achieves NBA milestone

Denver (US), April 2: Nikola Jokic delivered a career-best performance with 61 points, 10 rebounds, and 10 assists, marking the highest-scoring triple-double in NBA history. But it wasn't enough to save the Denver Nuggets from a 140-139 overtime defeat to the Minnesota Timberwolves at Ball Arena. The three-time MVP surpassed the previous record held by his Nuggets teammate Russell Westbrook, who notched a 57-point triple-double for Oklahoma City Thunder in 2017. With the Nuggets leading 139-138 in the final seconds of overtime, Westbrook had a chance to seal the game but missed a lay-up with 10 seconds remaining. In a cruel twist of fate, he then fouled Nickeil Alexander-Walker on a last-gasp three-point attempt with just 0.1 seconds left on the clock. Alexander-Walker coolly sank two of his three free throws, completing a dramatic comeback for the Timberwolves. Elsewhere, another generational talent stole the spotlight. Two-time MVP Stephen Curry



turned back the clock with a masterclass in three-point shooting, draining 12 triples on his way to a sensational 52-point performance in the Golden State Warriors' 134-125 victory over the Memphis Grizzlies at FedEx Forum. Already the league's all-time leader in made 3-pointers, Curry joined the top 25 scorers in NBA history. Reggie Miller, whom Curry passed in all-time 3s made in 2021, is next up on the all-time scoring list at No 24. Alex English, Vince Carter, Kevin Garnett and Russell Westbrook round out the 20-through-25 group.

WORLD BOXING CUP

Jadumani punches his way to semis

New Delhi, April 2: Indian boxer Jadumani Singh Mandengbam punched his way into the 50kg semifinals but three others made opening round exits from the World Boxing Cup in Foz do Iguacu, Brazil. The 20-year-old reigning national champion edged past last year's World Boxing Cup silver medallist Ellis Trowbridge of Great Britain with a hard-fought 3-2 split decision win in the 50kg quarterfinals late Tuesday night. He will now face former Asian U-22 champion Asilbek Jililov of Uzbekistan in the semifinals. Meanwhile, Uzbek Games medallist Narender Berwal (+90kg), Nikhil Dubey (75kg), and Jugnoo (85kg) bowed out of the tournament after quarterfinal defeats. India's campaign continues Wednesday with Manish Rathore (55kg) set to face Paris Olympian Yusuf Chothia of Australia, Hitesh (70kg) taking on Italy's Gabriele Guidi Rontani, and Abhinash Jamwal (65kg) up against Germany's Denis Bril.

Hockey India trims core group of women players



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, April 2: Hockey India Wednesday trimmed the senior women's core group for the ongoing national camp to 40 from 65 after evaluating the performances of the players over the past two weeks. The camp began at the Sports Authority of India centre at Bangalore March 23. While 28 senior players have retained their spots, 12 new players have been selected in recognition of their impressive performances in the 15th Senior Women's National Championship and their efforts in the first phase of the national camp. The goalkeeping department has four familiar names in Savita, Bichu Devi Kharibam, Bansari Solanki, and Madhuri Kindo. They are joined by Samiksha Saxena from Assam, who has been rewarded for her strong performance in the national championships. In defence, eight players from the existing core group - Mahima Chaudhary, Nikki Pradhan, Sushila Chanu Pukhrabam, Udita, Ishika Chaudhary, Jyoti Chhattri, Jyoti, Akshata Abaso Dhekale, Anjna Dunggung, Suman Devi Thoudam. Besides, Anjna Dunggung from Bengal and Suman Devi Thoudam from Manipur have also been included in the group. The midfield continues to feature experienced names like Vaishnavi Vitthal Phalke, Neha, Salima Tete, Manisha Chauhan, Ajmla Kujur, Sunelita Toppo, Lalremsiami, Sharmila Devi, Baljeet Kaur, Mahima Tete, Alberta Rani Toppo, Pooja Yadav. **FORWARDS:** Dipimonia Toppo, Hritika Singh, Deepika Soreng, Navneet Kaur, Sangita Kumari, Beauty Dunggung, Mumtaz Khan, Annu, Chandana Jagadish, Kajal Sadashiv Atpadkar.

New 40-member senior core group

GOALKEEPERS: Savita, Bichu Devi Kharibam, Bansari Solanki, Madhuri Kindo, Samiksha Saxena. **DEFENDERS:** Mahima Chaudhary, Nikki Pradhan, Sushila Chanu Pukhrabam, Udita, Ishika Chaudhary, Jyoti Chhattri, Jyoti, Akshata Abaso Dhekale, Anjna Dunggung, Suman Devi Thoudam. **MIDFIELDERS:** Sujata Kujur, Vaishnavi Vitthal Phalke, Neha, Salima Tete, Manisha Chauhan, Ajmla Kujur, Sunelita Toppo, Lalremsiami, Sharmila Devi, Baljeet Kaur, Mahima Tete, Alberta Rani Toppo, Pooja Yadav. **FORWARDS:** Dipimonia Toppo, Hritika Singh, Deepika Soreng, Navneet Kaur, Sangita Kumari, Beauty Dunggung, Mumtaz Khan, Annu, Chandana Jagadish, Kajal Sadashiv Atpadkar.

I am really excited to see how these young girls are going to perform now in the camp and take one big step for their future

HARENDRA SINGH | CHIEF COACH, WOMEN'S HOCKEY TEAM

PSG survive scare to reach French Cup final

Luis Enrique's PSG side will be confirmed as Ligue 1 champions Saturday if they avoid defeat at home to Angers

Paris, April 2: Holders Paris Saint-Germain survived a major scare by coming from two goals down to beat second-tier outsiders Dunkerque 4-2 in the semi-finals of the French Cup Tuesday, sealing their place in next month's final. Ousmane Dembele scored twice on the night for PSG to take his tally for the season to 32 goals in all competitions, while captain Marquinhos and Desire Doue also found the net for the capital side in a game played in Lille. In the final at the Stade de France May 24, PSG will face the winners of Wednesday's second last-four tie between Reims and fourth-division Cannes. Dunkerque, who are fifth in Ligue 2 and were playing in their first French Cup semi-final in 96 years, had been dreaming of pulling off one of the com-



petition's all-time great shocks as they found themselves 2-0 up against PSG after 27 minutes. Having already eliminated three top-flight teams on their run to the last four, Dunkerque went ahead in the seventh minute when a free-kick from the left was headed on by Alec Georgen for Vincent Sasso to score via the underside of the crossbar. They doubled their advantage before the half-hour mark as PSG were undone by a routine approach. Gaetan Courtet heading on a long kick by the

goalkeeper for Saudi Arabian winger Muhannad Al-Saad to run through and finish. The Dunkerque fans, who had made the trip to Lille from the North Sea port city to watch the game because the club's own stadium was not deemed suitable for the occasion, could probably not believe what they were witnessing. However, PSG launched their comeback bid as Achraf Hakimi cut the ball back for Dembele to lash in on the stroke of half-time.

2011 WC winning squad relive memories

The unforgettable triumph is wretched in hearts of all Indians as it was Men in Blue's second ODI trophy which came after long wait of 28 years

New Delhi, April 2: April 2, 2011 saw one of the greatest chapters of Indian cricket being written as the nation lifted the ODI World Cup for the second time, 28 years after the first, at the Wankhede Stadium. 14 years later, on the anniversary of the famous win, the players of that 2011 WC winning squad still look back on that night in Mumbai fondly and took to social media to celebrate the occasion. "ON THIS DAY in 2011, In-

dia scripted history by winning the ICC Cricket World Cup! I still get goosebumps thinking about that iconic moment when @msdhoni hit that six! But it wasn't just about one person, it was a team effort! Huge appreciation for the entire team's hard work, dedication & perseverance! @GautamGambhir's 97, @sachin_rt's valuable contributions throughout. @YUVSTRONG12 all-round brilliance, @harbhajan_singh's crucial wickets, @ImZaheer exceptional bowling & the en-



tire support staff! @BCCI We all made India proud! #IndiaWinsWorldCup #2011WorldCup #Cricket #TeamIndia." read the post by Suresh Raina on X. "14 years ago #OnThisDay in 2011, we won the 50 over world cup after 28 years. 42 years now and 2 World Cups. Shows how difficult it is and what a significant day it was for all of us to make the dream come true. A day I can never forget. Hoping we win the next

one in 2 years," read the post by Virender Sehwag. Sri Lanka, who were chasing their second World Cup title, made the most of their opportunity while batting first and gave India a stiff target of 275. Player of the Tournament, Yuvraj Singh, also took to social media and claimed the famous victory to ensure the legend gets the farewell he deserves. "April 2, 2011 — the night we did it for a billion people... and for one man who carried Indian cricket on his shoulders for over two decades. 14 years later, the memory of India's win still gives me goosebumps. A night we'll never forget. @BCCI #throwback #WC2011," read the post by Yuvraj on X.