



Rakul on false perfection

Actor Rakul Preet Singh slams unrealistic beauty standards, emphasising the importance of authenticity over a curated image

LEISURE | P2



Israel seizes Rafah

Gazans seek shelter in one of the biggest mass displacements of the war, as Israeli forces advance into the ruins of Rafah

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Gold scales fresh peak

Gold prices climb ₹200 to hit a fresh peak of ₹94,350 per 10 grams amid persistent buying by jewellers and stockists

BUSINESS | P11



El clasico final

Barcelona defeat Atletico 1-0 to reach its first Copa final in four seasons, setting up a 'clasico' against Real Madrid

SPORTS | P12



BOOST TO INDUSTRIALISATION: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi inaugurates a project and lays stones for 13 others in Khurda, Thursday. Industries Minister Sampad Chandra Swain and Khurda MLA Prasanta Kumar Jagadev are seen

CM lays stones for 13 industrial projects in Khurda

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 3: In a boost to state's industrialisation drive, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi laid foundation stones for 13 projects and inaugurated a beverage unit with a cumulative investment of Rs 5,770 crore in Khurda, Thursday. According to official sources,

these projects are expected to generate over 37,000 employment opportunities, underscoring the state government's commitment to converting investment intentions into actionable projects and its unwavering focus on ease and speed of doing business. The CM inaugurated a unit of Varun Beverages Limited, set up with an investment of Rs 624 crore, at Malipada in Khurda. Majhi laid the foundation stones for 13 industrial projects, all located in Khurda district. The projects included those from Jupiter Tatravagonka Railwheel Factory Private Limited, Polimiroir India Private Limited, Shalimar Glass Works Private Limited and IFGL Refractories Limited.

"These projects are more than industrial units—they are growth engines for our state, employment generators for our youth, and milestones on our journey to a 'Samrudh' (developed) Odisha. We are building a state that is productive, inclusive, sustainable and globally competitive," Majhi said.

Emphasising the state's focus on industrial infrastructure development, skill enhancement, and regional industrial diversification, Industries Minister Sampad Chandra Swain reaffirmed the government's commitment to attracting investments and ensuring timely project execution and efficient service delivery.

Press Trust of India

New Delhi, April 3: In a major blow to the West Bengal government, the Supreme Court Thursday invalidated the appointment of 25,753 teachers and staffers in the state-run and aided schools, calling the entire selection process 'vitiated and tainted'.

SC blow to Bengal

In a verdict that will have serious implications on school education across West Bengal, the Supreme Court Thursday upheld the Calcutta High Court's April 22, 2024 decision cancelling the appointment of 25,753 teaching and non-teaching staff in government and aided schools across the state through a 'tainted' selection process. The SC bench of Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar said the entire selection process adopted for appointment in 2016 is vitiated and tainted beyond resolution. Meanwhile, in her guarded reaction to the top court's verdict, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said she doesn't accept the SC judgement personally, but her government would abide by it while exploring all legal options.



A bench comprising Chief Justice of India (CJI) Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar upheld a Calcutta High Court verdict of April 22, 2024, annulling the appointments and said the tainted candidates should refund their 'salaries/payments received'. "This is a case wherein the entire selection process has been vitiated and tainted beyond resolution. Manipulations and frauds on a large scale, coupled with the attempted cover-up, have denied the selection process beyond repair and partial redemption. The credibility and legitimacy of the selection are denuded," said the CJI. The CJI, however, said candidates who are already employed need not be asked to refund or reimburse any payments made to them. It also made a relaxation for a

differently-abled employee on humanitarian grounds, saying she would remain in the job. The bench fixed pleas, including the one filed by the West Bengal government challenging the HC direction for a CBI probe, for hearing April 4. On February 10, the SC reserved its judgement on a batch of petitions in the matter. Citing irregularities, the HC had invalidated the appointment of 25,753 teaching and non-teaching staff in schools in West Bengal. On May 7 last year, the SC stayed the HC's order over the appointments made by the state's SSC. The case stemmed from the irregularities in the 2016 recruitment process conducted by the WB's SSC in which 23 lakh candidates appeared for 24,640 posts and 25,753 appointment letters were issued. Meanwhile, West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee said, "While I've the highest respect for the judiciary and judges, I cannot accept the judgment from a humanitarian point of view." She, however, emphasised that her government would abide by the SC's decision while exploring all legal options. P9

BJD's volte-face surprises many

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 3: The political stance of Biju Janata Dal (BJD) once again came under scrutiny ahead of the passage of the contentious Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024 in the Rajya Sabha Thursday. During the morning discussions on the Bill, BJD MP Muzibulla Khan opposed it, presenting strong arguments against its provisions. However, by the evening, party Rajya Sabha member Sasmit Patra's post on 'X' regarding the Bill triggered renewed criticism of the regional party's position. Speculation is now rife in political circles that

Dr. Sasmit Patra @sa... · 6h
The Biju Janata Dal has always upheld the principles of secularism and inclusivity, ensuring the rights of all communities. We deeply respect the diverse sentiments expressed by different sections of the Minority communities regarding the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024. Our Party, having taken these views into careful consideration, has entrusted our Hon'ble Members in the Rajya Sabha with the responsibility of exercising their conscience in the best interest of justice, harmony and the rights of all communities, should the Bill come up for voting. There is no Party Whip.

BJD may have once again compromised its position in the Upper House to protect certain vested interests. The speculation stems from the reason that a senior woman IAS officer, known for wielding significant power during the BJD government's tenure, recently took voluntary retirement. Surprisingly, the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre promptly accepted her application for voluntary retirement, taking many state BJP leaders by surprise. Interestingly, Opposition leaders had already speculated about this development when BJD chief Naveen Patnaik visited Delhi recently. Soon after his return, the application for voluntary retirement was swiftly approved, cementing suspicion about a larger political understanding. Now,

with BJD refraining from opposing the Waqf Bill in the Rajya Sabha, many believe that Naveen's Delhi visit and the retirement approval are interlinked, fuelling political debate. A few days ago, the BJD

WAQF BILL
had participated in a meeting on delimitation chaired by DMK leader and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin. Following the meeting, reports suggested that the BJD had shifted its stance for the first time. However, within a few days, political circles were rife with discussions that the security of the wife of certain individual, who has been blamed for the debacle of BJD in the elections, has once again become a priority for the party supremo. It fuelled debates in political circles

that for Naveen, the future of his party workers and allies is no longer of primary importance. Instead, the safeguard of an individual appears to carry significantly more weight. The Lok Sabha passed the Bill late Wednesday night after a 12-hour debate. The Bill secured 288 votes in favour, while 232 votes were cast against it, narrowing the gap between the ruling party and the Opposition to just 56 votes. Though BJD's strength has been reduced to zero in the Lower House, political analysts said the party has learnt little from the experience and remain indecisive. A few days ago, Patra had stated that the party would decide its position after reviewing whether Opposition amendments to the Bill were considered in the House. However, Thursday, Patra clarified that BJD MPs would vote on the Bill based on their individual discretion, as there was no party whip on the matter. Meanwhile, several Rajya Sabha members from BJD were reportedly contacted by this correspondent regarding the voting decision. Some MPs suggested that Patra might have made his statement in a private capacity. They indicated they would respond only after consulting the party leadership, but later stopped taking calls, signalling internal indecision. P9

IRREGULAR by MANJUL

How can we build a Hindu Rashtra if we keep making laws to 'improve' Muslim lives?

Trump hits India with 27% tariffs

STUDYING IMPLICATIONS: NEW DELHI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington/New Delhi, April 3: President Donald Trump slapped universal duties on all countries exporting goods to the US and additional steep levies on countries like India, potentially impacting sales of products from shrimp to steel in the world's biggest economy. The US imposed a steep 27 per cent tariff on all goods, barring pharmaceuticals,



semiconductors, energy and certain minerals not available in the US, that are imported from India, calling the country the 'worst offenders' of unfair trade practices. Export of products such as shrimp, carpet, medical devices and gold jewellery

to the US will be impacted. On the other hand, exports of electronics, textiles, and pharma will get an edge over its competitor countries. Exemption of energy from the tariffs would also mean that India can continue to export fuels like gasoil and

gasoline to the US. The goods that were exempted from the tariffs made up for just over 25 per cent of the total exports from India to the US. The Indian government reacted cautiously, saying it is 'carefully examining the implications' of the announcements and will also study opportunities that may arise due to this new development in US trade policy. Trump announced the imposition of additional ad valorem duties from 10 per cent to 50 per cent on imports. The baseline duty of 10 per cent will be effective on India from April 5 and an additional 27 per cent from April 9. P8,10 & 11

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ANA DE ARMAS NOT FOR GENDER-SWAPPING OF ICONIC CHARACTERS

Hollywood actress Ana de Armas is not in favour of gender-swapping in legacy titles like *James Bond*. The actress feels there should be more films like her forthcoming bare-knuckle action project *Ballerina*, rather than tinkering with gender-swapping legacy characters like James Bond, reports *Variety*.

WINFREY OPENS UP ABOUT HER MENOPAUSE STRUGGLES

Oprah Winfrey recently shed some light on her deeply personal experience with menopause, revealing the intense symptoms she faced and the toll they took on her daily life. The 71-year-old media mogul aims to raise awareness and support for women going through menopause.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Today, you will appreciate beautiful things and exotic artefacts. You may even seriously think of pursuing a business related to such commodities. However, you may not be able to make up your mind, says Ganesha. However, you will decide to keep an open mind about it.

TAURUS
You may find it hard to stop the impending outflow of cash while shopping today, says Ganesha. You aren't the one to be dominated and God help anyone who tries to dictate terms to you today. You may end up spending a small fortune, more than lavish to be precise, on the opposite sex today.

GEMINI
Today, you are likely to get encouragement and support for your endeavours from all quarters. You have a gift of gab and your ability to dispel tension with even the simplest of your remarks will be put to test. Still, you will rise to the occasion and prove your mettle.

CANCER
Today is a good day for you. However, don't expect a windfall. It is just one of those days when you will be in a good mood, irrespective of your problems, if any. You will treat your subordinates well, and they will show their appreciation. But if you think the atmosphere at your workplace is good, wait till you reach home.

LEO
Everyone wants to be different. But little do they realise that they already are unique, says Ganesha. Today, you may meet a lot of such different people at work, some of whom may even test your patience. Always remember that working in a team means balancing a variety of egos and opinions.

VIRGO
Take time off all by yourself and introspect today, says Ganesha. Office cubicle looks set to be a war front and pay due attention there, lest things turn to be more difficult, advises Ganesha. New love may just blossom today, and you may even enjoy a nice quiet evening with friends.

LIBRA
Gear up to play the peace maker today! Your ability to handle a 'Brady Bunch' hasn't gone unnoticed. So expect to be put in charge of handling disputes among your subordinates at work today, hints Ganesha. Research work may slow to a crawl today, but the offshoot is that it's an auspicious day to enter into new contracts.

SCORPIO
You shall be completely immersed in your routine today. It's the same old humbug of a day for you, says Ganesha. But this exhausting day may transform into an exciting evening - so be prepared to get surprised.

SAGITTARIUS
Your ship may be rocked by stormy controversies today. Ganesha advises you to steer clear of people looking to give you a piece of their mind. The storm looks to ease away if you lend a patient ear to all such elements, and try and accommodate their views.

CAPRICORN
It's a lucky day for your sweetheart! Wonder why it's written in your horoscope? You will pamper him/her to the hilt, take them out on a shopping spree and buy whatever they lay their eyes on, even if it's way beyond reasonable, says Ganesha. You will go overboard to make your love feel that nothing else matters, and although this lavish outing will serve the purpose, you may later repent not keeping a count of your cash.

AQUARIUS
You find solace in travel today. But if you plan to include others, beware, as you may end up doing all their dirty work too. But, you will find fulfillment even in that, which, says Ganesha, is your strong point. You know how to turn a weakness into strength.

PISCES
Today just might be the day when you invent a better mousetrap. However, your ideas have a propensity to wane and wax at the same speed, says Ganesha. Hence, keep a notebook handy to jot down all your earth-shattering revolutionary ideas.

'Stop idolising false perfection'

Mumbai: Rakul Preet Singh has addressed the issue of unrealistic beauty standards, emphasizing the importance of authenticity over a curated image. In a world where social media often promotes an unattainable version of perfection, the actress shared her perspective on being comfortable in her own skin and not conforming to these expectations.

"I don't think we need to show a perfect image of perceived beauty standards every time. We are all normal. I have been spotted with oil in my hair thousands of times, or I am wearing the same slippers, or I am wearing the same house shorts or the same jeans. My mom calls me and tells me to throw these jeans away. She has been looking at them for five days and five times. Because I feel it's normal," Rakul said.

She also highlighted the growing societal obsession with physical appearance and its impact on

self-worth. "Today, everyone thinks that they are not good-looking enough. And that's wrong. What standards are we setting for our younger generations?" she asked.

Rakul emphasised the need to redefine beauty on individual terms, rather than relying on filtered and edited images as benchmarks. "We need to stop idolising false perfection and embrace our true selves," she says.

Her remarks come at a time when social media influences perception significantly, especially among young audiences.



Screwvala surpasses three Khans' combined wealth

The 68-year-old started with a toothbrush manufacturing business in the 1970s before venturing into entertainment in the 1980s with a cable TV company



Mumbai: Noted filmmaker Ronnie Screwvala has secured a spot on Forbes' World's Billionaires List 2025 with a net worth of \$1.5 billion, surpassing the combined wealth of Bollywood's biggest stars—Shah Rukh Khan (\$770 million), Salman Khan (\$390 million), and Aamir Khan (\$220 million), which totals \$1.38 billion. Announced on April 2, 2025, this achievement makes Screwvala the wealthiest figure in Bollywood, outpacing its most recognized actors.

Unlike the Khans, who built their wealth through acting and endorsements, Screwvala's fortune stems from production and business ventures. Born in

Mumbai, the 68-year-old started with a toothbrush manufacturing business in the 1970s before venturing into entertainment in the 1980s with a cable TV company. In 1990, he founded UTV, which became a leading media powerhouse. His production credits include *Swades*, *Rang De Basanti*, and *Jodhaa Akbar*. In 2012, he sold UTV to Disney for over a billion dollars, significantly increasing his fortune. Returning to filmmaking in 2017 with RSV

Movies, he produced hits like *Uri: The Surgical Strike* and *Kedarnath*.



Sara's secret to deal with trolling

Mumbai: Sara Ali Khan, daughter of Saif Ali Khan and Amrita Singh, has often faced criticism on social media, but she has learned to cope with it over time.

In a recent interview, the *Gaslight* actress shared how meditation has helped her deal with trolling. "I've developed a thicker skin and started filtering out negativity," she explained. Meditation, according to Sara, helps her discern between real and imagined thoughts.



of 'Sara is the worst.' Sara is. That's what I am focusing on," she added.

Sara also addressed the criticism she faces for visiting Hindu temples. She recalled a moment from her childhood when she asked her mother about her identity. Amrita's response was simple yet impactful: "You are Indian." This lesson in self-identity has stayed with Sara, teaching her not to define herself by religion or caste.

On the professional front, the actress is currently filming a light-hearted spy comedy with Ayushmann Khurrana under Dharma Productions. Additionally, she will appear in Anurag Basu's *Metro... In Dino* and an untitled romantic comedy with Sidharth Malhotra.

Smita called out showbiz for objectifying women

Mumbai: Late actress Smita Patil, known for portraying strong and independent women, once criticised Bollywood for objectifying women and conditioning audiences to accept such portrayals. In an old Doordarshan interview, she highlighted how commercial Bollywood films often depicted women as foolish, perpetually suffering, or half-naked due to formulaic storytelling.

Addressing a controversial poster from her film *Chakra*, in which she was shown bathing, Smita stated that she had no control over its release and would have prevented it if possible. She condemned the industry's double standards,

stating, "You can't show a hero naked—nothing is going to happen then. But if a woman is shown naked, they think it will attract 100 more viewers. The Indian audience has been conditioned to believe that if a film has sex and half-naked bodies, they must watch it. This is a completely wrong attitude. If a film genuinely conveys something heartfelt, it will work. Just having such posters doesn't make a film successful."

When asked whether filmmakers assume that audiences prefer content that objectifies women, Smita acknowledged that while some films thrive on such portrayals, audiences



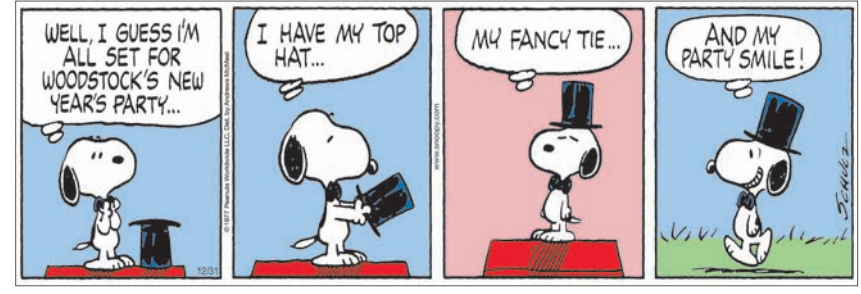
are not foolish. "If there is no storyline, the audience will reject it. Our family structure is strong, and people enjoy emotional films. If the wrong content is repeatedly shown,

viewers will grow accustomed to it. But filmmakers and actors have the power to change this."

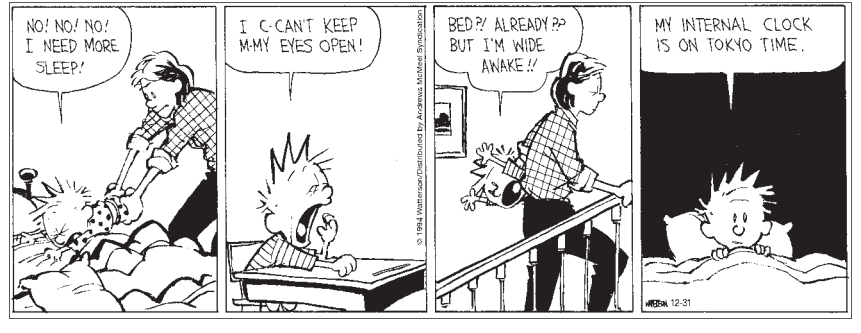
The resurfaced clip of the interview on Reddit sparked admiration for her views. Fans praised her stance, with one user stating, "The audience isn't stupid. Filmmakers can't make garbage and blame viewers for liking it."

With over 80 films to her credit, Smita Patil won two National Film Awards, a Maharashtra State Film Award, and the Padma Shri. She tragically passed away in 1986 at 31 due to childbirth complications while giving birth to her son, Prateik.

PEANUTS



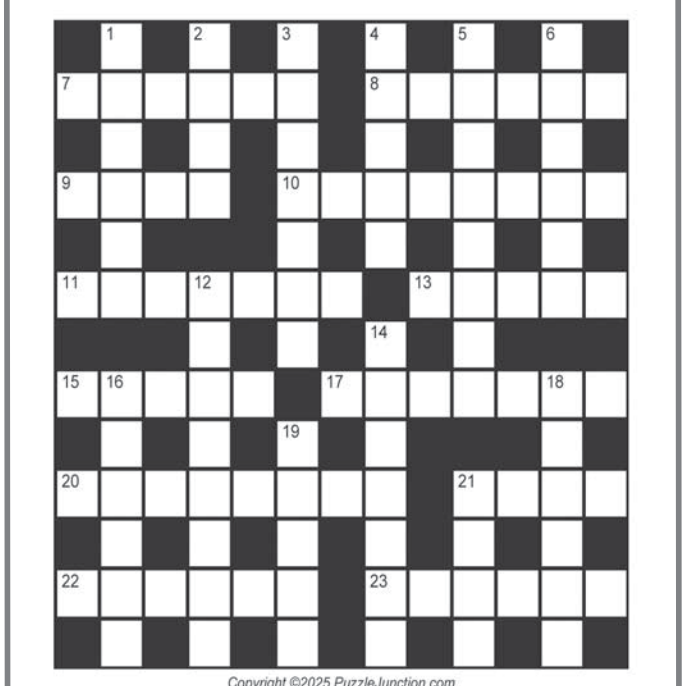
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



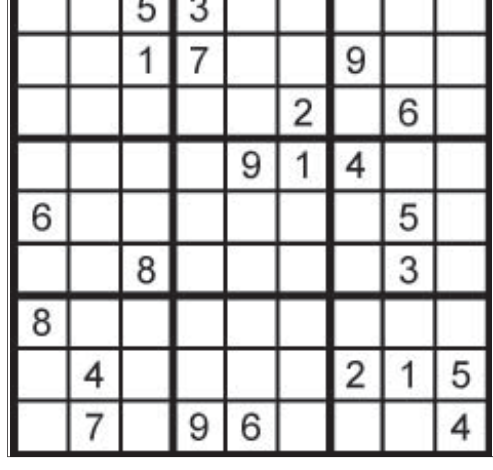
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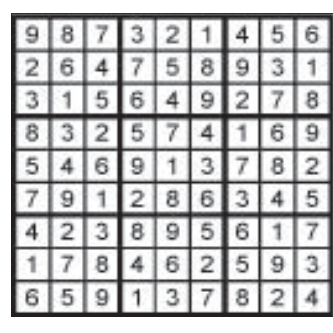
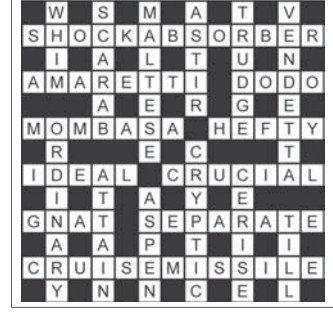
- Across**
- 7 Courage under fire
 - 8 Second sign of the zodiac
 - 9 Rum-soaked cake
 - 10 Give the cold-shoulder (5-3)
 - 11 Nightclub
 - 13 Bridge support
 - 15 Piquant
 - 17 Type of sale
 - 20 Gulf emirate (3,5)
 - 21 Baby buggy
 - 22 Professional movie reviewer
 - 23 Gofer's job
- Down**
- 1 Melon-like tropical fruit
 - 2 Eastern discipline
 - 3 Conundrum
 - 4 Guinness output
 - 5 Morel, for one
 - 6 Smorgasbord
 - 12 Poison cure
 - 14 Anniversary party?
 - 16 Start out
 - 18 Part of a healthy diet
 - 19 Impertinent
 - 21 Trim

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.

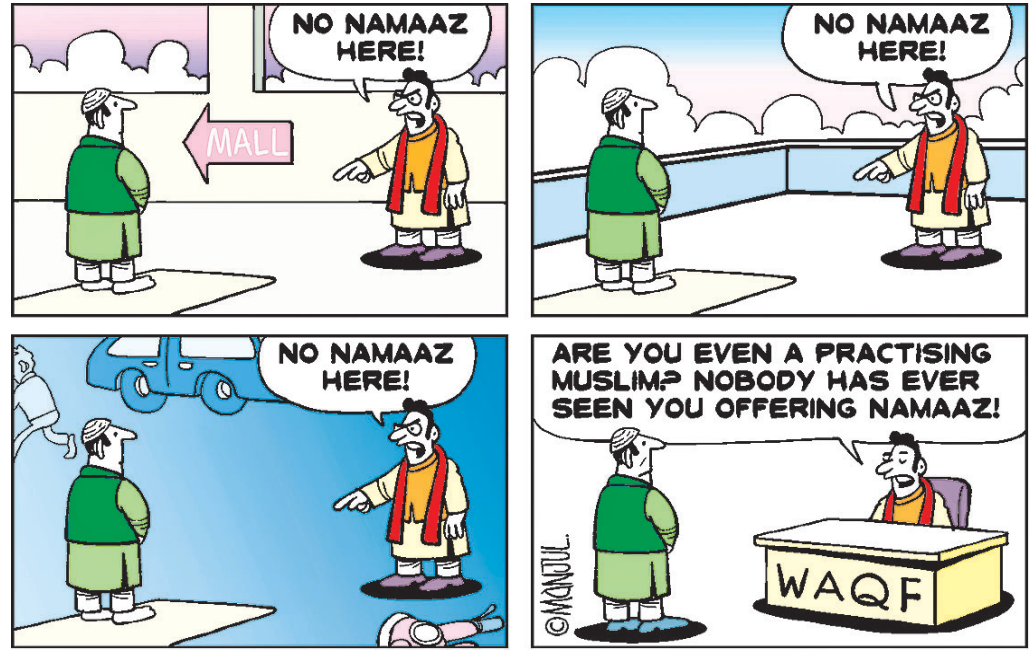


SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



'6% women trafficking cases solved in Odisha'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 3: While Odisha registered 582 cases of women trafficking from 2018-22—among the highest in the country—the state police managed to file closure reports in just 37 cases (6%), said Minister of State (MoS) in the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Savitri Thakur. She was replying to a question raised by AAP MP Ashok Kumar Mittal in the Rajya Sabha, Wednesday. She said Odisha recorded 75 women trafficking cases in 2018, which went up to 147 in 2019, before declining to 103 in 2020. How-

ever, the figures again rose to 136 in 2021, and fell to 126 in 2022. Significantly, the trial in 16 cases culminated during 2018-22, while for two years (2018 and 2019) none of the cases could be decided, she added. Highlighting the poor policing system in Odisha, Thakur said the state police managed to file chargesheet in just 386 cases (out of 582 cases) after a lapse of three years. "In the pre-Covid19 period - 2018 and 2019 - Odisha Police filed chargesheets in 89 per cent of the cases. However, it declined after 2020 when hardly in 50 per cent cases chargesheets were filed", she added.

4 held for abducting, assaulting man

Bhubaneswar: Chandaka police Thursday arrested four miscreants for allegedly assaulting a man by confining him in a room as the latter tipped off the cops about their sand smuggling in the area. The arrested have been identified as Asima Kumar Routray, 53, Abhishek Routray, 23, Biswajit Routray, 20, and Goutam Keshari Routray, 55, said Chandaka IIC Biswajit Manobandha. The accused had also been booked by Jatni and Chandaka police earlier. The police also seized three trucks and a four-wheeler involved in abduction of the man. The incident took place around 6am Wednesday, when the four miscreants abducted Swagat Sethi and kept him in Asima's house in Chandaka area where the men had assaulted him. Swagat's wife informed the Chandaka police who traced the men's location to a secluded area, and rescued Swagat. The miscreants were booked under Sections 126 (2), 296, 115 (2), and a host of others under BNS.

₹1,536cr BDA Budget gets nod

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 3: An estimated Budget of ₹1,536.08 crore has been approved for the Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA) for the 2025-26 financial year. The approval was made during the 150th Authority Meeting of BDA Thursday under the chairmanship of Housing & Urban Development and Public Enterprises Minister Krushna Chandra Mahapatra, who also serves as BDA Chairman. During the meeting, the Budget estimate for FY 2025-26 and the revised estimate for 2024-25 were presented. Moreover, in a significant move toward urban expansion, the BDA approved the inclusion of 143 new revenue villages within its jurisdiction. Currently, BDA oversees four urban local bodies - Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), the municipalities of Khurda and Jatni, and the Pipli Notified Area Council (NAC) - along with nearby gram panchayats.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 143 new revenue villages will be added to BDA jurisdiction
- With the addition, total number of villages under BDA will go up to 712 from the present 569
- Several land patches have been identified for auction
- BDA to launch multi-storied housing project at Chandrasekharpur
- Housing & plotted devpt schemes to start at Jagasara and Sanapalla in Khurda
- Nicco Park to be redeveloped
- 24 CDP roads across City to be developed

An official said the expansion aims to promote systematic urban growth, enhance infrastructure, and address the challenges of rapid urbanisation. Since its establishment in 1983 with 116 revenue villages, BDA has expanded multiple times, notably in 2002, 2003, and 2011. "The latest expansion aligns with the City's strategic urban planning efforts and major infrastructure projects aimed at improving regional connectivity," the official added. With the addition of these new villages, the total number of villages under BDA's jurisdiction will rise to

712 from the present 569. "Following approval, the proposal will now be forwarded to the state government for consideration under Section 3 of the ODA Act, 1982," the official said. Additionally, the Authority approved a proposal for land monetisation to generate revenue for BDA. Several land patches have been identified for auction for the purpose. The BDA has also decided to launch a multi-storied housing project at Chandrasekharpur. Moreover, housing and plotted development schemes will be undertaken

at Jagasara and Sanapalla in Khurda. The Authority has also approved the development of Bhubaneswar Town Centre through Engineering, Procurement, and Construction (EPC) mode to enhance parking facilities and commercial utilisation. Another proposal to redevelop BDA City Centre, commonly known as Nicco Park, has been approved. It also approved issuance of a Request for Proposal (RFP) to select an agency for planning and design of Town Planning Schemes 05, 06, and 07. Currently, BDA is implementing Town Planning Schemes 1, 2, 3, and 4 in revenue villages under Bhubaneswar Development Planning Area (BDPA), including Sahajpur, Naragoda, Sijuput, Paikarapur, Tamando, Bijipur, Nuagan and Shyamsundarpur. The BDA has also decided to develop 24 Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP) roads across the city, a proposal that was presented during the Authority meeting.

CAG REPORT
₹864.45cr minor mineral revenue lost during 2015-22

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, April 3: The state government has lost revenue of ₹864.45 crore from minor mineral sources during financial years 2015-16 to 2021-22, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India said in its latest report. In its audit report on collection of revenue from minor minerals, the CAG said the government failed to collect ₹864.45 crore towards the District Mineral Fund (DMF) and Environment Management Fund (EMF) on royalty from minor minerals supplied by contractors and used in public projects without valid transit passes amounting to ₹4,624.58 crore. The authorities in charge of public projects deducted royalty amounting to ₹4,624.58 crore from the bills of contractors or project executives due to non-production of valid transit passes and purchase receipts in support of procurement from authorised sources. A total of ₹885.70 crore towards DMF and EMF on royalty was to be realised in the state, during 2016-22.

House passes 2 key Bills

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 3: Two crucial Bills - Odisha Universities (Amendment) Bill, 2024 and Odisha State Highways Authority Bill, 2025 - were passed in the Assembly following an overnight debate in which BJD members actively took part, but Congress MLAs gave it a miss. The Odisha Universities (Amendment) Bill, 2024, which seeks to give more autonomy to universities for recruitment and other activities, and The Odisha State Highways Authority Bill, 2025, which seeks to establish a body on the lines of NHAI for planning, development, maintenance and management of highways and major roads in the state, were passed by voice vote after long hours of debate, according to reports. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, Deputy CM Pravatī Parida and around a dozen ministers remained present in the House for the entire night till the varsity Bill was passed around

Assembly adjourned sine die

Bhubaneswar: The Budget session of Odisha Assembly was Thursday adjourned sine die by Speaker Surama Padhy two days ahead of its scheduled date. The third session of the 17th Odisha Legislative Assembly commenced February 13 and was scheduled to continue till April 5. However, keeping in view that no more important business is left, the House was adjourned sine die, the Speaker said. Earlier, government Chief Whip Saroj Kumar Pradhan moved a proposal to adjourn the House. 4:29am after a debate of over 12 hours. Many senior BJD members, including eight-time MLA Ranendra Pratap Swain, former ministers Arun Kumar Sahoo, Ganeswar Behera and Pramila Mallik, who is also the Opposition's chief whip, participated in the debate on the universities Bill that started at 4pm Wednesday. The House witnessed a heated exchange of words between the Opposition and the treasury benches during the discussion on Odisha Universities (Amendment) Bill, 2024. The House also passed Odisha State Highways Authority Bill, 2025 tabled by Works Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan. "The state government

has envisaged implementation of an ambitious plan to develop 75,000 km of world-class road network in the state. A fast-track approach is needed for land acquisition, rehabilitation and resettlement along the corridors, environmental and forest clearance and utility shifting or relocation and other activities, for which an authority is needed," the minister said. Harichandan said the Odisha State Highway Authority would be on the lines of the NHAI and it would be responsible for the planning, development, maintenance and management of highways and major roads. The Bill was passed at 6:29am through voice vote after a discussion for about two hours.

Green push as min flags off 40 e-Buses

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 3: In a further boost to environment-friendly urban mobility, the state government has expanded its electric bus fleet with the addition of 40 new buses under Capital Region Urban Transport (CRUT). Housing & Urban Development Minister Krushna Chandra Mahapatra flagged off the buses at Gadakana bus depot here Thursday. Addressing the media, Mahapatra said, "The state government remains committed to enhancing urban transportation, ensuring eco-friendly and efficient mobility solutions for citizens. This expansion is a significant step towards realising the vision of VIKSIT Odisha and building a greener future. With over 3 lakh people relying on this service daily, the addition of more buses will greatly enhance accessi-



bility, convenience, and the overall public transportation network." He further highlighted that out of CRUT's fleet of 560 buses, 180 are electric. At present, Ama Bus service operates in 106 routes across Capital Region, Rourkela, Sambalpur and Berhampur. This initiative marks another milestone in the state's journey towards sustainable and smart urban transport, reinforcing the government's focus on eco-friendly mobility solutions. With this addition, bus frequency

will increase on key routes, including 20, 21, 24/24E, 27, 32, 33, 37, 38, 40, 41, 43, 44, 47, 64 and 82. Consequently, the Ama Bus service schedule will be revised from April 4, 2025, with modifications to certain routes. In near future, the fleet will be expanded with 100 additional electric buses under the state scheme. Further 400 e-buses will be added under PM e-Bus Sewa scheme. State-of-the-art electric depots are currently under construction at Nokhariput in Bhubaneswar and Naraj in Cuttack, with upcoming depots planned at Chhend in Rourkela and at Modipara in Sambalpur. CRUT continues to focus on improving bus services by ensuring safe, efficient, and comfortable travel for all commuters, said sources. Several safety measures have been introduced, alongside a series of enhancements aimed at making the service more reliable.

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581 fined for littering at Bhubaneswar rly station

A total of ₹1,17,100 collected as fines during March 2025 as part of a cleanliness enforcement drive by the Railway Protection Force



ties, including spitting, throwing garbage, cooking, bathing, urinating, or defecating within railway premises or train compartments. The aim is to create a cleaner and healthier travel experience for passengers while discouraging activities that contribute to filth and unhygienic conditions.

ECoR's commitment to strict cleanliness measures extends beyond Bhubaneswar railway station to all stations under its jurisdiction. Station managers are tasked with ensuring regular maintenance, monitoring passenger behavior, and implementing penalties for violations.

Officials emphasise that maintaining cleanliness is not just about compliance but also about ensuring public health and enhancing the overall travel experience.

"Keeping railway stations clean is a shared responsibility. Our efforts aim to instill a sense of discipline among passengers and encourage them to actively participate in keeping the environment clean," said an ECoR official.

Passengers are urged to use designated dustbins placed throughout station premises, dispose of waste responsibly, and use the toilets and washrooms provided at specified locations. They are also reminded to refrain from spitting on platforms or within station premises to ensure a cleaner, healthier environment.

The railway administration calls upon all passengers to cooperate with cleanliness norms and contribute towards making railway stations and trains free of litter and waste.



VALEDICTORY FUNCTION: Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati addresses the Closing Ceremony of NCC Mega Cyclothon and 76th Raising Day Celebrations at Cantonment Road NCC Group Headquarters in Cuttack, Thursday

Rahul Maharana wins National Youth Award

Recognised for his efforts in environmental conservation, Rahul's work in waste cleanup, mangrove restoration, and biodiversity preservation inspires change



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 3: Odisha's Rahul Maharana was conferred the prestigious National Youth Award 2022-23 for his exceptional contributions to environmental conservation.

The award, presented by Union Minister for Youth Affairs & Sports, Mansukh Mandaviya, recognised his impactful work in plastic waste management, mangrove restoration, and biodiversity preservation. The

ENGAGED AND INSPIRED YOUTH THROUGH COMMUNITY-DRIVEN ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS PROGRAMMES

PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN STRENGTHENING CLIMATE RESILIENCE IN COASTAL REGIONS

and biodiversity conservation initiatives, particularly in Odisha's coastal regions.

Through community engagement programmes, he has educated and inspired local youth, fostering a culture of environmental responsibility. His leadership in grassroots movements has significantly contributed to ecological restoration and climate resilience.

While presenting the award, Minister Mandaviya lauded the efforts of young changemakers

like Maharana, underlining that their vision and dedication are instrumental in shaping a better future. He remarked that these youth awardees exemplify selfless service, working tirelessly for social and environmental causes.

The minister further expressed optimism that by 2047, when India celebrates 100 years of independence, the young leaders of today will be at the forefront of the nation's transformation.

He envisioned an India that evolves from a developing nation to a fully developed one, driven by the passion and perseverance of its youth.

The National Youth Award serves as a recognition of Maharana's unwavering commitment to conservation, inspiring many to contribute towards a sustainable and greener future.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 3: The Railway Protection Force (RPF) has fined 581 individuals for spitting and littering at Bhubaneswar Railway Station in March 2025, collecting a total of ₹1,17,100 in penalties.

This action, taken under the directives of the East Coast Railway (ECoR), is part of an ongoing initiative to maintain cleanliness and hygiene across railway premises.

To tackle the persistent problem of littering and spitting, a special task force (STF) has been set up to enforce cleanliness regulations and raise awareness among passengers.

The STF operates in coordination with station managers, ticket collectors, RPF personnel, and officials from the commercial and operating depart-

ments. Their role is to actively monitor cleanliness, issue fines to violators, and ensure that railway premises remain clean and hygienic for all passengers.

In addition to enforcement, a special campaign has been launched to educate travelers about the importance of maintaining railway cleanliness. Public announcements are being made through the station's audio system, and awareness materials such as posters and banners have been placed at strategic locations. The campaign is further strengthened through outreach efforts on social media and other communication channels.

Under the revised cleanliness directives, railway staff has been given the authority to penalise individuals found engaging in unhygienic activi-

WEATHER		
	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	36.8°	36.0°
Min Temp	24.5°	23.4°
Humidity	76%	79%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
FORECAST		
Mainly clear sky		

MARKET WATCH		
INDEX	VALUE	CHANGE
SENSEX	76,295.36	↓ 322.08
NIFTY	23,250.10	↓ 82.25
DOLLAR	85.28	↓ 0.15
EURO	94.27	↑ 1.45
GOLD	₹90,136	↓ ₹407
SILVER	₹94,367	↓ ₹5,348

Cong to hold 'mashaal' rallies April 15

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, April 3: The Congress Thursday said it will organise 'mashaal' rallies across all 314 blocks of Odisha April 15 to protest against rising cases of missing women and children.

Addressing the mediapersons, Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president Bhakta Charan Das said, "We are continuously fighting for women's safety both inside and outside the Assembly. We will continue our fight in the coming days until the government takes concrete steps for their safety."

Das claimed that over 60,000 women and children have gone missing in the state in recent times. "Therefore, the party will hold 'mashaal rallies in all



WOMEN'S SAFETY ISSUE

314 blocks April 15, a day after Ambedkar Jayanti," he added. Similar protests are scheduled to be held in district headquarters April 21.

"Padayatras, meetings, and collector office gherao will be organised at the district level on that day," Das said.

In addition to addressing the issue of missing women and children, the district-level protests will also raise concerns over local issues such as drinking water shortages,

mining scams, and farmers' grievances, according to Das.

Criticising both the ruling BJP and the Naveen Patnaik-led BJD, the OPCC president remarked, "Both parties have remained silent on the issue. It shows that both parties are together."

Das expressed disappointment over the state government's inaction, stating, "It is unfortunate that the Odisha government has not yet formed a House Committee to probe the cases of missing women and children."

Bone marrow transplant unit opens at BSSCCRI

RESHMI YADAV, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 3: The Bagchi Sri Shankara Cancer Centre and Research Institute (BSSCCRI), Bhubaneswar, a charitable unit of the Sri Shankara Cancer Foundation, has announced significant advancements in cancer care, including the launch of a Bone Marrow Transplant (BMT) Centre and a 300-room long-stay facility for patients.

At a press meet at the Bhubaneswar Press Club Thursday, BSSCCRI's leadership—medical director Lalatendu Sarangi, managing trustee BS Srinath, trustee member B R Nagraj, and academic director Bid-

hukalyan Mohanti—outlined these developments.

"With our Bone Marrow Transplant Centre, we aim to make this life-saving treatment both accessible and affordable for patients in Odisha," said Sarangi. The new centre, equipped with ten BMT suites and ten high dependency wards, is expected to conduct 200 transplants annually.

To support patients traveling from distant areas, BSSCCRI has also launched a 300-room long-stay facility. "Initially, 100 air-conditioned rooms will be available from April 16, with the remaining 200 ready by September," Srinath stated.

Website to engage public in 'Odia Pakhya'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 3: For the first time, Odisha is celebrating 'Odia Pakhya' from April 1 to 14, an initiative dedicated to honouring the state's rich cultural heritage, language, and traditions. This fortnight-long celebration aims to instill a sense of pride among Odias and encourage active participation in preserving and promoting their cultural identity.

To facilitate engagement, a dedicated website (<https://odiapakhya.com>) has been launched, offering detailed information about the celebrations. The platform provides a complete schedule of government-



ment-organised events and features an interactive quiz covering various aspects of Odisha's history, language, literature, and eminent personalities. Participants can take the quiz and earn a digital certificate upon completion.

In addition, the initiative encourages community involvement at the block and district levels. Citizens can actively participate in local events and even upload selfies on the website to showcase their engagement in 'Odia Pakhya' celebrations.

Beyond being a cultural festival, 'Odia Pakhya' is a movement that seeks to reignite the passion for Odia traditions. By embracing this initiative, people can contribute to preserving and promoting Odisha's unique cultural and linguistic heritage.

TRADITIONAL ATTIRE DAY

Odisha promotes handloom heritage & culture

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, April 3: As Odisha observed the 'Traditional Attire Day' Thursday, most of the state government employees and leaders of the ruling BJP wore handloom clothes.

The state is observing April 3 as the 'Traditional Attire Day' as part of the 'Odia Pakhya' (Odia fortnight) being celebrated from April 1 (Odisha Day) to April 14 (Odia New Year).

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and Culture minister Suryabanshi Suraj had called upon the people to wear locally developed clothes to promote traditional Odia attire and the rich heritage of Odisha's handloom and weaving industry.

The Handlooms, Textiles,



and Handicrafts department also organised 'Ama Poshak, Ama Parichaya' (Our dress our identity) programme in different parts of the state.

In a special message for the

abandh, Kotpad handlooms and sarees, along with Khurda lungi and gamuchha have gained popularity in the state and outside the state."

The culture minister in a post on X said, "On the call of the Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri @MohanMOdisha today is being celebrated as our Traditional Dress Day. Today, Odia lovers working in various government and private sectors have come to their offices wearing traditional dresses. Heartfelt congratulations to them."

Odisha's Handlooms, Textiles and Handicrafts department in a letter to all the department heads and district collectors had urged them to encourage every government official, employee and common people to wear Odia handloom

clothes April 3.

As the state for the first time is celebrating 'Odia Pakhya' (Odia fortnight) from April 1 to April 14 to celebrate its rich cultural heritage and traditions, the government has launched a dedicated website to provide comprehensive information about the celebrations.

The website provides all the details related to Odia Pakhya, including a schedule of events organised by the state government during this period, an official release said.

Apart from being just a celebration, Odia Pakhya is a movement that seeks to reignite the passion for Odia culture and inspire people to take active steps in promoting their language, literature, heritage and culture, it added.

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RAGGING HORROR

Class VI student beaten with iron rods by seniors

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada/Udala, April 3: A disturbing case of ragging has surfaced at SSD School at Basipitha, under Khunta police station in Mayurbhanj district. A Class VI student was allegedly beaten with an iron rod, slashed with a blade, and salt applied to the wounds by his seniors before being locked in a room. The matter came to the fore after the child's guardian filed a police complaint.



Jena investigated and confiscated empty liquor bottles along with more than 100 mobile phones.

However, the following day, when Dipankar was going to washroom before school, several students allegedly beat him mercilessly with iron rods. They also cut his hands with blades, applied salt to the wounds, and locked him in a room, threatening further harm if he reported the incident.

Fearing attacks, Dipankar returned home March 25 after completing his annual exams. After he narrated his ordeal, his parents lodged a complaint at Khunta police station.

The principal acknowledged the school's difficulties, citing a lack of staff to prevent alcohol smuggling onto the premises.

Some hostel students had reportedly marched to meet the District Collector, protesting against alleged injustices February 25. Khunta Police Station Officer-in-Charge Panchanan Mohanty said, "This is an old incident. We have discussed the matter with the principal, and an investigation is ongoing."

Telugu over Odia: Linguistic shift in border areas



KOTIA AADHAAR CARDS CARRY DETAILS IN TELUGU

POST NEWS NETWORK

Pottangi/Nandapur, April 3: Though the state government has been emphasising on the protection of Odia language in border villages, alarming deviations have been observed. A recent incident in Koraput district's Kotia region, a bone of contention between Odisha and neighbouring Andhra Pradesh, has raised concerns about the state of Odia language in the border areas.

During the Odisha Day celebrations in Pottangi block Tuesday, an elderly woman's Aadhaar card was found to contain various details written in Telugu instead of Odia. The woman was identified as Khara Jhipai, 70, of Arjubalsa village in Kotia panchayat. The discovery has raised questions as to why an Odisha-issued Aadhaar card would prioritise Telugu over the state's official language.

Additionally, the woman's date of birth on the card was found to be incorrect. Though she is approximately 70 years old, her Aadhaar card lists her age as 45. Such errors have led to many border residents being deprived of Odisha government benefits under various welfare schemes, while neighbouring Andhra Pradesh has reportedly taken advantage of the situation. The issue highlights con-



cerns over the protection of Odia language in border areas. When asked why she had brought her Aadhaar card to the event, the elderly woman stated that she had been instructed to do so after being denied an old-age pension. She also confirmed that she was not receiving any pension benefits.

When contacted, Sudhir Sahu, Block Social Security Officer (BSSO) of the Persons with Disabilities (PwD) department



BORDER DWELLERS DISTANCING THEMSELVES FROM ODIA



further said that he informed the district administration about the matter. "Discussions are underway to resolve Aadhaar-related discrepancies independently and bring them to the attention of the Union government," he added.

Meanwhile, residents of Nandapur, Lamtaput, Pottangi, Bandhugaon, and Narayanpatana blocks of Koraput are gradually shifting from Odia to Telugu as their primary language. While indigenous communities such as the Kui, Paraja, Bhunia, Bhatra, and Gadaba tribes still converse in their native dialects, educational institutions in the region continue to follow an Odia-language curriculum.

Residents in Panthlung, Bilaput, Golur, Paraja Badapada, Kularsing, Chatua, Khinbara, and Nandaka panchayats depend heavily on Andhra for trade, healthcare, education, and livelihood. This economic reliance has contributed to a linguistic shift, with many residents choosing to speak and write in Telugu, distancing themselves from Odia.

Language experts and educationists warn that this trend could threaten the future of Odia in the region. Intellectuals have urged the government to take necessary measures to protect the language.

Sources said eight panchayats in Nandapur block, hav-

ing 70 per cent population from Kui, Paraja and Gadaba tribes, are located near the Andhra Pradesh border. They receive their education in Odia language from schools established in these villages by the state government.

However, the residents cross the border and travel to weekly markets in Andhra Pradesh to sell their agricultural produce and purchase essential goods. They also rely on Andhra for weddings, education, and healthcare services. While there, they often use Telugu instead of Odia, both in conversation and writing, sometimes opting for English as well.

When contacted, Nandapur Block Development Officer Durga Prasad Dora and Block Education Officer Bhabani Nandan Pattnaik said the state's Culture and Education departments are aware of the issue. With support from block and district administrations, various initiatives have been launched to safeguard Odia language.

As part of these efforts, the district education department has appointed 364 multilingual education (MLE) teachers specialising in languages of Kui, Paraja, Gadaba, Bhunia, and Bhatra tribes. Around 53 Paraja-language teachers are currently engaged in Nandapur block alone, Pattnaik stated.



RELIGIOUS FERVOUR: A roadside vendor arranges flags with images of Lord Hanuman for sale ahead of Sri Ram Navami and Hanuman Jayanti in Sambalpur, Thursday

308 turtles seized; 2 held



POST NEWS NETWORK

MV 79, April 3: Forest personnel seized 308 turtles and arrested two persons on charge of smuggling the animals near the Motu border under Kalimela block in Malkangiri district, early Wednesday morning. The accused were identified as Suraj Malik and Shaktipada Gain.

Acting on inputs about turtle smuggling, a team led by MV-79 ranger Rashmiranjan Swain, along with forester Muralidhar Anugulia and Motu forest personnel conducted a checking at Motu.

Around 4am, officials spotted a pickup van and two motorcycles entering Odisha from neighbouring Andhra Pradesh. During verification,

the officials discovered the turtles. Preliminary investigation suggests the turtles were being transported from Kakimada in Andhra to Kalimela block.

The seized vehicles were taken to the MV-79 forest office, where authorities seized 308 turtles from the vehicles. The Forest department registered a case in connection with the incident and produced the two suspects in court Thursday.

Wanted criminal injured in encounter

POST NEWS NETWORK

Talcher, April 3: A notorious criminal, Sushant Kumar Nayak alias Jhamu, 40, from Ramadima village under Nisha police limits in Angul district, was apprehended and injured in a police encounter late Wednesday night. Nayak, who is wanted in several criminal cases across Angul, Dhenkanal, Jajpur, and Deogarh districts, had previously fired at police officers during a market raid January 22, and fled.

Acting on a tip-off, Talcher police led by Inspector-in-Charge Digbijay Biswal and supported by the Angul district special squad raided the Talabeda forest

where Nayak and his associate, Prafulla Nayak, were hiding. When asked to surrender, Nayak fired two rounds at the police, but no injuries were reported.

In retaliation, Sub-Inspector AS Jena of the special squad fired a warning shot. However, Nayak continued firing, forcing the police to shoot him in the left leg. Prafulla Nayak, who attacked police with a sickle, was also subdued.

Sushant Nayak was first taken to Talcher Sub-Divisional Hospital and then shifted to Angul DHH. He was later referred to SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack for advanced treatment.

12-ft king cobra rescued sans protocols, released

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, April 3: Conservationists are raising concerns over violations of wildlife protection laws in Mayurbhanj district after a 12-foot king cobra was rescued and released without following proper protocols. The snake was found in the house of a resident in Baidakuli village, located near the Similipal Wildlife Sanctuary. The frightened family informed Forest officials but, instead of dispatching a trained snake handler, two untrained forest personnel captured and released the snake into the wild. Furthermore, videos of the

snake recorded by locals went viral on social media later.

Wildlife protection guidelines stipulate that endangered species like the king cobra, listed under Schedule-I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 require special handling. Rescued animals should be monitored and kept in a safe location before their release, which should be done away from populated areas to avoid conflict. Additionally, filming and sharing rescue footage on social media is prohibited, but locals violated this rule by making the video of the rescue viral.

Baripada Divisional Forest Officer A Uma Mahesh acknowledged the incident but

stated that delays in obtaining permission from the Chief Wildlife Warden led to the use of untrained staff. Critics argue that the Forest department's reliance on untrained personnel highlights a lack of preparedness in handling endangered species.

Although the snake appeared healthy and was released into the forest, critics argue that the forest department's rescue team is inactive despite having a rescue vehicle worth Rs 45 lakh. According to animal rights activist Bibhudatta Das, this negligence reflects poorly on the department's preparedness and commitment to wildlife protection.

National seminar on 'Fiction & Politics of Narration' organised

Baripada: The Government Women's College here Thursday hosted a national seminar titled 'Writing Resistance: Fiction and Politics of Narration', with scholars and experts gathering to discuss the interplay between storytelling and political discourse. The event was organised under the patronage of Principal Sagarika Singh along with Convener Rajanikanta Sankhaya, Assistant Professor of English, and Co-convener Debahuti Das, Faculty of English. The seminar began with an inaugural speech by Singh, followed by guest introduction by Sankhaya. Subash Chandra Patra, retired Principal, delivered a speech, which was succeeded by a keynote address from Debasisa Pati, Associate Professor of English at the University of Allahabad, Prayagraj. Shurri Sangita Pati, Assistant Professor of Zoology, served as the stage host for the inaugural session. An online plenary session was conducted, featuring a speech by Plenary Speaker Umashankar Patra, Assistant Professor of English at IIT Madras. The vote of thanks for the session was delivered by Anindita Ghose.



16-year-old gangraped by three youths

Chhatrapur: A 16-year-old girl was allegedly gangraped by three youths under Aryapalli police limits in Ganjam district, police said. The incident occurred when the survivor woke up from her sleep and went out to relieve herself March 26 night. Three youths of the village kidnapped her on a motorcycle and took her to a deserted area where they took turns to rape her under a tree. Family members came to know about the incident and lodged a complaint at the Aryapalli Marine Police Station, Thursday after the survivor narrated her ordeal. Police registered a case and launched an investigation. Chhatrapur SDPO Chandan Ghadei said. On the other hand, the accused youths are absconding after the incident.

Woman beats sister-in-law to death during tiff over firewood

Deogarh: A woman allegedly killed her sister-in-law during a dispute between them over firewood in Deogarh town Thursday morning. The deceased, Jyotsna Bhoj, 55, was the widow of the late Pradyumna Bhoj and lived in Nilaberini Sahi under the Deogarh Municipality. The accused, Gita Bhoj, 45, is the wife of Pratap Bhoj. According to local residents, the argument between the two women escalated into a scuffle. Gita thrashed Jyotsna Bhoj, who was later found unconscious and was rushed by neighbours to Deogarh District Headquarters Hospital. Doctors pronounced her dead on arrival. Neighbours detained Gita Bhoj until officers from Deogarh Model Police Station arrived and took her into custody for questioning. A case has been registered and the investigation is ongoing.

EAST COAST RAILWAY

File No. DRM/Engg/KUR/24-25/
E-Tender/121 Dt.: 27.03.2025
(1) Tender No. etenderEastkur-353-2024 Dt.: 25.03.2025
Description: DEVELOPMENT OF CUTTACK GOODS SHED WITH BASIC FACILITY & POLLUTION CONTROL MEASURES OF KHURDAROAD DIVISION.
Approx cost of the work: ₹ 1090.54 Lakhs, EMD: ₹ 6.95,300/-
(2) Tender No. etenderEastkur-355-2024 Dt.: 25.03.2025
Description: DEVELOPMENT OF KAPILAS ROAD JUNCTION GOODS SHED WITH BASIC FACILITY & POLLUTION CONTROL MEASURES OF KHURDAROAD DIVISION.
Approx cost of the work: ₹ 1047.45 Lakhs, EMD: ₹ 6.73,700/-
(3) Tender No. etenderEastkur-356-2024 Dt.: 25.03.2025
Description: DEVELOPMENT OF DHANMANDAL GOODS SHED WITH BASIC FACILITY & POLLUTION CONTROL MEASURES OF KHURDAROAD DIVISION.
Approx cost of the work: ₹ 905.58 Lakhs, EMD: ₹ 6.02,800/-
Completion period: 12 months (for Sl. No. 1 to 3).
Tender closing date & time: at 1500 hrs. of 16.04.2025 (for all tenders).
No manual offers sent by Post/Courier/Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.
Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tenders is available in website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>
Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (TRD)/PR-1147/P/24-25 Khurda Road


EAST COAST RAILWAY

File No. DRM/Engg/KUR/24-25/
E-Tender/122 Dt.: 27.03.2025
(1) Tender No. etenderEastkur-357-2024 Dt.: 26.03.2025
Description: DEVELOPMENT OF NERGUINDI GOODS SHED WITH BASIC FACILITY & POLLUTION CONTROL MEASURES OF KHURDAROAD DIVISION.
Approx cost of the work: ₹ 965.93 Lakhs, EMD: ₹ 6.33,000/-
(2) Tender No. etenderhqkur-348-2024 Dt.: 21.03.2025
Description: DEEP SCREENING OF TRACK, POINTS & CROSSINGS AND OTHER ALLIED WORKS AT KHURDA ROAD YARD AND APPROACHES UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF SENIOR SECTION ENGINEER/P.WAY/KHURDA ROAD OF KHURDAROAD DIVISION.
Approx cost of the work: ₹ 263.63 Lakhs, EMD: ₹ 2,81,800/-
(3) Tender No. etenderEastKur-350-2024 Dt.: 24.03.2025
Description: MISCELLANEOUS UTILITY SHIFTING WORK IN CONNECTION WITH PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION OF ROAD OVER BRIDGE (ROB) AT KM 424/15-17 IN LIEU OF EXISTING LEVEL CROSSING NO. CP-9 KM 424.410 (424/13-15) ON SH-12 (KANDARPUR-MACHHAGAOIN) AT KANDARPUR BETWEEN CUTTACK-KANDARPUR STATION ON CUTTACK-PARADEEP SECTION OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.
Approx cost of the work: ₹ 227.59 Lakhs, EMD: ₹ 2,63,800/-
Completion period: 12 months (for Sl. No. 1), 10 months (for Sl. No. 2) & 6 months (for Sl. No. 3).
Tender closing date & time: at 1500 hrs. of 16.04.2025 (for all tenders).
No manual offers sent by Post/Courier/Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.
Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website www.ireps.gov.in
Note: The prospective tenderers are advised to visit the website 10 (Ten) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/corrigenda issued for this tender.
Divisional Railway Manager (Engg), Khurda Road

EAST COAST RAILWAY

'E' PROCUREMENT SYSTEMS
Tender Notice No. PCMM/EP/2025-26/01 Dt.: 01.04.2025
SL. NO. 01: TENDER NO. 06255010, SHORT DESCRIPTION OF ITEM: METAL LINER DRG. NO. T-8748, QUANTITY: AS PER TS.
SL. NO. 02: TENDER NO. 04251247, SHORT DESCRIPTION OF ITEM: JOINT LESS GROOVED COPPER CONTACT WIRE 107 SO.MM, QUANTITY: AS PER TS.
SL. NO. 03: TENDER NO. 06245270, SHORT DESCRIPTION OF ITEM: HVN-66 INSULATING LINER, QUANTITY: AS PER TS.
SL. NO. 04: TENDER NO. 08251075, SHORT DESCRIPTION OF ITEM: ENGINE LUBRICATING OIL, QUANTITY: AS PER TS.
SL. NO. 05: TENDER NO. 06255009, SHORT DESCRIPTION OF ITEM: WIDER PRE STRESSED CONCRETE SLEEPER, QUANTITY: AS PER TS.
SL. NO. 06: TENDER NO. 03243860A, SHORT DESCRIPTION OF ITEM: INTER CAR GANG WAY MOUNTING, QUANTITY: AS PER TS.
SL. NO. 07: TENDER NO. 03251024, SHORT DESCRIPTION OF ITEM: YOKE FOR HIGH TENSIL CBC, QUANTITY: 364 NOS.
SL. NO. 08: TENDER NO. 06255011, SHORT DESCRIPTION OF ITEM: METAL LINER DRG. NO. T-3740, QUANTITY: AS PER TS.
SL. NO. 09: TENDER NO. 03251988, SHORT DESCRIPTION OF ITEM: CUT OFF ANGLE COCK, QUANTITY: 8407 NOS.
SL. NO. 10: TENDER NO. 02241681A, SHORT DESCRIPTION OF ITEM: PINION SHAFT 21 TEETH, QUANTITY: AS PER TS.
SL. NO. 11: TENDER NO. 02251213, SHORT DESCRIPTION OF ITEM: STEEL LOCK NUTS, QUANTITY: AS PER TS.
SL. NO. 12: TENDER NO. 02251044, SHORT DESCRIPTION OF ITEM: AOH KIT, QUANTITY: AS PER TS.
Tender opening date: 30.04.2025 (for Sl. No. 1 & 8), 17.04.2025 (for Sl. No. 2 & 3), 18.04.2025 (for Sl. No. 4), 21.04.2025 (for Sl. No. 5, 7 & 12), 11.04.2025 (for Sl. No. 6), 28.04.2025 (for Sl. No. 9), 15.04.2025 (for Sl. No. 10) & 14.04.2025 (for Sl. No. 11).
Regarding detailed notice, EMD, Purchase restrictions and detailed tender conditions, please visit Website www.ireps.gov.in and www.eastcoastrail.indianrailways.gov.in
Principal Chief Materials Manager, Bhubaneswar

“To stand for the Truth in all circumstances, to declare it if necessary in the teeth of the worst opposition and to be ready to all you can for its sake, is the definition of heroism.”
THE MOTHER



Israel's Blind Spot

Enjoying a perfectly brewed cappuccino and a crisp croissant on a pleasant street in Tel Aviv, it is hard to imagine that people are being bombed, shelled, and strafed about 43 miles (69 kilometers) away in Gaza (not to mention the constant violence on the West Bank less than 40 miles away). When life seems so civilized on the surface, it is easy to forget about the suffering of others.

This is not to say that Israelis are oblivious to the war. They can see it on their television screens all the time, including images of devastated cities in Gaza and animated discussions about the latest news. Anger about the war, and Benjamin Netanyahu's efforts to prolong it, as well as his attempts to undermine the judiciary and other institutions of Israel's democracy, is palpable everywhere, especially in Tel Aviv, a mostly secular and liberal city.

There are daily demonstrations against the war, and against Netanyahu's firings of public officials who stand in the way of his autocratic impulses. People denounce the prime minister and the extremists in his cabinet as fascists and war criminals, and argue about who is the greater influence on the other, Trump or Netanyahu. A former fighter pilot in the Israeli Defense Force told me he would not serve again in a war he found unacceptable. Another person said he might leave Israel if his son were called up. I spoke to a writer who despaired that his country would be torn apart by hatred among Israelis, as well as Arabs and Jews.

Many anti-war protesters and pro-democracy activists feel isolated from the outside world. Cultural boycotts are cutting the international ties of Israeli arts institutions and universities. Israeli liberals feel that they are being squeezed between hostile forces at home, not least their own government and its radical nationalist supporters, and people abroad who condemn all Israelis for the horrors inflicted on the Palestinians.

One can sympathize with such feelings of being misunderstood or even abandoned. Guilt by association is never fair. A good reason to oppose cultural boycotts is that they harm and alienate the very people who should be allies in opposing dictatorship and unjust wars.

There is, however, a glaring void in all the anti-war and pro-democracy demonstrations in Israel: hardly anyone mentions the Palestinians. There are banners everywhere demanding that the government "bring the hostages home." People on the left and the right of Israeli politics wear yellow ribbons. Amateur art installations outside the excellent Tel Aviv Museum of Art movingly express the anguish Israelis feel about the hostages, many of whom have already died in Gaza's stifling tunnels.

People on television talk shows deplore the continuation of a war that might cause all remaining Israeli hostages to die. But even though pictures of shattered buildings and streets in Gaza are shown, there are no images of Palestinian civilians being killed, maimed, driven from their homes, and starved. Haaretz still reports on these atrocities, but the readers of this fine liberal newspaper constitute only about 4% of the Israeli population. For the rest, it is all too easy to pretend that the suffering of Palestinians is none of their concern. Or, worse, many Israelis regard even raising the issue as being in bad taste, as though any mention of it were just an encouragement to anti-Semites. I heard about an anti-war demonstration in Jerusalem where the microphone was taken away from a protester who began to discuss the Palestinian victims.

In Jerusalem, I met a middle-aged person, fiercely anti-Netanyahu and anti-war, who speaks Arabic and has started a worthy charity organization for the poor. When I asked whether her charity benefited Arabs, too, she sighed, and said she wished it were possible. Then she explained that the Palestinians said they wanted peace, but all of them supported the murders and abductions of more than 1,200 Israelis on 7 October, 2023. What happened on that day reminded her of the Nazi Holocaust. How could one possibly have friendly relations with such people?

This view cannot simply be dismissed as bigotry or racism. Her view is widely shared in Israel. There are many good reasons to be critical of Israeli oppression of Palestinians and indifference to their suffering. But it is foolish to underestimate the shock of 7 October. Suddenly being subjected to the kind of savage brutality from which Jews in Israel thought they finally would be safe revived memories of centuries of persecution, murder, and humiliation.

This would have been the case even if Netanyahu had been a less cynical leader, bent on continuing a war to maintain his government of extremists. Out of government, he will be tried and possibly convicted of fraud and corruption. He is not the first Israeli prime minister to use the long narrative of Jewish victimhood, culminating in the Holocaust, for political ends. David Ben-Gurion already did that in 1961, when Adolf Eichmann, the Nazi bureaucrat of mass murder, was put on trial in Jerusalem. But Netanyahu has done more than all his predecessors to promote the idea that the Palestinians, and Hamas in particular, are an existential threat to the Jews and that only he can protect them from a second Holocaust.

The 7 October attack made the last claim appear hollow, which is one reason for Netanyahu's plummeting popularity. But most Israelis share his view of an existential threat. In a struggle for survival, there is no room for compassion toward the enemy. That is why well-meaning people can be vehemently opposed to an illiberal, self-serving leader, while succumbing to the fears he has stoked.

The writer is the author, most recently, of Spinoza: Freedom's Messiah (Yale University Press, 2024).

PROJECT SYNDICATE

WISDOM CORNER

“If we command our wealth, we shall be rich and free; if our wealth commands us, we are poor indeed.”

EDMUND BURKE

“We're all going to die, all of us; what a circus! That alone should make us love each other, but it doesn't. We are terrorized and flattened by trivialities. We are eaten up by nothing.”

CHARLES BUKOWSKI

“I believe that every human mind feels pleasure in doing good to another.”

THOMAS JEFFERSON

PENSIONERS' RIGHTS

FOCUS SOCIAL SECURITY

On 25 March, 2025, the Government of India passed a bill along with the Finance Bill 2025, introducing a controversial provision that has sparked outrage among pensioners and legal experts alike. This legislation seeks to classify pensioners who retired in the past as a separate category, effectively denying them benefits that may be granted to those retiring after the bill's enactment. The move has been widely criticized as an attempt to bypass the landmark Supreme Court judgement that upholds the constitutional right to equality for all pensioners.



Bruhaspati Samal

PENSIONERS ARE NOT A BURDEN ON THE STATE BUT INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE COUNTRY'S DEVELOPMENT



Ian Buruma

IN A STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL, THERE IS NO ROOM FOR COMPASSION TOWARD THE ENEMY. THAT IS WHY WELL-MEANING PEOPLE CAN BE VEHEMENTLY OPPOSED TO AN ILLIBERAL, SELF-SERVING LEADER, WHILE SUCCUMBING TO THE FEARS HE HAS STOKED

At the heart of the issue is the government's assertion that pensioners of the same class can be divided based on an artificial cut-off date. According to this perspective, those who retired earlier should not be entitled to benefits granted to future retirees. This argument stands in stark contrast to the principles laid down by the Supreme Court, which had previously ruled that the government cannot arbitrarily divide pensioners of the same class. The attempt to introduce such a significant change within the Finance Bill, rather than as a separate piece of legislation, raises concerns about the government's intentions. Many see this as a deliberate effort to push the bill through without due debate, especially given that it was passed despite strong opposition.

The Constitution guarantees equality before the law under Article 14. This fundamental right ensures that no individual or group is subjected to arbitrary discrimination by the state. The Supreme Court, in



The imposition of cut-off dates to deny benefits to older pensioners is not only discriminatory but also unconstitutional

its landmark ruling in Union of India vs. DS Nakara (1982), explicitly held that pensioners form a homogeneous class and cannot be treated differently based on arbitrary dates of retirement. The Court's decision reinforced that pension is not a mere bounty but a right, and any unjust distinction between pensioners violates the principles of equality and fairness.

By introducing an artificial distinction between past and future pensioners, the government is effectively contradicting this well-established legal precedent. The imposition of cut-off dates to deny benefits to older pensioners is not only discriminatory but also unconstitutional. The principle of pension parity ensures that those who have retired earlier receive the same benefits as those retiring later, provided they belong to the same service category. The government's move seeks to undo this principle, setting a dangerous precedent for future policies.

The implications of this bill are far-reaching. If implemented, it would mean that pensioners who retired before a specified date would be de-

nied enhancements in pension amounts, medical benefits, and other allowances that may be granted to newer retirees. This would create significant disparities, making older pensioners vulnerable to financial difficulties and limiting their access to essential benefits. Many retired government employees depend solely on their pensions for their livelihood, and any attempt to curtail their entitlements could have severe consequences on their quality of life.

Beyond its legal and financial implications, this move also raises ethical concerns. Pensioners are individuals who have devoted decades of their lives to government service. Denying them rightful benefits simply because they retired earlier is not just unfair but also morally indefensible. The government has a responsibility to treat all pensioners with dignity and respect. Instead of discriminating based on retirement dates, it should work towards ensuring that all retirees receive adequate financial support, especially as they grow older and their healthcare

needs increase.

The passage of this bill has rightly triggered strong opposition from pensioners' associations, legal experts, and political parties. Many have condemned the government's attempt to push the bill through the Finance Bill without open discussion. The move has also led to calls for legal intervention, with experts suggesting that the matter may soon be challenged in the Supreme Court. Given the clear constitutional violations, there is a strong case for striking down the provision and reaffirming the rights of pensioners.

It is imperative that the government reconsiders its position on this issue. Pensioners are not a burden on the state but individuals who have contributed to the country's development. Denying them rightful benefits undermines not only their rights but also the broader principles of justice and equality.

The government must uphold the Supreme Court's ruling and ensure that pensioners, regardless of their retirement date, receive equal treatment. The constitutional guarantee of equality cannot be compromised for administrative convenience or financial considerations. It is the duty of lawmakers, civil society, and legal institutions to stand against such discriminatory policies and protect the rights of pensioners. Any deviation from this fundamental principle would not only violate the Constitution but also erode public trust in the government's commitment to justice and fairness.

The writer is a service union representative and a columnist.

SPECTRUM NATION

Delimitation: Why's the south worried?

Delimitation of parliamentary seats due in 2026 has evoked controversy with Opposition leaders, particularly the southern states, expressing serious concern and warning it will be a 'test for democracy'. If the delimitation is solely based on population, it is expected to violate federal fairness. This has forced the southern states to challenge the proposed delimitation with the formation of the Joint Action Committee (JAC) for 'Fair Delimitation', comprising CMs and heads of political parties from Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Telangana, Odisha and Punjab. It has passed a resolution calling for a 25-year extension of the freeze on Lok Sabha constituencies based on the 1971 population census.



Dhurjati Mukherjee

IT IS WELL KNOWN THAT THE SOUTHERN STATES STAND TO LOSE THE MOST IF THE DELIMITATION EXERCISE IS CARRIED OUT ON THE BASIS OF POPULATION ALONE

The JAC initiated by Tamil Nadu CM MK Stalin presented a joint representation to Prime Minister Modi by a core committee of MPs. The CMs and party chiefs are determined to challenge the Centre's delimitation plan, expressing concerns about transparency and states being penalised for successfully implementing population control measures. The JAC wants the Centre to enact Constitutional amendments to stop penalising states

that implemented population control programmes.

Another point that needs to be addressed is that while an MP can effectively represent around 3 million people in India, in the UK it is 0.1 million and closer home in Bangladesh it's 0.56 million. This is not to say that richer states should be rewarded with more seats. Nor is it necessary to tie representation to achievement of key development indicators, incentivising governments to improve their performance.

Reports indicate that Samajwadi Party and JMM have lent support to Tamil Nadu on the issue. However, the RJD has backed the proposed delimitation exercise.

It is well known that the southern states stand to lose the most if the delimitation exercise is carried out on the basis of population alone. According to one estimate, Gujarat, Bihar, MP, UP and Rajasthan would have 367 seats, constituting 47% of parliamentary representation while the five southern states would have a mere 164 seats. Reduced representation could erode their say on national policy and government formation.

Though Union Home Minister Amit Shah has stated recently that no state will face

reduction in Lok Sabha seats, it doesn't appear to be a fact. If seats are to be allocated in proportion to the present population, UP, which now has 80 seats may send more than 130 members to a 790-strong House while Tamil Nadu will get only 43, an increase of just four seats. Indeed, states like UP, Bihar and Maharashtra would benefit, while the southern ones would see a drastic decline in their number of seats, obviously a punishment for successfully implementing family planning.

It is understood that the proposed Delimitation Commission will be the final authority to decide the basis of the exercise. The Commission will be formed only after the population census is over and that members would go around the country to elicit states' views.

Delving into the past, the government thought it necessary not to disincentive the small family norm and delimitation of Parliament seats on basis of population was frozen for 25 years in 1976 and again for another 25 years by the Vajpayee government. The big question now is whether the BJP government wants to force delimitation in order to expand and consolidate the party's advantage in the

north?

At 1.45 billion, the country's population continues to be above the carrying capacity of our ecosystem. In fact, the Centre has an important role to play in helping northern states, and even eastern states, in this regard. And those states that have shown success in controlling population cannot, in any way, be penalised by reducing their number of seats and thereby curtailing their powers in the national decision-making and governance process.

Obviously, an amicable solution needs to be formulated. One such solution would be to set the 2011 population as the new norm for both central resource transfers and for delimitation and freeze it at that level for the next 25 years. The delimitation could be gradual with 20 or 25% adjustment every five years starting 2031.

It is worth remembering the American political philosopher, Alexis de Tocqueville who argued that the equalising spirit of democracy exerted a prodigious influence over the whole course of society and the country, including public opinion, laws and the habits of the governed and this should not be curbed, in any way.

INFA

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, Rasulgarih Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Altering Gandhian identity

Sir, Tushar Gandhi, the great-grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, has filed a petition in the Supreme Court challenging the Gujarat High Court's 2022 decision, which upheld the state government's ₹1,200-crore redevelopment project for the Sabarmati Ashram. In his petition, Tushar Gandhi has stated that the redevelopment project will destroy the simplicity and original ethos of the ashram, turning it into a modernised, state-controlled monument. The petition also argues that proposed structures like museums, amphitheaters, and food courts have absolutely no connection to Gandhian principles and that they would significantly alter the ashram's identity and character. Tushar Gandhi has further stated in the petition that the current plan will also displace residents of Harijan families and bypass Gandhian trusts that have historically overseen the precinct. It is bewildering on what basis the Gujarat High Court has given weight to oral submissions and affidavits of the state government without examining the ground realities or the legal implications of changing the governance structure of the Sabarmati Ashram.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

Threat of landmines

Sir, Explosive devices kill and maim people. Socio-economic development of nations is crushed when people are killed at the drop of a hat. Mines, explosive remnants of war and Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) are the biggest culprits of mankind. The International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action is observed on 4 April to infuse awareness among the people about the threat caused by landmines. Saving lives, providing humanitarian aid, protecting lives and properties, helping internally displaced refugees return to where they belong are not easy tasks at all, and the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) is seized of the matter for the last two decades in providing a healing touch to the needy. The UN always believes that "safe future starts here." Every government should keep itself busy in locating and destroying mines, and open roads.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Stalin urges Modi on Katchatheevu

Writing to Modi, Stalin cited the Assembly resolution passed April 2, 2025 seeking retrieval of Katchatheevu island from Sri Lanka, and underscored that the origin of the problem was the Indo-Sri Lankan treaty (Katchatheevu Agreement) of the year 1974

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, April 3: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin Thursday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to take immediate steps for retrieving the Katchatheevu island from Sri Lanka to ensure permanent protection of the traditional fishing rights of the state's fishermen in the Palk Bay area.

Writing to Modi, Stalin cited the Assembly resolution passed April 2, 2025 seeking retrieval of Katchatheevu island from Sri Lanka, and underscored that the origin of the problem was the Indo-Sri Lankan treaty (Katchatheevu Agreement) of the year 1974. The government of Tamil Nadu has been steadfast in opposing the Katchatheevu agreement right from the beginning. The Members of Parliament from Tamil Nadu had strongly opposed the ceding of Katchatheevu to Sri Lanka in Parliament in 1974.

After the signing of the Katchatheevu agreement by the union government on 28.06.1974 without the consent of the state government, the then Chief Minister M Karunanidhi immediately convened an all-party meeting at the Secretariat on the very next day 29.06.1974 and passed a resolution condemning it and wrote a letter to the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on the same day.



In the year 2024, 530 Indian fishermen have been arrested and in the first three months of the year 2025, 147 fishermen were apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy

Subsequently, the Tamil Nadu legislative Assembly passed a resolution 21.08.1974 strongly opposing the decision of union government on the issue of Katchatheevu.

The Tamil Nadu legislative Assembly had passed resolutions 03.10.1991, 03.05.2013 and 05.12.2014 reiterating the consistent demand of retrieving the Katchatheevu Island to protect the traditional fishing rights of the state's fishermen.

The CM said, "The frequent apprehensions of our fishermen and seizure of their boats in large numbers have put the lives of coastal community in a state of permanent anxiety

and distress. The livelihood of the fishermen has also become uncertain due to the arrests and seizures. I have personally brought this issue to your notice for immediate intervention, during our first meeting 17.06.2021 after my assumption of office as Chief Minister and also reiterated our earlier requests for a permanent solution of this issue in our subsequent meetings as well. Since 2021, I have also written many letters to the Minister for External Affairs and yourself on the arrests and attacks on Indian fishermen by the Sri Lankan Navy."

In the year 2024, 530 Indian fishermen have been arrested

and in the first three months of the year 2025, 147 fishermen were apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy.

"Our fishermen are being sentenced to maximum imprisonment and are being levied hefty fines. Besides this, their boats are confiscated and put to auction. All these aggressive measures of Sri Lanka have pushed our fishermen to the brink of extreme poverty and reaffirms our repeated demand for retrieval of Katchatheevu, which is the only way to find a permanent solution to this problem."

In this regard, the Tamil Nadu legislative Assembly unanimously passed a resolution 02.04.2025, urging the union government to immediately review the Indo-Sri Lankan Agreement and take all steps to retrieve Katchatheevu island and also to urge the Prime Minister to hold talks with the Sri Lankan government to get "all our imprisoned fishermen released along with their boats on a goodwill basis," during his upcoming official visit to Sri Lanka.

Stalin said, "I request your good office to take immediate steps to review the Indo-Sri Lankan Agreement at the earliest so that the Katchatheevu Island is retrieved and the traditional fishing rights of our fishermen are permanently protected."

Delhi Assembly to set up 500 kVA solar capacity

The Assembly has also targeted to go paperless before the monsoon session under the National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA) project

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 3: Delhi Assembly is targeting to set up 500 kVA capacity solar panels in 100 days to save a monthly electricity bill of Rs 15 lakh, Speaker Vijender Gupta said Thursday.

Addressing a press conference a day after the conclusion of the budget session, Gupta said that the Assembly will promote solar energy to send a message to the people to adopt it and ensure zero bills against electricity consumption.

He said the Assembly has also targeted to go paperless before the monsoon session under the National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA) project. A media desk will be set up and equipped with 25 computers, an internet connection, and printers.

Gupta said that in the 40 days of the formation of the new government in Delhi, two sessions were held and properly concluded.

The seven-day budget session was conducted for a record 27.56 hours. Gupta said that the budget tabled March 25 was discussed for 7.13 minutes by 36 members, including those from Opposition AAP.

The only calling attention motion accepted in the session was from the Opposition, he



said. The motion was moved to discuss power cuts.

"It's, however, surprising that despite being on the Assembly premises, they did not attend the discussion on their motion. I want to ask the Opposition why (they) did not attend the discussion while lying that they were stopped from speaking on the issue of power cuts," the Speaker said.

He said the Opposition will have to answer about this in the next session. Gupta asserted that "politically motivated" disruptions by the Opposition were "sternly" dealt with as the last option during the budget session.

In a first, one day of the session was fixed for private mem-

bers resolutions. A record 78 matters were raised under the special mention rule, the Speaker said.

Eight reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) on the performance of the previous Delhi government were also tabled in the House, but the Opposition did not take part in the discussions, he said.

Resolution under Rule 107 was also passed in the session, disposing of over 300 matters taken up by committees of the previous Assembly that were carried forward to the newly constituted eighth Assembly, he said. Celebration of the Hindu New Year for the first time in the Assembly was yet another achievement, he asserted.

FREE BUS TRAVEL FOR WOMEN

Delhi women to get 'lifetime' smart card

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 3: The Delhi government's free bus ride scheme for women will only be available to those living in Delhi, with the transport department launching an exercise to introduce a 'lifetime' smart card for availing the benefits, officials said Thursday.

The BJP government in Delhi will soon launch the registration process for women willing to obtain the smart card for free travel in public buses, they said.

The move comes days after Chief Minister Rekha Gupta in the Assembly alleged corruption in the existing 'pink ticket' system under the previous Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government.

"We are committed to providing this service to women... Corruption will not be tolerated. We will introduce digital travel cards for women, putting an end to the 'pink corruption' tied to physical tickets," Gupta



ta said. "The card will allow women to travel freely on public buses anytime, eliminating corruption linked to ticketing," she added, emphasising that the ticketing system will be fully digitised to enhance efficiency.

She also said that the entire system would be modernised, and the flawed existing schemes would be revamped to ensure transparency and efficiency.

"Our goal is to make Delhi's public transport more accessible, reliable and globally recognised," Gupta said during the Budget Session of the Assem-

bling, highlighting the broader efforts to make public transports more inclusive and efficient, particularly for women.

The pink ticket scheme, launched by the AAP on the occasion of Bhai Dooj in 2019, offers free travel to women on Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) buses.

Women receive single-journey passes in the form of pink tickets, with Delhi government covering the cost - priced at Rs 10 per ticket - and compensating the bus companies based on the total number of tickets issued.

Participation in the scheme is voluntary, leading to a rise in the number of women using public transport in the national capital.

The BJP, which formed the government in Delhi after more than 26 years following its landslide victory in the February 5 Assembly polls, is expected to begin work on the smart card initiative within the next two to three weeks.



A labourer works on a hot day, in Chennai, Thursday

PTI PHOTO

Delhi govt to roll out Ayushman Bharat April 5

Under the scheme, priority will be given to Delhi's poorest families, including those under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana and priority households

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 3: The Delhi government's Ayushman Bharat scheme will prioritise the "poorest of the poor," with one lakh people enrolled by April 10, aiming to improve the city's healthcare infrastructure, Health Minister Pankaj Singh said.

Under this scheme, priority will be given to Delhi's poorest families, including those under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) and priority households, Singh told PTI Thursday.

"The Ayushman Bharat scheme must be implemented swiftly after the MoU is signed. Efforts will be made at the ground level to ensure that the most vulnerable sections of society benefit," he said.

Delhi's healthcare infrastructure will improve with this initiative, patients will receive better primary care and health services will be enhanced, the minister said.

Additionally, the patient records will be digitally maintained, allowing for better monitoring and management,



The scheme includes Ayushman Arogya Mandir, critical care blocks, integrated diagnostic facilities, PMJAY and the National Digital Health Mission

he added.

"We will first issue the cards to those who need them the most, including beneficiaries under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) and priority households. After that, we will expand the distribution further."

The AAY is a government scheme launched in 2000 to provide highly subsidised food to

the poorest families. It was first implemented in Rajasthan.

Under this scheme, after identifying the "poorest of the poor" families within the Below Poverty Line (BPL) category, the government allows them to purchase up to 35 kilograms of rice and wheat at highly subsidised rates - Rs 3 per kilogram for rice and Rs 2 per kilogram for wheat.

The Ayushman Bharat scheme, launched by the Central government as recommended by the National Health Policy 2017, was not implemented in the national capital.

The scheme includes Ayushman Arogya Mandir, critical care blocks, integrated diagnostic facilities, PMJAY and the National Digital Health Mission.

The BJP, which formed its government in Delhi after more than 26 years, approved the scheme in its first cabinet meeting - right after Chief Minister Rekha Gupta and her six ministers took the oath of office February 20.

The Delhi government has with this move increased the healthcare budget by 48 per cent for the financial year 2025-26, compared to the previous year's allocation by the AAP regime.

The current administration has allocated Rs 12,893 crore for the health sector - an increase of Rs 4,208 crore from the Rs 8,685 crore budgeted by the AAP in FY 2024-25.

A significant portion of the funds will be directed towards implementing central health schemes, including Ayushman Bharat, which was a key BJP poll promise during the elections.

The scheme will receive Rs 2,144 crore, expanding insurance coverage for Delhi residents to Rs 10 lakh, with Rs 7 lakh being borne by the city government.

TN to install Karl Marx's statue, memorial for Mookiah Thevar

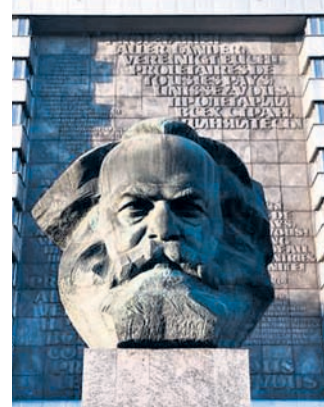
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, April 3: The Tamil Nadu government will install a statue of German philosopher and revolutionary socialist Karl Marx in Chennai and also establish a memorial for All India Forward Bloc leader PK Mookiah Thevar in Usilampatti in Madurai, Chief Minister MK Stalin announced Thursday.

Making the announcements under rule 110 in the Assembly, he said the Dravidian model government wanted to glorify and commend the revolutionary world leader Karl Marx.

"Karl Marx gave us the slogan 'workers of the world unite,'" the Chief Minister said referring to the famed political slogan, one of the rallying cries of The Communist Manifesto.

Though many made history, it was Karl Marx who altered the course of history. "It was his thoughts that laid the foundation for world revolutions and various changes that this world has achieved so far. It is with such a thought of 'everything for all' that we presented our Budget March 14, coinciding with Marx's death anniversary," Stalin said.



"I think it is appropriate that a statue of Marx be erected in Chennai, where the trade union movement was formed a hundred years ago," he said.

The second announcement was made on the eve of Mookiah Thevar's 103rd birth anniversary.

Mookiah Thevar voiced against ceding of Katchatheevu to Sri Lanka. He requested former Chief Minister CN Annadurai to establish educational institutions for the people of Thevar community, the Chief Minister said.



Encroachments were made in the name of Waqf at various places, including the sacred land associated with Nishad Raj. But this will not be allowed to continue. A grand and divine Kumbh Mela was organised despite their objections
YOGI ADITYANATH | UTTAR PRADESH CM

ALLAHABAD HC GRANTS RELIEF TO AZAM KHAN

The Allahabad High Court has granted relief to former Samajwadi Party MP Mohammad Azam Khan in a 2007 house demolition case by staying his arrest. A two-judge bench comprising justices Rajiv Gupta and Ram Manohar Narain Mishra also asked the Uttar Pradesh government to file its reply in the matter



of the day quote

By imposing Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir, Congress had shackled Mother India. The Ram Temple should have been built at the same time as the Somnath Temple
KESHAV PRASAD MAURYA | UP DEPUTY CM

The Waqf Bill was brought in haste. The government has done whatever it wanted without listening to the Opposition. They made promises to mislead the people, but none of them have been fulfilled
AJAY RAI | UP CONG PRESIDENT

It seems that the Government of India repeatedly makes laws targeting the minority community to divert attention from important issues like inflation, unemployment, the ongoing fall in the stock market and devaluation of the rupee
ASHOK GEHLOT | RAJASTHAN EX CM

Oppn slams PM over US tariff

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 3: The Congress and other Opposition parties Thursday attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi over imposition of 27 per cent reciprocal tariff on India by the US and said it's time that the government "develop a spine" and start standing up for the country's interest.

"Somebody once asked Indira Gandhi ji - 'In the matter of foreign policy you lean left or you lean right', and Indira Gandhi ji answered 'I don't lean left or right, I stand straight. I am Indian and I stand straight'." Rahul Gandhi said. Speaking to reporters in Parliament complex, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge also took potshots at Prime Minister Modi, saying the imposition of additional tariff on India by the US shows that US leadership is a businessman and "our customer" fell into his trap. When asked, Congress MP



Leading the charge, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi said tariffs imposed by the US are going to "completely devastate" the Indian economy, particularly sectors like the auto industry, pharmaceuticals and agriculture

The government of India must give answers as to what it is doing about the imposition of reciprocal tariffs on India, he demanded while speaking in the Lok Sabha during Zero Hour

Manish Tewari said the imposition of additional tariff is a "complete failure" of the negotiations between the government of India and the Trump administration. "America has

gone ahead and done what it wanted to do. Coupled with that you have the unfortunate situation where the visas of Indian students are being cancelled en masse. The government of In-

dia is not raising its voice," he told PTI in Parliament complex.

Asked for comment, BJP Rajya Sabha MP and former Uttar Pradesh deputy chief minister Dinesh Sharma said India is an independent country with an "independent foreign policy" and it will not come under anybody's pressure. "India is the world's fifth largest economy. The country has implemented measures for self-reliance and self-employment. It is now moving ahead firmly. If a country is framing its policy, then India will also frame its policy," he told PTI in Parliament complex.

The US has announced additional 27 per cent import duties on India saying New Delhi imposes high tariffs on American goods, as the Donald Trump administration aims to reduce the trade deficit and boost manufacturing.

Though the move is expected to impact India's exports of certain sectors to the US, experts say that India is better-placed

than its competitors, including Bangladesh (37 per cent), China (54 per cent), Vietnam (46 per cent) and Thailand (36 per cent) which face increased levies. Samajwadi Party MP Rajiv Rai took a dig at Modi over imposition of reciprocal tariff and said the country's "credibility and strength" does not increase by "having one-sided love and calling someone a friend". "Modi will have to reply why the US is mistreating India," he told PTI when asked for comment. TMC Rajya Sabha MP Sagarika Ghosh hit out at the Modi government on the issue and said it will have its adverse impact on key sectors in India like textiles engineering and gems and jewellery as well as on the fate of lakhs of people employed in these sectors. Congress MP Shashi Tharoor termed the imposition of tariff as "disturbing" and said it will affect "some of India's exports" to the US which will "perhaps" become less competitive.

AGUSTAWESTLAND CASE

Attempts to poison me in jail: Michel to court

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 3: A Delhi court Thursday sought a response from Bihar Jail authorities on a plea of Christian Michel James, an alleged middleman in the Agustawestland case, claiming attempts were made to poison him inside the prison.

Special judge Sanjeev Aggarwal sought a status report from the DG (prisons), Bihar Jail on the application filed by James over the "specific serious allegations".

The judge directed the official to file the report by April 16, 2025 detailing the action taken after James levelled the allegations.

The judge further directed the jail superintendent concerned to "positively" take James to the orthopedic department, AIIMS April 7 after her complained of pain post his surgery February 11, 2025. James, a British national, was extradited December 4, 2018 from Dubai, where he spent four months in custody. Probe agencies had reported irregularities in the purchase of 12 VVIP helicopters from Italian manufacturing company AgustaWestland.

Delhi Police aims for drug-free city by '27

New Delhi: Delhi Police Thursday organised a drug destruction event as part of its ongoing campaign against narcotics and destroyed 1,643 kg of seized drugs worth ₹2,622 crore in the international market, an official said. The event held at Biotic Waste Solutions Pvt. Ltd. on GT Karnal Road was attended by Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena and Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora, he added. Large quantities of narcotics, including 529 kg of cannabis, 27 kg of charas, 11 kg of heroin, 517 kg of cocaine and smaller quantities of MDMA, ketamine and ephedrine, were disposed of during the event. "Set in motion the destruction of 1,643 kg of seized drugs and narcotics valued at about ₹2,622 crore in the international market, in another major step towards Drug Free Delhi by 2027," the lieutenant governor said on X. The cocaine destroyed was part of a total recovery of 1,289 kg from a multi-state drug bust following the registration of a case at the Special Cell October 2, 2024.

TREE FELLING

SC says no activity till further orders

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 3: The Supreme Court Thursday asked the Telangana government to explain the 'compelling urgency' for clearing a large tree cover on a land parcel next to University of Hyderabad, and stayed any future activity till further orders.

A bench of Justices BR Gavai and Augustine George Masih, which took suo motu cognisance of the state's tree felling drive in Kancha Gachibowli Forest, called it a 'very serious' matter. It said the interim report placed before it by the registrar (judicial) of the Telangana High Court depicted an 'alarming picture' as a huge number of trees were being felled aside from the deployment of huge machineries. "We direct that until further orders, no activities of any sorts, except the protection of the trees already existing, shall be undertaken by the state," the bench said. The state Chief Secretary was ordered to answer several of its questions, including the 'compelling urgency' in clearing the green cover for developmental activities from a purported forest area.

The SC cautioned if it found lapses on the part of the state, it would take action against the Chief Secretary. "He will go to temporary prison constructed at the same spot near the lake,"

the bench said, "If Chief Secretary wants to enjoy the state hospitality, one can't help it."

The Chief Secretary was directed to explain whether the state had obtained the environmental impact assessment certificate for the development activities.

The bench asked whether for felling the trees, requisite permission from the forest authority or any other local statutes was obtained.

In case the state authorities were found in the violation of any of its directions in true letter and spirit, the onus would fall on the state's chief secretary, it added.

The court enquired about the status of the felled trees.

A central empowered committee was directed to visit the place in question and submit its report prior to April 16, when the matter would be heard again. The committee was formed in 2002 after a top court order for monitoring and ensuring compliance of the directions of the apex court on preservation of forests and wildlife. The apex court referred to its March 4 order in a separate matter in which it had directed the states and union territories to constitute within a month an expert committee for preparing a consolidated record of lands, including forest like areas, unclassified and community forest lands.



The new Pamban Bridge, connecting Rameswaram with mainland India, that will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Ram Navami (April 6), at Rameswaram in Ramanathapuram district of Tamil Nadu. It is considered to be India's First Vertical Lift Railway Sea Bridge
PTI PHOTO

INDIA, THAILAND ELEVATE TIES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangkok, April 3: India and Thailand Thursday decided to elevate their relations to the level of a strategic partnership with Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserting that both the countries support a free, open, inclusive, and rules-based order in Indo-Pacific, and believe in a policy of development, not expansionism.

Modi made the remarks at a joint press event with his Thai counterpart Paetongtarn Shinawatra after holding delegation-level talks during which they held extensive discussions on various areas of bilateral cooperation. "We have emphasized cooperation in the fields of tourism, culture, and education between India's



northeastern states and Thailand. We discussed enhancing mutual trade, investment, and exchanges between businesses," Modi said about his talks with Shinawatra.

Agreements have also been made for cooperation in

MSME, handloom, and handicraft, he noted. Modi asserted that Thailand holds a special place in India's 'Act East' Policy and the Indo-Pacific vision. "Today, we have decided to elevate our relations to the level of a Strategic Partnership.

Discussions were also held on establishing a 'Strategic Dialogue' between security agencies," Modi said.

He said India fully supports ASEAN unity and ASEAN Centrality. "In the Indo-Pacific, we both support a free, open, inclusive, and rules-based order. We believe in the policy of vikaasvaad, not vistaarvaad (development-ism, not expansionism)," Modi said.

"I am grateful to the Thai government for issuing a special postage stamp based on the 18th-century 'Ramayana' mural paintings on the occasion of my visit," he said. Modi said Prime Minister Shinawatra presented him with the Tripitaka. "On behalf of the Buddha-land India, I accepted it with folded hands," he added.

Parl panel flags delays in MGNREGA payments

The Standing Committee on Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, in its eighth report on MGNREGA that was tabled in Parliament Thursday, highlighted that delays in wage payments continue to be a significant issue, affecting lakhs of rural workers dependent on the scheme for livelihood

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 3: A parliamentary panel has raised concerns over delays in wage payments under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and called for urgent reforms in the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) to ensure better support for vulnerable sections of society. The report urged the government to address systemic

bottlenecks, improve fund allocation, and ensure timely payments. Additionally, the panel expressed concerns over the declining budgetary allocation for MGNREGA and the increasing demand for jobs under the scheme. It recommended revising the wage structure to match inflation and strengthening grievance redressal mechanisms to protect workers' rights. The report also pointed out issues such as the lack of



proper job card issuance, the need for better social audits, and the importance of including more women beneficiaries in MGNREGA employment. Furthermore, it emphasized that material shortages and administrative delays at the state level must be addressed to ensure seamless implementation of the scheme. In its ninth report 'Impact

of National Social Assistance Programme on the Poor and Destitute in the Villages', which provides financial assistance to senior citizens, widows, and persons with disabilities, the committee flagged inadequacies in pension amounts. The report observed that current pension rates under the scheme remain insufficient to meet basic needs, urging the gov-

ernment to revise the amounts in line with rising living costs.

It also stressed the need for a simplified application process and better integration of NSAP with other social security schemes to enhance outreach. The panel further recommended an increase in central contributions to NSAP, saying that the financial burden should not be disproportionately placed on state governments.

It also suggested greater transparency in fund disbursement and improved tracking mechanisms to prevent delays in pension payments. The report emphasised the need to expand the coverage of NSAP, ensuring that all eligible beneficiaries receive assistance without bureaucratic hurdles. Moreover, it called for a periodic reassessment of pension amounts to reflect inflation

trends and ensure sustainable social security support.

Another report analyzed broader welfare program inefficiencies, highlighting gaps in the implementation of direct benefit transfers (DBT). The panel noted that DBT-related delays hinder access to essential social benefits, particularly in rural areas where banking infrastructure remains weak. It called for improved coordination between financial institutions and government agencies to ensure smooth transactions.

The report also stressed the need to strengthen awareness campaigns so that eligible beneficiaries are informed about their entitlements. The panel urged the government to launch community outreach programs, especially in remote regions, to educate citizens on accessing welfare schemes.

SHORT TAKES

Thunderstorms likely in Andhra

Vijayawada: The India Meteorological Department Thursday forecast thunderstorms accompanied by lightning in parts of Andhra Pradesh for three days, from April 3 to 5. It predicted thunderstorms at isolated places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh (NCAP), Yanam, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh (SCAP), and Rayalaseema. "Gusty winds with speeds of up to 40-50 km per hour are likely at isolated places over NCAP, Yanam, SCAP, and Rayalaseema.

3 suspended for 'ragging' junior

Hyderabad: Three students of the Government Medical College in Nagarkurnool district of Telangana were suspended for ragging a first-year MBBS student, the principal said Thursday. Following a meeting of the Anti-Ragging Committee Wednesday, disciplinary action was initiated against the three senior students—one from the third year and two from the second year, she added. The Anti-Ragging Committee imposed penalties, barring the three students from academic activities at the college and expelling them from the hostel for periods ranging from one to three months, college officials said.

Mini Secretariat gets bomb threat

Faridabad: The Mini Secretariat here in Sector 12 turned into a scene of commotion Thursday after the threat of a bomb inside. The mail was sent to the office of Faridabad Deputy Commissioner around 7.30 am. The threat prompted authorities to evacuate the building and seal it. After a long and thorough search, around 3.30 pm, search authorities concluded it was a hoax, Central Police Station SHO Inspector Sunil Kumar said.

2 kids killed after gas cylinder blasts

Budaun: Two children and a cattle were killed Thursday afternoon after a gas cylinder exploded inside a hut that caught fire here, officials said. According to police officials, a spark triggered a fire in a hut belonging to Jaipal Singh, located outside Jinsinangla village. As villagers struggled to control the flames, the gas cylinder inside the hut exploded, engulfing the surrounding area.

national



OVER 400 SEIZED VEHICLES GUTTED
More than 400 vehicles seized by the Delhi Traffic Police were gutted in a fire in Nehru Place Thursday, an official said. An FIR has been registered in the matter and police are probing if there was any foul play involved, he said. The Delhi Fire Services received a call regarding a fire at a police malkhana (yard) in Nehru Place at around 2 pm, he said



of the day quote

The Prime Minister, finance minister and external affairs minister should have taken the country into confidence and informed about the steps to mitigate the effects. Had they taken such a stand, his (Sena UBT) party would have supported the government

UDHAV THACKERAY | SHIV SENA (UBT) CHIEF

Kerala is a beacon of spirituality, where devotion and culture are deeply intertwined. Such gathering holds a great significance in uniting people from different states and communities through faith

SUKHVINDER SINGH SUKHU | HP CM

The Bihar polls are due this year, followed by Assembly polls in Assam early next year. The BJP government is a complete failure in women empowerment

ALKA LAMBA | MAHILA CONG PRESIDENT

SC refuses to relax ban on firecrackers in Delhi-NCR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 3: The Supreme Court Thursday refused to relax the ban imposed on the manufacture, storage and sale on firecrackers in Delhi-NCR noting that air pollution levels remained alarming for a considerable time.

A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan said a large section of the population worked on streets and was the worst affected by pollution. Not everybody can afford an air purifier at their residence or place of work to fight pollution, the bench said.

"Several orders passed by this court during last six months bring on the record the horrible situation with which prevailed in Delhi due to very high levels of air pollution... Right to health is an essential part of Article 21 of the constitution so is the Right to live in a pollution free atmosphere," the court said.

Unless the court was satisfied that the pollution due to the "so-

called" green crackers was bare minimum, there was no question of reconsidering the previous orders, it added. The bench said restricting the ban on firecrackers in the Delhi-NCR region just around Diwali would be meaningless, as it could be purchased and stored in advance. The top court said the orders passed from time to time would indicate that the directions and ban on the use of firecrackers was warranted by an "extraordinary situation" created in Delhi.

Senior Advocate Aparajita Singh, who is amicus curiae in the case, informed the bench that all four NCR states had banned firecrackers, but on-line sale remained an issue in some states like Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. The apex court also raised the issue of noise pollution caused by bursting of firecrackers. The top court was hearing a batch of petitions filed by firecracker manufacturers seeking relaxation of ban and permission to sell green crackers.



Devotees pay obeisance to the Sun God after taking a holy dip in the Ganga river during 'Chaiti Chhath Puja' festival in Patna, Bihar

PTI PHOTO

SC INVALIDATES SCHOOL JOBS

Can't accept verdict: Mamata

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, April 3: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Thursday said she respects the judiciary but disagrees with the Supreme Court's verdict on school appointments "on humanitarian grounds" and dared the BJP that she was ready to be arrested for supporting the affected candidates.

While accusing the BJP and the CPI(M) of "hatching a conspiracy and influencing the verdict", Banerjee emphasised that while her government would abide by the top court ruling, it would explore all possible legal options.

"I have the utmost respect for the judiciary and judges, but from a humanitarian perspective, I cannot accept this judgment. As a citizen of this country, I have every right to express my opinion. While I respect the judge and the judiciary, I do not agree with the verdict," Banerjee said at a press conference at the state secretariat. "How can a single person's crime lead to punishment for all," Banerjee said. She also took a defiant stance against the BJP's criticism of her support for the dismissed teachers. "Our lawyers will review this matter. If the BJP wants to send me to jail for supporting them, they can. Catch me if you want to," she declared.

Referring to the alleged recovery of large amount of cash recovered from a judge's



I have the utmost respect for the judiciary and judges, but from a humanitarian perspective, I cannot accept this judgment. As a citizen of this country, I have every right to express my opinion. While I respect the judge and the judiciary, I do not agree with the verdict

MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CM

residence in New Delhi, she questioned why such cases are treated differently when money is found at a judge's home. "I have heard and read reports of huge cash being recovered from a judge's residence. If you recover money from a sitting judge's home, he is only transferred. Then why were these candidates not transferred? The first judge (ex judge of Calcutta High court Abhijit Gangopadhyay) to give this order is now a BJP MP," she said. She alleged that the verdict was "influenced by a conspiracy between the BJP and the CPI(M)".

Banerjee highlighted that the ruling had impacted not just the candidates but also their families. "It's not just 25,000

candidates; their families are affected too. Why should so many people be punished for a few?" she questioned. A Supreme Court bench, led by Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar, upheld a Calcutta High Court order dated April 22, 2024, which annulled the appointments and directed the state government to initiate a fresh selection process. Accusing the BJP of deliberately targeting Bengal, Banerjee asked whether being born in the state was a crime. She raised concerns over the impact of the verdict on the education system. "Over 11,000 of the affected teachers taught in Class IX and 10, and more than 5,500 in Class XI and XII. These are crucial years, the gateway to higher education. Many of them are correcting answer sheets of board exams. Do BJP and CPI(M) want the education system to collapse?" she asked. The chief minister reiterated that her government would follow the court's ruling but explore all legal avenues.

Oppn members walk out of LS in protest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 3: Opposition members, led by the Congress, staged a walkout from the Lok Sabha Thursday in protest against an alleged attack on Catholic priests in Madhya Pradesh's Jabalpur district.

Soon after the House met for the day, the opposition members sought to raise the issue. Some of them came to the aisle raising slogans and demanded a discussion on the issue. Speaker Om Birla did not allow a discussion over the matter and after raising slogans, the opposition members walked out of the House.

Congress members later held a protest in the Parliament complex against the reported attack on two priests, demanding justice for the victims and safety for Christians.

"The way the government and the BJP-Sangh Parivar are attacking minorities, this is just another example (of that)," he charged, adding, "Wherever they are getting a chance, they are attacking churches." Venugopal claimed that similar incidents took place earlier in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand. In a post on X, the Congress leader slammed the BJP-led Centre and alleged that the "attack" on the Christian priests in Jabalpur was a reflection of the "ruling regime's agenda" of spreading hatred and dividing people on religious lines.

Govt tables Waqf Bill in Rajya Sabha



AGENCIES

Chennai, April 3: Union Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju Thursday tabled the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025 in the Rajya Sabha, asserting that the proposed legislation is not against Muslims or intended to hurt their religious feelings, but seeks to improve the functioning of Waqf properties, address the complexities, ensure transparency and introduce technology-driven management.

The Lok Sabha passed the Bill with a 288-232 vote in the wee hours of Thursday after nearly 12 hours of debate.

Tabling the Bill in the Upper House, which was examined and redrafted by a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC), Rijiju said the proposed legislation has nothing to do with religion, but deals only with properties.

The Bill aims to include all the Muslims sects in the Waqf board, Rijiju said.

The minister informed the

House that there were 4.9 lakh Waqf properties in 2004, which have now increased to 8.72 lakh. Seeking the Opposition's support to pass the Bill, Rijiju said it aims to accomplish the unfulfilled tasks of the previous governments.

He also said that Waqf owns the largest chunk of properties in the country, leaving aside those owned by defence and railways. Brushing aside the charges made by the Opposition, Rijiju said, "The Bill is not against Muslims... We don't want to hurt anyone's religious sentiments. The Waqf board is set up only to oversee, and not manage, Waqf properties." "The government has introduced the Bill with a good intention, and thus renamed it as 'UMEED'. No one should have any problem with the name," he added. The government proposes to rename the Waqf Bill as Unified Waqf Management Empowerment, Efficiency and Development (UMEED) Bill.

DMK to move SC

Taking strong exception to the passage of the Waqf Bill in the Lok Sabha, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK president M K Stalin Thursday said his party would challenge the bill in the Supreme Court. Following the announcement, the opposition AIADMK expressed solidarity with 'all steps' taken by the DMK on the issue while the BJP members staged a walkout from the Assembly House in protest.

POST OF THE DAY



ISRO to establish infrastructure for space related activities in Assam
Shri Keshab Mahanta, Honble Minister for Revenue, Disaster Management, IT, Science, Technology and Climate Change, Govt of Assam and Dr. V. Narayanan, Secy, Department of Space/ Chairman, ISRO, have jointly undertook a reconnaissance visit to the site proposed for establishing key infrastructure for Indian Space Programme, in Assam. The multi-purpose facility will help India to ensure safety of space assets, in addition to supporting Indian weather advisory services. Hon'ble Minister has promised all possible support of Govt of Assam for the endeavour and also shared his vision in bringing up a space museum in the area, for the benefit of students and the public at large. Secretary DoS/ Chairman, ISRO has lauded the idea and offered ISRO's cooperation for this.

SHORT TAKES

8 die after inhaling toxic gas inside well

Khandwa (MP): Eight persons died inside a well possibly due to the inhalation of a toxic gas that emanated from the water body in a village in Khandwa district of Madhya Pradesh Thursday, senior officials said. The incident took place at Kondavat village in the Chaigaon Makhan area at around 4 pm when a group of persons entered the well (bawdi) to clean it for immersions on the occasion of Gangour Mata festival and got trapped inside. Khandwa Collector Rishav Gupta and SP Manoj Kumar Rai told reporters.

HC stays proceedings against Baba Ramdev

Kochi: The Kerala High Court Thursday stayed all proceedings in a lower court against Yoga guru Baba Ramdev, his associate Acharya Balakrishna and their company Divya Pharmacy in a "misleading" advertisement case. Justice V G Arun stayed the proceedings, saying there was prima facie merit in their claim that cognisance of the offence was taken after the period of limitation.

202 MPs speak during Zero Hour in Lok Sabha

New Delhi: A record 202 MPs spoke during Zero Hour of Lok Sabha which lasted for over five hours Thursday, according to LS Secretariat. Earlier, July 18, 2019, 161 MPs had spoken during the extended Zero Hour.

Showdown between J&K L-G, Abdullah govt looms over transfers

THE CONTROVERSIAL TRANSFER OF 48 BUREAUCRATS BELONGING TO THE JAMMU AND KASHMIR ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE (JKAS) BY THE LG TWO DAYS AGO LED TO THE LATEST FLASHPOINT BETWEEN THE RAJ BHAVAN AND THE ABDULLAH GOVERNMENT WHICH REGARDS THE TRANSFERS AS VIOLATIVE OF THE LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORK UNDER JAMMU AND KASHMIR REORGANISATION ACT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, April 3: A showdown is looming between Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor Manoj Sinha and the nearly six-month-old government over the transfer of bureaucrats and other issues, prompting Chief Minister Omar Abdullah to convene Friday an urgent meeting of MLAs belonging to the ruling National Conference and supporting parties.

The agenda for the meeting to which legislators of the alliance partner Congress have also been invited, remained a subject of speculation as Abdullah and NC spokespersons remained tight lipped.

But the meeting is expected to discuss reported interference by Raj Bhavan in administrative matters which fall in the domain of the elected government.

The controversial transfer of 48 bureaucrats belonging to the Jammu and Kashmir Ad-

ministrative Service (JKAS) by the LG two days ago led to the latest flashpoint between the Raj Bhavan and the Abdullah government which regards the transfers as violative of the legal and administrative framework under Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act.

Sources in the know said the chief minister has written to Sinha asking him to review the unilateral decision, pointing out that the transfers and postings of officers outside the All India Services cadre was the exclusive prerogative of the elected government.

Such orders undermine the functioning and authority of the elected government, Abdullah asserted in the letter. Abdullah said to have taken up the matter with Union Home Minister Amit Shah complaining that a series of actions by the LG, including the transfers, eroded the authority of his government.

The LG's approach was a serious challenge in functioning



of the elected government, he is said to have stated.

Though the Abdullah government had been facing difficulties with the Raj Bhavan over several administrative issues, Sinha's Tuesday order to transfer and post 48 JKAS officers led to a face-off between the two power centres in the Union territory.

The chief minister also called for the expedited finalisation of the 'Transaction of Business



Rules, which were approved by the Cabinet on March 6, saying that the delay in issuing these rules is contributing to the current administrative friction.

Abdullah has also directed Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo to ensure that no transfer or posting orders for non-All India Services officers are issued without his prior approval.

He has specifically asked the chief secretary to keep the transfer orders of the 48 JKAS

officers in abeyance.

In the meantime, Friday's meeting is expected to convey the same feelings to the LG as well as the Centre.

The announcement of the meeting was made by NC Chief Whip Mubarak Gul on Thursday, who stressed on its significance, requesting all members to prioritise attendance.

Political analysts argue that the LG's recent transfers signify an attempt to gain an overarching control of the bureaucratic structure, particularly at a time when the elected government is awaiting approval from the Union Home Ministry for its proposed governance rules.

"Until we receive statehood, it is essential to establish business rules for clarity," Chief Minister Abdullah had said during a response to the LG's Assembly address, noting that the Cabinet had finalised the governance rules in a meeting on March 6 and submitted them for the LG's approval.

Abdullah has previously expressed his discontent with the dual governance model in the Union Territory, labelling it as a "recipe for disaster".

In a show of solidarity, the Congress party also criticised Sinha's decision on Thursday, saying that the LG should have awaited approval of the business rules before proceeding with officer transfers.

Gulam Ahmed Mir, the Congress's national general secretary and leader of the Congress Legislative Party (CLP) in the J&K Assembly, said that the LG should have exercised more patience, asserting that such actions could undermine confidence in the administration.

The current business rules stipulate that the chief minister has dominion over the transfers of local JKAS officers, while the LG retains authority over senior officers (IAS), Mir said, adding "taking such a step was not advisable".



The (Trump) administration's tariffs have no basis in logic and they go against the basis of our two nations' partnership. This is not the act of a friend ANTHONY ALBANESE | PRIME MINISTER, AUSTRALIA



international

of the day quote

President Trump's announcement of universal tariffs on the whole world, including the EU, is a major blow to the world economy



URSULA VON DER LEYEN | EUROPEAN COMMISSION PRESIDENT

The U.S. government's broad trade restrictions will have a significant impact not only on the economic relationship between Japan and the U.S., but also on the global economy and the multilateral trading system as a whole



SHIGERU ISHIBA | PRIME MINISTER, JAPAN

(Trump) has preserved a number of important elements of our relationship, the commercial relationship between Canada and the United States. But the fentanyl tariffs still remain in place, as do the tariffs for steel and aluminum



MARK CARNEY | PRIME MINISTER, CANADIAN

WORLD REELS FROM TARIFF SHOCK

REUTERS

Washington/Ottawa, April 3: President Donald Trump's sweeping tariffs on US imports sparked threats of retaliation Thursday, as companies and governments rushed to count the costs from an escalating trade war that threatens to shake up global alliances.

The penalties announced Wednesday unleashed turbulence across world markets and drew condemnation from other leaders facing the end of an era of trade liberalization that has shaped the global order for decades.

Trump said he would impose a 10% baseline tariff on all imports to the United States and higher targeted duties on some of the country's biggest trading partners, hammering goods from Italian coffee and Japanese whisky to sportswear made in Asia.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said the United States had abandoned its historic role as a champion of international economic cooperation.

"The global economy is fundamentally different today than it was yesterday," he said as he announced a limited set of countermeasures.

Elsewhere, China vowed retaliation for Trump's 54% tariffs on imports from the world's No 2 economy, as did the European Union, which faces a 20% duty. French President Emmanuel Macron called for European countries to suspend invest-



- Trump officials defend 10% base tariff on imports
Stock markets sink as recession fears mount
Canada institutes countermeasures, China and EU say they will follow

ment in the United States. Other trading partners, including South Korea, Mexico and India, said they would hold off for now as they seek concessions.

Washington's allies and rivals alike warned of a devastating blow to global trade.

"The consequences will be dire for millions of people around the globe," EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said.

Stocks suffered a global meltdown, as analysts warned the tariffs could upend global supply chains and hurt corporate profits. Tech and retail stocks were especially hard hit.

Imports to the world's largest consumer market now face an

average duty of 22.5%, up from 2.5% last year, according to Fitch Ratings -- the highest barriers in more than a century.

Trump says the "reciprocal" tariffs are a response to barriers put on US goods, though his list of targets includes uninhabited Antarctic islands.

Administration officials said the tariffs would create manufacturing jobs at home and open up export markets abroad, though they cautioned it would take time to see results.

Economists say the tariffs could reignite inflation, raise the risk of a US recession and boost costs for the average US family by thousands of dollars -- a potential liability for a president who campaigned on a promise to bring down the cost of living. Regions that backed Trump in the last election could be among the most exposed, according to the Federal Reserve.

Trump himself has no public events scheduled before he

departs Washington for a golf tournament at one of his Florida resorts.

"THE OPERATION IS OVER! THE PATIENT LIVED, AND IS HEALING," he wrote on social media.

FREEZING BUSINESSES, SCRAMBLING THE GLOBAL ORDER

Since returning to the White House in January, Trump has issued a string of on-again, off-again tariff threats, which have rattled consumer and business confidence. Trump could step back again, as the reciprocal tariffs are not due to take effect until April 9.

US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said that would not happen. "The president is not going to back off what he announced yesterday," he said on CNN.

But questions about the permanence of the tariffs will persist, making it difficult for businesses to forecast demand, analysts said. "Uncertainty just went up," said Eric Johnson, a strategist at Cantor Fitzgerald.

Trump's new economic barriers come as he has likewise pulled the United States out of global bodies like the World Health Organization and cut off billions of dollars in foreign aid.

Some of his highest tariff increases will fall on impoverished countries in Africa that are already struggling with a loss of US funding to fight HIV, malaria and other diseases.

Trump's tariffs also single out some of the United States' most important geopolitical allies.

China urges US to immediately lift tariffs, vows retaliation

Beijing: China Thursday urged the United States to immediately cancel its latest tariffs and vowed countermeasures to safeguard its own interests, after President Donald Trump declared sweeping levies on US trading partners around the world. The US move disregards the balance of interests reached in multilateral trade negotiations over the years and the fact that it has long benefited greatly from international trade, China's Commerce Ministry said in a statement. "China firmly opposes this and will take countermeasures to safeguard its own rights and interests," the ministry said, as the world's largest economies look set to spiral deeper into a trade war that stands to upend global supply chains. Trump Wednesday announced China would be hit with a 34% tariff, on top of the 20% he previously imposed earlier this year, bringing the total new levies to 54% and close to the 60% figure he had threatened while on the campaign trail.

Substantial implications for global trade: WTO DG

New Delhi: WTO Thursday said the measures announced by the United States will have substantial implications for world trade and economic growth prospects, and could lead to an overall contraction of around 1 per cent in global merchandise trade volumes this year. The statement by Director-General of the the World Trade Organization (WTO) Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala follows US decision to impose tariffs on nearly 60 countries. In a statement, Director-General of the the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala said the WTO Secretariat is closely monitoring and analysing measures announced by the United States April 2. "Many members have reached out to us and we are actively engaging with them in response to their questions about the potential impact on their economies and the global trading system," she said, adding that the recent announcements will have substantial implications for global trade and economic growth prospects. "While the situation is rapidly evolving, our initial estimates suggest that these measures, coupled with those introduced since the beginning of the year, could lead to an overall contraction of around 1 per cent in global merchandise trade volumes this year, representing a downward revision of nearly four percentage points from previous projections," she said.

SHORT TAKES

Indian gets 35-year for exploiting minors

New York: A 31-year-old Indian national has been sentenced to 35 years in prison for sexually exploiting several children through a social media app where he often posed as a teenage boy to gain their trust and threatened and extorted them with child pornography when they refused his requests. Sai Kumar Kurremula, 31, an Indian national living in Edmond, Oklahoma on an immigrant visa, has been sentenced to serve 420 months in federal prison for the sexual exploitation of three children and transportation of child pornography, US Attorney Robert Troester said in a statement.

Dozen migrants die as boats sink off Greece

Athens: A boat carrying migrants from Turkey to a nearby Greek island sank Thursday morning, leaving at least seven people dead, including three children, Greece's coast guard said. Turkish authorities reported what appeared to be a separate sinking in the same area, with nine people dead. The two accidents reportedly occurred several hours apart in the narrow stretch of the Aegean Sea between the Greek island of Lesbos and the Turkish coast, with both sides unaware of the other nation's rescue efforts. Greece's coast guard said a dinghy carrying migrants began taking on water and 23 people were rescued and the bodies of three women, two boys, one girl and one man were recovered.

AQI in Kathmandu hits hazardous category

Kathmandu: The air quality in the Kathmandu Valley has hit the hazardous or extremely hazardous category this week, according to a new ICIMOD analysis, which shows that high pollution has been prevalent in Nepal this year. The report said that inhabitants suffered 75 days of unhealthy air in the past three months. With this, Kathmandu has ranked one of the world's most polluted cities. Experts at the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) centre attribute the spike to pre-monsoon forest fires across Nepal, mainly in the western parts where many districts are in moderate to extreme drought.

Israel takes control of Rafah

Gaza's health ministry reported at least 97 people killed in Israeli strikes in the past 24 hours, including at least 20 killed in an airstrike around dawn in Shejaia, a suburb of Gaza City in the north



Gaza City in the north.

REUTERS

Cairo/Gaza, April 3: Hundreds of thousands of fleeing Gazans sought shelter Thursday in one of the biggest mass displacements of the war, as Israeli forces advanced into the ruins of the city of Rafah, part of a newly announced "security zone" they intend to seize. A day after declaring their intention to capture large swathes of the crowded enclave, Israeli forces pushed into the city on Gaza's southern edge which had served as a last refuge for people fleeing other areas for much of the war.

Gaza's health ministry reported at least 97 people killed in Israeli strikes in the past 24 hours, including at least 20 killed in an airstrike around dawn in Shejaia, a suburb of

Netanyahu applauds Hungary's ICC exit

Budapest: Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu applauded Hungary for its "bold and principled" decision to leave the International Criminal Court as he visited Budapest Thursday, a rare trip abroad in defiance of an ICC arrest warrant. Netanyahu, invited by Hungary's right-wing Prime Minister Viktor Orban, faces the ICC arrest warrant over allegations of war crimes in Gaza as Israel has expanded its military operation in the Palestinian enclave. Hungary has rejected the idea of arresting the Israeli prime minister and has called the warrant "brazen". In an announcement timed with Netanyahu's visit Thursday, Orban said Hungary would withdraw completely from the ICC, an organisation set up more than two decades ago to prosecute those accused of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide.

Israel has not spelled out its longterm aims for the security zone its troops are now seizing. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said troops were taking an area he called the "Morag Axis", a reference to an abandoned former Israeli settlement between Rafah and Khan Younis.

Gazans who had returned to homes in the ruins during the ceasefire have now been ordered to flee communities on the northern and southern edges of the strip.

Protesters clash with police in Haiti over gang violence

REUTERS

Port-Au-Prince, April 3: Thousands of Haitians took to the streets in Port-au-Prince Wednesday to express their anger against armed gangs that control nearly all of the capital and surrounding areas and the government's failure to hold them off.

Violent armed groups have united behind a coalition known as Viv Ansanm and forced over 1 million people from their homes, which has contributed to a freezing of the economy and fueled mass hunger. They are also accused of extortion, mass rapes and killings.

The transitional government, a rotating body of presidential council members appointed nearly a year ago, alongside a long undermanned and underfunded UN-backed security mission, have done little to hold off the gangs' advances.

"Do you see what is happening?" protestor Joseph Mackendy told Reuters at the demonstration. "Today, Haitian people will fight to be free already. We are free. Those men today cannot frighten me."

Residents filled the streets of Port-au-Prince carrying ban-



Myanmar's military head visits Thailand in rare overseas trip

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Bangkok, April 3: The head of Myanmar's military government arrived in Thailand Thursday for a regional summit, making a rare international trip as his country recovers from a devastating earthquake that killed thousands.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing has been shunned by much of the West for overthrowing the democratically elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi and subsequent brutal repression. He has not been allowed to participate in meetings of another regional organisation, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), since the army seized power in February 2021 and began violently suppressing opposition.

He is one of several regional leaders visiting Bangkok for a three-day summit of nations in the Bay of Bengal region.



SpaceX rocket cargo project puts Pacific seabirds in jeopardy

REUTERS

Washington, April 3: A project proposed by Elon Musk's SpaceX and the US Air Force to test hypersonic rocket cargo deliveries from a remote Pacific atoll could harm the many seabirds that nest at the wildlife refuge, according to biologists and experts who have spent more than a decade working to protect them.

It would not be the first time that SpaceX's activities have affected protected birds. A SpaceX launch of its Starship rocket in Boca Chica, Texas, last year involved a blast that destroyed nests and eggs of plover shorebirds, landing the billionaire Musk's company in legal trouble and leading him to remark jokingly that he would refrain from eating omelets for a week to compensate.

The Air Force announced in March that it has selected

Johnston Atoll, a US territory in the central Pacific Ocean located nearly 800 miles (1,300 km) southwest of the state of Hawaii, as the site to test the Rocket Cargo Vanguard program it is developing with SpaceX.

The project involves test landing rocket re-entry vehicles designed to deliver up to 100 tons of cargo to anywhere on Earth within about 90 minutes. It would be a breakthrough for military logistics by making it easier to move supplies quickly into distant locations.

According to biologists and experts who have worked on the one-square-mile (2.6 square km) atoll - designated as a US National Wildlife Refuge and part of the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument - the project could be too much for the island's 14 species of tropical birds to withstand. Roughly a million seabirds



use the atoll, home to a variety of wildlife, throughout the year, up from just a few thousand in the 1980s. The bird species include red-tailed tropicbirds, red-footed boobies and great frigatebirds, which have eight-foot (2-1/2 meter) wingspans. "Any sort of aviation that happens to the island is going

to have an impact at this point," said Hawaii-based biologist Steven Minamishin, who works for the National Wildlife Refuge System, part of the US Fish and Wildlife Service. "The biggest issue this will bring is the sound of the rocket flushing birds off of their nests and having them so anxious

Johnston Atoll located nearly 800 miles (1,300 km) from Hawaii

Project involves test landing SpaceX rocket re-entry vehicles

and unsure as to not return to their nest, resulting in a loss of generation," said University of Texas wildlife biologist Ryan Rash, who spent nearly a year on Johnston.

The project would involve construction of two landing pads and the relanding of 10 rockets over four years.

'ALL THAT'S LEFT'

In the Pacific, where unpopulated land is scarce and threatened by sea level rise, the birds depend on Johnston for their nesting and survival, according to the biologists interviewed by Reuters.

This makes the protection of these birds essential, said Desirée Sorenson-Groves, pres-

ident of the National Wildlife Refuge Association, a nonprofit group focused on protecting US National Wildlife Refuge System.

"These little remote oceanic islands are all that's left for them," Sorenson-Groves said. "We've invested a lot of money as a country to bring back wildlife to these places."

Johnston Atoll, closed to the public, is administered by the Air Force and managed by Fish and Wildlife Service. The island was used for nuclear testing from the late 1950s to 1962, and to stockpile chemical munitions including Agent Orange from 1972 to 1975.

The Air Force completed a clean-up of the atoll in 2004, and it has served as a haven for nesting seabirds and migrating shore birds since. Visits by people to the island have been highly controlled to avoid disturbing the birds.

Business



Banking Amendment Bill 2025, passed recently, allows nomination up to 4 persons for payment of depositors' money, articles kept in safe custody and safety lockers
NIRMALA SITHARAMAN | FINANCE MINISTER

IOC UNVEILS PROJECT SPRINT

Indian Oil Corporation, the nation's largest oil firm, has unveiled Project SPRINT that looks to make the firm future-ready by fashioning businesses to meet changing global energy landscape and stay relevant and profitable



of the day quote

Institutional investors in Indian real estate continue to exhibit confidence. This growth highlights the resilience of the Indian real estate and the untapped opportunities it presents
BADAL YAGNIK | CEO, COLLIERS INDIA

To achieve the ambition of becoming a \$7 trillion economy for India, I think the tech sector alone will have to contribute roughly about a trillion dollars in terms of GDP, and this will have to drive innovation that won't just solve India's problem but also global problems
RAJESH NAMBIAR | PRESIDENT, NASSCOM

We do not see any impact of its increasing adoption of artificial intelligence tools on the jobs front
NITIN CHUGH | DEPUTY MD, SBI

US RECIPROCAL TARIFFS

India's shrimp, carpets, gold jewellery sectors to take a hit

US president, in a historic measure to counter higher duties on American products imposed globally, announced reciprocal tariffs on about 60 countries. The US imposed a 27% tariff on Indian goods while imposing a 10 per cent baseline tax on imports from all countries

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 3: India's export sectors such as shrimp, carpet, medical devices and gold jewellery will face the impact of the 27 per cent additional import duties announced by the US Wednesday, an official said.

However, export segments like electronics, textiles, and pharma will get an edge over its competitor countries in the US.

On April 2, US President Donald Trump announced a major new tariff policy designed to reduce the US trade deficit and boost domestic manufacturing.

The announcement includes a universal 10 per cent tariff on all imported goods, effective April 5. It will be replaced by 27 per cent duty on April 9. Over 60 countries are affected by the measures announced by America. The US is the largest market of domestic shrimp industry.

Shrimp will now become significantly less competitive in the US market due to the higher tariffs.

America already has anti-dumping and countervailing duties on Indian shrimp.

Out of India's total shrimp exports, the country ships 40 per cent to America. Ecuador and Indonesia are major competitors of the domestic exporters in the US market.

The export of frozen shrimps during 2023-24 was 7,16,004 tonnes. The US imported 2,97,571 tonnes last fiscal year, followed by China (1,48,483 tonnes), the European Union (89,697 tonnes), and Japan (35,906 tonnes).

The US continued to be the major importer of Indian seafood in value terms, with an import worth \$2.55 billion, accounting for a share of 34.53 per cent.

Frozen shrimp continued to be the principal item exported to the US, with a share of 91.90 per cent. Exports of black tiger shrimp to the US increased 35.37



Both India and the US want to expedite the negotiations for the proposed bilateral trade agreement as the two countries are looking at promoting two-way commerce

per cent in quantity terms and 32.35 per cent in value in terms.

Similarly, America is the largest importer of carpets from India. It was about \$2 billion in 2023-24. In 2023-2024, India exported gems and jewellery worth \$32.85 billion globally, with the US accounting for 30.28 per cent (\$10 billion). In 2024, India exported diamonds, gold, and silver worth \$11.88 billion in exports. It has a tariff differential of 13.32 per cent.

The country exports wide range of products, including cut and polished diamonds, studded gold jewellery, plain gold jewellery, lab-grown diamonds, and silver jewellery.

Imposition of 27 per cent reciprocal tariff on medical device exports to US may pose challenges to the sector's growth. Association of Indian Medical Device Industry (AiMed) said Thursday.

In 2023-24, India's medical device exports to the US stood at USD 714.38 million, while imports from the US to India were significantly higher at USD 1.52 billion.

On the positive side, despite the steep hike of tariff for India, it prima facie seems to be a case

of India advantage for the apparel sector, with India's major competing countries like China, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Sri Lanka having been slapped higher tariffs by the US.

The US is the world's single largest apparel importing country, primarily sourcing from Asia.

AEPC said the US accounts for about 35 per cent of Indian apparel exports. In 2024, the apparel exports to the US were \$5.2 billion with a growth of 11.2 per cent over 2023.

America is also the largest market for India's electronics exports. The US accounts for 33 per cent of the total shipments of about \$30 billion in 2023-24.

The United States, the UAE, the Netherlands, the UK, and Italy have emerged as the top five export markets for Indian electronics goods.

The US administration has exempted pharmaceuticals from reciprocal tariffs. The country's exports to America in the sector stood at about \$9 billion.

The reciprocal tariff announced by the Trump administration can shave off India's GDP growth rate by up to 50 basis points to 6 per cent and the country's exports to the US could fall by 2-3 percentage points in the current fiscal, experts said Thursday.

EY Chief Policy Advisor D K Srivastava said, "The maximum adverse impact on India's GDP growth will not be higher than 50 basis points. As per our earlier projection, the GDP growth estimate for current fiscal was 6.5 per cent, which may go down to 6 per cent without retaliation".

Biz environment in Odisha fair, supportive: Thacker

Essen Hero in Sikharpur, Cuttack is a prominent two-wheeler dealership whose commitment to excellence has positioned it as a leader in the segment. The man behind this successful venture is Pradeep Kumar Thacker, Director, a dynamic entrepreneur with footprints in multiple sectors like mining, real estate, and automobile. He believes Odisha offers a fair and supportive business environment, enabling entrepreneurs to thrive. His story serves as an inspiration for aspiring entrepreneurs navigating competitive industries with resilience and integrity. In an exclusive interview with Orissa POST, Thacker shares insights into his business journey, emphasising strategic growth, ethical practices, and a people-centric approach. Excerpts...



Can you brief us about your early life and education?

I was born in Barbil, a mining town in Keonjhar district. I completed my schooling there before moving to Bhubaneswar for higher education. I pursued my graduation at BJB College and later completed my management studies at Xavier Institute of Management (XIM), Bhubaneswar.

How did you develop an interest in business?

My father had a traditional business, and I decided to join him and took it forward along with my brothers. We were involved in mining, working as contractors for OAMC, OAMBC, and various Government of India enterprises. Around the year 2000, we identified a tremendous need for real estate development in var-

ious towns across Odisha. This led us to expand into real estate, where we successfully executed over 40 projects. As time passed, our children grew up, and with their expertise in engineering and management, they proposed entering the retail business. This included working with globally recognised brands in the automobile and earth-moving equipment sectors. Today, we are dealers for Hero in Odisha and for Komatsu Machine. Subsequently, Hero formed a joint venture with Harley-Davidson, and we successfully secured a Hero Premia motorcycle dealership. In addition to our automotive ventures, we own Khushi Realcon Pvt Ltd, which manages our real estate business, and a mining company that undertakes excavation and transportation for the Steel Authority of India Ltd (SAIL) at their Rourkela Steel Plant and iron ore mines in Keonjhar district.

Do you have any expansion plans for the near future?

Yes, we have ambitious expansion plans. We aim to establish new two-wheeler and four-wheeler dealerships in Odisha and other states. Additionally, we have a goal of doing housing projects in the headquarters of other districts. These initiatives will not only contribute to our growth but also create more employment opportunities and cater to the growing demand in these sectors.

What message do you have for upcoming entrepreneurs?

My advice is simple — develop good habits, work hard, and wake up early. Stay away from bad influences and distractions. Work is worship, and it should be your first priority. Hardships and challenges will come your way, but you must face them with determination. One significant advantage of working in Odisha is that the business environment here is fair and supportive. If you are dedicated and willing to put in the effort, you have a great chance of succeeding here.

ical business practices are crucial. If you remain honest and committed to your customers, you will succeed. The market is large, and there is room for everyone to grow and prosper.

SAFE HAVEN DEMAND

Gold climbs ₹200 to hit record high of ₹94,350

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 3: Gold prices climbed ₹200 to hit a fresh peak of ₹94,350 per 10 grams in the national capital Thursday amid persistent buying by jewellers and stockists, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had stayed flat at ₹94,150 per 10 grams Wednesday.

Rising for the fifth straight day, gold of 99.5 per cent purity rose ₹200 to establish a lifetime high of ₹93,900 per 10 grams.

However, silver prices plunged ₹1,000 to ₹1,00,500 per kg from Wednesday's closing level of ₹1,01,500 per kg.

Meanwhile, gold futures for June delivery on the MCX, climbed ₹695 to hit a record high of ₹91,423 per 10 grams. Later, it pared all its gains,

trading lower by ₹848 at ₹89,880 per 10 grams.

"Gold saw an initial rally in the morning session driven by the impact of reciprocal tariffs but soon faced profit-booking as prices had largely factored in the tariff effects," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst of Commodity and Currency at LKP Securities, said.

In the international markets, spot gold dipped \$43.39, or 1.38 per cent, to \$3,089.64 per ounce. On Wednesday, it had hit a fresh peak of \$3,167.71 per ounce after US President Donald Trump unleashed tariff barrage on over 60 countries.

"Gold soared to a new record high of \$3,167 per ounce as risk aversion heightened following President Trump's tariff decision," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HD-FC Securities, said.

Shares endure US tariff jolt

Sensex falls by 322 pts as Trump imposes reciprocal tariffs on 60 countries; IT shares lead losers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 3: Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty closed down on Thursday due to selling in IT shares amid a global sell-off as US President Donald Trump unveiled reciprocal tariffs on about 60 countries, including India.

The 30-share BSE Sensex declined by 322.08 points or 0.42 per cent to close at 76,295.36. During the session, it plunged 809.89 points or 1.05 per cent to hit an intraday low of 75,807.55 but recovered some of the losses as pharma shares advanced.

The broader NSE Nifty fell 82.25 points or 0.35 per cent to settle at 23,250.10. The index declined by 186.55 points or 0.79 per cent to a low of 23,145.80 in early trade but later pared some losses.

IT shares led the losses with TCS falling the most by 3.98 per cent. Tech Mahindra declined by 3.79 per cent, HCL Technologies by 3.71 per cent and Infosys by 3.41 per cent.

Tata Motors, Bajaj Finance, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Mahindra & Mahindra, Bharti Airtel and Maruti Suzuki India, Tata Steel were also among the laggards.

PowerGrid, Sun Pharmaceuticals, UltraTech Cement, NTPC, Asian Paints, Nestle India,



Titan, IndusInd Bank and Axis Bank were among the gainers. "The Nifty index opened lower in response to the US tariff announcements but saw some recovery due to resilience in select heavyweight stocks. This helped trim losses in early trades, leading to a range-bound session," Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

In broader markets, the BSE smallcap gauge rose by 0.76 per cent and the midcap index went up 0.31 per cent.

Market breadth was positive as 2,809 stocks advanced while 1,175 declined and 139 remained

Despite, market ended in red territory, market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms rose by ₹35,170.32 crore to ₹4,13,33,265.92 (\$4.83tn)

The domestic market initially showed signs of recovery but ended with modest losses after the announcement of a relatively lower... tariff on US imports. The IT and auto sectors experienced selling pressure due to US slowdown concerns and disruptions in the supply chain

VINOD NAIR | HEAD OF RESEARCH, GEJOIT INVESTMENTS

unchanged on the BSE. Among the sectoral indices, IT plunged the most by 4.13 per cent, IT (3.78 per cent), Teck (2.85 per cent), Auto (1.14 per cent), Metal (0.99 per cent), Oil & Gas (0.59 per cent), Consumer Discretionary (0.24 per cent) and Energy (0.38 per cent).

On the other hand, Utilities, Power, Healthcare, Telecommunication, Consumer Durables, Services, and FMCG were among the gainers.

Central bank not to hold 14-day repo for upcoming fortnight

REUTERS

New Delhi, April 3: India's central bank has decided not to conduct a 14-day variable rate repo auction for the fortnight ending April 17, following a review of liquidity conditions, it said, Thursday.

The Reserve Bank of India infuses liquidity in the banking system using repos and sucks it out using reverse repos.

India's banking system liquidity surplus is set to widen to five-month high to around ₹2.5 trillion in coming days amid government spending and the RBI's bond purchase, traders told Reuters earlier in



the day. Banking system liquidity moved into surplus March 29, after being in deficit since mid-December. The surplus stood at ₹1.42 trillion, as April 1. Reuters reported last week that the central bank may revert to providing fixed daily on-tap liquidity to banks.



Venky silences critics

KKR's costliest player Venkatesh Iyer slams 60 as the defending champions crush SRH by 80 runs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, April 3: Venkatesh Iyer answered his critics with a match-winning 60 off 29 balls, propelling Kolkata Knight Riders to a convincing 80-run win in the Indian Premier League here Thursday.

Angkrish Raghuvanshi's classy 50 (32b, 5x4, 2x6) in an 81-run stand with skipper Ajinkya Rahane (38 off 27) laid the foundation, while Iyer and Rinku Singh (32 not out off 17b) provided the late fireworks with a blistering 91-run partnership (41b) to lift KKR to 200/6 - their highest total of the season.

Seamer Vaibhav Arora set the tone by removing the dangerous Travis Head (4) and Ishan Kishan (2) in successive overs to return with impressive figures of 4-1-29-3.

Harshit Rana dismissed Abhishek Sharma (2), leaving SRH reeling at 9/3 in 2.1 overs, while Andre Russell and Sunil Narine also chipped in with a wicket each to make it 66/5 inside 10 overs.

Varun Chakravarthy then cleaned up the lower order taking two wickets in two balls en route to his 4-0-22-3 as SRH crumbled to 120 all out - their explosive batting lineup lasting just 16.4 overs.

The defending champions thus returned to winning ways after losing two of their first three matches and will next face Lucknow Super Giants Tuesday.

Meanwhile, SRH, enduring their third straight defeat, head



home to take on Gujarat Titans Sunday.

After being reduced to 9/3 in 2.1 overs, Nitish Reddy (19) counterattacked Arora with two fours and a six, while Kamindu Mendis (27 off 20 balls) lifted hopes by taking on Andre Russell with a pick-up shot over deep square leg.

But Russell struck back to remove Reddy before Sunil Narine (1/30) accounted for Mendis in the 10th over, reducing SRH to 66/5 at the halfway mark and effectively ending

their chase.

Earlier, KKR's new-look opening pair continued to struggle, with Quinton de Kock (1) and Narine (7) once again falling cheaply after Pat Cummins opted to bowl first.

Rahane and Raghuvanshi steadied the innings, countering early movement with intelligent shot selection.

Rahane's back-to-back pull-shot sixes off Shami and Cummins broke the shackles, as KKR reached 53/2 after the powerplay.

Raghuvanshi showcased his stroke-making prowess with exquisite drives and a stunning reverse hit past backward point, reaching his fifty in 30 balls.

Mendis, making his IPL debut, bowled left-arm spin to right-hander Raghuvanshi before switching to off-spin against the left-handed Rinku Singh in the same over, a rare sight in the competition.

Boundaries dried up for 16 balls before Iyer, KKR's costliest player this season (Rs 23.75 crore), broke the shackles with a desperate pull off a Simarjeet Singh beamer.

SCORECARD

Kolkata Knight Riders: Quinton de Kock c Zeeshan Ansari b Cummins 1, Sunil Narine c Klaasen b Shami 7, Ajinkya Rahane c Klaasen b Zeeshan Ansari 38, Angkrish Raghuvanshi c Harshal Patel b Kamindu Mendis 50, Venkatesh Iyer c Aniket Verma b Harshal Patel 60, Rinku Singh not out 32, Andre Russell run out (Klaasen) 1. **Extras:** (LB-8, W-3) 11; **Total:** (6 wks, 20 Overs) 200; **Fall of Wickets:** 14-1, 16-2, 97-3, 106-4, 197-5, 200-6; **Bowlers:** Mohammed Shami 4-0-29-1, Pat Cummins 4-0-44-1, Simarjeet Singh 4-0-47-0, Zeeshan Ansari 3-0-25-1, Harshal Patel 4-0-43-1, Kamindu Mendis 1-0-4-1. **Sunrisers Hyderabad:** Travis Head c Harshit Rana b Vaibhav Arora 4, Abhishek Sharma c Venkatesh Iyer b Harshit Rana 2, Ishan Kishan c Ajinkya Rahane b Vaibhav Arora 2, Nitish Kumar Reddy c Narine b Russell 19, Kamindu Mendis c (sub) Anukul Roy b Narine 27, Heinrich Klaasen c Ali b Arora 33, Aniket Verma c Venkatesh Iyer b Varun Chakravarthy 6, Pat Cummins c Harshit Rana b Varun Chakravarthy 14, Harshal Patel c and b Russell 3, Simarjeet Singh b Varun Chakravarthy 0, Mohammed Shami not out 2. **Extras:** (LB-3, W-5) 8; **Total:** (10 wks, 16.4 Overs) 120; **Fall of Wickets:** 4-1, 9-2, 9-3, 44-4, 66-5, 75-6, 112-7, 114-8, 114-9, 120-10; **Bowlers:** Vaibhav Arora 4-1-29-3, Harshit Rana 3-0-15-1, Varun Chakravarthy 4-0-22-3, Andre Russell 1.4-0-21-2, Sunil Narine 4-0-30-1.

EL CLASICO

Barca reach Copa del Rey final against Real Madrid

Barcelona, the Copa's most successful club with 31 trophies, hadn't made it to the final since 2021. Madrid, in its second final in three seasons, won its 20th title in 2023



ASSOCIATED PRESS

The April 26 final in Seville will mark the third clasico of the season. Barcelona won 4-0 in the Spanish league in October and 5-2 in the Spanish Super Cup final in January. The rivals could also meet in the Champions League this season

Madrid, April 3: Barcelona has made it back to the Copa del Rey final. Atletico Madrid is left enduring yet another elimination to a rival.

Barcelona defeated Atletico 1-0 Wednesday to reach its first Copa final in four seasons, setting up a "clasico" against Real Madrid.

Ferran Torres scored a first-half winner for the Catalan club, which advanced 5-4 on aggregate after a 4-4 draw in the first leg in Barcelona in February. Madrid eliminated Real Sociedad in extra time Tuesday, also advancing 5-4 on aggregate. The rivals will meet in the Copa decider for the first time since the 2013-14 season, when Madrid won the title. "It feels great to win here, and it's even more special that it means we have qualified for the final," Torres said. "It's always good motivation to be in a final, even more so when it's against a direct rival."

It was yet another disappointing home elimination for Atletico after it lost on penalties to Madrid in the round of 16 of the Champions League

ally well," Atletico coach Diego Simeone said. "It did it in the Champions League, in the Copa and in the league. We're having a good season and we'll keep going with the game-by-game mentality. We'll try to improve to get closer to the teams above us, accepting what we are."

The April 26 final in Seville will mark the third clasico of the season. Barcelona won 4-0 in the Spanish league in October and 5-2 in the Spanish Super Cup final in January. The rivals could also meet in the Champions League this season.

Atletico was trying to make it to the Copa final for the first time since 2013, when it defeated Madrid to win its 10th title.

Simeone's team had rallied with two late goals to draw the first leg in Barcelona after squandering a 2-0 lead.

Torres scored in the 27th with a nice touch from inside the area after a perfect through ball by Lamine Yamal.

Atletico striker Alexander Sorlotha had a goal disallowed for offside in the 69th.

last month. "We are just as sad as our fans," Atletico defender José María Giménez said. "We have to raise our heads and try to finish the season the best way possible."

The Copa was Atletico's only realistic hope for a title this season, as it trails first-place Barcelona by nine points after 29 matches in the league. "Our team has competed re-

SHORT TAKES

AFI's new directive

New Delhi: Athletics Federation of India (AFI) has made it mandatory for athletes to compete in at least one regional competition or country-wide one-day event like the Grand Prix to be eligible for participation in the Federation Cup, the first national championship of the season 2025. This is being done to ensure that athletes come prepared or show consistency as the Indian team for the Asian Championships to be held in Korea from May 27-31 will be picked on the basis of performance at the Federation Cup, which will be organised in Kochi, Kerala from April 21-24. However, the athletes who are sent abroad by AFI for training, like double Olympic medalist javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra, will be exempted from this regulation. "To participate in this competition (Federation Cup), athletes must achieve the qualification entry standards in events directly organised by the AFI in the year 2025," the AFI said in a circular.

SKY not leaving MCA

Mumbai: The Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) Thursday refuted reports that Suryakumar Yadav was planning a switch to Goa for the upcoming Ranji Trophy season along with some of his teammates, saying that India's T20 skipper was committed to representing the state. Young Mumbai opener Yashasvi Jaiswal has already announced his decision to switch to Goa from Mumbai due to alleged differences with senior players of the Ranji side. However the official transfer will only happen when BCCI opens its inter-state transfer window. A media report had claimed Wednesday that Suryakumar could leave the Mumbai Ranji side, led by Ajinkya Rahane.

Naqvi new ACC prez

Dubai: Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Mohsin Naqvi Thursday assumed charge as the president of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC), succeeding Sri Lanka Cricket supremo Shammi Silva. The ACC presidency is rotated among the member nations and it was turn of Pakistan to take charge. Naqvi will remain president till 2027. Naqvi's first challenge will be smooth conduct of the men's Asia Cup, which will be held in T20 format. The tournament set to be held in September but venue is yet to be announced. "I am deeply honoured to assume the presidency of the Asian Cricket Council," Naqvi said.

WORLD BOXING CUP

Pugilists sail into semifinals

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 3: Indian boxers Manish Rathore, Hitesh and Abhinash Jamwal showcased their title ambitions with commanding victories in the quarterfinals in their respective weight categories of the ongoing World Boxing Cup Brazil 2025 Wednesday.

Jamwal tamed Germany's Denis Bril with a unanimous decision in the 65kg category, while Hitesh defeated Italy's Gabriele Guidi Rontani by an identical scoreline in the 70kg category.

In the 55kg category, Manish Rathore was up against Australia's Paris Olympian Yusuf Chothia and the Indian national champion proved that he was well prepared for whatever his opponent threw at him.

Both the boxers kept things tight in all three rounds with Rathore emerging victorious as three judges ruled in his favour while two gave equal points to both.

In the semifinals, Rathore will face Nursultan Altynbek of Kazakhstan, Hitesh takes on Makhan Traore while Jamwal plays Gianluigi Malanga of Italy.

Earlier, national champion Jadumani Singh Mandengbam overcame Ellis Trowbridge of Great Britain to reach the semifinals of the 50kg category on Wednesday.

Trowbridge, the 2024 World Boxing Cup Finals silver medalist, began the bout in his usual aggressive style, but the Indian was prepared to absorb the pressure and find ways to land his punches, earning a 3:2 split decision in his favour.

Jadumani will now face former Asian U-22 champion Asilbek Jalilov for a place in the final. However, India's challenge in the 75kg, 85kg and 90+ kg categories came to an end after all three boxers went down fighting in their respective bouts.

Nikhil Dubey lost the 75kg bout 0:5 against local favourite Kaue Belini, while Jugnoo was at the wrong end of the 1:4 split decision against France's Abdoulaye Traore in 85kg.

Narendar came close to beating Kazakhstan's Daniyal Saparbay, even getting a 30-27 verdict from one judge, but lost the 90+ kg bout on a 3:2 split decision.



2ND EDITION OF UN GAMES

India to take lead in chess, yoga

The United Nations Games 2025 will be held in April - May 2025

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

United Nations, April 3: India is co-organising the second edition of the United Nations Games, taking the lead in chess and yoga at the unique annual tradition at the world body that aims to foster diplomacy and collaboration through the power of sports.

"It was an honour for me to be part of the Opening Ceremony of the Second @UN Games. As a co-organiser, India will take the lead on chess and yoga," India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Parvathaneni Harish said in a post on X Wednesday.

Harish underlined that the UN Games are a celebration of the spirit of unity and international collaboration.

"I look forward to the inclusion of cricket in the next edition of the Games. I wish all participants the best. Team @IndiaUNNewYork, do well," he said, referring to the Permanent Mission of India to the UN.

Yoga will be held April 9 at the Rose Garden, North Lawn in the UN headquarters while chess will also be held the same day in the North Lawn's Olym-



pic Corner. Prime Minister Narendra Modi led a historic yoga session at the expansive North Lawn on the 9th International Day of Yoga commemorated June 21, 2023. Harish noted that while not everyone may be active sportspersons, most members of the diplomatic community are avid fans and while people may root for different teams, they are united by sports.

As a cricket fan, like more than a billion Indians, hailing from a cricket-playing nation which is passionate about the sport, Harish said he hopes cricket would also feature in the next UN Games.

He said it is a privilege for India to take the lead on yoga and chess-like it did last year. Since the unanimous adoption of the resolution in 2014 declaring June 21 as International Day of Yoga with the co-sponsorship of a record number of Member States, yoga has become a way

of life for hundreds of millions across the globe, he said. As regards chess, India started playing the initial versions of modern-day chess centuries ago, Harish said.

The world of chess is dominated by young players from India who are creating history by shattering records and winning global championships.

Last year, Indian Grandmaster D Gukesh became the youngest world chess champion at 18 years after beating title-holder Ding Liren of China in the 2024 World Chess Championship.

The Opening Ceremony of the United Nations Games 2025 was held in the UN headquarters Wednesday, marking the official launch of the second edition of the Games—"bringing together diplomats, UN personnel, and their families for a month-long celebration of sport, unity, and international friendship," the UN said.

Hockey India Senior Men National Championship under new format begins

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jhansi, April 3: Thirty teams will compete in three divisions in the 15th Hockey India Senior Men National Championship to be held here from April 4-15.

This will be the first time the men's tournament, to be held at the Major Dhyan Chand Hockey Stadium, is being played in the new three-division format. The Senior Women National Championship was played in the same new format in March.

The domestic competition, which will now also feature promotion and relegation battles, has been divided into three divisions - A, B and C.

The Division A will be the highest one as the teams in it will fight for the championship title. Division B will have teams competing for promotion to Division A next season while in Division C, the teams will fight for a spot in Division B for the next edition.

The Division B and C matches are scheduled to begin April 4 while the Division A matches will commence April 8.

Division A has the top-12 teams in India, including defending champions Odisha and runners-up Haryana, based on their overall performances in the tournament over the years.

Each team will play every opponent once in their respective pools.

Real Madrid mint record \$154mn from Champions League win

The Spanish club topped prize money table last season

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Geneva, April 3: Champions League winner Real Madrid topped the prize money list last season by getting almost 139 million euros (\$154 million), UEFA said Thursday, finally confirming the payments.

Madrid's money came from a total competition prize fund of more than 2 billion euros (\$2.22 billion) that rises by 25% this season in the new and expanded format with more teams and more games.

UEFA's formula to pay clubs

included Madrid getting more than 36 million euros (\$40 million) as the top-ranked club pre-season, but just 14 million euros (\$15.5 million) as a share of income from broadcast rights deals.

Paris Saint-Germain was the second biggest earner - despite being eliminated in the semifinals - with 122.4 million (\$135.7 million). That included 34 million euros (\$37.7 million) from TV money with the French rights deal shared with Lens as the only two French teams in the group stage.

Borussia Dortmund, the beaten finalist, just edged Bayern Munich with both getting more than 120 million euros (\$133 million). German broadcast money was shared among



four teams. In the second-tier Europa League, beaten finalist Bayer Leverkusen got the highest payment of 41.2 million euros

(\$45.7 million). Title winner Atalanta got almost 34 million euros (\$37.7 million). Liverpool, which was beaten by Atalanta in the quarter-

nals, earned less than 27 million euros (\$30 million) from UEFA.

Manchester City earned 110.5 million euros (\$122.5 million) from reaching the Champions League quarterfinals as the defending champion. An extra 4.5 million euros (\$5 million) was earned playing in the season-opening Super Cup against Sevilla, winner of the 2023 Europa League.

Barcelona got just 98 million euros (\$108.6 million) for reaching the Champions League quarterfinals in another financially challenging year for the club, which has had issues registering players this season.

Manchester United was paid less than 61 million euros (\$67.6 million) by UEFA for placing last in its group, and Newcastle

got 34 million euros (\$37.7 million) including less than 5 million euros (\$5.5 million) from the club ranking payments.

The smallest sum was less than 22 million euros (\$24.4 million) paid to Belgian champion Royal Antwerp, the lowest-ranked team.

UEFA also paid 25 million euros (\$27.7 million) to the European Club Association, led by PSG president Nasser al-Khelaifi, which represents hundreds of clubs and helps manage the competition's commercial strategy in a joint venture.

The payments were detailed in UEFA's financial report published during its annual meeting being held in the Serbian capital Belgrade.