

### Striking statement

Actor Adah Sharma takes a unique stand on ramp to draw attention to the threats faced by wildlife

LEISURE | P2



### China, Vietnam sign deals

China's President Xi Jinping urges deeper trade and supply chain ties with Vietnam during a visit to Hanoi

INTERNATIONAL | P10



### Tariffs hit wealth

Investors' wealth erodes by ₹11.30 lakh crore since early this month as stock markets experienced turbulence due to Trump tariffs

BUSINESS | P11



### Successful campaign

India wrap up their campaign at Archery World Cup Stage 1 with a creditable four medals

SPORTS | P12



**DELICIOUS DRINK:** Devotees relish 'pana' being offered at Ram Mandir in Bhubaneswar on the occasion of Maha Bishuba Sankranti and Odia New Year, Monday

PHOTO: BIKASH NAYAK

# Big push for Tarini Temple facelift

**POST NEWS NETWORK**

**Keonjhar, April 14:** In a major boost to infrastructure development at Ghatgaon Maa Tarini Temple in this district, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi announced a comprehensive plan of ₹215 crore during his visit to the shrine on the occasion of Odia New Year and Maha Bishuba Sankranti (Pana Sankranti) Monday.

Majhi paid his obeisance to the deity, performed several rituals and witnessed the golden attire (Suna Besha) of the goddess of energy on the occasion. The occasion also marked the end of 89th Chaiti Parva at the shrine.

Keonjhar MP Ananta Nayak and other party members accompanied him to the temple in a rally from temporary helipad at Ghatgaon stadium.

Majhi said a detailed project report (DPR) worth over ₹215 crore is being prepared for the holistic development of the temple complex. The plan aims at restoration and beautification of the temple structure, and development of infrastructure such as approach roads, pilgrim amenities, parking facilities, lighting and sanitation.

Earlier, in his first full-fledged Budget tabled in the Assembly in February, Majhi had announced an allocation of ₹225 crore for the development



of the temple.

The CM stated that once the DPR is approved, a groundbreaking ceremony will be held to initiate the redevelopment work in and around the shrine complex.

Later, Majhi went to Keonjhar and participated in Hanuman Jayanti celebrations held at Labanya Chhak in Keonjhar town.

Meanwhile, thousands of devotees from various parts of the state and outside witnessed the Suna Besha of Maa Tarini on the occasion of Chaiti Parva which is being organised by the temple trust board since 1937. On this occasion, the priests known as 'Dehuri' appease the deity by performing a holy bath of the deity with milk, cheese, turmeric, chua, sandalwood paste and honey early in the morning.

The deity is then adorned with gold ornaments as part of rituals for the 'Suna Besha'. 'Arati' is performed before her with incense sticks, lamps, and offerings amid the blowing of conch, ringing of bells and beating of gongs. Later, the devotees are allowed to enter the shrine to have 'darshan' of the goddess.

On Monday, devotees were seen standing in long barricaded queues. Police personnel were deployed to control traffic and maintain law and order. Voluntary outfits distributed cold water and 'pana' to the devotees and sprayed water on them in view of a scorching summer.

## Salman gets fresh threat

**AGENCIES**

**Mumbai, April 14:** Mumbai traffic police have got a message threatening Bollywood actor Salman Khan and registered a case in this connection, officials said Monday. In the message, an unidentified person under section 351(2) (3) (criminal intimidation) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, he said.

received on the traffic police's WhatsApp helpline Sunday, the sender threatened to blow up the actor's car and also thrash him by entering his residence, a police official said.

An official posted at the traffic police control room then alerted seniors about the message, based on which Worli police here registered a case against the unidentified person.

## Drugs worth ₹1,800cr seized near Guj coast

**Ahmedabad:** In a joint operation, the Gujarat Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) and the Indian Coast Guard have seized over 300 kg of drugs worth ₹1,800 crore which were dumped into the Arabian Sea by Pakistani smugglers who fled across the international maritime boundary on being chased, officials said Monday. The seized contraband is suspected to be methamphetamine and has been handed over to the ATS for further probe, a release by the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) said.

# Choksi held in Belgium; little to rejoice for India

*The extradition of fugitive diamondaire Mehul Choksi—arrested by Belgian authorities in connection with the ₹13,000-crore Punjab National Bank scam—is expected to be a long and challenging process for Indian agencies. Choksi, 65, has a history of evading legal proceedings and is likely to deploy a team of top-tier European lawyers, similar to the strategy used by Vijay Malviya, to stall extradition. His legal team is expected to argue on grounds of 'ill health' and cite alleged 'human rights concerns' in India to resist repatriation. In the past, Choksi successfully dodged extradition from Antigua using similar tactics. Adding to the complexity, the ED's plea to declare him a fugitive economic offender has been pending in a Mumbai court for nearly seven years, delayed repeatedly due to numerous applications filed by Choksi alleging procedural lapses. Given the background, and the arduous extradition formalities in EU countries (as was witnessed in Abu Salem's extradition from Portugal), bringing Choksi back to India and securing a conviction is likely to be an uphill task*

**AGENCIES**

**New Delhi, April 14:** Absconding diamondaire Mehul Choksi has been arrested by Belgium authorities following an extradition request by Indian probe agencies for his involvement in the ₹13,000-crore PNB loan "fraud" case.

The Belgian Police took custody of the second "prime suspect" in this case, after Choksi's nephew diamondaire Nirav Modi, April 12 in Antwerp based on an extradition request moved by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED), official sources said Monday.

The Belgian federal public service of justice confirmed in an email to PTI that Choksi was arrested Saturday (April 12).

"He is being detained in anticipation of further judicial proceedings. Access to his legal counsel has been assured," it said, adding that the Indian authorities have introduced an extradition request for Choksi.

Choksi, 65, was located in Belgium last year after he reached there on the grounds of getting medical treatment, sometime in November, 2023.

He had been staying in Antigua after leaving India in 2018 and had taken citizenship of the Caribbean country even as his Indian citizenship is stated to be valid.

The sources said the Interpol Red Notice against him for arrest was "deleted" sometime back by the global police body after analysing the representation made by the businessman

## 5 murders in as many days rock Rourkela

**POST NEWS NETWORK**

**Rourkela, April 14:** Rourkela has witnessed as many as five murders in the past five days speaking volumes of the law and order situation in the industrial township.

According to reports, a 22-year-old youth has allegedly beaten his 60-year-old father to death to avenge his mother's murder at Bhalupatra under Brahmanitarang police limits in Sundargarh district Sunday night.

The deceased was identified as Kranti Kumar Burma and the accused his younger son as Bishnu Burma. Police said Kranti had served a 15-year jail term for killing his wife in 2009. He was released from jail in December 2024, since when he had been staying with his elder son Shiba and younger son Bishnu.

Bishnu alleged that his father had been abusive towards his younger son and a few local women. He would also often assault him over trivial issues, the accused said.

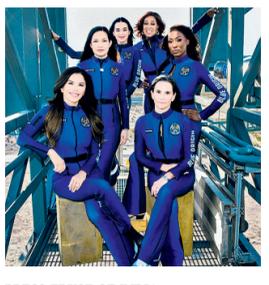
It was around 8pm Sunday when Kranti returned home and got into a fight with Bishnu, who got infuriated and hit the former with an iron pipe lying by the roadside. Kranti died on the spot, the report said.

Bishnu then fled to a nearby forest and hid there but was later apprehended by police. The incident came to light Monday morning when the victim's daughter-in-law, Priya Barla, discovered Kranti's body lying in a pool of blood and lodged a police complaint.

Investigators, along with the help of a forensic team, are conducting a thorough probe into the horrific murder.

A case (185/25) has been registered at Brahmanitarang police station.

## All-women team zooms into space



**WASHINGTON, April 14:** Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin launched his fiancée Lauren Sanchez to space Monday with an all-female celebrity team that included pop star Katy Perry and Gayle King.

It was the latest wave in space tourism, where more of the rich and famous than ever before — can enter the zero-gravity realm traditionally dominated by professional astronauts. The New Shepard rocket blasted off on the quick up-and-down trip from West Texas. The fringes of space beckoned some 65 miles (105 km) up, promising a few precious minutes of weightlessness.

Sanchez, a helicopter pilot and former TV journalist, invited the others along for the 10-minute, fully automated flight, packing on the star power with singer-songwriter Perry and "CBS Mornings" co-host King.

Also sharing the ride were film producer Kerianne Flynn; Aisha Bowe, a former NASA engineer who started her own companies to promote science education; and Amanda Nguyen, a scientist who studied planets around other stars and now advocates for survivors of sexual violence.

Blue Origin declined to say how much the flight cost or who paid what. The trip comes two months before Sanchez and Bezos marry in Venice.

# Indian royal diamond to make auction debut in Geneva

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

**New Delhi, April 14:** A rare piece of India's royal heritage, 'The Golconda Blue' — a historic diamond once owned by the Maharajas of Indore and Baroda — is set to make its auction debut at the Christie's "Magnificent Jewels" sale in Geneva May 14.

The 23.24-carat vivid blue diamond, mounted in a striking modern ring by celebrated Parisian designer JAR, is expected to fetch an estimated value between USD 35 and USD 50 million (₹300 — ₹430 crore).

"Exceptional noble gems of this caliber come to market once in a lifetime. Over the course of its 259-year history, Christie's has had the honour of offering some of the world's most important Golconda diamonds, including the Archduke Joseph, the Princie, and the Wittelsbach.

"With its Royal heritage, extraordinary colour, and exceptional size, 'The Golconda Blue' is truly one of the rarest blue diamonds in the world," Rahul Kadakia, Christie's International head of Jewellery, said in a statement.

Hailed as one of the most important and rarest blue diamonds ever discovered, what makes the auction more significant for Indian audiences is its direct lineage to Indian royalty — and its origins in the legendary Golconda mines of pres-

ent-day Telangana, renowned for producing the world's most iconic diamonds.

According to Christie's, 'The Golconda Blue' once belonged to Maharaja Yeshwant Rao Holkar II of Indore, a modernist monarch celebrated for his refined taste and cosmopolitan lifestyle during the 1920s and '30s.

**THE GOLCONDA BLUE**

In 1923, the Maharaja's father commissioned a bracelet featuring this extraordinary blue diamond from the French house Chaumet, after he had earlier acquired the famed "Indore Pears" — the two significant Golconda diamonds — from the same jeweller, they informed.

A decade later, the Maharaja appointed Mauboussin as his official jeweller, who redesigned the royal collection and incorporated "The Golconda



## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Demolish the college. Rebuild it with mud. Only then will cow dung lower the temperature more effectively

# leisure



## AIMEE WOOD WINS APOLOGY OVER 'UNFUNNY' SKETCH

The White Lotus star Aimee Lou Wood has won an apology from *Saturday Night Live* after she expressed her disapproval of a 'unfunny' sketch which featured comedian Sarah Sherman sporting oversized prosthetic teeth. Sherman did the act to mimic the British actress who called the show out on social media.

## COOGLER: I REALLY LOVE THE PROCESS OF MAKING FILMS

Director Ryan Coogler has talked about what makes it so creatively and personally satisfying. Coogler said: "I think for me, I was fortunate enough to find out what I love to do—some people say a calling or a passion—but I just really love the process of making films."



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
A romantic link is about to be presented to you as a surprise, shining and smiling. Ganesha advises you to be prepared in your best dress and to practice some romantic talking. You never know what the evening has in store for you. Only Ganesha does, and he is sporting a knowing smile.

**TAURUS**  
This day you are likely to be prone to daydreaming and fantasizing. Ganesha sees you losing touch with reality and making errors in judgment, in your assessment of facts. You will, by sheer force of your tenacity and determination ensure that things work out in the end. In spite of an initial lack of focus, you will be able to sort out your affairs and find that everything turns out in your favour.

**GEMINI**  
Today, your enthusiasm for sports and outdoor activities is palpable. According to you, variety is the spice of life. You will keep on jumping from one venture to another. You will establish a good rapport with your bosses and colleagues. It's time to taste success in your immediate and interim objectives.

**CANCER**  
You will help others and be cheerful, feels Ganesha. You will inspire and encourage others. Closeness with beloved will gladden you. You will be attracted to special person, and it could benefit you.

**LEO**  
You will spend the day with your family and friends today and feel closer to them. You will try to help others, as always. You will like to guide someone if your own situation is comfortable today. You will be able to fulfill the expectations placed upon you by someone and will garner a lot of well-wishes, says Ganesha.

**VIRGO**  
You will be the flag-bearer for people around you, spreading hope and inspiration. Ganesha advises you to be the ideal family man today. By doing this you will radiate affection and love. This will in turn work remarkably in cultivating positive relationships.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesha says that you will be more careful about your outward appearance and will try to enhance it further. Towards the evening you may impress people around you when you attend a social function. Those of you who are single can put forth a marriage proposal to their beloved today and it will be accepted.

**SCORPIO**  
Today, you must spend most of the time in meditation and introspection. If you do not meditate, you will be surrounded by negative thoughts and bitterness for others. According to Ganesha, this may hinder your progress and growth in career. Simple living and high thinking may make things easier for you.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Someone from the opposite sex is likely to get attracted towards you. Enjoy being in the limelight. Today, your main activity becomes hanging around with friends and cherishing their company.

**CAPRICORN**  
You love your family and you will try your best to live up to the expectations of your family members. If you are student, you will finish up your existing projects and get on with some fresh assignments, foretells Ganesha. Don't block your imagination; give yourself some freedom so that you can test your creativity and talent.

**AQUARIUS**  
You may have to remain indoors today. But, don't think that you will get bored. You can do a lot of things, like playing cards and other board games, reading, watching the natural world around, and what not. You will spend the day in a relax mood and look at life from a different perspective, feels Ganesha.

**PISCES**  
You will race ahead of you competition today. No matter what field you are in, you will find yourself at an advantageous point, well ahead of your contemporaries. You will be able to complete the task at hand with lesser effort than required.



## Akshay's gesture wins hearts

**Mumbai:** Akshay Kumar and R. Madhavan are currently busy promoting their upcoming film, *Kesari Chapter 2*. The actors were spotted jetting out of Mumbai on Monday morning from the private airport and graciously posed for pictures with the paparazzi. However, what caught everyone's attention was Akshay's thoughtful gesture towards a police official.

On Monday, celebrity photographer Viral Bhayani shared a video of the two stars at the airport. In the clip, Akshay and Madhavan are seen showing their documents and stepping inside the terminal. As the paparazzi continued calling their names and requesting photos, Akshay approached the police official stationed at the entry and politely asked if they could take pictures.

While the police officer looked a little hesitant, he allowed them to pose for paparazzi. Later, the duo was seen sharing jokes as they posed for the cameras. While Madhavan wore a traditional white kurta-pyjama, Akshay opted for a casual grey ensemble paired with black sunglasses.

Fans were impressed by Akshay's respectful gesture. One comment read, "They both are really very well-mannered and true gentlemen. That's why they're my favourites in the industry." Another wrote, "That's why he's my favourite." A third added, "Both are actually gentlemen," while another fan simply called them "real gems." AGENCIES



### WILDLIFE PROTECTION

## Adah's unique stand

**Mumbai:** Actress Adah Sharma made a striking statement on the runway as she walked with a sword in hand, symbolically defending the cause of wildlife protection.

Known for her bold fashion choices and passion for animal rights, Adah used the dramatic moment to draw attention to the threats faced by wildlife. Her fierce stance on the ramp served as a heartfelt message—urging people to stand up for the voiceless and safeguard nature's most vulnerable creatures.

Speaking about the same, Adah shared, "We thought it would be a nice twist, dramatic like the theme of the show was. I think action moves are extremely fashionable, and I loved the warrior princess look. The theme was peacocks, and with my sword, it was a symbolic way to ward off anyone who wants to

harm wildlife." Interestingly, the actress walked the ramp wearing a 28 kg lehenga while wielding a sword. Adah walked the ramp as the showstopper at the recent fashion event.

On the professional front, Adah Sharma most recently appeared in the romantic drama *Tumko Meri Kasam*, helmed by director Vikram Bhatt. The film featured a notable cast including Anupam Kher, Esha Deol, and Ishwak Singh, and drew inspiration from the life of Ajay Murdia, the founder of the Indira IVF clinic chain.



## Qualities Krystle looks for in men

**Mumbai:** Popular television actress Krystle Dsouza has shared that she really wants to get married and have kids but just not right now.

Krystle appeared as a guest on Bharti Singh and Harsh Limbachiya's podcast. The actress was seen talking about her idea of marriage.

"I don't have any plans to get married right now. When it happens, it will happen like this (snaps finger). Yes, I want to get married... I actually want children. I know we can have children without having to get married, but I want to go the traditional way... I want to get married, but not right now," she said.

Asked what kind of a man she is looking for, Krystle said, "I don't want a guy who travels a lot because I want to travel alone or with my girls. I want a guy who works, is sweet, is humble, and is funny but doesn't like to travel a lot so that I also get my time."

## Secrets behind Avika's humility

**New Delhi:** Actress Avika Gor revealed that her idea of a perfect day off is unwinding with her family and reconnecting with old friends, a simple joy which she says, keeps her grounded.

"A perfect day off for me is all about spending time with my family. My work often takes me to different cities, so I really value those moments at home," Avika told this agency.

She added: "I also love catching up with old friends—having meaningful conversations, finding out where they are in life, and reflecting on how far I've come too. It keeps me grounded and reminds me of my roots. That's what makes a day off truly special for me."

The actress, who gained the spotlight for playing the role of Anandi in the show *Balika Vadhu*, which was set in rural Rajasthan and revolves around the life of a child bride, stated that comfort takes center stage for her.

Avika said: "For me, comfort comes first. I'd usually go for a good pair of jeans with a white shirt—simple and easy. Then, to add a touch of glam, I'll throw on some jewelry—gold or silver, something that complements my bag or shoes. I might pair that look with heels to elevate the vibe." IANS

### PEANUTS



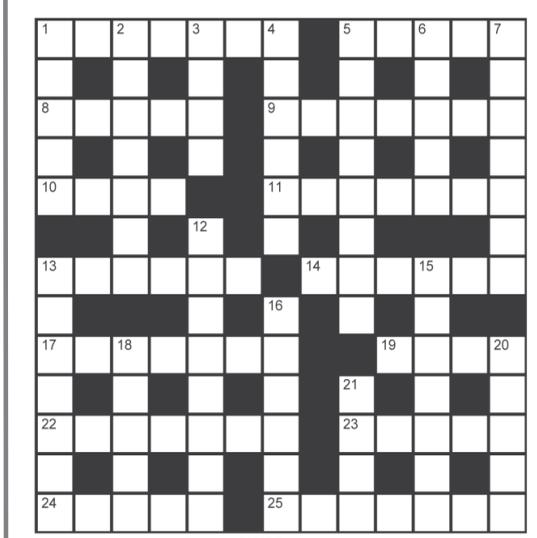
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



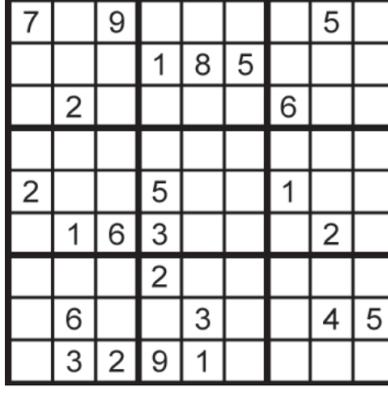
### FUN POST CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Defame
  - 5 Scrooge, for one
  - 8 Farewell
  - 9 Airport area
  - 10 Kind of wave or rash
  - 11 Like some volcanoes
  - 13 Hamper
  - 14 Serbian province
  - 17 Tour de France participant
  - 19 Bee's hangout
  - 22 Thug
  - 23 Penniless statesman
  - 24 Noblemen
  - 25 Furrows
  - 5 Salad item
  - 6 Leaf opening
  - 7 Italian rice
  - 12 Athenian statesman
  - 13 Excavator
  - 15 Menacing
  - 16 Type of clock or number
  - 18 Church group
  - 20 Fencing swords
  - 21 Up to the task
- Down**
- 1 Secret supply
  - 2 Fauna
  - 3 Tabour
  - 4 Ebb

### 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

Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati, Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan, Language and Culture Minister Suryavanshi Suraj and other dignitaries release a book at the concluding ceremony of 'Odia Pakhya', at Krushi Sikhya Sadan, OUAT in Bhubaneswar, Monday



downtown

BJD's internal rift worsens over Waqf

Party veteran Raja Swain urges Naveen to reaffirm party's commitment to secularism, social justice

Bhubaneswar, April 14: There seems to be no end in sight to the internal rift within the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) as party leaders continue to express their discontent over the party's U-turn on the contentious Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025.



Veteran BJD leader Ranendra Pratap Swain (Raja Swain), who won eight times from the Athagarh Assembly constituency in Cuttack, has also joined the list of disgruntled leaders who openly expressed their disappointment over the party's flip-flop on the Waqf Act during voting in Rajya Sabha, and matters related to the functioning of the party organisation.

among party workers over the Waqf Bill (now an Act) controversy has raised serious questions about our stand on secularism. In this context, I sincerely urge that the party must reaffirm its commitment to both social justice and secularism as its core planks and take the cadre into full confidence moving forward," wrote Swain.

Meanwhile, amidst the on-going organisational elections in the party, Swain also urged Patnaik to ensure equitable representation from all regions and communities, including SC/ST, OBC and minorities in the party ranks.

He alleged that certain individuals are trying to hijack the party, distort the social fabric, or deepen regional imbalances. "You, being the supreme leader of our party, should ensure equitable representation for all regions and communities, especially SCs-STs, OBCs, minorities and women in proportion to their population, not only at the state apex level but also across districts and block levels of our party organisation. Let not a few individuals hijack the party, distort the social fabric, or deepen regional imbalances. Only then can our party organisation truly uphold the ideals of social justice and regional balance," said the senior BJD leader.

He stated in the letter that former Odisha Chief Minister Biju Patnaik's politics was rooted in social justice, with secularism

Over 300 BJD workers join Congress



Bhubaneswar: Amid the on-going strife within the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) over the recent Waqf (Amendment) Bill (now Act) flip-flop in the Rajya Sabha, more than 300 workers of the regional party crossed over to the Congress Monday. The 'Mishrana Parba' (joining ceremony), which was organised at the Congress headquarters here, was attended by OPCC president Bhakta Charan Das, Gunupur MLA Satyajet

Gomango, Bhawanipatna MLA Sagar Charan Das and former Rayagada district Congress president Durga Prasad Panda among others.

BJD's Gudari block president, vice-president, youth president, student's wing president, Samiti members and sarpanchs from the Gunupur Assembly constituency were among the joiners.

Expressing his gratitude towards the new recruits, Das said, "We are happy to

welcome them into our party. The way BJD is behaving with the people of Odisha, people are hurt and they want to raise their voice against it.

"In the coming days, more activists from BJD will join Congress as the regional party is unable to protect its individuality. The Waqf Bill flip-flop is an example of how BJD is crumbling due to BJP's secret involvement in the party."

After joining Congress, Gudari panchayat samiti chairperson Lakshmi Sabara said, "The main reason I joined Congress is because it is the only party in Odisha which is raising voice against the atrocities being faced by women in the state. Being a woman, I will work for their wellbeing under the Congress."

Meanwhile, observers said the change of side by the BJD workers, mostly grassroots leaders, at this juncture may well be the first signs of a larger calamity going to hit the over two decades old outfit in the state.

Governor, CM pay tributes to Ambedkar



AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 14: Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and Leader of Opposition (LoP) Naveen Patnaik Monday paid tributes to Bhim Rao Ambedkar on his birth anniversary.

"Hon'ble Governor, Shri @DrHariBabuK has paid his tributes to Dr BR Ambedkar, one of the architects of the Indian Constitution, on his birth anniversary. #AmbedkarJayanti2025," the official Twitter handle of the Governor said.

Cutting across party lines, leaders of the ruling BJP, Opposition BJD and Congress assembled at the AG Square in the city and garlanded the statue of Ambedkar.

"Paid floral tributes to Bharat Ratna Baba Saheb Dr BR Ambedkar by garlanding his statue at AG Chowk, Bhubaneswar on the occasion of his birth anniversary. Our government follows Dr Ambedkar's ideology of equality," the CM said.

LoP in the Assembly and BJD president Naveen Patnaik in a post on X said: "Humble tribute to the architect of Indian Constitution, Bharat Ratna Dr #BRAmbedkar on his birth anniversary. The visionary leader and scholar was a champion of social justice throughout his life which continues to guide the nation. He will be remembered for his life-long efforts to uplift the underprivileged and marginalized."

OPCC president Bhakta Charan Das and other party leaders also garlanded Ambedkar's statue and held a memorial meeting at the Congress Bhawan.

Ambedkar is recognised for his lifelong struggle for the empowerment of Scheduled Castes and his key role in drafting the Constitution. Born in a Dalit family in 1891, he was a brilliant student who went on to study in foreign countries. The discrimination he suffered in Indian society turned him into a committed social reformer.

He was India's first law minister. He died in 1956.

Prez, PM greet people on Odia New Year



Bhubaneswar, April 14: President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and a host of leaders Monday greeted the people of the state on Odia New Year.

The day is also celebrated as Pana Sankranti in the state.

Taking to X, President Murmu, who hails from the state, said, "On the occasion of the holy Odia New Year, Pana Sankranti or Maha Bishuba Sankranti, I extend my heartfelt greetings to the people of Odisha and to our Odia brothers and sisters living abroad. Pana Sankranti brings a message of love and peace to our society. This joyful festival also inspires us to work dedicatedly for our country. On this occasion, I wish everyone happiness and prosperity."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi also greeted the people and said, "Best wishes on Odia New year." The PM also shared a sticker on his X post depicting the worship of the Tulsi plant by Odias and wrote, "Best wishes on Maha

Bishuba Pana Sankranti. May the coming year bring the fulfillment of all your dreams, and may happiness, harmony and prosperity prevail everywhere."

Union Home Minister Amit Shah in a post on X said, "Heartiest wishes to my sisters and brothers of Odisha on the occasion of Maha Bishuba Sankranti. At the advent of the Odia New Year, may Mahaprabhu shower blessings of joy, well-being and affluence on all."

"Hon'ble Governor @DrHariBabuK greets all on the occasion of Odia New year and holy Maha Bishuba Sankranti, Wish and pray Lord Jagannath for the bright future of all," the official X handle of the Governor said.

Greeting people on Pana Sankranti, CM Mohan Charan Majhi said: "Today marks Odia New Year and Bishuba Sankranti. I extend my greetings to all Odias. We are committed to working with pride for Odisha and will continue our efforts with full dedication."

Leader of Opposition in Assembly Naveen Patnaik said, "Greeting to the people of Odisha on the occasion of Maha Bishuba Sankranti. Bande Utkal Janani."

One detained over theft of toddler from mother

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 14: The Commissionerate Police Monday detained one person in connection with the theft of a 18-month-old boy of a visually impaired beggar from a footpath in the City Sunday morning.

DCP, Bhubaneswar, Jagmohan Meena said that multiple police teams have been formed to look for the stolen boy.

"Steps are being taken to obtain photographs and footage of the missing child and the place of occurrence and probable entry and exit routes for identification of the culprit," he said.

He said technical data, human intelligence and confidential sources have been engaged to get clues in the case.

"One suspect has been detained in the case," a release issued by the police said.

The incident took place early Sunday when Jayanti Mallik, 25, a visually impaired beggar, was sleeping on a footpath near Ram Mandir in Janpath area.

She made a living by begging and stayed at Kanyashram, a shelter home for destitute women. However, due to bad weather, she could not return to the shelter home Saturday night and slept on the footpath

with her six-year-old daughter and her one-and-half-year-old son, the DCP said.

Around 2 am Sunday, an unidentified person came to her and offered juice to them, and gave his mobile phone to the child to play.

"The baby was playing with the mobile phone and I went back to sleep. When I woke up, that person had left the place with the child," the woman said.

Worrying that the child must not have eaten anything as he is breast-fed, the woman made fervent appeals to the police to trace her child and bring him back.

Thunderstorms, rain likely over next 5 days

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 14: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) regional centre here Monday issued a yellow warning for thunderstorm activity, accompanied by lightning and gusty winds, over the next four to five days in several districts in the state.

The alert also includes predictions of light to moderate rainfall across parts of the state, particularly during afternoon and evening hours.

According to the IMD, thun-

derstorms with lightning and gusty surface winds reaching speeds of 40-50 kmph are likely to occur in one or two places in Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Puri, Khurda, Nayagarh, Ganjam, Gajapati, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Rayagada, Koraput, Malkangiri, Nawarangpur, Kalahandi, and Kandhamal districts.

Meanwhile, the weather office said, light to moderate rainfall or thundershowers are very likely at several places in the above districts, with isolated showers expect-

ed in Angul, Dhenkanal, Boudh, and other parts of interior Odisha. Dry weather is predicted to prevail in the remaining districts.

In addition, the IMD has warned of heavy rainfall at isolated locations in Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Balasore, Sundargarh, Dhenkanal, Ganjam, and Gajapati districts during this period.

Delhi MLAs to visit Odisha Assembly, study NeVA rollout

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 14: A Delhi Assembly delegation led by Speaker Vijender Gupta will visit Odisha from April 15-17 to study the Odisha Assembly's successful implementation of the National e-Vidhan Application.

The visit aims to explore the model of paperless governance and digital transformation adopted by Odisha, which recently became fully paperless, according to a statement Monday.

Gupta will be accompanied by Deputy Speaker Mohan Singh Bisht, senior Assem-



bly officials, and other key personnel from the National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA) project.

The delegation's goal is to learn from Odisha's experienc-

es, focusing on the technological frameworks, best practices and operational models that contributed to the successful rollout of NeVA.

Announcing the Delhi

Assembly's move towards a paperless system during the Budget session, Gupta committed to completing the transition within 100 days.

The Union parliamentary affairs ministry is expected to release the necessary funds for implementation of NeVA in Delhi, according to the statement.

Expressing his optimism, Gupta said the visit would be crucial in accelerating the Delhi Assembly's digital transformation, helping it evolve into a more modern and transparent legislative body.

The delegation will begin its tour by paying courtesy

visits to the Odisha Governor and the Chief Minister in Bhubaneswar.

On April 16, the delegation will attend meetings with the NeVA committee and meet the Odisha Assembly Speaker.

The final day's agenda includes wrap-up meetings and discussions with stakeholders involved in the NeVA's implementation.

The Delhi Assembly is committed to adopting a more transparent, tech-enabled and citizen-centric approach to its operations, with the swift implementation of NeVA a key step in this transformation, according to the statement.

Advertisement for Baishakhi festival featuring Odia text, a 50th anniversary logo, and various sponsors like OMC, DISHA, and Odisha Live.

# DHE: Applications for Plus III admission to begin April 16

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 14:** The Department of Higher Education (DHE), Odisha, Monday announced that the application process for Plus III (Undergraduate) courses across the state will commence April 16 for 2025-26 academic session.

Students seeking admission into various degree colleges will be required to apply online through the Student Academic Management System (SAMS) portal.

Sources said the initiative is part of the government's larger effort to streamline the admission process for a range of higher education programmes, including postgraduate courses as well as two-year BEd, MEd, and BHEd programmes.

In line with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020,



the new academic framework allows students greater flexibility in choosing subject combinations. Applicants can opt for a single major with two minors, double majors, or three minor subjects, offering a more interdisciplinary and student-centric approach to higher education.

The Common Application Form (CAF) will be available on the SAMS portal from April 16. The platform has been instrumental in digitising and streamlining the admission

process across Odisha, ensuring transparency and efficiency.

To ensure timely commencement of the academic year, the state government has announced that undergraduate classes will begin from July 10, 2025.

"This academic model not only encourages curiosity-driven learning but also helps students align their studies with career goals from the undergraduate level itself," a senior official from the DHE stated.

The CHSE Odisha Plus II exams 2025 was held from February 18 to March 27 across 1,276 centres.

As many as 3,93,618 students had appeared for the exam -2,47,391 in Arts stream, 1,14,980 Science and 25,526 in Commerce stream. 5,721 students appeared in the exams in for various vocational streams.



**AUSTERITY AND PENANCE:** A man carrying a child in arms walks on hot embers on the occasion of Jhamu Jatra at Jugal Kishore temple premises inside Bastari mutt at Badhei Sahi in Buxi Bazar area of Cuttack, Monday

## 5 murders in as....

From P1

Significantly, this is the fifth murder reported in Rourkela police district in the past five days, raising concerns about the recent spike in violent crimes in the police district.

Earlier, at least four people have reportedly been killed across different police jurisdictions in Rourkela police district, officials said.

On Wednesday night, a rag picker was allegedly murdered on Gandhi Road under the Plantsite police limits after he reportedly refused to serve liquor to his friend. The victim's throat was slit, police said.

In the same evening, another youth was killed under Chhend police limits over a dispute related to a girl. Police arrested seven individuals in connection with the incident.

In a separate case, a person succumbed to injuries at Rourkela Government Hospital (RGH) hospital Friday evening after being attacked with a screwdriver by a lineman in Malgodown area under Udit Nagar police limits. The accused was arrested Saturday.

Similarly, a youth allegedly slit the throat of another youth during a brawl in the Raghunathpali police limits late Saturday night. One person has been arrested in this case.

**WEATHER**

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	35.2°	35.0°
Min Temp	23.8°	23.6°
Humidity	67%	69%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

**FORECAST**  
Partly cloudy sky with possibility of rain/thunderstorm.

## Choksi held in...

From P1

He said the "obvious" grounds for the appeal would be that Choksi is "not a flight risk, is extremely sick and undergoing treatment for cancer".

He said their legal defense would be that this is a "political case and the human condition (in Indian prisons) was not good".

Choksi, Nirav Modi, their family members and employees, bank officials and others were booked by the CBI and the ED in 2018 for perpetrating the alleged loan fraud at the Brady House branch of the Punjab National Bank (PNB) in Mumbai.

It was alleged that Choksi, his firm Gitanjali Gems and others "committed the offence of cheating against PNB in connivance with certain bank officials by fraudulently getting the LoUs (letters of undertaking) issued and got the FLCs (foreign letter of credit) enhanced without following prescribed procedure and caused a wrongful loss to the bank".

The CBI has filed at least two chargesheets against him in this case while the ED has filed three such prosecution complaints.

Nirav Modi, declared a fugitive economic offender, has been lodged in a London jail since he was held by the authorities there in 2019 on the basis of a legal request made by the ED and the CBI in this case. He is contesting extradition to India.

According to the investigating agencies, officials at PNB's Brady House branch in Mumbai issued 165 LoUs and 58 FLCs during March-April 2017, against which 311 bills

were discounted.

These LoUs and FLCs were allegedly issued to Choksi's firms without any sanctioned limit or cash margin and without making entries in PNB's central banking system to evade any scrutiny in case of a default.

LoUs are a guarantee given by a bank on behalf of its client to a foreign bank. If the client does not repay the foreign bank, the liability falls on the guarantor bank.

Based on these LoUs by PNB, money was lent by State Bank of India, Mauritius; Allahabad Bank, Hong Kong; Axis Bank, Hong Kong; Bank of India, Antwerp; Canara Bank, Manama; and SBI, Frankfurt.

"Since the accused companies did not repay the amount availed against the said fraudulent LoUs and FLCs, PNB made the payment of ₹6,344.97 crore (USD 965.18 million), including the overdue interest, to the overseas banks, which had advanced buyer's credit and discounted the bills against the fraudulent LoUs and FLCs issued by the PNB," the CBI's supplementary chargesheet in the case alleged.

The ED has attached or seized assets worth ₹2,565.90 crore in the case against Choksi and the court has allowed "restitution" of these properties.

The anti-money laundering agency had also initiated legal process before a Mumbai court to get Choksi declared a fugitive economic offender under a 2018 Act meant for those Indians who commit a minimum ₹100 crore worth fraud and flee abroad.

# 48th nat'l Baisakhi festival begins today

RESHMI YADAV, OP

**Bhubaneswar, April 14:** The 48th national Baisakhi festival, organised by Chinta O Chetna—one of Odisha's oldest cultural and social service organisations—will be held from April 15 to 18 at Rabindra Mandap, said, organisation's national secretary Surendra Das Monday.

The four-day cultural celebration, marking the Odia New Year, will be inaugurated by Assembly Speaker Surama Padhy. Distinguished guests include Law Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan, Commerce, Transport, Steel & Mines Minister Bibhuti Bhusan Jena, and Odia Language, Literature & Culture Minister Suryabanshi Suraj. Editor of *Dharitri* and *OrissaPOST* Taghata Satpathy will also be in attendance.

The festival will feature a rich lineup of classical and folk dance performances, showcasing the cultural vibrancy of India.

Renowned and emerging artists will present Odissi, Kathakali, Kuchipudi, Bharatanatyam, and Kathak, while traditional folk dances like Ghumura, Kalika, Mahishamardini, Ranapa, Gotipua, Sambalpuri, and tribal

dances will add local flavour. Patriotic marches by the CRPF and 7th Battalion brass bands will further enliven the event.

A spiritual highlight of the festival will be the evening ritual inspired by the Divyapahandi of Lord Jagannath, complete with traditional elements such as Aalat, Chamara, Chhatratrasa, Aalati, Pujarachana, and Tulsiprasada.

The closing ceremony will be graced by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, along with senior ministers, administrative officials, artists, writers, and members of the armed forces.

The Baisakhi festival committee has called upon the public, especially art lovers and cultural enthusiasts, to attend in large numbers and celebrate the enduring spirit of Odia identity and tradition.



REPRESENTATIVE PHOTO

## BB Trust awards 10 scholarships

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 14:** In a noble effort to support educational aspirations, the Biswa Bhusan (BB) Memorial Trust reaffirmed its commitment to community welfare by awarding scholarships to 10 needy students pursuing higher education across various disciplines.

The initiative, held in memory of Late Biswa Bhusan, was spearheaded by Anil Mahalik, chairman of the Trust and former president of the All Odisha Contractors' Association. Mahalik reiterated the Trust's mission to empower meritorious-yet-financially-challenged students in Odisha.

Addressing the gathering,



Tanaya Patnaik, Editor of the Sambad Group, praised the noble efforts of the Trust and its scholarship programme, BB Scholars, for making a meaningful impact in the field of education.

She personally handed over scholarship cheques to the students, including those pursuing medical studies in reputed institutions across the state.

Other distinguished guests, including Rajyogini Durgesh Nandini, Sanchalika of Brahma Kumaris (Unit-VIII), and Pritish Chandra Basha, a former banker and noted social reformer, also joined in presenting the awards. Both lauded the Trust's continued efforts in fostering educational equity and encouraged the students to stay committed to their goals.

## Dy CM Parida bats for SHG leadership shift

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 14:** Deputy Chief Minister Pravatī Parida made a powerful appeal to women members of self-help groups (SHGs) across the state, encouraging them to welcome leadership transitions and collaborate with the government for organisational growth.

In a social media post, Parida emphasised the importance of dynamic leadership changes for fostering organisational progress. She revealed a significant Mission Shakti restructuring initiative, which dissolves existing grassroots SHG leadership to open doors for inclusive opportunities for all families to engage in income-generating activities. Parida criticised the previous government's misuse of SHG programmes for electoral gains, alleging that funds were diverted to unregistered groups without audits.

## Ambedkar Study Centre to be set up at CUO: VC

**BHUBANESWAR:** The Central University of Odisha (CUO), Koraput, will soon establish an Ambedkar Study Centre to promote in-depth research and understanding of the life, vision, and contributions of BR Ambedkar, announced VC Chakradhar Tripathi Monday. The announcement was made during the university's observance of Ambedkar's 134th birth anniversary at its Sunabeda campus. Tripathi also appealed to the CUO community to contribute financially to create a corpus fund for the proposed centre. In his keynote address, the Tripathi underlined Ambedkar's enduring relevance, describing him as "a true son of the soil" who envisioned a just, inclusive, and progressive India. Highlighting Ambedkar's educational philosophy, he said the architect of the Constitution believed in a system that empowers students morally, scientifically, and skillfully; expects teachers to teach with integrity and national spirit; and urges institutions to uphold equity and inclusiveness. Tripathi added, "Dr Ambedkar's ideas continue to inspire global movements wherever inequality is challenged."

# 'Balasore Darshan' launched on Odia New Year

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar/Balasore, April 14:** Marking the auspicious occasion of Pana Sankranti and the Odia New Year, the heritage initiative 'Balasore Darshan' was formally launched—a heartfelt attempt to reconnect the people of Balasore with their rich, centuries-old cultural legacy.

Spearheaded by local citizens and cultural volunteers, 'Balasore Darshan' envisions a weekend heritage trail that celebrates both the tangible and intangible heritage of the region—encompassing more than 500 years of socio-cultural evolution.

The initiative is dedicated to fostering public awareness, encouraging heritage documentation, and promoting the sustainable preservation of historic sites and traditional knowledge systems.

The inaugural event witnessed the presence of eminent personalities such as renowned



artist Keshu Das, cultural researcher and heritage activist Prashant Padhi, Yuba Bikash founder-cum-chairperson Govind Ballabh Dalai, Odisha Heritage Walks founder member Bishwaranjan Dehury and Jñ nashri Social Organisation Prashant founder Kumar Patel.

In his address, Das noted that archaeological evidence suggests Balasore's origins date back as far as 4,000 BCE, long before colonial influences—highlighting its ancient identity as an agrarian and cultural hub. He stressed the urgency of reclaiming and conserving

these deep-rooted civilizational stories before they fade into obscurity.

Speakers collectively emphasised the need for community-led heritage consciousness, drawing attention to significant sites like ancient Kupari (historically known as Kumpara-kathu), the Triveni-like confluence of the Budhabalanga, Sona, and Gangahar rivers in Ayodhya (Oudha), and Balasore's enduring cultural connections with Kosambi, Santiniketan, and colonial-era British administration.

Traditional elements—from folk arts and oral literature to local food systems and ritual practices—were acknowledged as vital threads in the region's cultural tapestry.

The first heritage walk began with floral tributes to Byasa Kabi Fakir Mohan Senapati, the pioneer of modern Odia literature.

The guided trail then moved from Santikanan to Barabati High School and the old District

Headquarters Hospital, where freedom fighter Bagha Jatin spent his final days.

It continued through Balighat, the British Cemetery, Mirzapokhari, and concluded at the Niliabag Palace—each location offering a window into Balasore's layered colonial and cultural history.

Organised by Yuba Bikash, the initiative was made possible through the active involvement of passionate local youth, including Sambit Khuntia, Rakhal Maity, Lakshmi Priya Marandi, Asit Dalai, Ashok Das, and others dedicated to the cause of heritage awareness.

"This is more than just a walk—it's a movement to reclaim our identity, to tell our stories, and to pass them down with pride," said Dalai.

The organisers also shared their long-term vision of building a documented heritage network, aiming to establish Balasore as a hub of national and international cultural significance.

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# Marine fishing ban comes into force; thousands face job loss



The annual ban is expected to result in a shortage of sea fish in local markets, driving up prices and affecting consumers statewide

replenish dwindling fish stocks and support long-term marine biodiversity.

However, the ban triggers a widespread livelihood crisis among the fishing community. An estimated 50,000 families including fishermen, boat owners, trawler operators, ice factory workers, and labourers rely on marine fishing for daily income. With operations set to halt in key hubs such as Paradip, Balaramgadi, Chandipur, Bahabulpur, Talasari, and Gopalpur, communities will have to grapple with unemployment and economic uncertainty.

At Paradip, Odisha's largest fishing harbour, about 90 per cent of vessels had returned to port by Sunday evening, with the remainder docking by Monday. Fishing activity along the coast from Chaumukh to the Hanskara river mouth has come to a standstill. "Most boats have been pulled ashore. There's no work for us until the ban ends," said Suba Rao, a fisherman from Paradip.

Balasore/Paradip, April 14: A two-month long ban on marine fishing along Odisha's coastline is all set to take effect Tuesday, forcing thousands of fishermen to dock their boats and brace for financial hardship.

Enforced annually under the Odisha Marine Fishing Regulation Act, 1982, the ban — in place from April 15 to June 14 — aims to protect breeding marine species during the critical spawning season. The restriction, issued by the Directorate of Fisheries (Notice No 4038, dated April 11), applies to all mechanised fishing operations across the state's coastal harbours and is intended to help

## Hanuman Jayanti peaceful in state; Majhi, Pradhan join processions

Bhubaneswar, April 14: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and several state ministers and lawmakers Monday joined the Hanuman Jayanti celebration which was observed peacefully across the state.

Wearing a headgear with "Jai Sri Ram" written on it, Majhi participated in the Hanuman Jayanti procession at his hometown Keonjhar, while saffron-clad Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan joined the celebration in Sambalpur, his Lok Sabha Constituency.

"I came to Keonjhar after offering puja at Maa Tarini Temple and joined the procession from Mahavir Chhak. I join the procession every year. By the grace of the Lord, this time also I got the opportunity to participate in the festival. The celebration is peaceful," Majhi told reporters.

Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Suresh Pujari, veteran BJP MLA Jayanarayan Mishra and other leaders also performed 'Aarti' of Lord Hanuman before starting the processions in Sambalpur.

The entire Sambalpur town was put under the security blanket with the deployment of over 50 platoons of the police and Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) personnel.

The city witnessed a riot on Hanuman Jayanti in 2023 for which the permission for the procession was denied the next year.

In a post on X, Pradhan said, "I joined Hanuman Jayanti in a spiritual atmosphere at Budharja, Dhankauda and Sunapali in Sambalpur. Lord Shri Hanuman is the symbol of devotion, sacrifice, perseverance and dedication. There is devotional enthusiasm among the citizens on Hanuman Jayanti. I wish the world well-being from the Lord. Jai Sriram, Jai Bajrangbali."

Pradhan also said that the celebration was peaceful. "The Hanuman Jayanti celebration was held amid tight security across the state and there was no report of any untoward incident from any part of the state," Additional DG (Law and Order) Sanjay Kumar told PTI.

## Woman to reunite with son after 10 yrs; father held for abduction



POST NEWS NETWORK

Balasore, April 14: A woman from Balasore district is all set to reunite with her teenage son after a decade, following the successful rescue of the child from Delhi and the arrest of his father, who had allegedly abducted him and gone into hiding.

At a press briefing held Monday at the DIG (Eastern Range) office, DIG Satyajit Nayak confirmed that a special police team, acting on intelligence provided by anti-human trafficking organisation 'You to Sell' and the cyber unit, located and rescued the child. SP Raj Prasad was also present at the briefing.

The dramatic turn of events unfolded after the woman, identified as Seema Satapathy, pursued legal action through the Balasore family court, seeking custody of her son. Acting on a court directive, police traced the missing boy—now 14 years old—and his father, Kamalakanta Mishra, to the national capital.

According to officials, Seema and Kamalakanta got married in 2008. The couple, who lived

"Many from the Nolia community have already migrated back to Andhra Pradesh," he added. With all fishing boats and dinghies docked, a sense of stillness has descended upon the coastal region.

While the state government has announced relief measures, including the distribution of rice and essentials to affected families, many fishermen say they have yet to receive support. A major hurdle is the lack of registration — only traditional fishermen officially recognised by the Fisheries department are eligible for benefits.

"This is the toughest time of the year for us," said a fisherman from Baliapal in Balasore district. "We have no income, and our families are suffering. We urge the government to step in with immediate aid."

Beyond just the fishermen, the impact ripples across the fishing economy — from transporters and fish sellers to seasonal labourers working in ice plants and processing units.

Adding to the pressure, the ban is expected to result in a shortage of marine fish in local markets, driving up prices and affecting consumers statewide.

Fishermen's unions and local leaders have called for urgent intervention by the state to provide financial relief and ensure food security during the ban. Without meaningful support, many warn, the coastal fishing community could face worsening hardship.

# Village faces nuptial crisis amid severe water shortage

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nabarangpur, April 14: A severe and long-standing drinking water crisis has led to an unusual and alarming social fallout in Badabarli village, under Sanabarli panchayat of Papadahandi block in Nabarangpur district — more than 80 young men remain unmarried because families refuse to marry their daughters into a village with no reliable access to drinking water.

Despite the launch of a mega drinking water project nearly two years ago — which included the construction of a water tank and pipeline installation — the village's 1,000-plus residents are still waiting for piped water. With no access to a consistent water supply, villagers are forced to walk over 1.5 km daily to fetch water.

Badabarli, surrounded by

## NO WATER, NO BRIDES



hills, has basic infrastructure like roads and electricity but continues to suffer from a severe shortage of potable water. Of the three tube wells once installed by the administration including one on a school campus, only one remains partially functional, yielding barely enough to meet demand. The others have fallen into disrepair.

Women often trek to a natu-

ral spring more than a kilometre away late at night to fetch water. A decade ago, after similar complaints surfaced, local officials built a water collection tank and laid pipes from the spring, which lies about 30 feet below ground level. They also constructed 35 steps and added two pipes at the rock outlet to ease water access. But this measure has not been enough to meet the village's

growing needs. For bathing, sanitation, and even funeral rites, villagers must travel nearly 2 km to reach nearby ponds in Sanabarli or Nuaguda. Repeated appeals to block and district administrations have yielded little response, villagers say. "The situation is so bad that many women who married into the village eventually returned to their parental homes," said Paramananda Nag, a local resident. "They just couldn't bear the hardship."

Sameer Harijan and other villagers have now warned of a potential agitation if the issue



MATTER OF FAITH: Women lay prostrate near a pond as part of penance during Maa Dandakali Jatra at Purusottampur in Ganjam district which concluded Monday

## CS witnesses mass hatching of turtles

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Berhampur, April 14: Chief Secretary Manoj Kumar Ahuja Monday witnessed the mass hatching of the endangered Olive Ridley turtles at the Rushikulya mouth rookery in Ganjam district, even though the phenomenon was affected due to the thunderstorm in the area Sunday evening.

Ahuja's visit came a day after Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati witnessed thousands of hatchlings emerging from sandy pits and crawling towards the sea in the same area.

The Chief Secretary discussed the protection measures for the hatchlings with the local forest officials and asked them to take more surveillance measures during the second phase of mass hatching, expected to take place next month.

Senior forest officers were present during Ahuja's inspection of the hatching of the Olive Ridley turtles. Mass hatching which started from Thursday, however, was affected due to the thunderstorm which hit the area Sunday evening, said Sunny Khokkar, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) of Berhampur.

# Sand smuggling by Bengal mafia continues unabated



POST NEWS NETWORK

Jaleswar, April 14: Despite complaints by locals and repeated media coverage, sand smugglers from West Bengal are plundering the minor mineral from Subarnarekha riverbed here in Balasore district. This comes even after a satellite survey was conducted for demarcation of borders with the neighbouring state.

The daylight loot came to the fore when six earthmover machines were spotted excavating sand that was being transported to West Bengal by hundreds of trucks from Guagadia and Praharajpur regions of Jaleswar block.

A makeshift wooden bridge has reportedly been constructed to facilitate the illegal transport of sand across Subarnarekha river, bypassing regulatory oversight.

Locals alleged that despite repeated media coverage and their complaints, there is no sign of Bengal mafia relenting. Acting on the direction of Balasore Collector, a joint border inspection was conducted at Subarnarekha River between Sonakonia (West Bengal) and Dakshin Praharajpur (Odisha) to demarcate the boundary March 4.

Present during the inspection were Balasore Additional District Magistrate Hemanta Singh, Odisha Space Applications Centre (ORSAC) representative Nalini Kanta Jena, and Jaleswar tehsildar Saty-

ajit Mohanty. Officials from West Bengal administration also participated in the joint survey. Satellite imagery and photographs were taken from various points along the river to support the demarcation process.

However, illegal sand extraction continues unabated. Sources allege that sand smuggled daily from Odisha to Haldia in West Bengal is further repackaged and sent to Bangladesh. Local residents claim that the owners of unauthorised brick kilns in Praharajpur area are acting as key facilitators in this smuggling network.

Repeated complaints have been lodged by residents demanding clear demarcation of the inter-state boundary to curb the ongoing illegal activity. When contacted, the Additional District Magistrate confirmed the issue, saying, "We are investigating the matter and have handed over the responsibility to a central team for further action."

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ajit Mohanty. Officials from West Bengal administration also participated in the joint survey. Satellite imagery and photographs were taken from various points along the river to support the demarcation process.

## Int'l Children Film Fest underway in Kalahandi



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhawanipatna, April 14: An International Children Film Festival is underway in Kalahandi district, organisers said.

The three-day festival, hosted by the Laxmi Vikash Group of Institutions, began Sunday and features over 30 feature films, documentaries, short films and student-made movies from 15 countries. More than 1,500 students attended screenings of internationally acclaimed films

centred on child psychology. On the second day Monday, a workshop titled "Creating Impactful Films and Connecting with Your Self" was held at Wisdom Park. Notable speakers included filmmaker Jeetendra Mishra, Purple People Labs founder Shweta Parakh, Georgia's Ambassador Ana Dobroginidze, Rasa Ozunaite of Lithuania and Ukraine's Volodymyr Prytula.

Films screened so far include 'Biswa' (Hindi), Poland's 'Triple Trouble', 'A Butterfly Heart'

## Speeding biker dies after 20-foot plunge

POST NEWS NETWORK

Balasore, April 14: A 28-year-old biker died in a road accident late Sunday night after falling nearly 20 feet near a bridge along National Highway 60 under Rupsa police limits in Balasore district. The deceased was identified as Sayan Das, a resident of the Parnasree police station area under South 24 Parganas in West Bengal. According to police, Das was riding with four to five friends from Puri to West Bengal on individual racing motorcycles when he lost control of his bike and veered off the road near Rupsa, resulting in a fatal fall.

Officers from Rupsa police station rushed to the scene after locals discovered the crash early Monday. An investigation into the incident is underway.

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POST NEWS NETWORK

Balasore, April 14: A 28-year-old biker died in a road accident late Sunday night after falling nearly 20 feet near a bridge along National Highway 60 under Rupsa police limits in Balasore district. The deceased was identified as Sayan Das, a resident of the Parnasree police station area under South 24 Parganas in West Bengal. According to police, Das was riding with four to five friends from Puri to West Bengal on individual racing motorcycles when he lost control of his bike and veered off the road near Rupsa, resulting in a fatal fall.

Officers from Rupsa police station rushed to the scene after locals discovered the crash early Monday. An investigation into the incident is underway.

**IIFL FINANCE** **বুনা ঝা**

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

The branch of IIFL Finance Ltd. located at 1st Floor, Plot No. 5, New Bus Stand Road, Pallahat, Khorda - 752056, Orissa, Assam, will be shifting to below mentioned address with effect from 15.06.2025.

**New Address: IIFL Finance Ltd., Ground Floor, Opposite Service Building Near Smart Retail, New Bus Stand Road ward no. 11 Khordha.**

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All existing services can be availed at the new location.

**ସ୍ୱାର୍ଥଚଳନା ବିଜ୍ଞପ୍ତି**

ଆଇଆଇଏଫଏଲ ଫାଇନାନ୍ସ ଲିମିଟେଡର ଶାଖା, ପ୍ରଥମ ମହଲା, ରୁଟ ବସ ଷ୍ଟାଣ୍ଡ ରୋଡ, ପାଲହାଟ, ଖର୍ଦ୍ଦା - 752056, ଓଡ଼ିଶା, ଆସାମରେ ଉପସ୍ଥାପନ ହେବ।

ନୂତନ ଠିକଣା: ଆଇଆଇଏଫଏଲ ଫାଇନାନ୍ସ ଲିମିଟେଡର, ଭୂମି ମହଲା, ଗାଡ୍ ବିଲ୍ଡିଂ ନିକଟରେ ଥିବା ସ୍ମାର୍ଟ ରିଟେଲ ନିକଟରେ, ନୂତନ ବସ ଷ୍ଟାଣ୍ଡ ରୋଡ୍ ଘର ନଂ 11 ଖର୍ଦ୍ଦା।

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FOCUS POLITICS

# POPULISTS IN THE DOCK



**Those skeptical of deploying the law properly against populist leaders claim that convictions will allow such politicians to present themselves as martyrs – possibly boosting their popularity**

Pen. Plenty of other politicians, including decidedly establishment figures – such as former Prime Minister François Fillon (also a one-time presidential front-runner) – have been convicted of embezzlement. Even former presidents like Nicolas Sarkozy have been found guilty of corruption. Le Pen had always called for harsh punishments in such cases, yet now she conveniently believes that the people themselves are the supreme court.

There is a categorical difference between sanctioning a particular candidate for illegal conduct and removing an entire political option from the electoral menu. The latter is characteristic of the approach known as “militant democracy,” as practiced most prominently in Germany. Here an entire party is banned because its programme and leadership seek the destruction of the liberal democratic order.

One can debate the legitimacy of such bans, since it is reasonable to worry that actions aimed at preserving democracy can themselves end up damaging it. But this is not the question at issue with the Le Pen verdict. Her

party will remain on the ballot, and though the RN has always been a Le Pen family enterprise, it would be odd to argue that preserving democracy requires this to remain the case.

Moreover, showing leniency to popular politicians who have broken the law can have dire consequences for democracy as such. After all, it would signal that such figures are above the law, as in the United States, where the Supreme Court has declared President Donald Trump immune from prosecution for any official act.

While some observers assumed that Trump would be chastened by his many narrow legal escapes (not to mention two impeachments), he was emboldened. His second term has already been a parade of lawlessness, reflecting his belief that he is the law. Worse, many voters will infer that Trump’s behaviour is generally fine, because elite institutions like the Supreme Court have effectively said so.

Leniency for popular politicians also risks creating a perverse incentive to enter politics to avoid encounters with the courts. Silvio Berlusconi

ran for office in the 1990s partly because he knew that he was being investigated for bribery and tax fraud. For two decades thereafter, he managed to shield himself from the law. (In 2013, he was convicted of tax fraud, barred from holding office for two years, and sentenced to perform community service.)

Those skeptical of deploying the law properly against populist leaders also claim that convictions will allow such politicians to present themselves as martyrs – possibly boosting their popularity. Le Pen now declares herself the victim of a “witch hunt” by elites who wish for her “political death.”

But populist politicians always claim to be victims of corrupt liberal elites who have ignored “the people” and sought to sideline their authentic representatives. A conviction can of course be portrayed to a populist’s supporters as evidence of an elite conspiracy. But the narrative is created not by court cases, but by the populists.

One also might worry that verdicts against self-declared anti-establishment politicians could undermine confidence in the judiciary and, in this case, strengthen a longstanding French aversion to “government by judges.” But here, too, the critics have it backwards: populists routinely attack independent judges as “enemies of the people.”

Rather than making unforced concessions when it comes to the rule of law, politicians – as well as legal professionals, journalists, and academics – should make the case that impartial courts are crucial both for serving justice and for sustaining what the judges in Paris called a “democratic public order.”

*The writer is Professor of Politics at Princeton University.*



Jan-Werner Mueller

**THERE IS A CATEGORICAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SANCTIONING A PARTICULAR CANDIDATE FOR ILLEGAL CONDUCT AND REMOVING AN ENTIRE POLITICAL OPTION FROM THE ELECTORAL MENU**

Late last month, a French court barred Marine Le Pen from standing for political office for five years, on the grounds that her party, the far-right National Rally (RN), systematically embezzled more than 4 million (\$4.5 million) in public funds. Resources earmarked for staff of members of the European Parliament in Brussels were instead used to cover RN’s expenses back in France.

Le Pen is appealing the verdict, and her supporters are not the only ones finding fault with it. Impeccably liberal voices are also arguing that it would be better to allow Le Pen to stand in the 2027 presidential election and be judged by voters. Yet these arguments for prioritising politics over the law are deeply flawed.

One such argument echoes US Vice President JD Vance’s claim that European political elites do not trust their own people. The way he tells it, they have no problem nullifying election results that are not to their liking. His example is the recent Romanian presidential election, which was declared invalid after the far-right candidate, Cîlin Georgescu, won the first round. Concluding that he had failed to “comply with the electoral regulations,” the Romanian electoral bureau prohibited him from standing altogether.

Short of bans, European elites have excluded far-right parties from governing. The most important recent example of this is Germany’s “firewall”: a commitment by all the other major parties not to govern with the far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), which finished second in the February federal elections.

Yet there is absolutely no evidence that the French judiciary was acting at the behest of politicians or, more important, that it was picking on Le

## Run At Cross Purposes

The Supreme Court judgement settling the dispute between Tamil Nadu Governor RN Ravi and the ruling DMK government over the clearing of Bills speaks volumes about the courage demonstrated by the apex Court. It has thwarted the Governor’s patently political intent of keeping Bills way beyond a ‘reasonable time’. The very next day, the SC issued the ruling fixing a maximum time limit of 90 days for the President of the Union to clear any and all Bills that are referred to the Rashtrapati Bhavan. This is yet another bold milestone that is rarely seen these days when the borderline between the executive and the judiciary often gets blurred to the peril of the institution of democracy that rests on the three pillars of the legislature, executive and judiciary functioning independent of one another.

The Bench of Justices JB Pardiwala and R Mahadevan, went even further and said in its judgement invoking Article 143 of the Constitution that the President “ought to” seek its (the SC’s) opinion where the Governor has reserved the Bill for her/his consideration on the ground of “perceived unconstitutionality.” Article 143 deals with the power of the President to seek the SC’s opinion on important questions of law or fact. Acknowledging that it is not mandatory for the government to accept its opinion, the SC added that the same “holds high persuasive value and should ordinarily be accepted by the legislature and the executive.” “Merely because” the jurisdiction under Article 143 is not binding, the Bench said, the principles used “by this Court to determine the constitutionality of the Bill” are not undermined.

Now, the question is what has propelled the apex court to act so firmly taking on not only the office of the Governor, but also the President, creating almost a constitutional crisis since it sets a precedent that the President may have to act in consultation with the SC for better understanding of constitutional matters such as expeditious disposal of Bills passed by a state legislature and then forwarded by a Governor to the President for the latter’s consent. These judgments came close on the heels of the discovery of a huge amount of burnt cash from the residence of Delhi HC Judge Yashwant Verma. The two may not be a coincidence. However, one may be within one’s rights to wonder whether the judges were trying to repair the loss of image of the judiciary. It also raises the disturbing question whether Justice Verma was alone in that game. For, his mere transfer to another High Court, instead of stringent and exemplary punishment being meted out to him, makes the action open to criticism. Doubt arises whether the matter was deliberately allowed to die a natural death since proper action against him might have resulted in the inconvenient opening of the ‘Judiciary Box’ or the proverbial Pandora’s Box.

It is being argued from some quarters that the apex court has exceeded its remit and sought to play the role of the executive in the garb of judicial wisdom. However, the SC said that in cases where a Bill has been reserved on the grounds that it is not in consonance with constitutional principles and involves questions of constitutional validity, the executive is supposed to exercise restraint. It is expected that the Union executive should not assume the role of the courts in determining the maintainability of a Bill and instead “as a matter of practice” should refer such a question to the Supreme Court under Article 143. The apex court even observed that it has “no qualms” in stating that the hands of the executive are tied when engaging with purely legal issues in a Bill. It held that only the constitutional courts have the prerogative to study and provide recommendations regarding the “constitutionality of a Bill.”

These are strong words indeed, but perhaps much needed in the present times when the executive has often been seen to be trying to get favourable court judgements. It is in the interest of a healthy Indian democracy that its three pillars – the legislature, executive and judiciary – run at cross purposes, rather than their interests converge.

## WISDOM CORNER

- Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end.**  
VIRGINIA WOOLF
- It’s very important that we re-learn the art of resting and relaxing. Not only does it help prevent the onset of many illnesses that develop through chronic tension and worrying; it allows us to clear our minds, focus, and find creative solutions to problems.**  
THICH NHAT HANH
- Human greatness does not lie in wealth or power, but in character and goodness. People are just people, and all people have faults and shortcomings, but all of us are born with a basic goodness.**  
ANNE FRANK

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1912:** On this day in 1912, the British luxury passenger liner Titanic sank en route to New York City from Southampton, Hampshire, England, after striking an iceberg during its maiden voyage; some 1,500 people died.
- 1926:** Robertson Aircraft, one of the companies that later developed into American Airlines, flew its first mail route, between Chicago and St. Louis, Missouri, with Charles A. Lindbergh as the pilot.
- 1935:** The Eastman Kodak Company launches Kodachrome. The photographic film was one of the most popular media used by professional and hobby photographers around the world. The product was discontinued in 2009 because of the advent of digital photography.
- 1945:** The German concentration camp Bergen-Belsen is liberated. British and Canadian troops found about 53,000 prisoners inside the camp. Tens of thousands died before and after the liberation.
- 1955:** American fast-food pioneer Ray Kroc opened the first McDonald’s franchise, launching an enterprise that would eventually become the world’s largest fast-food chain, in Des Plaines, Illinois.
- 1980:** French novelist and playwright Jean-Paul Sartre, who was a leading exponent of existentialism, died at age 74.
- 1986:** The United States launches retaliatory air strikes against Libya. Around 40 Libyans died in Operation El Dorado Canyon, including an infant girl. The attack was the United States’ response to the bombing of a Berlin discotheque on April 5, in which 3 people had died.
- 1989:** A small group of students initiates pro-democracy protest on Tiananmen Square in Beijing. The death of reformer Hu Yaobang triggered the demonstrations, which grew in size and were brutally dispersed in the Tiananmen Square Massacre on June 4.

## SPECTRUM ECONOMIC MODEL

# A clash of ideologies

Why do the American ruling elites, both in the Republican and Democratic parties, oppose China so strongly? Since taking office, President Donald Trump imposed tariffs of up to 145% on Chinese goods. But it doesn’t stop at trade and tariffs. The American imperialist strategy—marked by political, economic, and military bullying—continues in an unprecedented scale in an effort to pressure China into submission under imperialist hegemony. The core objective is to undermine China’s development and its alternative path, which challenges the foundations of the capitalist system.

What has China achieved that fundamentally challenges the very foundation of American capitalism?

One striking example is the development of a miniature nuclear battery by the Chinese company Betavolt, with support from the government. This battery boasts a lifespan of 50 years, eliminating the need for recharging in devices such as mobile phones and electric vehicles. Such a breakthrough not only renders frequent charging obsolete but also disrupts the business models of American and European electronics companies, which rely heavily on planned obsolescence—a strategy that encourages repeated consumption through short-lived products and continual

upgrades. For example, Apple Inc. products like iPhones continuously change every year.

China has not only developed its own space station and lunar exploration programme but has also created an international transaction system known as the Cross-Border Interbank Payment System (CIPS). This system has the potential to completely bypass the Western-dominated SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication) network used for global banking and international transactions.

These are just a few examples of the achievements stemming from China’s scientific, political and economic system, which fundamentally contrasts with the American and European capitalist model. Unlike the Western approach, which is largely driven by profit, China’s scientific and technological advancements are geared toward improving the well-being of its people and promoting sustainable development and long-term prosperity.

The Schumpeterian notion of capitalism as a process of “creative destruction”—where innovation leads to the replacement of outdated industries by newer, more efficient ones—is, in reality, a myth. The Schumpeterian sympathy for capitalism stems from its lenient understanding of capitalist innovation. What is truly creative and innovative is labour itself. However, under

capitalism, the creative potential of labour is not liberated but rather controlled and exploited to sustain and expand a profit-driven system. Capitalism continually restructures itself to either accommodate or dominate the productive and creative capacities of labour. This dynamic reinforces the strategy of planned obsolescence, accelerating the exploitation of both nature and human beings—as producers and consumers.

Rapid technological advancement, rather than serving human progress, is often harnessed to sustain this exploitative system. The capitalist logic of planned obsolescence deliberately designs products with artificially limited lifespans, ensuring they become quickly outdated. This fuels a “use-and-throw” culture—one that perpetuates constant consumption and reinforces commodity dependency. Far from promoting genuine innovation, this cycle serves to undermine it, replacing durable progress with short-term profitability.

Technological progress under capitalism is primarily driven by the logic of planned obsolescence. It functions not to meet genuine human needs, but to manufacture ever-new desires for commodity-based consumption. This cycle not only accelerates the depletion of natural resources but also fuels consumer anxiety, particularly through the psychological pressure of the “fear of miss-

ing out.” In this way, capitalism commodifies both material goods and emotional experience, reinforcing a culture of disposability and dependency.

However, China’s scientific and economic progress is guided by a long-term vision centered on the well-being of its people—an approach fundamentally opposed to the capitalist strategy of planned obsolescence. This alternative model threatens the very foundations of Western capitalism by offering a path rooted in sustainability, resilience, and durability—countering the wasteful “use-and-throw” culture that has emerged from capitalist cycles of consumption and planned obsolescence. In this context, China presents not just a geopolitical rival, but a civilisational alternative—one that challenges the dominance of profit over people. It is precisely because of this that American imperialism, along with its European allies, relentlessly seeks to undermine and weaken China and its achievements. The fear is not merely rooted in economic competition, but in the example that China sets: a political model of planned economic development grounded in peace, progress, and prosperity—one that dares to envision a future beyond capitalist exploitation and its foundation in planned obsolescence.

*The writer teaches at the London Metropolitan University. Views are personal.*

## 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](mailto:edit@orissapost.com)

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

## Communal cauldron

Sir, This refers to, “Waqf fire spreads,” Orissa POST, April 14. The three deaths in Murshidabad district during protests against the Waqf (Amendment) Act have exposed the deep political fault lines and the festering communal divide in West Bengal. The state has been a simmering communal cauldron for quite some time. While the TMC tacitly encouraged Muslim protests against the Waqf amendments, police inaction before and during the current flare-up has been evident. The state remains on edge ahead of every major religious festival, and policing has grown weak and increasingly politicised. The violence is unfolding in one of the state’s most impoverished regions, where men migrate for work and women earn a living by rolling beedis. As tensions have escalated over the Ram Navami processions and the Waqf amendment, political parties have chosen to fan the flames rather than promote calm. The Mamata Banerjee government must act swiftly and impartially to restore normalcy. The rule of law must be firmly established, and the police must prevent violence. With Assembly elections due in a year, the BJP and the TMC appear intent on pandering to communal sentiments for political gain. This must change. The focus must shift to governance and development.

*N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE*

## Placements slide

Sir, Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) graduates are considered highly “employable” with great demand in job market. However, according to a parliamentary standing committee report there has been a 10 percentage points drop in placements in all the IITs except one in 2023-24 as compared to 2021-22. Following COVID-19, there was a slight upswing in IIT job seekers, but a slight decline may mean much because the loss to the technical field may be a gain for other fields like civil services as there are plenty of IIT graduates who are picking the latter as career options. It may also be that quite a few innovative IIT graduates are going for their own ventures to make a mark in the society. That said, the Centre should seriously think on the lines of making the 23 IITs more faculty-friendly by attracting the best teaching talent.

*Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA*

'HOTSPOT OF SILENT SUFFERING'

# Gujarat's suicide crisis deepens

Over 13,000 student suicides were reported across India in 2022, with Gujarat accounting for more than 800, mostly among those aged 15 to 25

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Gandhinagar, April 14:** A case of suspected mass suicide in Gujarat's Sabarkantha district has brought renewed attention to the growing mental health and social crisis unfolding quietly across the state.

A family of five from Vadali town allegedly consumed poison April 12. The parents, 42-year-old Vinu Sagar and 40-year-old Kokilaben, died, while their three teenage children—aged 17 to 19—are being treated at Himmatnagar civil hospital. Neighbours reported that all five began vomiting early Saturday morning. Though no suicide note was found, police are investigating possible psychological or financial stress as the trigger.

Just a day later, April 13, another tragedy occurred in Vadodara. Abhishek Sharma, a 19-year-old engineering student from Jammu and Kashmir studying at Maharaja Sayajirao University, was found dead by suicide in his hostel's common room. CCTV footage showed that he acted early in the morning when no one was around. Police noted that Sharma had recently lost his father and had become withdrawn, suggesting emotional distress may have played a role.

These incidents are part of a growing trend in Gujarat, where suicide cases have risen significantly in recent years.



HEALTH EXPERTS NOTE A TROUBLING RISE IN COLLECTIVE SUICIDES INVOLVING ENTIRE FAMILIES, PARTICULARLY IN RURAL AND SEMI-URBAN AREAS LIKE SABARKANTHA

ECONOMIC HARDSHIP, ESPECIALLY IN AGRARIAN REGIONS FACING INCONSISTENT RAINFALL AND FALLING FARM INCOMES, HAS LEFT MANY FAMILIES DEEP IN DEBT AND DESPAIR

The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reported 9,475 suicide deaths in Gujarat in 2022, over 1,000 more than the previous year. While states like Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu report higher absolute numbers, Gujarat's sharp year-on-year increase is cause for concern.

Health experts note a troubling rise in collective suicides involving entire families, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas like Sabarkantha. Economic hardship, especially

in agrarian regions facing inconsistent rainfall and falling farm incomes, has left many families deep in debt and despair.

Youth suicides are another pressing issue. Over 13,000 student suicides were reported across India in 2022, with Gujarat accounting for more than 800, mostly among those aged 15 to 25. Academic pressure, job insecurity, and emotional isolation have created a dangerous environment for young people. Experts highlight the lack of emotional literacy and the societal stigma around mental illness as major barriers to seeking help.

Access to mental health care in Gujarat is severely limited. With only 0.07 psychiatrists per 100,000 people—well below the national average—public health systems are overburdened, particularly in rural regions. Although the state government has launched helplines and school counseling programs, experts argue these are insufficient.

What Gujarat needs is a systemic, community-based approach to mental health. This includes improving awareness, building emotional support networks, offering financial counseling, and expanding access to professional mental health services. Only through integrated and inclusive efforts can the state hope to stem the tide of silent suffering and prevent further tragedies.

# TN to conduct Nilgiri Tahr survey

Timed to coincide with the post-birthing season, the survey aims to monitor mothers and their December-January born offspring

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Chennai, April 14:** The Tamil Nadu Forest Department is set to conduct the second annual synchronised survey of the endangered Nilgiri Tahr, from April 24 to 27.

This year's effort will span 176 blocks across 14 forest divisions known to host Tahr populations — up from 140 blocks last year.

Notably, the historic Kodaikanal division, home to the iconic Ibex Hills, is among the 36 newly-included areas.

Meanwhile, the Kerala Forest Department has expressed interest in joining the effort.

Tamil Nadu had requested Kerala to survey 30 blocks adjacent to the inter-state border, but Kerala officials indicated that Nilgiri Tahr presence in many of those areas is unlikely.

As a result, Kerala may expand its survey from three to approximately 9–10 blocks this year.

Timed to coincide with the post-birthing season, the survey aims to monitor mothers and their December-January born offspring. This timing is expected to offer valuable insights into population trends and reproductive health.

The Forest Department will



This year's effort will span 176 blocks across 14 forest divisions known to host Tahr populations — up from 140 blocks last year

employ scientifically robust methodologies such as the Bounded Count and Double Observer techniques, adapted to both fragmented and continuous habitats — particularly near the Tamil Nadu-Kerala border.

Beyond population estimation, the survey will also include threat assessments, carnivore faecal sampling for parasitic studies, and extensive field observations.

To ensure precision in data collection, specially designed data sheets will be used. Field personnel will undergo intensive training between April 15 and 20.

The effort will be supported by experts from IUCN-India, the Wildlife Institute of India, and Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University.

The survey will cover 2,000 km of terrain and 233 sq km of habitat, stretching from Ashambu Mottai in Kanniyakumari to Thavalamalai in Gudalur.

The inaugural survey in 2024 estimated Tamil Nadu's Nilgiri Tahr population at 1,031. When combined with Kerala's Eravikulam National Park count of 827, the total stood at 1,858.

Encouragingly, the survey recorded a healthy male-to-female ratio of 1:2 and a

female-to-young ratio of 2:1, indicating strong reproductive health. However, conservationists remain concerned about local extinctions reported in eight historical habitats such as Budha Gundu and Glenmorgan.

Launched in October 2023 by Chief Minister MK Stalin, Project Nilgiri Tahr aims to counter these trends through synchronised surveys, grassland restoration, and removal of invasive species.

In a positive development, a new Nilgiri Tahr habitat was discovered in Pasumalai, located in the Megamalai Forest Division, in November 2024.

Five Tahrs were sighted in the area, underscoring the species' adaptability and the importance of protecting emerging habitats.

# Dolphins find safe haven along Gujarat's coastline



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Gandhinagar, April 14:** National Dolphin Day is celebrated across India April 14, a day dedicated to raising awareness about the ecological importance of dolphins, their conservation, and the protection of their natural habitats.

This year, the spotlight is on the western coast of the country, where Gujarat - home to India's longest coastline - has emerged as a significant hub for dolphin conservation.

With its 1,600 km-long coastline, Gujarat has a rich marine biodiversity. In the latest Dolphin Census conducted by the Gujarat Forest Department, approximately 680 dolphins were recorded across a 4,087 sq. km marine stretch - a promising outcome of sustained conservation efforts, as per government data shared today.

The coastal expanse from Kutch to Bhavnagar has been identified as a thriving habitat for dolphins.

The Marine National Park and Marine Sanctuary located in the southern part of the

Gulf of Kutch, between Okha and Navlakhi, recorded the highest dolphin population: 498 dolphins in 1,384 sq. km.

The northern Gulf of Kutch saw 168 dolphins in 1,821 sq. km, while 10 were spotted in Bhavnagar and 4 in Morbi.

Experts highlight that dolphins are top predators in the marine food chain and play a crucial role in maintaining ecological balance. Their presence is often an indicator of a healthy ocean ecosystem.

Conservationists also credit coastal fishing communities, particularly from Kutch to Bhavnagar, for their growing awareness and cooperation in dolphin protection.

Among the species sighted along Gujarat's coast, the Indian Ocean Humpback Dolphin is the most prominent.

Recognised by its distinctive hump and elongated dorsal fin, this dolphin species is known for its acrobatic displays and friendly nature.

Found in shallow waters near estuaries, these dolphins feed primarily on fish, crabs, and shrimp.

India officially declared the dolphin as its National Aquatic Animal in October 2009, with the Ganga Dolphin symbolising the purity of the Ganges River.

Known for their intelligence and playfulness, dolphins continue to capture the imagination of tourists and researchers alike.

# Tamil New Year 'Viswavasu' celebrated with fervour

THE BIRTH OF TAMIL MONTH 'CHITHIRAI' SIGNIFIED THE NEW YEAR AND PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI AND LEADER OF OPPOSITION IN LOK SABHA, RAHUL GANDHI GREETED PEOPLE ON THE OCCASION



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chennai, April 14:** The Tamil New Year, 'Viswavasu,' was celebrated across Tamil Nadu Monday with usual fervour and gaiety. The birth of Tamil month 'Chithirai' signified the new year and Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi greeted people on the occasion.

People made a beeline to various famous temples in the city and elsewhere, including Madurai, Tiruchirappalli, to pray for a prosperous and successful new year.

Extending his Tamil "puthandu" (new year) greetings on 'X,' Modi expressed all-round prosperity.

"May this new year usher in prosperity, good health and happiness. May everyone be blessed with good health," he said. In his greetings, Congress MP Rahul Gandhi said, "May this New Year bring you harmony, prosperity, good health, and happiness."

Tamil Nadu Governor RN Ravi and leaders of various political parties have extended their New Year greetings.

"On the auspicious occasion of Tamil New Year, I extend

my warmest greetings and best wishes to all, especially my Tamil brothers and sisters across the world. This day is a celebration of our proud, ancient, and rich Tamil culture and heritage, vibrant present, and promising future," Ravi said in his greetings.

"May the New Year bring prosperity, good health, renewed energy, and abundant opportunities to all. May it further reinforce our collective resolve to build a developed Tamil Nadu for a 'Viksit Bharat 2047 in the Amrit Kaal,'" he added in a statement.

AIADMK General Secretary and former Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami said, "Let us all achieve new goals, taste success by overcoming hurdles, and make Tamil Nadu flourish this Tamil New Year."

Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (AMMK) leader TTV Dinakaran, Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK) Chief Vaiko, Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) leader Anbumani Ramadoss, and expelled AIADMK leader O Panneerselvam also extended their greetings.

# Fish prices surge ahead of 61-day fishing ban in TN

The primary objective is to facilitate the breeding of marine species and ensure the conservation of fish stocks



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Chennai, April 14:** With the annual 61-day fishing ban set to come into effect from midnight April 14, fish prices have skyrocketed at the Kasimedu fish market in Chennai.

Seer fish (vanjiram) is selling at Rs 1,000 per kg, red snapper (shankara) at Rs 600 per kg, and pomfret (vaaval) at Rs 650 per kg, reflecting high consumer demand.

The fishing ban, mandated under the Tamil Nadu Marine Fisheries Regulation Act, 1983, and enforced in accordance with the Centre's Deep Sea Fishing Regulation Act, 2001, will remain in force until June 14, and applies to mechanised and trawl boats operating from Tiruvallur in the north to Kanyakumari in the south.

The primary objective is to facilitate the breeding of marine species and ensure the conservation of fish stocks.

However, traditional country boats and small-scale fishermen are permitted to operate within 5 nautical miles during the ban period.

There are an estimated 800 registered mechanised boats in the coastal districts of Chennai, Kanchipuram, and Chengalpattu. During the ban, these boats are required to remain docked.

The state government has

announced financial assistance of Rs 8,000 for each fisherman affected by the moratorium, covering the entire 61-day period, while strict enforcement measures are in place under and violators who venture into the sea during the ban will face legal action.

Meanwhile, South Indian Fishermen's Welfare Association President K Bharathi raised concerns about the timing of the ban.

"In Tamil Nadu, the fishing ban is observed from mid-April to mid-June, which coincides with the summer season. But fish generally breed during the rainy season. On the western coast of India - from Kerala to Gujarat - the fishing ban starts in June, aligning with the monsoon, which is more suitable for breeding," he told media persons.

Bharathi urged the state government to reconsider the timing of the ban and align it with the actual breeding period. He also called for an increase in the financial assistance provided to fishermen, citing inflation and rising costs of living.

"During this period, fishermen carry out maintenance work on their boats or temporarily migrate to other states for alternative employment. Given the current economic conditions, enhanced support from the state is essential," he added.

# Progress pleases Jaishankar in adopted villages

Jaishankar began his three-day visit to Gujarat Monday during which he visited various villages adopted by him in different talukas of the Narmada district under the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Rajpipla (Gujarat), April 14:** External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar Monday expressed happiness at the progress of various developmental projects undertaken in villages adopted by him in Gujarat's tribal-dominated Narmada district.

Jaishankar began his three-day visit to Gujarat Monday during which he visited various villages adopted by him in different talukas of the Narmada district under the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS).

He will spend two days in Narmada to inspect the villages and review the development projects. He performed the

ground-breaking ceremony for the labour and delivery recovery complex for women at Jetpor Monday, laid the foundation stones for similar centres at Kolvan and Sagai and flagged off a new ambulance under the MPLAD scheme for Garudeshwar.

"Visiting Narmada district #Gujarat to see the progress on MPLAD works. Started with projects in Vyadhar. Very glad to see the new Health and Wellness Centre being operationalized. It has evoked a positive community response," Jaishankar said in a post on X.

He also visited the MPLADS projects in Amadla, and said the health and wellness centre is encouraging more screenings and preventive measures, and



'Smart Anganwadi' ensuring higher attendance of children. "Great to see students of 7th-8th Grade enjoying their studies in a Smart Classroom," the minister said.

Later, Jaishankar told mediapersons that interactive

screens in the classroom make it easy for students to learn, and facilities in a health and wellness centre draw people for preventive health screening.

"I heard from the medical officer how a good health centre helps gain public trust and they

visit them for preventive health screening more often. This has helped increase visits (by people) to the centre," he said.

"As MPs, we want to see the developmental concepts being implemented on the ground. It fills us with happiness," he added. Jaishankar will inaugurate a gymnasium hall and sports equipment of the Chhotubhai Purani Gymnasium Mahavidyalaya in Rajpipla Tuesday, and the smart anganwadi and smart classroom in Lachhras village.

He will also interact with students of the Charusat University in Kheda district Tuesday, and visit Lothal archaeological site in Ahmedabad Wednesday, before leaving for New Delhi.

of the day **QUOTE**

Ambedkar was a true warrior who fought tirelessly for Dalits and the coalition government is committed to their upliftment and welfare, inspired by his ideals



N CHANDRABABU NAIDU | AP CM

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the government is striving to make the criminal justice system people-centric and scientific



AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

Those people who were struggling with an absence of argument, lack of logic and famine of facts during the discussion on Waqf amendments in Parliament, are now creating a ruckus on the streets. These people have launched a communal attack on Constitutional reform



MUKHTAR ABBAS NAQVI | SENIOR BJP LEADER

**SHORT TAKES**

**Ugandan man held with cocaine**

**Mumbai:** Mumbai Customs seized 785 grams of cocaine worth about Rs 7.85 crore from a Ugandan passenger at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport, an official said Monday. The passenger had concealed the contraband in his stomach by ingesting it during the journey, he said. "Based on suspicion, the passenger was intercepted by Mumbai Customs on the night of April 9. During interrogation, the accused was found to be restless and anxious. He then admitted he had swallowed a large number of yellow tablets. A medical examination showed the tablets in the stomach weighed 785 grams," the official said.

**Live-in partner held for killing woman**

**Gurugram:** A crime branch team of the Gurugram Police has arrested a man for allegedly killing his live-in partner March 11, police said Monday. The accused was identified as Shiv Shankar Sharma, alias Kali Charan, a resident of Uttar Pradesh, while the victim was identified as Rita, a native of Bihar. Police said that March 11, information was received regarding the body of a woman found in the village of Naharpur. An official said that on receiving the information, the police team reached the spot where the body of a woman was found wrapped in a blanket in a field in Naharpur village.

**7 Naxalites held from two places**

**Bijapur:** Seven Naxalites were arrested from two places in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district Monday, police said. While six lower rung cadres were apprehended from the forest near Daler village under Bhairamgarh police station limits, another ultra was rounded up near Bechupal village in Mirtur police station area, an official said. Joint teams of District Reserve Guard (DRG), Chhattisgarh Armed Force (CAF) and local police were involved in the two operations, he added.

**Two killed as wall collapses**

**Farrukhabad (UP):** Two persons were killed Monday after they were trapped under the debris of a wall that collapsed during excavation work in the Allaganar Barhpur area of Farrukhabad district, officials said.

## Waqf violence shifts to Bhangar



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata/Murshidabad/Malda, April 14:** Fresh episodes of Waqf (Amendment) Act-related violence rocked Bhangar area in West Bengal's South 24 Parganas district Monday, even as police claimed that law and order situation in the previous riot epicentre of Murshidabad remained largely under control. Supporters of the Indian Secular Front (ISF) clashed with the police at Bhangar during protests over the Act, leading to several injuries, vandalising of public properties and the torching of multiple police vehicles. The clashes erupted when police stopped ISF supporters from heading towards Ramlila Maidan in central Kolkata to attend an anti-Waqf Act rally addressed by party leader and Bhangar MLA Naushad Siddique. According to police, the rallyists were stopped near Bhojhat on the Basanti Highway, where a large number of ISF workers had gathered from

Bhangar as well as neighbouring areas such as Minakhan and Sandeshkhali. Tension escalated when the crowd attempted to break through police barricades, leading to a clash between the two sides. "Some police vehicles were set on fire by the protesters and a few police personnel were injured when the agitators attacked the law enforcers," a senior police officer said. Eyewitnesses said police resorted to lathi-charge to disperse the protesters, as the rally at Ramlila Ground didn't have proper police permission, leading to at least one ISF worker sustaining a head injury. The situation spiralled quickly, prompting ISF activists to sit on a protest on the highway, leading to long traffic snarls along the stretch. A large police force, including senior officers, was deployed to bring the situation under control. The protesters were later dispersed. Opposition parties alleged that police did little to

**YSRCP moves SC**

**New Delhi:** The YSRCP-led by former Andhra Pradesh chief minister Jagan Mohan Reddy on Monday moved the Supreme Court challenging the constitutional validity of the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025. Prior to the YSRCP, the Communist Party of India (CPI) also filed a plea challenging the legality of the new Waqf law through its general secretary D Raja. In its plea filed through lawyer Mahfooz Ahsan Nazki, the YSRCP cited "serious constitutional violations" and "failure to address the concerns of the Muslim community".

stop the rampaging mob. Earlier in the day, senior Border Security Force (BSF) officials visited the violence-hit areas of Murshidabad, assuring residents of all necessary assistance to restore peace and ensure their safety. The BSF delegation led by Additional Director General (East) Ravi Gandhi visited the disturbed pockets in Suti, Samsanganj and Dhulian that witnessed widespread unrest over the weekend, claiming the lives of at least three people and leaving many injured. "We spoke to victims and assured them of their safety and security. We interacted with the locals and our jawans are posted there. The situation is slowly returning to normal," Gandhi told PTI after the visit. "A joint strategy has been chalked out to increase patrolling in the area. We are working in close coordination with the state police to ensure the return of normalcy," he added. The state police said the situation in Murshidabad is gradually returning to normal, with shops reopening and displaced families starting to return.

## Meiteis abort plans to reach Manipur hill as Kukis object

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Moirang (Manipur), April 14:** Following the advice of community elders, a large number of Meiteis Monday aborted their plans to go to the sacred Thangjing hills in Manipur's Churachandpur district and returned home from here, as the Kuki-Zo members are against the pilgrims crossing the 'buffer zone'. The distance between Moirang town in Bishnupur district and Thangjing hills is over 10 kilometres. The buffer zone, which is heavily guarded by security forces, separates the Meitei-controlled Imphal Valley and the Kuki-dominated hill districts of the restive state. Security was tightened in Bishnupur and Churachandpur districts of the state which has been rocked by ethnic violence since May 2023. Several Meitei devotees who had offered prayers Sunday to prepare for the pilgrimage came back home after community elders persuaded them to return, citing the current situation at the sacred hill where armed Kuki men are allegedly present. A Naoba had come to Moirang to go for the pilgrimage but failed. To prevent any untoward incident, security deployment was increased in Kwakta and Phougakchao



**Meitei community members take the annual pilgrimage in the month of April in accordance with the traditional Manipuri calendar system**

Ikhai in Bishnupur district, officials said. The pilgrimage route to Thangjing must pass through these areas. Meitei elders are also against the pilgrimage now and they want the community members to carry on with the journey later when the situation improves. "They (pilgrims) have to pass through Kuki villages and there are reports that many Kukis have gathered at the foothills to prevent their entry. Under such circumstances, it's not advisable to undertake the journey. Even with security protection, it is difficult," an elderly Meitei man said. The route to the sacred site at the top of Thangjing hills also passes through thick forests and isolated areas, he said.

## Drugs worth ₹1,800cr seized off Guj coast

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ahmedabad, April 14:** In a joint operation, the Gujarat Anti-Terrorist Squad and the Indian Coast Guard have seized over 300 kg of drugs worth Rs 1,800 crore which were dumped into the Arabian Sea by Pakistani smugglers who fled across the international maritime boundary on being chased, officials said Monday. The seized contraband is suspected to be methamphetamine and has been handed over to the Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) for further probe, a release by the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) said. Methamphetamine is a lab-made (synthetic) stimulant also known as "ice" or "crystal meth". It is a highly addictive recreational drug which exhibits powerful euphoric effects. According to the ATS, the contraband sent from Pakistan's Pasni port was supposed to be moved to another boat mid-sea and then transported to Tamil Nadu. The ATS and the ICG carried out the joint operation near the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) between India and Pakistan in the Arabian Sea off Gujarat on the intervening night of April 12-13, said the release. The Jakhau coast in Kutch district is the closest point on the Indian mainland



to the IMBL. Upon seeing an approaching Coast Guard ship, the smugglers, who were on a boat, dumped the contraband into the sea and fled across the IMBL, it said. "In an overnight operation April 12-13, the Indian Coast Guard undertook an intelligence-based anti-narcotics operation at the sea jointly with the Gujarat ATS. More than 300 kg of narcotics approximately valued at Rs 1,800 crore have been seized. The seized drug is suspected to be methamphetamine," the release said. Based on an input from the ATS, an ICG ship from the Coast Guard Region (West) was diverted to the area in the sea near IMBL where a suspi-

cious boat's presence was detected, it said. "The ICG ship identified a suspect boat despite pitch dark night. On realising the approaching ship, the suspect boat dumped its narcotics consignment into the sea before it started fleeing towards the IMBL. The alert ICG ship deployed its sea boat immediately for recovery of the jettisoned consignment whilst commencing a hot chase of the suspect boat," it said. The proximity of the international boundary line and the initial separation between the Coast Guard ship and the boat at the time of its detection helped the boat to evade interception before it crossed over the IMBL within a short time, said the release.

# Telangana first state to implement top court categorisation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Hyderabad, April 14:** Telangana government Monday issued an order on the implementation of Scheduled Castes (SC) categorisation, making it the first state in the country to do so, Irrigation Minister N Utam Kumar Reddy said. Telangana government had earlier appointed a commission headed by retired High Court judge Justice Shreeam Akther on SC categorisation, which made recommendations that the 59 Scheduled Caste (SC) communities be divided into three groups viz I, II, and III for the total reservations of 15 per cent in government jobs and education. "The following Act of the Telangana Legislature received the

assent of the Governor of Telangana on 8, April 2025 and the said assent is hereby first published on the 14th April 2025 in the Telangana Gazette for general information," the GO said. The issuance of GO coincides with the birth anniversary of BR Ambedkar, architect of Indian Constitution. According to the commission report, group-I one comprising 15 socially, economically and educationally disadvantaged SC communities, are given one per cent reservation. Group-II, including 18 moderately benefited SC communities, are provided a nine per cent quota while the Group-III comprising 26 significantly benefited SC communities, are given five per cent reservation. Addressing a press conference,



Minister Reddy, who headed a sub-committee on SC Categorisation, said the first copy of the GO was given to Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy this morning. "From today, from this moment, SC categorisation will

be implemented in Telangana in employment and education. We have issued a GO to that extent and gave the first copy to the CM," he told reporters. "Telangana is the first state to implement the SC categorisa-

The Telangana Legislature in February accepted the recommendations of Justice Akther on SC categorisation, rejecting an advice that creamy layer should be exempted from reservations. The Scheduled Castes (Rationalisation of Reservation) Bill, 2025 was passed last month. The Supreme Court gave a verdict last year in favour of categorisation. The Telangana Legislature in February accepted the recommendations of Justice Akther on SC categorisation, rejecting an advice that creamy layer should be exempted from reservations. The Scheduled Castes (Rationalisation of Reservation) Bill, 2025 was passed last month. The Supreme Court gave a verdict last year in favour of categorisation.

further said all job vacancies in the state government now will be filled according to the sub-categorisation for SCs. The Irrigation Minister further said the cabinet sub-committee did an extensive exercise in collecting the opinion of all the stakeholders. He also said if the SC population goes up in 2026 census, the reservations for it would go up accordingly. The Telangana Legislature in February accepted the recommendations of Justice Akther on SC categorisation, rejecting an advice that creamy layer should be exempted from reservations. The Scheduled Castes (Rationalisation of Reservation) Bill, 2025 was passed last month. The Supreme Court gave a verdict last year in favour of categorisation.



Everybody has the democratic right to stage a peaceful protest with permission. I will request people not to take the law into their own hands. To protect the law, we have custodians and do not need any demon

MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CM

**PARTS OF RAJ REEL FROM SEVERE HEAT**

Parts of Rajasthan continued to reel from severe heat Monday, with Barmore recording the highest maximum temperature at 45.4 degrees Celsius, the Met office said. The maximum temperature in Phalodi was recorded at 44.2 degrees Celsius



Women perform Bihu dance during Rongali Bihu celebrations, in Guwahati, Assam

**SNIPPETS**

**IndiGo, Akasa Air to shift flights to T1 from T2**

**New Delhi:** IndiGo and Akasa Air will shift their domestic flights to Delhi airport's Terminal 1 from Terminal 2 starting Tuesday as T2 will be temporarily shut for maintenance work. The new T1 will be fully operational from Tuesday (April 15). At present, IndiGo and Akasa Air have flights from T2, which handles around 270-280 air traffic movements and serves over 46,000 passengers per day. The Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA), operated by DIAL, has three terminals -- T1, T2 and T3 -- and four runways. It is also the country's largest and busiest airport.

**Mumbai water tanker operators call off strike**

**Mumbai:** In a relief for Mumbaikars battling hot summer and water woes, tanker operators Monday withdrew their strike on its fifth day following the invocation of the Disaster Management Act by the civic body to requisition private water tankers and wells a day before. The association announced the immediate resumption of the water supply. The breakthrough came after a meeting between municipal commissioner Bhushan Gagrani and Mumbai Water Tanker Association (MwTA) members earlier in the day.

**Delhi excise dept conducts surprise liquor checks**

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, April 14:** The excise department of Delhi government has initiated a series of surprise inspections to curb irregularities in retail liquor sale, including from unauthorised premises, officials said Monday.

At a meeting with excise officials last week, Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta issued instructions to stop smuggling of illicit liquor and ensure an increase in government's revenue collections. The excise department, after receiving information that liquor was being served at unlicensed premises in various parts of Delhi in violation of the Delhi Excise Act and Rules, conducted a series of surprise inspections across West and South-West Delhi, an excise official said.

The enforcement teams of the department last Friday registered four FIRs at different police stations for violations of excise laws detected during the inspections, the official said.

Similar surprise checks will continue in the coming weeks to bring more such establishments under the licensed regime and deter unlawful practices, he added. Meanwhile, the Delhi High Court has stayed an order of the excise department asking 'Hauz Khas Social', a popular eatery in the city, to stop serving liquor in the absence of a valid eating house licence. The high court, which was informed that the restaurant's eating house licence was valid till March 31, 2024, and it has been pursuing for the renewal ever since, said that as per law, the registration already granted to the eatery shall ensure till the renewal certificate is issued or till an intimation of refusal is issued by the licensing unit of Delhi Police.



I would like to request the prime minister to take up the matter as he is close to the country (Saudi Arabian leadership) FEROOZ ABDULLAH | NC PRESIDENT

'OFFENSIVE' DANCE AT SCHOOL

A dance performance, held at a school, and deemed offensive by some, has attracted an official enquiry. On Sunday night, a dance performance was held at a primary school in Bari village under the Hasayan development block



3 Jain monks beaten by drunk miscreants

Neemuch, April 14: Inebriated persons armed with sticks and sharp weapons allegedly attacked three Jain monks who were resting in a temple after being refused money in Madhya Pradesh's Neemuch district, leaving them injured, a police official said Monday.

Acting swiftly, police arrested five persons and detained a minor boy - all of them hailing from Rajasthan - for the attack which took place in Singoli town in the intervening night of Sunday and Monday.

Accused Ganpat Nayak, Gopal Bhoje, Kanhaiya Lal, Raju Bhoje, Babu Sharma and the minor hail from Rajasthan's Chhittorgarh district, which is close to Neemuch, the official said.

"Jain monks Shailesh Muni Ji, Balbhadra Muni Ji, and Munindra Muni Ji had stopped to rest at a Hanuman temple when the accused arrived there on three motorcycles and sought money from them after consuming liquor," Singoli police station SHO Bhura Lal Bhabhar told reporters.

The three monks, who sustained injuries on their heads and back, were taken to a nearby hospital, but they refused medical treatment citing religious customs that forbade them from doing so after sunset, as per police.

Rana being interrogated by NIA for 8-10 hrs daily

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 14: Mumbai terror attacks key mastermind Tahawwur Hussain Rana is being interrogated for eight to ten hours daily by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) sleuths to unravel a larger conspiracy behind the dreaded strikes, official sources said Monday.

The NIA officials are ensuring Rana's medical check-up and he is being provided with his lawyer, according to the order of a Delhi court that had on early Friday morning granted 18-day custody to the probe agency following his extradition from the US, they said.

The sources said Rana is being grilled by the NIA investigators for around eight to ten hours daily to probe a larger conspiracy behind the 2008 dastardly strikes orchestrated by Pakistan-based terrorist group Lashkar-e-Taiba and in which 166 people were killed and over 238 injured.

"Rana has been cooperating during the questioning," a source said, adding that a team of NIA officials led by Chief Investigating Officer Jaya Roy is interrogating him.

The sources said Rana so far asked for only three things



-- a pen, paper sheets or notepad and Quran -- which have been provided to him.

They said there has not been any specific food-related demand raised by Rana so far and he is being provided with "food items which are given to any other accused" according to the standard protocols meant to deal with such subjects.

The sources said the dreaded terror attacks plotter is kept in a highly-secured cell inside the anti-terror agency's head office here at the CGO Complex and is guarded by security personnel round-the-clock.

The 64-year-old Pakistani-origin Canadian businessman is said to be grilled on the basis of various leads gathered by the probe agency during the course of its investigation, including a large number of phone calls between him and his co-conspirator David Coleman Headley alias Daoud Gilani, a US citizen currently in prisons in that country.

BJP, Oppn fight for Ambedkar's legacy

Prime Minister Narendra Modi accused the Congress of turning the deprived sections of society into second-class citizens during its long stint in power and asserted that his government was being guided by Ambedkar's vision



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 14: The birth anniversary of Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, whose political influence has surged with the passage of time Monday was marked by bitter trading of charges between the ruling BJP and opposition parties as they fought for his legacy.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi accused the Congress of turning the deprived sections of society into second-class citizens during its long stint in power and asserted that his government was being guided by Ambedkar's vision.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge claimed that the Modi government paid mere lip service to him and reiterated the demand for a caste survey to push social justice.

While Modi led the BJP's charge on its rivals and its push to be identified as the champion of constitutional values espoused by Ambedkar, hailed as the architect of the Constitution, Kharge alleged the BJP-RSS were his "enemies".

Assailing Modi over his criticism of the Congress' treatment of Ambedkar, Kharge cited a letter by him in which he blamed SA Dange and VD Savarkar for his defeat in the elections of 1952. The BJP has often accused the Congress of ensuring Ambedkar's defeat in the Lok Sabha elections in 1951-52.

Speaking to reporters, Kharge reiterated his party's demand for a nationwide caste survey as well as implementation of reservation for Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in private academic institutions,

asserting that the Constitution gave them the right of social, economic and political justice. The prime minister travelled to Haryana to launch multiple development schemes in Hisar and Yamuna Nagar as he emphasised that his government's welfare schemes and push for industrialisation was guided by Ambedkar's vision.

"Babasaheb Ambedkar wanted to bring equality but the Congress spread the virus of vote bank (politics) in the country. He wanted every poor person to live with dignity, with heads held high, to dream and fulfil them. But the Congress made the SCs, STs and OBCs second-class citizens," he said, and cited the Waqf (Amendment) Act as a step towards social justice.

Sharpening his attack on the main opposition, Modi alleged the Congress turned the pious Constitution "into a weapon to gain power".

During the Congress' years-long rule, water reached the swimming pools of party leaders but tapwater did not reach the villages, he claimed. "Even 70 years after Independence, only 16 per cent of homes in villages had tapwater... Who was most affected by this? It was the SCs, STs and OBCs."

Modi highlighted that his government built 11 crore toilets and said the SCs, STs and OBCs had to face a lot of difficulties earlier due to a lack of toilets.

Even banks were not open for the SCs, STs and backward classes and availing of insurance and loans was a dream for them, Modi claimed, asserting that these communities were the biggest beneficiaries of the Jan Dhan scheme.

Ch'garh: Injuries to troops in anti-Naxal ops jump four times

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Raipur, April 14: The number of security personnel who got injured in IED attacks in Chhattisgarh has jumped to around 300 per cent in the first quarter of 2025, presenting a "formidable" challenge for them to meet the Centre's deadline of eliminating Naxalites from the country by March 2026.

As summer peaks in the jungles of the "last Naxal bastion" of the central Indian state, the security agencies are "treading with caution" on roads and dirt tracks to avoid getting trapped by these IED blasts that have killed hundreds and led to loss of limbs for many over more than two decades of the insurgency.

According to official data accessed by PTI, the first quarter (January-March) of 2025 saw 23 improvised explosive device (IED) attacks, leading to injuries to 23 personnel from the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and other forces including Chhattisgarh Police and recovery of 201 such bombs weighing more than 500 kgs.

The comparative figures for the same period of last year show that there were nine IED attacks in Chhattisgarh, leading to injuries to six personnel and recovery of 85 such bombs weighing about 257 kgs.

USBRL project and socio-economic devpt in J&K



The dream of linking Kashmir with the Indian Railway network dates back to 1892, with multiple surveys and route options explored. However, due to tough terrain, climate, and limited resources, the project remained unrealized. It was only in 1981 that the Jammu-Udhampur rail link was sanctioned, and in 1994-95, the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla (USBRL) project was approved and declared a National Project in 2002. Since then, several key milestones have been achieved, including the opening of various rail sections, with the Banihal-Sangaldan section inaugurated 20 February 2024. The USBRL project has significantly contributed to socio-economic development in Jammu & Kashmir:

- 1. EMPLOYMENT GENERATION: Over 14,000 people were employed during construction, with 65% being locals. Additionally, 804 land-loser families received direct railway jobs, generating over 525 lakh man-days of work.
2. SKILL DEVELOPMENT: Specialised work in tunneling, electrification, and bridge construction trained thousands of local workers, many of whom are now skilled professionals working across India.
3. ACCESSIBILITY: Over 215 km of approach roads were built, improving access to about 70



MI 26 Helicopter transporting a Dumper from Jammu to Surukote in October 2010, a remote location between Reasi and Sangaldan

- remote villages and impacting around 1.5 lakh people. These roads connected previously isolated communities, leading to the emergence of local markets, eateries, and services.
4. IMPROVED CONNECTIVITY: The railway connects key pilgrimage and tourist destinations, reducing travel time and boosting tourism, benefiting the local economy.
5. ECONOMIC GROWTH: Easier

of the day uote

We have convened a cabinet meeting on April 17 to discuss this lone subject. There we will discuss. After the discussion, I will speak (on the topic) SIDDARAMAIAH | KARNATAKA CM

Today, UP is not in the queue of a BIMARU state... it has emerged as the growth engine of India... it is moving forward as the number 2 economy in the country YOGI ADITYANATH | UP CM

We are truly privileged to have witnessed the vision and wisdom of Babasaheb Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar, who is such a towering figure in our history PREM SINGH TAMANG | SIKKIM CM

POST OF THE DAY

To win in life, take asymmetric risks. Asymmetric risks: 10 units of risk, 100 units of reward. Some examples: - Investing in Bitcoin in 2016. - Moving to a new country to explore a job. - Starting a business. Does all this look scary at inception? You bet. But, if you do things most people do, you get results that most people get. This is not some motivation post. This is the simple reality of life. To win asymmetric risks: invest in knowledge @Akshat\_World

SHORT TAKES

Top court notice to education ministry

New Delhi: The Supreme Court has sought response from the Union education ministry and others on a plea seeking measures to ensure fair and transparent grading by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council of Higher Education Institutions. A bench of Justices P S Narasimha and Jyotsna Bhatnagar issued notice to the ministry, the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the NAAC on a plea filed by NGO Bistrot Destino Foundation.

Two girls die of suffocation

Hyderabad: Two girls, aged four and five respectively, died of "suffocation" after accidentally getting locked inside a car in neighbouring Ranga Reddy district Monday, police said. The incident happened in Damargidda village at around 2 PM when the girls, both cousins, while playing, got into the car parked near their relative's house, they said. Neither their parents nor other family members were aware that the children had got locked inside the car, police said, based on preliminary information.

4-year-old raped by father's friend

Varanasi (UP): A four-year-old girl was allegedly raped by her father's friend here, police said Monday. The incident occurred Saturday when the accused, aged 40, reached the girl's house and took her to a graveyard, police said. He raped her in the graveyard and fled after her condition deteriorated. Additional Commissioner of Police Vidush Saxena said. When the girl did not return home, her family began searching for her and found her writhing in pain with blood stains over her body, Saxena said.

GUJARAT IN FOCUS: CONGRESS PLOTS A RETURN

Coincidence is a word best used when levers and pulleys—that levitate, gravitate, and manipulate—remain unseen. So, words and events need to be strung together to make cogent sense. Let's try. Ahmedabad in Gujarat hosted the 84th session of the All India Congress Committee (AICC) April 8 and 9, for the first time after 64 years. For long, the party had avoided taking the bull by the horns. It decided to strike in Narendra Modi and Amit Shah's heartland. Those who are aware of the regulated retaliation and flexible response that follow any foray into their homeland did not have to wait for long. Call it corny coincidence, hustled happenstance, or a persisting pattern. Forty-eight hours later (April 12), the Enforcement Directorate (ED) announced that it had served notices to take possession of immovable assets worth 661 crores in Delhi, Mumbai, and Lucknow—as part of a money laundering probe—belonging to Associated Journals Ltd. (AJL), which owns the National Herald group of publications. Shepherded out of Gujarat—Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's home state—and kept out of power for thirty years, the Congress had scarce options. It either had to take the bull by the horns or waste

itself into obsolescence. "It does not behove one to leave a live dragon out of your calculations if you live near one," said Dr Manish Doshi, justifying the Congress's move to beard the wolf in its own lair. There were many in the party's youth brigade attending the session who felt that if Rahul Gandhi had not been thwarted in building on the momentum of the Gujarat Pradesh Youth Congress's Vikas Khoj Padyatra in February 2014, the state—and perhaps even the country—would have presented a totally different picture. Gandhi had walked the last leg of the padyatra and addressed a lakh-strong crowd at Bardoli February 8, 2014. That Rahul's plans to turn the Youth Congress into a strong force were scuttled from within is a different matter altogether. Better late than never, he set the record straight March 8, exactly a month before the Ahmedabad session. "Get off your haunches and get going," he told a gathering of over 2,000 grassroots-level party leaders. "A party loyal to the people, not a BJP 'B' team, is what the people want," he said to a standing ovation. This one address was like adrenaline flowing through the veins of the party. Whatever may be the outcome, Rahul and the Congress have placed Gujarat firmly at the center of the table,



with the State Assembly elections of 2027 occupying primacy of place. A list of leaders differentiating between the workhorses and the marriage horses, the fertile and the sterile, is in the works. The implementation is expected to be two-pronged: strategic sidelining on one hand, and more drastic action—including suspensions—on the other. The list is fairly long, but some progenies of illustrious parents are in line for the order of the boot. With the party 2025 dedicated to rebuilding party cadres and with Rahul Gandhi himself taking the initiative in Gujarat, the Congress will witness a greater injection of youth and vitality. Any proof, if needed, lies in the fact that he returns to Gujarat April 15-16—his second visit within a fortnight—this time to Modasa, Aravalli, for finalizing the state party's district leadership.

Already, four Pradesh Congress Committee observers and one AICC observer have been appointed for each of the 41 district Congress bodies, who will decide on the district party chiefs. Rahul had sought feedback from the rank and file. He has been deluged with a virtual mountain of letters—information that has left those processing it dazed, even shocked. The Congress strategy of taking the battle into the rival camp is not expected to go unchallenged. Nothing of note moves in Gujarat without Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Home Minister Amit Shah being in the know. It was not without reason that Amit Shah was additionally made the Union Minister of Cooperatives. In one fell stroke, the entire structure of cooperatives in Gujarat—as well as in the country—has been brought under Modi-Shah control. There are 8,02,639 cooperative societies in 29 different sectors in the country, of which 81,307 are in Gujarat alone. Gujarat State Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF), which owns the AMUL brand, itself achieved an annual turnover of RS 80,000 crores in 2023-24, thanks to 3.6 million milk producers (voters). The BJP now has a cast-iron grip on the milk cooperative sector in Gujarat, and chairpersons of district dair-

ies are appointed by official mandate from the party (read: government). The Congress foray into Gujarat—even if it happens to be a diversionary move aimed at easing the pressure elsewhere—has its ramifications. The swift stirrings within key law enforcement and investigative agencies are proof enough that it has hit home where it hurts. Besides the obvious advantage of holding the reins of power both in Gujarat and Delhi, the Congress remains vulnerable in the shape of a moribund Sewa Dal, which is no match for the effervescent Bajrang Dal and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP). Sewa Dal never evolved and, in fact, withered away with time. In contrast, Shakti Dal—which Shankersinh Vaghela set up after rebelling and quitting the BJP to finally join the Congress—was a much more effective counter to the Bajrang Dal. Shakti Dal proved its mettle when it took on the might of the Bajrang Dal and gave it a holering of a lifetime during Vaghela's election from Radhanpur. It was the old guards of the Gujarat Congress leadership who used Ahmed Patel to persuade Mrs Sonia Gandhi to shut down Shakti Dal. The Congress will feel that loss for a long time—until it creates an effective counterforce to this militant arm of the Sangh Parivar.



They're exempt from the reciprocal tariffs but they're included in the semiconductor tariffs, which are coming in probably a month or two HOWARD LUTNICK | COMMERCE SECRETARY, US

NOBOA NOTCHES ELECTION WIN IN ECUADOR

Ecuadorian voters weary of crime Sunday reelected President Daniel Noboa, a conservative young millionaire with a divisive no-holds-barred crimefighting record, but his opponent vowed to seek a recount over what she described as "grotesque" electoral fraud



international

of the day quote

We will finally put our common affairs in order. Our homeland, Hungary, will once again be a proud and reliable ally of NATO. Hungary will once again be a full-fledged member of the European Union



PÉTER MAGYAR | OPPOSITION PARTY LEADER, HUNGARY

There are no winners in a trade war, or a tariff war. Our two countries should resolutely safeguard the multilateral trading system, stable global industrial and supply chains, and open and cooperative international environment



XI JINPING | PRESIDENT, CHINA

I hope that President Trump, the US administration, see that the leader of Russia is mocking their goodwill, and I hope the right decisions are taken



RADEK SIKORSKI | FOREIGN MINISTER, POLAND

Trump to announce tariffs on imported chips

REUTERS

Washington, April 14: US President Donald Trump Sunday said he would be announcing the tariff rate on imported semiconductors over the next week, adding that there would be flexibility with some companies in the sector.

The president's pledge means that the exclusion of smartphones and computers from his reciprocal tariffs on China likely will be short-lived as Trump looks to reset trade in the semiconductor sector.

"We wanted to uncomplicate it from a lot of other companies, because we want to make our chips and semiconductors and other things in our country," Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One as he traveled back to Washington from his estate in West Palm Beach.

Trump declined to say whether some products such as smartphones might still end up being exempted, but added, "You have to show a certain flexibility. Nobody should be so rigid."

Earlier in the day, Trump announced a national security trade probe into the semiconductor sector.

"We are taking a look at Semiconductors and the WHOLE ELECTRONICS SUPPLY CHAIN in the upcoming National Security Tariff Investigations," he posted on social media.

The White House had announced the exclusions from steep reciprocal tariffs Friday, creating some hope that the tech industry might escape being ensnared in the escalating conflict between the two



- Trump indicates new tariffs on smartphones, computers and some other electronics
Trade war has sparked most volatile markets in five years
Senator Warren criticizes Trump's tariff policy as chaotic

products in a month or two, alongside sectoral tariffs targeting semiconductors and pharmaceuticals. The new duties would fall outside Trump's so-called reciprocal tariffs, under which levies on Chinese imports climbed to 125% last week, he said.

"He's saying they're exempt from the reciprocal tariffs, but they're included in the semiconductor tariffs, which are coming in probably a month or two," Lutnick said in an interview on ABC's "This Week," predicting the levies would bring production of those products to the United States.

"CHANGES EVERY DAY" Sven Henrich, founder and lead market strategist for NorthmanTrader, was harshly critical of how the tariff issue was being handled Sunday.

"Sentiment check: The biggest rally of the year would come on the day Lutnick gets fired," Henrich wrote on X. "I suggest the administration figures out who controls the message, whatever it is, as it changes every day. US business can't plan or invest with the constant back and forth."

nations and that everyday consumer products such as phones and laptops would remain affordable.

However, Trump's commerce secretary, Howard Lutnick, earlier Sunday made clear that critical technology products from China would face separate new duties along with semiconductors within the next two months.

Trump's back-and-forth on tariffs last week triggered the wildest swings on Wall Street since the COVID pandemic of 2020. The benchmark Standard & Poor's 500 index is down more than 10% since Trump took office January 20.

Lutnick said Trump would enact "a special focus-type of tariff" on smartphones, computers and other electronics

China imposes visa restrictions on US personnel over Tibet



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, April 14: China Monday slapped visa restrictions against US personnel who have acted "egregiously" on Tibet-related issues in retaliation to additional visa curbs imposed by Washington on Chinese officials.

Tibet affairs are purely China's internal affairs, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian told a media briefing here.

"In accordance with the Law on Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China and the Anti-Foreign Sanctions Law of the People's Republic of China, China decided to impose visa restrictions on US personnel who have acted egregiously on the Xizang (Tibet)-related issues," Lin told a media briefing. China refers to Tibet as Xi-

zang. The restrictions were in response to similar restrictions imposed by Washington on Chinese officials.

In a statement issued March 31, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Washington would impose additional visa restrictions on Chinese officials "determined to be substantially involved in the formulation or execution of policies related to access for foreigners" to Tibet-an areas.

The statement said the decision was in accordance with the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act of 2018, under which Chinese officials could be denied US visas if they were complicit in denying American government officials, journalists, independent observers and tourists access to the region, Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported.

It said Chinese authorities had long "refused to afford US diplomats, journalists, and other international observers access to the Tibet autonomous region and other Tibetan areas of China", while "China's diplomats and journalists enjoy broad access in the United States".



People participate in the Ananda Shobhajatra procession to celebrate the first day of the Bangla New Year in Dhaka, Bangladesh, Monday

Ex-Malaysian leader Abdullah Ahmad Badawi dies at 85



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Kuala Lumpur, April 14: Former Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, a moderate who extended the country's political freedoms but was criticised for lackluster leadership, has died of heart disease. He was 85.

Affectionately known as "Pak Lah", or uncle Lah, Abdullah was admitted to Kuala Lumpur's State Institute of Heart Sunday after experiencing breathing difficulties.

He was closely monitored by a cardiac specialists team, but passed away Monday at 7:10 pm despite all medical efforts, the hospital said in a statement.

Abdullah was first admitted to the hospital in April 2024, after being diagnosed with spontaneous pneumothorax, a collapsed lung that occurs without any apparent cause.

In 2022, his son-in-law, Khairy Jamaluddin, disclosed that Abdullah had dementia that was progressively worsening. He said Abdullah had trouble speaking and could not recognise his family.

Abdullah, Malaysia's fifth leader, served from 2003 to 2009, when he was pressured to resign to take responsibility for the governing coalition's dismal results in national elections. He kept a low profile after leaving politics.

Abdullah took office in October 2003, riding a wave of popularity after replacing Mahathir Mohamad, a domineering, sharp-tongued leader known for his semi-authoritarian rule during 22 years in office.

Saudi Arabia plans to pay off Syria's World Bank debts

REUTERS

Beirut/Amman, April 14: Saudi Arabia plans to pay off Syria's debts to the World Bank, three people familiar with the matter said, paving the way for the approval of millions of dollars in grants for reconstruction and to support the country's paralysed public sector.

The plans, which have not been previously reported, would be the first known instance of Saudi Arabia providing financing for Syria since Islamist-led rebels toppled former leader Bashar al-Assad last year.

It may also be a sign that crucial Gulf Arab support for Syria is beginning to materialize after previous plans, including an

initiative by Doha to fund salaries, were held up by uncertainty over US sanctions.

Last month, Qatar announced a plan to provide Syria with gas via Jordan to improve the nation's meagre electricity supply, a move that sources told Reuters had Washington's nod of approval. A spokesperson for the Saudi Ministry of Finance told Reuters, "We do not comment on speculation, but make announcements, if and when they become official."

The Saudi government's media office, a World Bank spokesperson and a Syrian government official did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Syria has around \$15 billion in arrears to the World Bank which must be paid off before



- Saudi Arabia's payment may unlock grants for Syria's reconstruction
Gulf Arab support for Syria may be materializing
US sanctions complicate Syria's financial recovery efforts

the international financial institution can approve grants and provide other forms of assistance.

But Damascus is short of foreign currency and a previous

Hasina's niece, UK MP Tulip Siddiq, denies corruption allegations

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, April 14: Labour Party MP Tulip Siddiq, the niece of Bangladesh's deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, Monday vehemently denied any wrongdoing after reports emerged of an arrest warrant issued by Dhaka's Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

"My lawyers proactively wrote to the Bangladeshi authorities, they never responded," Siddiq told reporters here.

"I'm sure you'll understand I can't dignify this politically motivated smear campaign with any context or any comments. It's a completely politically motivated smear campaign trying to harass me. There is no evidence that I've done anything wrong," she said.

Siddiq resigned as UK treasury minister in January this year, saying her family connections were becoming a "distraction" for the work of Prime Minister Keir Starmer-led government.

Her spokesperson in a statement over the weekend said the allegations of corruption against Siddiq were "completely false" and her lawyers had dealt with that.

"The ACC has made various allegations against Ms Siddiq through the media in the last few months. The allegations are completely false and have been dealt with in writing by Ms Siddiq's lawyers," the spokesperson said.

"The ACC has not responded to Ms Siddiq or put any allegations to her directly or through her lawyers. Ms Siddiq knows nothing about a hearing in Dhaka relating to her and has no knowledge of any arrest warrant that is said to have been issued," the statement said.

China, Vietnam sign deals

Xi visits Hanoi amid US tariff tensions

REUTERS

Hanoi, April 14: China's President Xi Jinping Monday called for stronger ties with Vietnam on trade and supply chains amid disruptions caused by US tariffs, as he attended in Hanoi the signing of dozens of cooperation agreements between the two Communist-run nations.

The visit, planned for weeks and part of a wider trip in Southeast Asia, comes as Beijing faces 145% US duties, while Vietnam is negotiating a reduction of threatened US tariffs of 46% that would otherwise apply in July after a global moratorium expires.

"The two sides should strengthen cooperation in production and supply chains," Xi said in an article in Nhandan, the newspaper of Vietnam's Communist Party, posted ahead of his arrival Monday. He also urged more trade and stronger ties with Hanoi on artificial intelligence and the green economy.

"There are no winners in trade wars and tariff wars," Xi added, without mentioning the US specifically.

After he met Vietnam's top leader To Lam, the two countries signed dozens of cooperation agreements, footage of the documents reviewed by Reuters showed, including deals on enhancing supply chains and on cooperation over railways.

The content of the agreements was not disclosed and it was unclear whether they involved any financial or binding commitments.

Vietnam's Deputy Prime Minister Bui Thanh Son had Saturday said around 40 agreements would be signed. A separate aviation business deal was signed Sunday.

Under pressure from Washington, Vietnam is tightening



Xi begins three-nation Southeast Asia trip in Hanoi

Vietnam tightens controls on some China trade under US pressure

China, Vietnam sign agreements on rail links, supply chains

Vietnam greenlights jets approved by China, government says

China's COMAC signs deal with Vietjet, document shows

controls on some trade with China to make sure goods exported to the United States with a "Made in Vietnam" label have sufficient added value in the country to justify that.

One memorandum of understanding signed on Monday is to boost cooperation between the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade and the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which issues certificates on the origins of goods.

Vietnam is a major industrial and assembly hub in Southeast Asia. Most of its imports are from China while the United States is its main export market. The country is a crucial source of electronics, shoes and apparel for the United States.

In the first three months of this year Hanoi imported goods worth about \$30 billion from Beijing while its exports to Washington amounted to \$31.4 billion, Vietnam's customs data show, confirming a long-term trend in which imports from China closely match the value and swings of exports to the US.

# Business



There is a lot of relief now as we are at par with other exporters to the US. Now the shipments that were held back will be processed

KN RAGHAVAN | SECRETARY GENERAL, SEAFOOD EXPORTERS ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

## UP, FOXCONN IN TALKS FOR MFG UNIT

The Uttar Pradesh government and iPhone maker Foxconn have started discussions to set up an electronics manufacturing unit in the state, sources aware of the development said. The investment pitch was made by Invest UP to Foxconn at the time of the final land allocation for the HCL-Foxconn chip joint venture Vama Sundari



## of the day quote

If you're a start-up entrepreneur, there's no better time to begin. The number of sectors that start-ups are impacting is also 10-fold... it is more multi-dimensional and multi-sectoral



PRASHANTH PRAKASH | PARTNER, ACCEL

It's human nature to overestimate short-term impact and underestimate long-term potential. We believe in the long-term promise of the Indian economy and equity markets over the next 10 to 15 years



MADHU NAIR | CEO, UNION ASSET MANAGEMENT COMPANY

The build-up of stock in luxury housing, which has been the top-performing segment in the past 2-3 years, is largely due to significant supply additions in the last one to two years



ANUJ PURI | CHAIRMAN, ANAROCK

# Reciprocal tariffs wipe off ₹11.30L-cr

Since April 2, the BSE benchmark gauge has slumped 1,460.18 points or 1.90%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 14: Investors' wealth eroded by ₹11.30 lakh crore since early this month, where the BSE benchmark Sensex tumbled nearly 2 per cent, as stock markets experienced turbulence in recent times initially due to US President Donald Trump unveiling a massive tariff plan, followed by growing concerns of a tit-for-tat trade war between China and the US.

Tracking uncertainty in equities, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms tumbled by ₹11,30,627.09 crore to ₹4,01,67,468.51 crore (\$4.66 trillion) during this period.

Benchmark indices jumped nearly 2 per cent Friday as investors rejoiced at the 90-day suspension of additional import duties by the US.

Markets remained closed on two occasions, April 10 for Shri Mahavir Jayanti and April 14 due to Dr Baba Saheb Ambedkar Jayanti.

Trump unveiled a massive tariff plan in the first week of April. The White House later announced a 90-day pause on "reciprocal tariffs" for most countries except China, which in turn decided to impose 125 per cent tariffs on US imports.

China Friday upped its additional tariff on US goods to 125 per cent, retaliating the America's 145 per cent levy.

The US, April 2, announced an additional 26 per cent tariff on Indian goods entering the US. But April 9, the Trump administration announced the suspension of these on India for 90 days until July 9 this year. However, the 10 per cent baseline tariff imposed on the



Markets had a rocky start to the new fiscal year after Trump announced sweeping reciprocal tariffs on the world. Global markets witnessed sharp losses, and India also was not immune to the sell-off but fared relatively better so far

SATISH CHANDRA ALURI | ANALYST, LEMONN MARKETS DESK

countries will continue to remain in place.

Market participants fear that tensions between the world's two largest economies could cause widespread global damage.

China is the only country to have retaliated with tit-for-tat levies.

Vishnu Kant Upadhyay, AVP - Research & Advisory at Master Capital Services, said that the Indian markets have indeed experienced turbulence in recent times, driven by a combination of domestic and global factors. But, now global uncertainty is the major fear of market participants which can be a big force in deciding the trend and trajectory in the near term.

According to him, Indian equity markets are navigating a complex landscape which is shaped by global uncertainties and potential shifts in US trade policy. While domestic resilience and strengthening corporate earnings could offer a base for recovery.

"Despite the steep correction that took off during the end of

the previous year, participants are optimistic that the market could rebound in the second half of FY26. This projected rebound is likely to be aided by a recovery in corporate profits and renewed foreign capital inflow since valuation has turned reasonable. But the present phase of uncertainty may last for another three to six months specifically because of fear of a US slowdown and recession that is stifling investor sentiment. Conversely, if global conditions stabilise, Indian equities may once again emerge as a desirable destination for foreign investors seeking long-term growth potential," Upadhyay said.

He further added that India's economy is well-placed to grow but global market uncertainties, volatility and trade disruptions are still major risks.

"Sustained policy support and domestic resilience will be essential in maintaining economic momentum especially to protect and support Indian industries and economy from the US tariffs and potential trade wars," Upadhyay added.

# Meta faces historic antitrust lawsuit

The trial could force the tech giant to break off Instagram, WhatsApp eventually destroying its dominance

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

San Francisco, April 14: Meta Platforms Inc faces a historic antitrust trial beginning Monday that could force the tech giant to break off Instagram and WhatsApp, startups it bought more than a decade ago that have since grown into social media powerhouses.

The looming antitrust trial will be the first big test of President Donald Trump's Federal Trade Commission's ability to challenge Big Tech. The lawsuit was filed against Meta — then called Facebook — in 2020, during Trump's first term. It claims the company bought Instagram and WhatsApp to squash competition and establish an illegal monopoly in the social media market.

Meta, the FTC argues, has maintained a monopoly by pursuing CEO Mark Zuckerberg's strategy, expressed in 2008 'It is better to buy than compete.' True to that maxim, Facebook has systematically tracked potential rivals and acquired companies that it viewed as serious competitive threats.

Facebook also enacted policies designed to make it difficult for smaller rivals to enter the market and "neutralize perceived competitive threats," the FTC says in its complaint, just as the world shifted its attention to mobile devices from desktop computers.

"Unable to maintain its monopoly by fairly competing, the company's executives addressed the existential threat by buying up new innovators that were succeeding where Facebook failed," the FTC says. Facebook bought Instagram — then a scrappy photo-sharing



app with no ads and a small cult following — in 2012. The \$1 billion cash and stock purchase price was eye-popping at the time, though the deal's value fell to \$750 million after Facebook's stock price dipped following its initial public offering in May 2012.

Instagram was the first company Facebook bought and kept running as a separate app. Up until then, Facebook was known for smaller "acqui-hires" — a type of popular Silicon Valley deal in which a company purchases a startup as a way to hire its talented workers, then shuts the acquired company down. Two years later, it did it again with the messaging app WhatsApp, which it purchased for \$22 billion.

WhatsApp and Instagram helped Facebook move its business from desktop computers to mobile devices, and to remain popular with younger generations as rivals like Snapchat (which it also tried, but failed, to buy) and TikTok emerged. However, the FTC has a narrow definition of Meta's competitive market, excluding companies like TikTok, YouTube and Apple's messaging service from being considered rivals to Instagram and WhatsApp.

Meta, meanwhile, says the FTC's lawsuit "defies reality."

Regulators should be supporting American innovation, rather than seeking to break up a great American company and further advantaging China on critical issues like AI, the company said in a statement.

# SBI passes on RBI rate cut benefit to borrowers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 14: The country's largest lender State Bank of India (SBI) has reduced its lending rate by 25 basis points following the Reserve Bank's policy rate cut, making loans cheaper for both existing and new borrowers.

With the latest round of reduction, the Repo Linked Lending Rate (RLLR) of SBI would come down by 25 basis points to 8.25 per cent.

It has also reduced the External Benchmark Based Lending Rate (EBLR) by similar basis points to 8.65 per cent. The revised rates come into effect from April 15, 2025, according to updated rate information on SBI's website.

The rate reduction is in response to last week's RBI slashing key interest rate by 25 basis points for the second time in a row to support growth facing the threat of reciprocal tariffs by the US. Besides, the bank also cut deposit rates by 10-25 basis points, which will again be effective from April 15.



With the revision, for fixed deposits up to ₹3 crore, the interest rate on 1-2 year term deposits will be lower by 10 basis points to 6.70 per cent, and deposits having two years to less than 3 years maturity will attract 6.90 per cent as against 7 per cent.

Meanwhile, private sector major HDFC Bank has lowered interest rate on savings accounts by 25 basis points to 2.75 per cent which is the lowest among peers in the private sector.

Another public sector Bank of India has withdrawn its 400-day special deposit scheme which offered 7.3 per cent. Mumbai-based Bank of India has announced a reduction of 25 basis points in its home loan interest rates, benefitting both new and existing customers.

## SHORT TAKES

### Gold falls from peak

Mumbai: Gold prices fell from a record high Monday after US President Donald Trump excluded smartphones and computers from his reciprocal tariffs, although uncertainty around tariff plans kept prices above the significant \$3,200 per ounce level. Spot gold fell 0.9% to \$3,207.39 an ounce, as of 1040 GMT. Bullion hit a record high of \$3,245.42 earlier in the day. US gold futures fell 0.6% to \$3,223.50. Gold is traditionally viewed as a hedge against geopolitical and economic uncertainty. Gold prices could potentially hit \$4,500 by year-end in extreme tail scenarios where the market's focus on the risks of Federal Reserve subordination or changes in US reserve policy increases, analysts at Goldman Sachs said.

### Diesel demand drops

New Delhi: Growth in demand for diesel, India's most consumed petroleum product, fell to its lowest since the pandemic in the financial year ended March 31 as the economy expands at a slower pace and consumption shifts to cleaner fuels. Diesel consumption rose 2 per cent to 91.4 million tonnes in 2024-25 (April 2024 to March 2025) fiscal, according to provisional data released by the Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell of the Oil Ministry. The growth in demand for diesel, which is used to power trucks and farm machinery, in 2024-25 was slower than 4.3 per cent in the previous fiscal and 12.1 per cent in 2022-23.

# Lalchnd makes three more dreams come true

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 14: On a glittering evening at Hotel New Marrion, Lalchnd Jewellers — the biggest jewellery brand of eastern India — proudly announced the second, third and fourth winners of its wildly popular campaign, Kaun Banega Lakhpati (KBL).

At the grand mega lucky draw event, which was attended by some 2,500 enthusiastic customers, each of the three big winners — D Gita Patra from Berhampur showroom (January winner), Sharmistha Mahalik from Master Canteen showroom (February winner) and Bhagirathi Samal from Master Canteen showroom (March winner) — delightfully walked away with a prize cheque of ₹1,00,000 as their



jewellery shopping experience at Lalchnd transformed into dream-come-true stories.

From Lalchnd's exclusive Delhi showroom, for which a separate draw had been organised, 20 lucky people won ₹5,000 each while 20 others were glad to take home consolation prizes.

The event witnessed electrifying live performances from singing sensation Antara Chakrabarty and comedian Prajnya Ranjan, in the pres-

ence of Lalchnd Group founder and chairman Sunjoy Hans, Bollywood actors Bhoomika, Suryamayee and Kuna Tripathy.

On the occasion, Lalchnd also launched a brand-new collection of diamond jewellery under its Aarouhi sub-brand. "The main objective behind this launch is to democratise diamonds by making high-quality diamond jewellery accessible to our customers at the lowest possible prices," Hans stated.

Prices for the fresh collection of lightweight diamond jewellery start from ₹7,000 only — despite the entire range featuring certified diamonds and 14-18 carat HUID gold.

The KBL campaign continues to offer exciting opportunities for jewellery lovers. Shopping for jewellery worth ₹25,000 or more will get them a lucky draw coupon that can potentially make them the next lakhpati.

"Our customers mean the world to us. This lucky draw campaign, which started in 2011, is just a way for us to express our gratitude to them for the trust they have placed in us over the years. We are delighted to declare that a total of 192 people, including the three this time, have become lakhpatis under this campaign over the past 14 years," Hans said.

# Hospitality industry sees shift towards tier II, III cities in 2024

The year 2024 witnessed approximately 25 deals, primarily involving operational properties in both business and leisure destinations

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 14: India's hospitality sector, which grew at par with the previous year, witnessed a shift towards tier-II and III cities, which accounted for nearly half of all hotel transactions, a report said on Monday.

The year 2024 saw approximately 25 deals, primarily involving operational properties in both business and leisure destinations, real estate consultant JLL said in a report.

It said there was a significant shift towards tier-II and III cities, which accounted for nearly half of all hotel transactions.

This trend has effectively broadened the industry's reach, bringing quality accommodations to previously underserved markets such as Amritsar, Mathura, Bikaner, and several others, it added.

As per the report, 2024 saw investor diversity with high-net-worth individuals, family offices, and private hotel owners contributing 51 per cent of the transaction volume.

Listed hotel companies followed closely at 34 per cent, while owner-operators and real



estate developers made smaller but significant contributions at 8 per cent and 7 per cent, respectively, it stated.

The number of greenfield projects in 2024 (28,281 keys) crossed the full year of 2023 (13,600 keys), indicating the enduring confidence of hotel developers in the sector's long-term growth.

Tier I markets such as Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Pune, and Chennai saw signings of hotels with over 250 keys, signalling sustained interest in these hubs due to robust domestic demand and thriving commercial activity, said the report.

"The first quarter of 2025 has ignited a dynamic hotel transactions market, with JLL already facilitating two deals in Chennai and Goa. Investor enthusiasm for both operational assets and land parcels underscore the sector's attractiveness, buoyed by favorable economic conditions, expanding commercial markets, and the government's recent Budget push for tourism," JLL India Managing Director, Hotels and Hospitality Group, Jaideep Dang, said.

# Lodha vs Lodha: Brothers amicably end long-drawn feud

Macrotech Developers, which sells properties under the 'Lodha' brand, is one of the leading real estate firms in the country, while the HoABL is into the development of residential plots across major cities

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

## DISPUTE OVER BRAND NAME

Mumbai, April 14: Abhishek Lodha-led Macrotech Developers has resolved trademark and brand dispute with House of Abhinandan Lodha (HoABL), formed by his younger brother.

Macrotech Developers will continue to use 'Lodha' brand while the younger brother will continue to operate under 'House of Abhinandan Lodha' brand, as per the agreements between the two brothers under the guidance of their parents.

Abhishek and Abhinandan will not have any claims against each other.

In January, Macrotech Developers filed a suit in the Bombay High Court against HoABL for



infringement of its trademarks and sought appropriate injunctions, reliefs, and damages.

Macrotech Developers and



HoABL announced that they have resolved the dispute over the use of Lodha brand, through separate statements

but with similar words.

"In a significant development, the Lodha brothers — elder brother, Abhishek Lodha and younger brother, Abhinandan Lodha — and the companies led by them, have amicably resolved all outstanding disputes under the guidance of their parents," the statement said.

As per the agreement, listed entity Macrotech Developers Ltd is the owner of and has the exclusive right to use, the brand names 'Lodha' and 'Lodha Group'.

Abhinandan Lodha is the owner of, and has the exclusive right to use the brand name 'House of Abhinandan Lodha'. 'Lodha Group' and 'House of Abhinandan Lodha' have no

connection with each other. Both entities will communicate this widely," as per the statement.

Abhinandan Lodha has no rights or claims in Lodha Group or Macrotech Developers or other businesses of Abhishek.

Similarly, Abhishek has no rights or claims in HoABL or other businesses of Abhinandan. "Both Abhishek and Abhinandan express their heartfelt gratitude to Justice R V Raveendran (Retd.), whose guidance in the mediation process was invaluable. The family is grateful to the Justice Arif Doctor for encouraging them to follow the process of mediation," the statement said.

# CSK end losing streak

Dhoni, Dube help Chennai Super Kings beat Lucknow Super Giants by five wickets

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Lucknow, April 14:** Chennai Super Kings (CSK) finally brought their Indian Premier League (IPL) 2025 campaign back on track with a commanding five-wicket win over Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) in Match 30, played at the Bharat Ratna Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee Cricket Stadium.

Chasing a tricky target of 167 on a slow surface, CSK rode on disciplined bowling early on, a composed middle phase, and a trademark finish from MS Dhoni and Shivam Dube to seal their second win of the season and break a five-match losing streak.

Earlier in the evening, CSK's bowlers laid the foundation for victory with a sharp, controlled performance. Khaleel Ahmed gave the perfect start, removing Aiden Markram in the first over, courtesy of a spectacular running catch by Rahul Tripathi. Then Anshul Kamboj, playing with energy and confidence, trapped the dangerous Nicholas Pooran for just 8 with a clever change of pace and a successful DRS referral taken by a smiling Dhoni.

Captain Rishabh Pant held the innings together for LSG with a gritty 63 off 49 balls—his first fifty of the season. Coming in early after the double blow, Pant weathered the storm, building partnerships with Mitchell Marsh (30 off 25) and Ayush Badoni (22 off 17). But LSG's innings lacked the flour-



ish in the death overs, thanks to CSK's spin trio.

Ravindra Jadeja was superb in the middle overs, removing Marsh and later getting Badoni stumped—marking Dhoni's historic 200th fielding dismissal in the IPL. Noor Ahmad kept Pant quiet, conceding only six runs off the 15 balls he bowled to him. Matheesa Pathirana was accurate at the death, and LSG could only reach 166/7—at least 15-20 runs short on a surface offering turn and grip.

CSK's chase began with a surprise change. Youngster

Shaik Rasheed made his IPL debut, opening with Rachin Ravindra in place of the out-of-form Devon Conway. Rasheed made an immediate impact, scoring 27 off 19 with confident strokes, including a stylish flick and a powerful pull. Rachin too looked fluent with 37 off 22, and the duo added 50 in just 4.2 overs, setting a strong platform.

But LSG hit back with spin, as Ravi Bishnoi and Aiden Markram picked up Rachin and Tripathi in quick succession. Then, Jadeja holed out, and Vijay Shankar fell trying

## IPL STANDINGS

TEAM	M	W	L	NRR	PTS
GT	6	4	2	1.081	8
DC	5	4	1	0.899	8
RCB	6	4	2	0.672	8
LSG	7	4	3	0.086	8
KKR	6	3	3	0.803	6
PBKS	5	3	2	0.065	6
MI	6	2	4	0.104	4
RR	6	2	4	-0.838	4
SRH	6	2	4	-1.245	4
CSK	7	2	5	-1.276	4

to accelerate, leaving CSK at 111/5 after 15 overs—needing 56 from 30 balls.

Walking in ahead of Jamie Overton, Dhoni knew he had to time his assault. He started slowly but then found his range with a four and a thick edge for another boundary in the 16th over. He then pulled off a vintage one-handed six over deep square in the 17th, energizing the CSK dugout and the crowd.

At the other end, Shivam Dube soaked in the pressure. Though tied down early, he exploded in the 19th over, taking Shardul Thakur apart. A guided four, a full-toss sent into the stands, and a no-ball gave CSK 19 runs, leaving just 4 needed off the last over.

Fittingly, Dhoni was at the crease when the winning runs were hit, finishing unbeaten as CSK completed the chase with an over to spare. Dube remained not out on 43 off 37, with Dhoni contributing a crucial 26 off 11 balls.

### BRIEF SCORES:

**Lucknow Super Giants:** 166/7 in 20 overs (Rishabh Pant 63, Mitchell Marsh 30; Ravindra Jadeja 2-24, Matheesa Pathirana 2-45) lost to **Chennai Super Kings:** (Shivam Dube 43 not out, Rachin Ravindra 37; Ravi Bishnoi 2-18, Digvesh Rathi 1-23) by five wickets

# Stellar start for India at Archery WC Stage 1



**The country's medal tally from the tournament stood at four -- gold in the compound mixed team, bronze in compound men's team, silver in recurve men's team and bronze in recurve men's individual**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Auburndale (USA), April 14:** India wrapped up their campaign at the Archery World Cup Stage 1 with a creditable four medals, including a silver in the men's recurve team event and a bronze by rising star Dhiraj Bommadevara in the individual recurve category, here Sunday.

The 23-year-old Army archer Dhiraj showed exceptional grit

and composure to clinch the bronze medal match, bouncing back from a 2-4 deficit to beat Andres Temino Mediel of Spain 6-4 in a tense five-setter.

Earlier in the day, he was also part of the Indian trio alongside veterans Tarundeep Rai and Atanu Das that settled for silver after a 1-5 loss to China in the team final.

India's medal tally from the tournament stood at four -- gold in the compound mixed team, bronze in compound men's team, silver in recurve men's team and bronze in recurve men's individual (Dhiraj).

India's campaign also saw Abhishek Verma narrowly miss out on a medal, finishing fourth in the compound men's individual section. In the bronze medal match, Dhiraj and Mediel tied the first set 28-28.

The Spaniard then edged ahead 29-28 in the second set with two 10s, while Dhiraj could manage only one, to take a 3-1 lead. The third set was again deadlocked at 29-29, putting Dhiraj under pressure. But the

young Indian responded with a brilliant fourth set, hitting two 10s (including an X, the arrow closer to the centre) to win it 29-28 and level the score at 4-4.

In the deciding set, Dhiraj was ice-cool under pressure, nailing three perfect 10s to seal a well-deserved bronze.

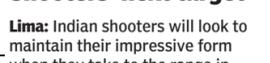
Earlier in the semifinals, he had lost 1-7 to world No 4 and Paris Olympics silver medallist Florian Unruh of Germany, who proved too strong with consistently high scoring.

Earlier, the Indian men's recurve team of Dhiraj, Tarundeep Rai and Atanu Das started well in the gold medal match against China, tying the first set 54-54.

However, inconsistency in the second set—marked by two 8s allowed the Chinese trio of Li Zhongyuan, Kao Wenchao and Wang Yan to pull ahead with a 58-55 scoreline. India needed to win the third set to stay in the contest, but again slipped with an 8, narrowly losing 54-55, as China clinched the gold with a 5-1 scoreline.

## TODAY'S CLASH

Indian Premier League



Time: 07:30 pm

Telecast: Star Sports Network Stream: JioHotstar

## SHORT TAKES

### Shooters' next target

**Lima:** Indian shooters will look to maintain their impressive form when they take to the range in the ISSF World Cup beginning here from Tuesday. The Indian team finished a creditable second in the year's first World Cup for rifle, pistol and shotgun shooters in Buenos Aires last week. On the first competition day in the capital city of Peru, the likes of Manu Bhaker, Suruchi and Sainyam will be in action in the women's air pistol competition, while Saurabh Chaudhary, Varun Tomar and Ravinder will take another shot at gold in the men's air pistol event at the Las Palmas range. Both the men's and women's 10m air pistol finals are scheduled for Tuesday.

### Rome derby ends 1-1

**Rome:** The always-tense Roma derby ended 1-1, allowing Roma to extend its unbeaten run to 16 matches and enabling Lazio to stay one spot in front of its city rival in the standings. Lifelong Lazio fan Alessio Romagnoli achieved a childhood dream when he put Lazio ahead shortly after the break. The result also ended the perfect run of five straight derby wins for Roma coach Claudio Ranieri, who is expected to retire at the end of the season. Hours before kickoff, police in riot gear intervened to prevent clashes between rival fans outside the stadium.

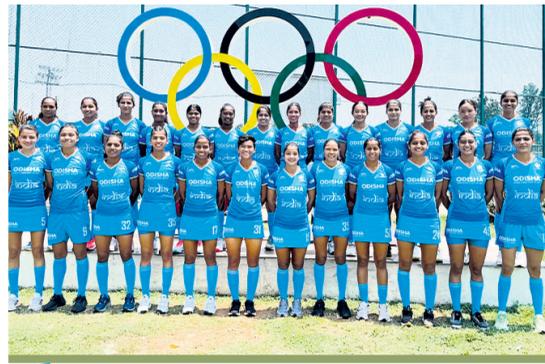
# Hockey India names 26-member women's squad for Australia tour

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, April 14:** Hockey India on Monday announced a 26-member Indian women's team squad for the upcoming tour of Australia, scheduled to take place from April 26 to May 4 at the Perth Hockey Stadium. The five-match series will see India take on Australia A in the first two games, followed by three matches against the senior Australian team.

The squad will be led by dynamic midfielder Salima Tete, with experienced forward Navneet Kaur serving as the vice-captain. The tour will be a crucial preparatory assignment ahead of the team's European leg of the FIH Pro League 2024-25, set to be held in June. Seasoned goalkeeper Savita and young talent Bichu Devi Khariabam will share responsibilities between the posts, providing a strong last line of defence.

The defensive line-up features a mix of experience and promising young talent, comprising Jyoti Singh, Ishika Chaudhary, Sushila Chanu, Pukhrambam, Sujata Kujur, Suman Devi Thoudam, Jyoti, Ajmina Kujur and Sakshi Rana. In the midfield, captain Sali-



**This tour is an important opportunity for us to test our skills and strategies against top-level competition. We've selected a balanced squad that combines experience with fresh energy**

HARENDRA SINGH | CHIEF COACH

ma will marshal the centre with support from Vaishnavi Vitthal Phalke, Neha, Sharmila Devi, Manisha Chauhan, Sunelita Toppo, Mahima Tete, Pooja Yadav and Lalremsiami to the side. The forward line looks sharp

and attacking with Navneet Kaur, Deepika, Rutaja Dadaso Pisal, Mumtaz Khan, Baljeet Kaur, Deepika Soreng and Beauty Dungkong. Notably, five players—Jyoti Singh, Sujata Kujur, Ajmina Kujur, Pooja Yadav and Mahima Tete—have earned a call-up to the senior team and will be eager to make their senior team debut.

Additionally, Bansari Solanki (goalkeeper), Anjana Dunderung and Lalhantluangi (defenders), Sakshi Shukla and Khaidem Shileima Chanu (midfielders), along with Dipi Monika Toppo and Sonam (forwards), have been named as standby players.

## Sleek metallic torches unveiled for Milan-Cortina Olympics and Paralympics

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Milan, April 14:** Organizers for the Milan-Cortina Olympics on Monday unveiled a sleek and minimalistic metallic design for the torches that will be used in the traditional relay ahead of next year's Winter Games.

The torches will be made primarily out of recycled materials, with a design system that lets the fuel canister be refilled up to 10 times—reducing the number of torches that will be needed, organizers said. Made from an aluminum and brass alloy, the Olympic torch features a blue-green hue while the Paralympic version is bronze colored.

The Olympic flame will arrive in Rome December 4 and will begin its journey across Italy two days later. The 2026 Games run February 6-22 and the Paralympics run March 6-15. The torches, which were designed by Italian architect Carlo Ratti, were displayed at joint presentations at the Expo 2025 in Osaka, Japan, and in Milan.



## UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE QF LEG 2

# Do-or-die situation for Madrid, Bayern, Dortmund and Villa



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, April 14:** Following a thrilling first leg filled with goals, the UEFA Champions League quarterfinals now head into the decisive second leg, where Real Madrid, Bayern Munich, Borussia Dortmund and Aston Villa face uphill battles to overturn unfavourable results.

Villa, Dortmund, Bayern and Madrid must overcome first-leg defeats if they are to reach the Champions League semifinals.

### Barcelona vs Borussia Dortmund:

In the first match of the night, Barcelona head to the BVB Stadion Dortmund with a commanding 4-0 lead from the first leg. The pressure is surely on the German side to pull off a remarkable comeback at home. However, given the Catalan club's current form and their habit of winning even under pressure, it appears to be a tall order for Dortmund.

Barcelona's attacking trio continues to dominate both in La Liga and the Champions League, and all eyes will be on their captain, Raphinha, who now leads the charts for both goals and assists this season.

### Aston Villa vs PSG:

In the other match of the night, Aston Villa will aim to capitalise on their home advantage against a confident PSG side, fresh off clinching the Ligue 1 title under manager Luis Enrique.

After a 3-1 loss in the first leg, the English side faces a stiff challenge. PSG, known for their swift counterattacks, will look to maintain a compact defensive structure while waiting for openings as Villa are expected to attack relentlessly in search of a turnaround.

### Inter Milan vs Bayern Munich:

The quarterfinal action continues as Inter Milan take on Bayern Munich at San Siro. Inter come into the second leg with a narrow lead, having executed a brilliant defensive performance in Munich.

Their disciplined 3-5-2 system, built around midfield control and a patient build-up, contrasts with Bayern's fast-paced, direct approach. It will be up to Harry Kane and his teammates to break through Inter's resilient setup and keep their European hopes alive.

### Real Madrid vs Arsenal:

Finally, defending champions Real Madrid face an almost insurmountable challenge against Arsenal, trailing 3-0 from the first leg. While the odds are stacked against Madrid, Los Blancos have a history of producing dramatic comebacks—most notably in 2022 against Manchester City.

Madrid will look to draw on that spirit once again and rely on their big-match mentality to try and pull off another unforgettable night in Champions League history.

# McIlroy wins Masters to complete career Grand Slam

## McIlroy becomes sixth man and the first European to achieve the milestone

REUTERS

**Augusta, April 13:** Rory McIlroy ended his long wait for a Masters title with a birdie on the opening hole of a sudden-death playoff to beat Justin Rose and claim the career Grand Slam after a nerve-racking final round on Sunday.

After missing a five-foot par putt at the 18th in regulation that forced the playoff, McIlroy made sure he did not let his lat-

est chance at major glory slip away and returned to the same hole in the playoff and put his approach two feet from the cup.

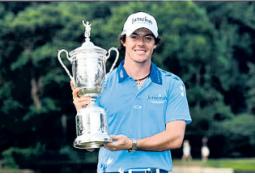
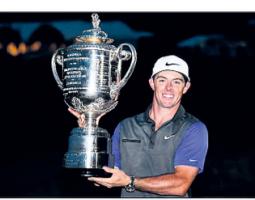
When the winning putt dropped, McIlroy raised his arms toward the clear sky and let his putter fall behind him as he dropped to his knees overcome with emotion.

McIlroy then embraced his wife Erica and daughter Poppy as chants of "Rory! Rory!" rang out around the green while he made his way toward Butler Cabin to collect the Green Jacket that he almost threw away earlier after a back-nine stumble.

"There was a lot of pent-up emotion that just came out on that 18th green," McIlroy



said just before slipping on the Green Jacket during the presentation ceremony. "A



moment like that makes all the years and all the close calls worth it."

**It was a nice touch and little bit ironic at the same time. It's been 14 long years. But thankfully, I got the job done**

RORY MCILROY

With the win, McIlroy joins Gene Sarazen, Ben Hogan, Gary Player, Jack Nicklaus and Tiger Woods as the only golfers to win each of the four major championships.

The 35-year-old McIlroy arrived at the year's first major, where in 2011 he blew a four-shot lead on the back nine, seeking his first major since August 2014 to end a barren run that came with its fair share of near misses.