



## Rakul's perception

Actress Rakul Preet Singh shares a heartfelt insight into her approach to growth and ambition

LEISURE | P2



## Renewing ties

Bangladesh will hold its first foreign office consultation (FOC) with Pakistan after a gap of 15 years

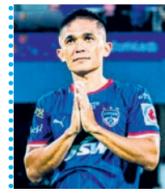
INTERNATIONAL | P10



## Trade deficit widens

India's trade deficit widens to USD 21.54 billion in March, according to government data

BUSINESS | P11



## Chhetri's regret

Bengaluru FC captain Sunil Chhetri admits that losing the Indian Super League final to Mohun Bagan Super Giant will hurt him immensely

SPORTS | P12

## CM approves creation of 2.5K home guard posts

**Bhubaneswar:** Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Tuesday approved a proposal for creation of 2,500 more posts of home guards in the state. The number of home guard posts will increase to 20,175 after creation of the additional ones, an official release said. Majhi had earlier announced an increase in the number of posts in the state police force to strengthen law and order in Odisha. The CM had stated around 12,000 posts would be created in various branches of Odisha Police.

## Above-normal rain this monsoon: IMD

**New Delhi:** India is expected to get above-normal rainfall in the upcoming southwest monsoon season, the India Meteorological Department said Tuesday, raising hopes for a bountiful harvest for the largely agri-based economy. According to the long-range monsoon forecast, the IMD said large parts of Tamil Nadu and the northeastern region were likely to get below-normal rainfall, while the rain-deficient parts of Marathwada and adjoining Telangana are expected to witness above-normal showers. "There is a 30 per cent chance of normal rainfall, a 33 per cent chance of above-normal rainfall, and a 26 per cent chance of excess precipitation during the monsoon season," IMD Director General Mrityunjay Mohapatra said. The southwest monsoon lasts from June 1 to September 30. P8

## Watery grave for two minor cousins

**Basta:** Two minor cousins died by drowning after they accidentally fell into a pond while playing, at Gandhi Chhak under this police limits in Balasore district Tuesday afternoon. The deceased - both six years old - were daughters of Sheikh Tairuddin and Sheikh Nazimuddin who live in the area. The incident occurred when the two girls, while playing, went near a pond behind their houses and accidentally slipped into water.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



You shouldn't have gifted footwear to the people, sir!



JOYOUS GATHERING: Women and girls participate in Mangal Shobhajatra to mark the first day of Bengali New Year in Kolkata, Tuesday

## Hosp to lose licence if newborn trafficked: SC

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, April 15:** The Supreme Court Tuesday came down heavily on the Uttar Pradesh government over its handling of child trafficking cases and laid down strict guidelines for states to curb such crimes.

A bench of Justices JB Pardiwala and R Mahadevan ordered the lower courts to complete trials in such cases within six months while directing authorities to suspend licences of hospitals if any newborn is trafficked.

"High Courts across the country are directed to call for the status of pending trials in child trafficking cases. Then directions shall be issued to complete the trial in 6 months and also conduct a day-to-day trial," the apex court said.

The SC move came while hearing a case where a trafficked baby was delivered to a couple in UP who wanted a son. The accused were granted anticipatory bail by the Allahabad HC, according to a report of India Today. While cancelling the bail of the accused, the SC slammed both the Allahabad HC and the UP government over their handling of the matter.

"The accused was longing for a son and then got a son for

₹4 lakh. If you desire a son... you cannot go for a trafficked child. He knew that the baby was stolen," the bench said.

The top court said the High Court dealt with the bail applications 'callously', leading many accused to abscond.

Issuing guidelines to arrest child trafficking cases, the Supreme Court said the licences of hospitals should be cancelled if any newborn is stolen.

"If any newborn is trafficked from a hospital, the first step should be to suspend the licence of such hospitals. If any woman comes to deliver a child to the hospital and the baby is stolen, the first step is suspension of licence," the SC ordered.

In 2023, the National Human Rights Commission entrusted the study on Human Trafficking to the BIRD, which flagged various shortcomings in the mechanism adopted by the states and law enforcement agencies in checking human trafficking, especially child trafficking and suggested remedial measures.

"All the state governments are directed to study the entire report and start implementing each of the recommendations by working out appropriate modalities in that regard," the bench said in its 95-page verdict.

# Stalin calls for autonomy

**Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin has been in conflict with the Centre over several issues. The DMK supremo intensified his attack on the BJP-led NDA at the Centre Tuesday claiming that the Union government is gradually encroaching on the states' rights. To scrutinise the state-Centre relationship in detail, the TN government has formed a high-level committee, headed by a retired Supreme Court judge, Stalin announced on the floor. He argued that his government's move, to seek decentralisation of power and funds, is not only essential for protecting TN's interests but has also been initiated keeping in mind the interests of people of all states. BJP legislators, however, dismissed the announcement as a political manoeuvre aimed at gaining favour ahead of the 2026 state elections. This ongoing tension highlights the broader power struggle between state and Central governments**

PNN & AGENCIES

**Chennai, April 15:** Alleging that states' rights were increasingly being snatched by the Centre, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin Tuesday announced the constitution of a panel under a retired Supreme Court judge on state autonomy.

Stepping up the attack on the BJP-led NDA at the Centre, Stalin said the high-level committee headed by former Supreme Court judge Kurian Joseph will examine in detail the relationship between the Union and state governments to ensure state autonomy. It will submit its interim report in January 2026. The final report with recommendations will be submitted in two years.

The panel will have former bureaucrat, Ashok Vardhan Shetty and former vice-chairman of the State Planning



Commission M Naganathan as its members.

"The committee will study, as per the law, to transfer those subjects that went from the State List to the Concurrent List," the Chief Minister said and pointed out that the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) was out of the purview of states.

"We are not stressing for devolution of power and funds

merely considering Tamil Nadu's welfare but are keeping in mind the interests of the people of the vast expanse of the country stretching from Gujarat to the northeastern parts; from Kashmir to Kerala," Stalin said while making a statement in the TN Assembly.

"Tamil Nadu's will be the first voice vis-a-vis discussions on state autonomy," he added. The motive behind setting up the said panel is to protect the rights of all Indian states that work on the basis of 'unity in diversity,' Stalin added.

"While Tamils world over showed their opposition when cultural identities like Eruthazhuvudal (similar to jallikattu) were attempted to be destroyed, our request is that the cultural ethos of the northeastern states like Manipur and Nagaland should also be given due respect," he said.

"It is a fact that while we

take all steps to protect our Mother Tamil, we are equally concerned about languages in other parts of India losing their nature," the CM said.

Opposition AIADMK slammed the CM over the announcement, asking what was his DMK that shared power with the Congress-led UPA earlier, doing all these years. The move was aimed at 'diverting' public attention, the principal opposition party charged.

The four BJP legislators in the Assembly protested any such move that encouraged state autonomy and walked out.

On the BJP criticism that the announcement was made with an eye on the 2026 Assembly polls, the Law Minister S Regupathy replied the DMK would come to power again under Stalin's leadership in the elections.

## Kidnapped baby boy of visually impaired rescued

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, April 15:** The Police Tuesday rescued the kidnapped one-and-half-year-old boy of a visually impaired beggar in Bhubaneswar and arrested one person in this connection, an officer said.

The baby boy was handed over to the mother after medical examination at the Capital Hospital here, Commissioner of Police S Dev Datta Singh told reporters. The baby was kidnapped Saturday night by an unidentified man when he was playing and his mother and sister were sleeping on the footpath.

"Within 48 hours of reporting the incident, the child has been rescued by the police and the kidnapper identified as Kedarsan Panda (27) of Gangadharpur of Puri district has been arrested and one woman from whom the child was rescued had been detained," Singh told reporters.

## Biju statue set on fire; CM orders stern action

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, April 15:** A statue of former Odisha chief minister Biju Patnaik was Tuesday set ablaze at Patnagarh town in Bolangir district, police said. Apart from BJD, CPI and other Left parties, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi also condemned the incident.

"This can only be the handiwork of some lowly person, perhaps suffering from some mental illness," Majhi said, adding that he has directed police to take stern action against persons involved in this incident and expose if there is any conspiracy behind it.

The CM said that one person has so far been arrested. He said the state government recognises the contributions of Biju Patnaik and gives due respect to all legendary figures, who made significant contributions to nation building. Majhi in a statement also mentioned that his government recently held a state-level function in memory of Biju Patnaik on his birth anniversary March 5. P3

## Amur Falcon's return journey to Siberia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Imphal, April 15:** An Amur Falcon bird which was radio-tagged in Manipur in November last year has started its return journey to Siberia after staying for 114 days in Southern African countries, a scientist said.

On October 12 last year, two Amur Falcon birds had arrived from Siberia in Manipur's Tamenglong district and were radio-tagged by scientists of the Wildlife Institute of India (WII). The male bird was named 'Chiuluan 2' while the female bird was named 'Guangram' after two roosting villages in Tamenglong district.

WII senior scientist Suresh Kumar, who is monitoring the bird's migratory route, told this agency, "Chiuluan 2 is now on its return journey to Siberia. It has crossed Zimbabwe, and Tanzania and is currently near the Kenya-Somalia border. It started its northward journey from Botswana on

April 8 morning." Kumar said the bird which previously left Manipur November 8 last year had reached South Africa December 20 last year after an epic flight and then headed to Botswana where it stayed for more than a month.

"It spent 114 days in Southern Africa with 46 days in the Central Kalahari Reserve in Botswana from where it started its return journey,"



Kumar said. "I am expecting Chiuluan 2 to start the oceanic crossing after 10 days," Kumar added.

After radio-tagging with satellite transmitters in Manipur's Tamenglong district, Chiuluan 2 was released November 8 last year. Chiuluan 2 passed through Bangladesh, Odisha, Maharashtra and eventually crossed the Arabian Sea to reach the Somalia-Kenya borders in the last week of November last year.

On the behavioural pattern in the migratory routes of the Amur Falcons, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Tamenglong, Kh Hitler Singh said, "In return journey, Amur Falcons don't stop at Tamenglong. They will come back in October after their breeding season at the Amur river region from May to October." The DFO said the female bird Guangram which was also radio-tagged in Manipur, "Stopped giving satellite data while it was somewhere near Kenya in December 2024."

Amur Falcons annually leave the cold harsh weather of Siberia and Northern China when winter approaches and travels a distance of approximately 14,500 km to head for the wintering grounds in South Africa and later from April-May start their return journey, Singh said.

He said the objective of the research is to study the migratory route of one of the world's longest-travelling birds. The annual migration of Amur falcon covers a distance of approximately 22,000 km, the DFO said.

## ED chargesheets Sonia, Rahul

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 15:** The Enforcement Directorate has filed a chargesheet against Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and others accusing them of allegedly laundering ₹988 crore in the National Herald case. Special judge Vishal Gogne examined the chargesheet, which was filed April 9, on the point of cognisance and posted the matter for further proceedings on April 25.

The chargesheet also names Congress leader Sam Pitroda and Suman Dubey as accused. Sources said the other accused include Young Indian, Dotex Merchandise Pvt Ltd and Sunil Bhandari.

"The present prosecution complaint shall next be taken up for consideration on the aspect of cognisance before this court on April 25, 2025 when the special counsel for the ED and IO shall also ensure the production of the case diaries for perusal by the court," the judge said. The chargesheet was filed under Sec-

## Land deal: Vadra's statement recorded

**NEW DELHI:** The Enforcement Directorate Tuesday recorded the statement of Robert Vadra, businessman and brother-in-law of Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, in a 2008 Haryana land deal-linked money laundering case, official sources said. Terming the agency's move to summon him as 'political vendetta', Vadra said he has spent hours with the ED earlier during questioning (in separate money laundering cases), sharing thousands of pages but still the agency has been raking up cases against him. "I will cooperate with them like in the past," he said.

tions 3 (money laundering) and 4 (punishment for money laundering) of Prevention of Money Laundering Act by ED's special public prosecutor N K Matta. "Let the complaint be checked and registered. The Ahlmad (court staff) shall ensure that the entire file/documents are properly paginated. The ED is directed to file a soft copy of the complaint in readable/OCR format by the next date," the judge said.

Cong reaction | P9

# leisure



## CARTER ACCUSED OF SEXUALLY ASSAULTING WOMAN

Singer-songwriter Nick Carter is facing charges of allegedly sexually assaulting a woman. The woman also claimed in a new lawsuit that she contracted STDs that led to cervical cancer. Laura Penly alleged that the *Backstreet Boys* performer, 45, sexually assaulted her in approximately 2004.

## BLANCHETT: I AM SERIOUS ABOUT GIVING UP ACTING

Cate Blanchett, the acclaimed actress, has hinted at a potential departure from the film industry, expressing a desire to explore new ventures. While promoting her audiobook, she admitted her family dismisses her claims, but she is serious about giving up acting.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
Today, the stars put you on high alert... and not for nothing. You will save yourself from being swindled. Though you will easily manage to stay ahead of others, you may make a few enemies on your way. It's not a good day if you're looking to buy a house or vehicle, says Ganesha.

**TAURUS**  
Impulsive action kicks in as you work and interact today. Do not let the pressure and strain cloud your thoughts, and instead focus on acting on the things at hand. If you find things spiralling out of control, take a break and listen to some music that soothes your heart, suggests Ganesha.

**GEMINI**  
Bosses will assign new responsibilities to you, predicts Ganesha. Your daytime distress, however, will transform into jubilation by the end of the day's work, as you will be able to produce brilliant results. Ganesha advises you to delay bidding for tenders by a few days.

**CANCER**  
Today, it is quite possible that you have a presentiment of things that are about to happen. Scarily enough, the premonition may not be too far off the mark. All your senses, especially your sixth sense, are likely to remain highly active today. It is best for you to keep your eyes and ears open to avoid any misunderstanding at work or home, says Ganesha.

**LEO**  
Your passionate and emotional nature contributes in a big way to your sudden outbursts of emotions, says Ganesha. Today, your anger may erupt abruptly. This makes it very likely for you to get carried away irrespective of your surroundings and circumstances, both at work and at home.

**VIRGO**  
Stay clear of a coalition when it comes to business ventures, warns Ganesha. Alone, you can manage an entire stampede. By your own you are, by far, the best administrator of your department. Today, find yourself being the general and uniting people under your banner to achieve greater success, says Ganesha.

**LIBRA**  
Ever heard of the phrase, 'To stick one's foot in one's mouth'? Well, today you might be doing exactly the same, albeit unwittingly. You are likely to invite trouble, especially if some of those heated discussions get out of hand. A legal dispute does not seem unlikely.

**SCORPIO**  
You shall probably realise the fact that seeing is believing. Learn to trust your own eyes more than what you hear. Don't get lost in the crowd, warns Ganesha. Strive to stand out and be in the spotlight, advises Ganesha.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Round and round they tumble, the wheels of life, smoothly gliding into a routine. You may spend your day in discontent due to the rut of regular activities. Sadly, there is little hope or adventure Ganesha foresees that might make this day worthwhile for you. There will be glimpses of excitement in the evening but on the whole, it will be nothing to write home about.

**CAPRICORN**  
A good day always begins with a good start. It will be a good day for you today as you will start the day with a positive attitude to life, says Ganesha. Your unremitting dedication and determination will not only put you ahead of others, but will also help you get an edge over them. If tiffs with your life partner are rife, you can expect to a peaceful day, at least for today.

**AQUARIUS**  
You are a polished diamond. Adversities come and go, yet you remain unruffled. Today, you manage to please your boss, and beloved, and that is a feat! It is yet another day of contentment. And in a cyclical process, this again rejuvenates you into giving your best, says Ganesha.

**PISCES**  
Do not let your emotions influence your strategies in any way. Mixing business with sentiments is only for super spies. Keep a close check on your emotions and do not get carried away. Travel for business purposes is indicated, says Ganesha.

# RAKUL

## on chasing dreams

**MUMBAI:** Rakul Preet Singh has established herself as a versatile force in Indian cinema, carving out a steady presence with performances across multiple languages and genres. Known for seamlessly balancing commercial and content-driven roles, Rakul continues to expand her horizons as an actor. Reflecting on her journey, she shared a heartfelt insight into her approach to growth and ambition.

Rakul emphasised the importance of always striving for more, saying, "The day you think you've arrived or that you're good enough, that's when you become laid-back. I'm grateful for what I have, but I know there's so much more to explore." She described life as a vast canvas, filled with endless opportunities to learn, grow, and evolve. For Ra-

kul, comfort isn't the end goal—there's always more to chase. With this mindset, Rakul is ready to take 2025 by storm. With projects like *De De Pyaar De 2*, *Ameeri*, and a slew of exciting, yet-to-be-announced ventures, she's continuing to break boundaries and build a diverse portfolio. Rakul's journey is far from over—she's chasing her dreams and painting her future with brilliance.



## CHINTA O CHETANA— NATIONAL BAISHAKHI FESTIVAL 2025



The 48th National Baishakhi Festival 2025, organised by Chinta O Chetana—one of the state's leading socio-cultural organisations—commenced Tuesday at Rabindra Mandap with the ceremonial Divyapahandi of Lord Jagannath. The inaugural evening featured a vibrant showcase of traditional dance forms including Mahari, Gotipua, Odissi, and Sambalpuri, culminating in a special Odissi performance by the acclaimed Guru Gajendra Panda.

**LOS ANGELES:** Actor Priyanka Chopra Jonas will be featuring alongside Hollywood stars Will Ferrell and Zac Efron in an upcoming comedy film from director Nicholas Stoller.

Priyanka joined the project along with Michael Pena, the star of movies and shows such as *Shooter*, *Fury*, *End of Watch*, *Narcos: Mexico* and *Jack Ryan*, according to entertainment news outlet The Hollywood Reporter.

The movie, which was earlier titled *Judgment Day*, focuses on a young convict (Efron) who gets out of prison and takes an unscripted TV courtroom hostage, as he is convinced that the judge (Ferrell) delivered a ruling that destroyed his life.

The cast also includes Oscar winner Regina Hall, Jimmy Tatro and Billy Eichner.

It is produced by Ferrell, Jessica Elbaum and Alex Brown for Gloria Sanchez Productions and Stoller under the banner Stoller Global Solutions.

The project reunites Priyanka with Efron, her co-star from the 2017 movie *Baywatch*.

Priyanka's upcoming projects also include *The Bluff* and *Heads of State*, starring John Cena and Idris Elba. She is also awaiting the second season of her action series *Citadel*.

**PeeCee boards Ferrell-Efron's next**

## 'This is an extremely volatile industry'



**NEW DELHI:** Actress Kritika Kamra, who began her acting journey in 2007 with the television series *Yahaan Ke Hum Sikandar* and made her film debut in 2018 with *Mitron*, says she doesn't let the pressure of expectations weigh her down in an industry she describes as "extremely volatile."

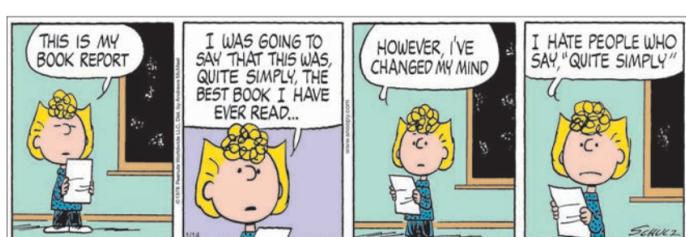
Asked how she handles the pressure of expectations in an industry that's always evolving, Kritika told the agency: "I don't. This is an extremely volatile industry. There's no blueprint, no guarantees, no set of rules. There are way too many pressures already."

The actress said that the only expectations that matter to her are her own.

"I hold myself to high standards. I know my reasons for being an actor, I'm committed to learning and I want to do the right thing even when nobody's looking. As long as I'm true to myself, I'm ok. I try my best to not think about what I'm expected to look like and what my success is expected to look like. I'm making my own space one project at a time," she said.

Kritika gained prominence with her role as Arohi in the popular TV show *Kitani Mohabbat Hai*. She made her transition to films with *Mitron* and has since appeared in projects like *Bheed*.

### PEANUTS



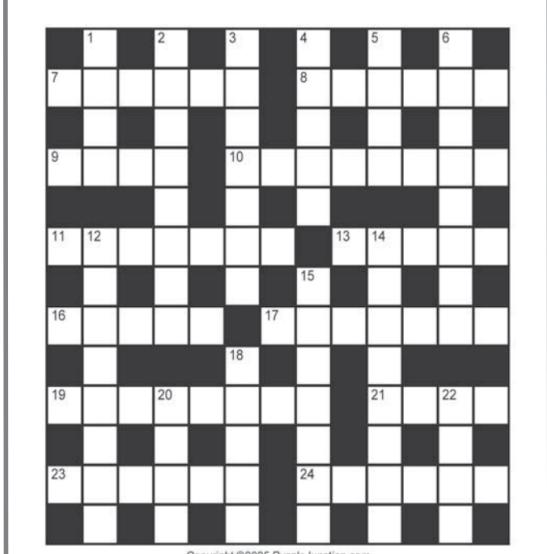
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



### CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Coventry's lady on a horse
  - 8 West Indies music
  - 9 Baltic port
  - 10 Short negligée
  - 11 Wine holders
  - 13 Butter maker
  - 16 Suite spot
  - 17 Tickler of the ivories
  - 19 Former Paris fortress
  - 21 Computer image
  - 23 Round hat
  - 24 Andean animals
  - 5 Matures
  - 6 Wild dabbling ducks
  - 12 Pear-shaped tropical fruits
  - 14 Man of the Alps
  - 15 Lightning bug
  - 18 Emergency signal
  - 20 Knight fight
  - 22 Girasol, e.g.

### 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.

3		7						2
	1	7		6				
2		4						
		6						3
9			1				5	
		9	7	1				
	9	6	3					4
	2		1					7
	5							

### SOLUTIONS

**CROSSWORD**

S	L	A	N	D	E	R	M	I	S	E	R
T	N	R	E	U	T	I					
A	D	I	E	C	U	S	T	O	M	S	
S	M	E	H	M	O						
H	E	A	T	D	O	R	M	A	N	T	
L	P	E	O								
B	A	S	K	E	T	K	O	S	O	V	O
A	R	I	S	A	M	M					
C	Y	C	L	I	S	T	H	I	V	E	
K	H	C	L	O	A	N	P				
H	O	O	D	L	U	M	B	R	O	K	E
O	I	E	I	L	U	E					
E	A	R	L	S	C	R	E	A	S	E	S

**SUDOKU**

7	8	9	4	6	2	3	5	1
6	4	3	1	8	5	7	9	2
1	2	5	7	9	3	6	8	4
3	5	8	6	2	1	4	7	9
2	9	7	5	4	8	1	3	6
4	1	6	3	7	9	5	2	8
8	7	4	2	5	6	9	1	3
9	6	1	8	3	7	2	4	5
5	3	2	9	1	4	8	6	7

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

**RAIN PAIN**

Commuters negotiate a water-logged road in CDA Sector VI area of Cuttack after a brief spell of rain, Tuesday



# downtown

## Only 15 judges/mn population, says IJR

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 15: There are only 15 judges per million population in the country, a far cry from the Law Commission's recommendation of 50 judges per million population, according to India Justice Report (IJR) 2025 released Tuesday.

In contrast, the US has 150 judges per million population, according to a January 2024 'New York Times' news report, and Europe had an average of 220 judges per million in 2022, according to an October 2024 Council of Europe report.

"For 1.4 billion people, India has 21,285 judges, or approximately 15 judges per million population. This continues to be significantly below the 1987 Law Commission's recommendation of 50 judges per million population," said IJR 2025, which ranks states on the delivery of justice in the country.

While High Courts struggled with 33 per cent vacancies of judges, district courts managed proceedings with 21 per cent vacancies - indicating a high workload for the existing judges.

"Nationally, in the district courts, the average workload is 2,200 cases per judge. In the Allahabad and Madhya Pradesh High Courts, the caseload per judge amounts to 15,000," it said.

The overall share of women judges, the report said, increased from 30 per cent in 2017 to 38.3 per cent in 2025 in district judiciary and from 11.4 per cent to 14 per cent in HCs during the period.



"There is a higher share of women judges in district courts as compared to HCs and the Supreme Court (6 per cent). Currently, there is only one woman chief justice across 25 HCs," the report said.

The report said Delhi district courts were among judicial branches with the lowest vacancies in the country (11 per cent), and in which women comprised 45 per cent judges.

"In the district judiciary, only five per cent of judges belong to STs and 14 per cent are from SCs. Of the 698 HC judges appointed since 2018, only 37 judges are from SC and ST categories," it said, adding that the overall representation of OBCs in the judiciary was 25.6 per cent.

The national per capita spend on legal aid was Rs 6.46 per annum whereas the national per capita spend on the judiciary stood at Rs 182, it added. "No state spends more than one per cent of its total annual expenditure on the judiciary," the report claimed.

Underlining the pendency of

cases, it said, "Barring Karnataka, Manipur, Meghalaya, Sikkim and Tripura, one in every two cases have been pending for more than three years in all HCs."

The report added, "At the district courts in Andaman and Nicobar, Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Goa, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, over 40 per cent of all cases have been pending for over three years."

One in every five cases, the report said, were pending for more than five years in Delhi, and two per cent were pending for more than 10 years.

"Each district court judge in Delhi had an average workload of 2,023 cases in 2024, an increase from 1,551 in 2017, and lower than the national average of 2,200. It could achieve a case clearance rate (CCR) of 78 per cent in 2024, one of the lowest in the country. Between 2017 and 2024, Delhi has achieved a 100 per cent CCR only once in 2023," the report said.

The report was stated to highlight the need for immediate and foundational corrections while flagging the urgent filling of vacancies and increased representation.

A release said the report was initiated by Tata Trusts in 2019 and the fourth edition of the report was in collaboration with the Centre for Social Justice, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, DAKSH, TISS-Prayas, Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy, and How India Lives.



COURTESY CALL: Union MSME Minister Jitan Ram Manjhi meets Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi at Lok Seva Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday

### Interest-free loan for women SHGs to continue

**BHUBANESWAR:** Odisha government has decided to continue the interest-free loan scheme for women self-help groups (SHGs) in the state, according to the Chief Minister's Office (CMO). Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi approved the proposal Tuesday. Majhi had earlier approved continuation of the scheme till March 31, 2025. With this, women SHGs can take loans up to Rs 10 lakh without interest. "This step will help create more women entrepreneurs and millionaires in the state. It will also help strengthen the rural and urban economies," Majhi said.

## Biju statue burning evokes widespread condemnation

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 15:** Leaders across party lines Tuesday condemned the act of setting ablaze a statue of former Chief Minister Biju Patnaik at Patnagarh town in Bolangir district.

Apart from Biju Janata Dal (BJD), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Congress, Communist Party of India (CPI), other Left parties also condemned the incident.

Denouncing the act, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi said, "This can only be the handiwork of some lowly person, perhaps suffering from some mental illness," Majhi said, adding that he has directed police to take stern action against persons involved in this incident and expose if there is any conspiracy behind it.

The CM said that one person has so far been arrested. He said the state government recognises the contributions of Biju Patnaik and gives due respect to all legendary figures, who made significant contributions to nation building.

The Biju Patnaik statue was set on fire early Tuesday morning at Parshuram chhak of Patnagarh town. The statue was installed by former Patnagarh MLA Saroj Kumar Meher during the BJD government.



However, some people had opposed the installation of Biju Patnaik's statue at the place as it is known as Parsuram Chhak. They had demanded the installation of Lord Parsuram's statue instead of Biju Patnaik, an official said.

Members of the Brahmin Samaj had staged a dharna around one month ago and the matter later reached the Orissa High Court, which had ordered for covering of the statue in a polythene sheet.

Later, an official of the Notified Area Council (NAC), Patnagarh, said that it was amicably decided to install the statues of both Biju Patnaik and Lord Parsuram there.

IGP (North Range) Himansu Kumar Lal said one man has been detained in the statue burning case. The IGP said the man appeared to be mentally unstable.

BJD leaders held a peaceful demonstration near Biju Patnaik's statue in the airport area in Bhubaneswar and raised

slogans against the ruling BJP.

Senior BJD leader Pramila Mallik criticised the state government for growing attacks on Biju Patnaik's statue in different places. "It is not only that the Biju Patnaik's statue was set on fire, but also setting Odisha's pride ablaze. No one will support this kind of vandalism," said former minister and BJD leader Prasanna Acharya.

Party leader Sanjay Das Burma said such types of incidents are taking place after the state's BJP government stopped observing Panchayati Raj Day on Biju Patnaik's birthday March 5.

Senior Congress leader and former Jatni MLA Suresh Routray said, "This unfortunate incident has happened after the Mahanga incident where Biju Babu's statue was vandalised. This is purely dirty politics. Shouldn't we respect a leader of international repute?"

Similarly, state secretary of CPI(M) Suresh Chandra Panigrahy said, "Biju Patnaik is the one of the greatest political figures who took birth in Odisha. We deeply condemn this incident and demand a thorough probe into it. This incident also reflects the law and order situation in the state under the BJP government. The government must ensure such incidents do not occur again."

### Santrupt disrespected Nehru, says Cong, calls for action

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, April 15:** The state unit of Congress has asked Biju Janata Dal (BJD) president Naveen Patnaik to take action against his political secretary Santrupt Misra for allegedly for drawing a parallel between Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru and bureaucrat-turned-politician VK Pandian.

Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president Bhakta Charan Das has said that the party will not tolerate any disrespect to the country's first Prime Minister.

"We have given a seven-day ultimatum to Naveen Babu to take action against Misra otherwise the Congress activists will gherao Naveen Niwas (Patnaik's residence). We will not tolerate any disrespect to the country's first Prime Minister Nehru who has a lot of contributions to the development of Odisha."

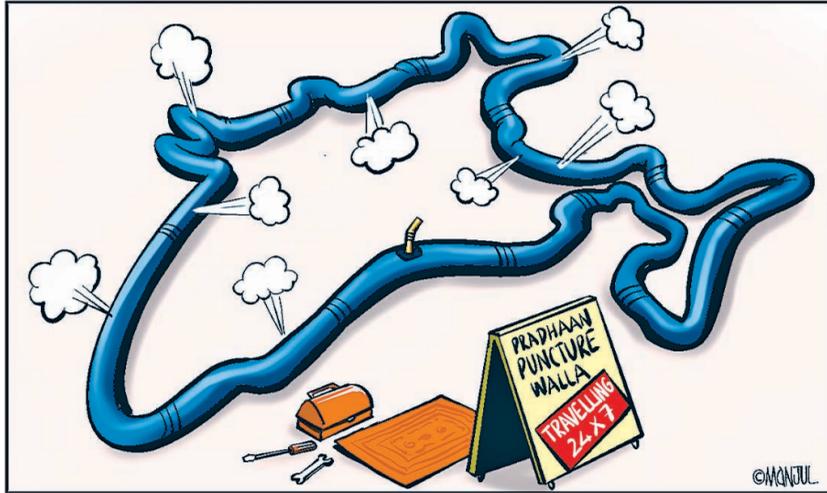
When contacted, Misra said, "I have not said anything wrong. I am not a fool to make a comparison between Nehru Ji and VK Pandian. My statement is distorted and presented in such a manner. I took the name of Nehru Ji under certain context and not made any comparison."

"Anybody interested in truth must listen to my interview. In this case, there is no attention to the fact and truth," Misra said. Misra in interviews to separate Odia news channels had stated that there should not be discussion on the persons. The debate should be on issues and on development, he said.

Misra was quoted in the interview saying: "People are discussing about Nehru, the alleged wrong done by him even after 60 years. Similarly, we have now Pandian, an equivalent of Nehru in Odisha. That is why people are discussing about him though he has played a great role in the development of Odisha."

Expressing strong displeasure over the alleged comparison between Nehru and Pandian, the OPCC president said the BJD was formed in the name of former CM Biju Patnaik who was a close aide of Nehru.

### POLITICKLE by MANJUL



## Visually-impaired woman's kidnapped baby rescued

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, April 15:** The Odisha Police Tuesday rescued the kidnapped 1.5-year-old boy of a visually-impaired beggar in Bhubaneswar and arrested one person in this regard, an officer said.

The baby boy was handed over to the mother after medical examination at the Capital Hospital here, Commissioner of Police S Dev Datta Singh told reporters.

The baby was kidnapped early Sunday by an unidentified man when he was playing and his mother and sister were sleeping on the footpath. Singh said that one person, identified as Kedarsan Panda, 27, of Gangadharapur area in Puri district, has been arrested and one woman, from whom the child was rescued in Balasore district, has been detained.

"Raids were conducted and the child was rescued from Khantapada police station area in Balasore district," Singh said, adding that Panda kidnapped the boy and took him to

Bhubaneswar railway station, from where he took the child to Balasore by train.

According to their plan, the woman, identified as Jhelam Rani Panda, received the child at Balasore railway station.

Jhelam Rani Panda has two daughters and a nine-year-old son, who is suffering from serious illness. She claimed she was in search of a male child for adoption.

"Her claim is under verification and her role in the case is under investigation," Singh said, while replying to a question on the possible motive of organ theft.

The police said it had formed four teams to look for the child, even outside the state.

"The help of human intelligence, technical intelligence, camera surveillance and mobile forensics was taken," the top cop said.

Assistance was also taken from Railway Protection Force, West Bengal Police and Balasore and Bhadrak district police forces.

Expressing his satisfaction

over the safe return of the baby, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi praised the police.

In post on X, he said, "The news of the return of the baby boy stolen from Bhubaneswar to his visually-impaired mother has given me peace of mind. I am very happy to see the smile on the face of the mother on finding her baby boy. The baby was rescued within 3 days of the incident. The steps taken by the police administration towards providing speedy justice to a poor, helpless woman are certainly commendable."

Majhi said his government has always been sensitive towards people's issues and solves their problems.

"Every resident of Odisha, especially the poor, helpless people who have no one to help them, has the government system at their disposal at all times. Solving their problems is our top priority," the CM said.

After getting back her child, the visually-impaired woman checked the boy by touching him and confirmed that the kid was hers.

### BJD names 18 dist presidents

BHUBANESWAR:

The BJD Tuesday announced the results of its organisational elections for 2025, declaring the names of 18 district presidents. The results were announced by the party's State Returning Officer Pratap Keshari Deb. Deb said, "The results of the newly-elected district presidents were declared today. Candidates from 18 districts were declared elected unopposed as there was single nomination from every district. From tomorrow onwards, the process for election of state council members will begin."

The newly-elected district presidents are: Braja Kishor Pradhan (Angul), Sushant Mohapatra (Bargarh), Jagannath Swain (Bhadrak), Pradip Kumar Amat (Boudh), Romanch Ranjan Biswal (Deogarh), Pradeep Nayak (Gajapati), Prasant Muduli (Jagatsinghpur) and Saroj Kumar Mohapatra (Jajpur), Harish Ganatra (Jharsuguda), Padmanabha Behera (Kandhamal), Manas Madkani from Malkangiri, Sudam Marandi (Mayurbhanj-1), Manohar Randhari (Nabrangpur), Ramesh Chandra Behera (Nayagarh), Abani Ranjan Joshi (Nuapada), Umakanta Samantray (Puri), Saroj Kumar Kampa (Subarnapur) and Jogesh Singh (Sundargarh).

# New Act empowers universities: Min Delhi delegation studies Odisha's paperless model

Odisha University Amendment Act ushers in a new era of academic autonomy, swift faculty recruitment, inclusive access to higher education through innovation and reform



RESHMI YADAV, OP

**Bhubaneswar, April 15:** The Odisha University (Amendment) Act, 2024 will empower universities with greater autonomy and streamline faculty recruitment, said Higher Education Minister Suryabanshi Suraj Tuesday.

Addressing the media after holding discussions with vice-chancellors of state universities at Utkal University here, Suraj said, "A university plays a pivotal role in shaping a student into a responsible citizen. Calling it the cradle of human

development would not be an exaggeration."

The emergence of ideas and humanistic thinking takes root in universities, he added.

The new Act, he said, is designed to eliminate delays in faculty appointments caused by legal disputes, ensure curriculum-based recruitment, and reintroduce the Senate in university administration.

Out of the 68 Senate members, at least 37 will be from teachers, academicians, and students, he

added.

"This Act will enable the recruitment to over 1,300 teaching positions across universities," Suraj said, adding appointments will be made as per curricular needs, ensuring regularity and speed.

The Act has provision of forming a three-member committee for the selection of the VCs. Only distinguished educationists from the field of higher education will be part of this committee. The age limit for

VCs has been increased from 67 to 70 years.

Distance education system will be introduced in every university to provide access to quality higher education for all and to enhance the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in the state, it was learnt.

The Act also proposes structural reforms, including the creation of construction and finance committees, along with mandatory audits by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India.

"These steps will enhance transparency and strengthen university administration," the minister noted.

Suraj also emphasised the synergy between the Act and the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020. "Together, they will bring a revolutionary transformation in Odisha's higher education sector," he said.

Notably, The Bill was passed April 2 after extensive deliberation in the Odisha Assembly and got the Governor's assent April 12.

Three-day study tour focuses on Odisha Assembly's successful implementation of the National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA), with Delhi aiming for a complete digital transition within 100 days

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar/New Delhi, April 15:** A high-level delegation from the Delhi Legislative Assembly, led by Speaker Vijender Gupta and Deputy Speaker Mohan Singh Bisht, arrived in Odisha Tuesday for a three-day study visit to explore Odisha's successful digital governance model.

The delegation was welcomed at the Odisha Legislative Assembly in Capital and engaged in de-



tailed discussions with Assembly Speaker Surama Padhy. The focus was on the technological frameworks, operational models, and best practices behind the state's transition to a paperless Assembly under the National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA) project. Speaker Gupta and his team showed a keen interest in the digital tools and procedural changes that have streamlined legislative processes in Odisha, enhancing transparency. "Odisha's seamless adoption of the NeVA model is impressive," Gupta remarked. "This visit is a key step in our efforts to transform the Delhi Assembly into a modern, paperless legislature."

He also reiterated Delhi's goal of completing its own digital transition within 100 days, as announced during the Budget session. The delegation will meet with the NeVA committee April 16 and engage with stakeholders involved in the project's implementation. On the final day of the visit, discussions will be held to consolidate insights and plan the next steps for Delhi's digital transition.

The Union Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs is expected to release necessary funding to support the NeVA rollout in Delhi, aiming for a more citizen-centric, transparent, and efficient governance model.

## CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

I, Nayntara Rachel Ninan, D/o - Dr Ravi Ninan George, Resident of Asha Kiran Hospital, P.O - Lamtaput, P.S - Machhkund, in the District of Koraput, Odisha, Pin - 764 081, declare by this affidavit No. 307, dated 21.01.2025, that now onwards, I shall be known as Nayntara Rachel Ninan George for all future purposes.

I, Satyabadi Behera, R/o. Village- Chadachadi, Po. Nakujori, Ps. Naktideul, Dist. - Sambalpur declare that my son's name has been wrongly mentioned as Benodini Behera instead of Gyanaranjan Behera in his Aadhaar card bearing No.xxxx xxx 5210. By this affidavit No.380 dated 09.04.25 sworn before the Executive Magistrate, Rairakhol, he shall be known as Gyanaranjan Behera, S/o. Satyabadi Behera for all purposes.

I, Tangudu Rajalaxmi Patra, W/o- Prasanta Kumar Patra, R/o. Village- Thidikajore, P.O.- Jhadrajing, P.S.- Purunakatak, Dist.- Boudh declare by this affidavit Indian non judicial No.- 70AA783420 dated 15.04.25 that now onwards I shall be known as Rajalaxmi Patra for all future purposes.

I, Tangudu Prasanta Kumar, S/o- Chidambara Patra, R/o. Village- Thidikajore, P.O.- Jhadrajing, P.S.- Purunakatak, Dist.- Boudh declare by this affidavit Indian non judicial No.- 59AA746785 dated 15.03.23 that now onwards I shall be known as Prasanta Kumar Patra for all future purposes.

## ICC to host meet on 'Viksit Odisha 2036'

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 15:** The Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC) will host a national conference in Bhubaneswar April 19, focusing on Odisha's journey towards becoming a developed state by 2036.

Titled "Economic Acceleration, Inclusive and Sustainable Growth: A Vision for a Developed Odisha," the conference aims to foster dialogue among key stakeholders from government, industry, academia, and civil society. The event is part of ICC's ongoing efforts to support regional economic growth and policy innovation.

Odisha is emerging as one of India's fastest-growing state economies, with a projected growth rate of 8.5 per cent for 2023-24. The state's rich mineral reserves, extensive forest cover, strategic coastline, and growing young workforce present vast opportunities for development.

Among the key dignitaries

attending are Law Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan, Skill Development and Technical Education Minister Sampad Chandra Swain, Commerce and Transport Minister Bibhuti Bhusan Jena, and Union Finance Secretary Nagaraj Madirala. They will join business leaders, policymakers, and academics to discuss strategies for inclusive and sustainable growth.

ICC Odisha State Council chairman Rajib Sahoo said, "Odisha has emerged as an economic powerhouse. This conference is a step towards aligning ICC's initiatives with the state's long-term goals, especially as we look ahead to 2036."

Also attending will be former ICC chairman JB Pany, Finance Committee member Kshitish Patra, and ICC Regional Head JP Pal. The conference is expected to generate actionable policy recommendations, promote capacity building, and encourage regional collaboration, further supporting Odisha's vision for a developed future.

## Over 100 hit by diarrhoea in City

**Bhubaneswar, April 15:** A diarrhoea outbreak has struck Ward No. 13 in Niladri Vihar, Bhubaneswar, affecting over 100 residents in the past 20 days. Several individuals have been hospitalized at the Niladri Vihar Government Health Centre and Capital Hospital, suffering from symptoms such as vomiting, abdominal pain, and severe loose motions. Authorities suspect the source of the outbreak is contaminated drinking water from a local sump tank. Residents reported poor water quality, citing the presence of cement, wood particles, and other impurities. Health department teams have been deployed to provide medical aid, distribute medicines, and raise awareness. Meanwhile, steps are being taken to clean the affected water sources. Officials have advised residents to avoid using water from open sources and to consume only boiled or purified water. Water samples have been sent for lab testing, and the situation is under close watch to prevent further spread, especially due to potential person-to-person transmission.

## Puri Literary Festival from April 18

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 15:** The Adhyayan Foundation for Policy and Research (AFPR), in collaboration with the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), Ministry of Culture, Government of Odisha, and the National Book Trust (NBT), will host the first-ever Puri Literary Festival (PLF 2025) from April 18 to 20 at Puri Resort & Spa. The announcement was made at a press meet held at the Bhubaneswar Press Club Tuesday.

Held under the theme "Weaving Stories of Tradition, Transformation & Triumph," the festival aims to bridge India's rich literary legacy with contemporary thought through engaging sessions, cultural performances, and meaningful dialogues.

PLF 2025 will be inaugurated by Governor Hari Babu



Kambhampati, with special addresses by Culture Minister Suryabanshi Suraj and Puri MP Sambit Patra. The closing ceremony will feature Union Ministers Sarbananda Sonowal and Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, along with Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi.

A major highlight is the launch of the Ramakant Rath Sahitya Puruskar, honouring excellence in Odia literature. The festival will include over 20 sessions covering themes such

as women's voices in literature, sustainability, decolonisation, social entrepreneurship, and Odisha's evolving cultural identity. Cultural attractions include heritage walks, sand art exhibits, Odissi performances, and local culinary showcases.

Among the keynote speakers and guests are historian Vikram Sampath, folk artist Malini Awasthi, digital creator Prajakta Koli, political analyst Shehzad Poonawala, and former ambassador Jitendra Nath Mis-

## Min Swain bats for women entrepreneurs

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 15:** Minister of State for Industries, Skill Development and Technical Education Sampad Chandra Swain has urged stronger collaboration between FICCI FLO Bhubaneswar and the state government to empower women entrepreneurs across Odisha.

Speaking at FLO Bhubaneswar Chapter's Change of Guard ceremony—where leadership passed from Rashmi Sahoo to Prangyan Paramita Mishra—Swain praised FLO's role in advancing women's

leadership. He encouraged FLO leaders, including Founding Chair Dharitri Patnaik, to create district-level platforms that promote women-led development.

Reiterating the state government's commitment to inclusive growth under Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, the Minister emphasized women's economic empowerment as a central goal of Odisha's industrial policy. He highlighted successful initiatives such as Subhadra Yojana and Startup Odisha for enabling women-led ventures.

Swain announced plans to

## Diabetic care clinic at Manipal Hospitals

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 15:** Manipal Hospitals, Bhubaneswar launched a state-of-the-art Diabetic Care Clinic, reinforcing its commitment to comprehensive and patient-focused healthcare in eastern India.

The new facility aims to provide a holistic, multidisciplinary approach to diabetes management at a time when India is witnessing a sharp rise in the condition.

The clinic was formally launched by cluster director, Manipal Hospitals (South-East Zone) Sudhakar Kantipudi in the presence of hospital director Saktimaya Mohapatra, regional marketing head Bhavana Badrinarayan, and leading consultant diabetologists Ankit Tiwari and Ritesh Agarwal.

The clinic's core mission is to redefine diabetes care through early detection, personalised treatment plans, regular monitoring, and preventive strategies that go beyond conventional sugar control. "With over five million people affected by diabetes in Odisha—most struggling with poor management—this clinic is a timely initiative," said Mohapatra.

Tiwari stressed that managing diabetes requires more than just dietary adjustments and occasional check-ups. "Our clinic offers intelligent, tailored strategies based on the latest medical research to help patients manage diabetes effectively,"



she noted.

Agarwal pointed to the serious complications of unmanaged diabetes—ranging from kidney failure and heart disease to nerve damage and stroke. "Many people lack reliable guidance. This clinic provides the tools and expert support they need to stay informed and in control," he said.

The facility brings together endocrinologists, dietitians, physiotherapists, podiatrists, and other specialists under one roof, ensuring seamless, individualised care.

To make services accessible, the hospital has introduced a range of affordable care packages: Basic, Comprehensive, Follow-Up, and Advanced.

With this launch, Manipal Hospitals positions itself as a leader in tackling the growing diabetes burden in Odisha, offering hope and expert care to those affected by the condition.



launch an Industrial Park for Women Entrepreneurs and a dedicated Support Desk at IPI-COL to help women navigate the business ecosystem.

He also shared outcomes of recent Investors' Meetings in Delhi and Mumbai, noting significant investments in green energy,

WEATHER		
	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	35.4°	34.5°
Min Temp	25.4°	24.4°
Humidity	68%	78%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
<b>FORECAST</b> Partly cloudy sky with possibility of rain/thunderstorm		

MARKET WATCH		
INDEX	VALUE	VARIATION
SENSEX	76,734.89	▲ 1,577.63
NIFTY	23,328.55	▲ 500.00
DOLLAR	85.79	▼ 0.22
EURO	96.63	▼ 1.27
GOLD	₹92,865	▲ ₹30
SILVER	₹94,571	▼ ₹273

## Padhee directs CCTV monitoring across ULBs

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 15:** In a significant move to strengthen transparency, accountability and ensure professional conduct in urban local bodies (ULBs), Housing and Urban Development principal secretary Usha Padhee directed the immediate installation of CCTV surveillance systems across all ULB office premises.

The new measure, designed to monitor staff behaviour and public interactions, ensures that both employees and citizens experience a more efficient and responsive administration. This step is part of a broader initiative to cultivate a citizen-first culture in urban governance.

Padhee, recognising the efforts of executive officers (EOs)

in maintaining punctuality, called for a uniform commitment from all ULB staff to uphold the standards. She also emphasised the swift implementation of biometric attendance systems, a step intended to institutionalise discipline and improve the timely delivery of public services.

"The time has come for a cultural shift in governance—one that reflects integrity, responsiveness, and efficiency. Punctuality and professional behaviour should be non-negotiable, with flexibility only in exceptional circumstances," Padhee said.

The directive also tasks Municipal Administration director Arindam Dakua with overseeing the enforcement of these measures and ensure strict compliance across all ULBs in the state.

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# Severe irregularities alleged in Suku bridge construction

Soil extracted from nearby hills being used to fill up Kolab reservoir



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Nandapur, April 15:** Wide-spread irregularities have been alleged in the construction of the Suku bridge, a ₹81.34 crore worth project over the Kolab Reservoir in Koraput district, a report said.

The bridge, once completed, will connect more than 70 villages across Nandapur, Lamtaput, and Koraput blocks with the district headquarters town. However, the on-going construction of the structure has been embroiled in various controversies.

It is alleged that large quantities of soil are being illegally excavated from nearby hills and used for construction, without proper authorisation. Moreover, thousands of truckloads of soil are reportedly being dug from the nearby hills and dumped into the Kolab reservoir for use in the bridge foundation. As a result, the reservoir is slowly getting buried.

This apart, no royalty has allegedly been paid by the contractors for the excavated soil, and authorities from the Mining, Revenue, and Irrigation departments have taken no action despite being aware of the development.

Local ecologists and intellectuals have raised concerns over this environmental violation and the lack of accountability.

Earlier (and at present), residents of the three blocks had to travel nearly 70 kilometers via Nandapur to reach Koraput due to the Kolab reservoir acting as a barrier. Many commuters risked their lives by traveling by the side of a narrow, two-foot-wide rail track on the Suku railway bridge over the reservoir.

To address this issue, the district administration and the state government had approved a new bridge project under the Biju Setu Yojana in the 2022-23 financial year. The ₹81.34 crore project was sanctioned to be constructed parallel to the existing railway bridge (No.543).

The Rural Development Department in Koraput floated a tender and awarded the contract to Shailabala Constructions, which has since begun work on the bridge.

As per the departmental approval letter (No. 28541600692022/RD), September 28, 2022 no directives were issued to excavate soil and fill the

reservoir during construction of the bridge. Local residents alleged that the contractor is proceeding arbitrarily.

According to complaints, the construction agency is illegally bringing down government-owned hills and dumping the excavated soil on both sides of the Kolab reservoir. No royalty has been paid for the extracted soil, which is considered a minor mineral, they alleged.

Local villagers further alleged that agencies including the Koraput Rural Development Department, Mining Department, Revenue Department, and authorities managing the Kolab reservoir have remained silent despite being aware of the development.

When questioned, an official of the Koraput Rural Development Department, requesting anonymity, said that excavation and reservoir filling supervision don't fall under their jurisdiction. He maintained that the bridge construction should follow the DPR (Detailed Project Report) prepared by the department.

Pradeep Kumar Nayak, Deputy Director of the Minor Mineral Department, stated that such actions are illegal and punishable by law. "The issue (materials) in question falls under the list of minor minerals. The consultancy agency is yet to issue any formal response," he said.

Krushnachandra Khuntia, District Mining Officer, said he has been made aware of the complaints. "The department has initiated proceedings to issue a notice, and impose penalties on the contractor," Khuntia said.

**Residents of three blocks had to travel nearly 70 kilometers via Nandapur to reach Koraput due to the Kolab reservoir acting as a barrier**



MYTHOLOGICAL PLAY: Artists enact a scene from 'Lanka Podi' on the eighth day of Ramlila at Baunsuni in Boudh district Tuesday

OP PHOTO

## Tit-for-tat: Odisha lays stone for road construction on WB border



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhograi, April 15:** In response to West Bengal's alleged encroachment on Odisha's land and construction of 40-meter stretch of road at Sagada Sahi village under this block in Balasore district, the local administration Tuesday responded by laying the foundation stone for a concrete road.

Bhograi MLA Goutam Buddha Das laid the stone for the road and also sanctioned ₹22 lakh from MLA LAD fund for construction of the road in the presence of panchayat samiti chairperson Prabir Kumar Gi-

ri, tehsildar Surya Kumar Nayak, Zilla Parishad member Kavita Mohanty, administrative officers, local representatives, and villagers.

He assured that the road works for which the foundation stone has been laid will start soon. Das also asked the administrative officials to complete road works on wartime footing and give a befitting reply to the neighbouring state's trespassing plans.

He said Odisha will not cede even an inch of its land to West Bengal, asserting a tough stance in response to what he described as 'encroachment by

Bengal authorities'.

"If our patience is mistaken for weakness, we will respond with resolve," Das said. Urging locals to remain vigilant for the protection of 'mother, land, and language,' he called upon border residents to act as sentinels.

The MLA's comments came amid tensions near the Sagada Sahi village on the border near Kamarda in Bhograi block of Balasore district, where West Bengal's revenue and administrative officials allegedly encroached on Odisha territory to construct a 40-meter stretch of road using earth moving equipment, under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana. The incident triggered unrest between villagers from both states.

Das visited the disputed site along with Bhograi tehsildar, Kamarda police, and Public Works Department officials, and halted the unauthorised construction. He vowed swift action from Odisha's side, and directed officials to carry out retaliatory development work at a 'wartime pace.'

## IIM, Sambalpur to hold 9th annual convocation



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sambalpur, April 15:** IIM, Sambalpur, one of India's premier management institutions, is all set to hold its 9th annual convocation April 19 at Konark Auditorium, located in its campus.

The upcoming event will celebrate the academic achievements of the MBA (2023-25), Executive MBA (2022-24), MBA for working professionals (2023-25), and PhD scholars, as they receive their respective degrees in the presence of esteemed dignitaries, faculty members and guests.

The convocation will be graced by the Chief Guest Pramod Kumar Mishra, Principal Secretary to the Honorable Prime Minister along with Padma Shri Arundhati Bhattacharya, Chairman, Board of Governors, IIM Sambalpur, and Chairman and CEO, Salesforce India & South Asia and Guest of Honour, Ashish Garg, Managing Director, Boston Consulting Group.

This convocation ceremony will mark a significant milestone in the institute's journey of academic excellence with 367 students graduating this year, including 313 MBA students, 38 Executive MBA students, 10 MBA for working professionals, and 6 PhD scholars, a release said.

## Four arrested over attack on ex-MLA

PNN & AGENCIES

**Jajpur, April 15:** Odisha Police arrested four persons in connection with the alleged attack on BJD leader and former MLA Pranab Balabantaray in Jajpur district, an officer said Tuesday.

The arrested were identified as BJP supporters Suresh Samal, Rajendra Barik and Susant Samal of Aruha village and BJD supporter Manoj Das of Kumari village under Dhamasala police limits, police said. All four were produced in the court while Manoj Das, the rest three were remanded to Ragadi sub-jail custody.



## Widow alleges rape by 'journalist'; 1 detained

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rajnagar, April 15:** A widow has filed a written complaint with Rajnagar police, alleging that a man who identified himself as a journalist sexually assaulted her and recorded explicit videos to blackmail her after promising to help her obtain land at a subsidised rate.

According to the complaint, the woman, originally from Patamundai, lost her husband 12 years ago and has been living in a rented house in Rajnagar for the past five years.

Around two years ago, three individuals—Sanjay Panda, Shishir Sen, and Surya Narayan Bas—visited her house, introducing themselves as leaders of a journalists' association. They promised to help her buy land in Shasan village (under Patamundai Adarsha Police Station limits) at a low price, the complaint stated.

Despite her repeated denials,



she was allegedly lured with false assurances. In March 2022, she finally gave ₹1.5 lakh cash in the presence of two witnesses. A month later, Sanjay Panda allegedly demanded an additional ₹20,000 through Shishir Sen, which she paid. However, no land was ever registered in her name, she added.

She alleged that later when she demanded a refund, Panda issued a cheque for ₹1.5 lakh, which was never honoured.

She claimed in December 2024, Panda and Sen allegedly forced entry into her house when she was alone at home. While Panda dragged her into the bedroom and raped her, Sen

restrained her and filmed the assault, she alleged.

The accused later used the explicit video to extort money and threatened to murder her son if she spoke out. They also forcibly took back the cheque provided earlier, she alleged.

She said fearing social stigma, she remained silent initially, but approached police following continued threats and repeated instances of sexual assault.

In her complaint, the woman accused the perpetrators of threatening to circulate the video and coercing her into maintaining physical relations against her will.

Meanwhile, Rajnagar IIC Naresh Kumar Sahu said the police has detained one person for questioning in connection with the complaint. "Investigations are on. We will register an offence only after obtaining corroboration during the preliminary probe," Sahu said.

## Youth critical in bear attack



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Pottangi, April 15:** A youth from Mirialpadu village under Ralegada panchayat in Koraput district's Pottangi block was seriously injured in a bear attack Tuesday morning while grazing cattle near a hill close to his village.

The victim, identified as Pamaia Balu, was rescued by local villagers who rushed to the scene upon hearing his cries for help. They drove the bear away by pelting stones and immediately arranged for an ambulance to transport Balu to

the nearby Pottangi community health centre for treatment. He was later shifted to Saheed Laxman Naik Medical College and Hospital at Koraput for further care as he had received critical wounds.

Locals alleged that no Forest department official had arrived at the village even hours after the incident. When contacted, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) KV Ravana Rao assured that all necessary assistance would be provided to the victim. He also stated that a Ranger would be sent to the area to conduct an investigation into the matter.

## 4 students serious in honeybee attack

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Daringbadi, April 15:** As many as 40 students of a Sevashram School at Badabanga panchayat of Daringbadi block in Kandhamal district were injured, including four of them seriously, after being attacked by a swarm of honeybees Monday.

Dr Swagat Senapati of Daringbadi community health centre said that four students who are critical are currently under observation, while the rest were discharged after treatment.

The incident occurred around 11:30 am, shortly after the school had closed for the day, when some students stepped outside the campus to bathe. A swarm of bees from a tree in the vicinity of the school campus became agitated due to some reason and began attacking the children while they were bathing.

Panic broke out as the students ran back inside the school premises to escape the attack. On being informed, Badabanga Sarpanch Prasanna Kumar Pradhan contacted



Headmaster Pranabandu Mahanayak, and rushed the injured students to the Daringbadi community health center in two auto-rickshaws. All the students, except the four seriously injured, were discharged after primary treatment.

Notably a week earlier, the BDO had summoned officials from various Sevashram School

to discuss ongoing issues and problems. Parents are reportedly upset that despite beehives being present on the premises for several years, school authorities have remained clueless about the development. The headmaster is stated to have already flagged the problem in the school's messaging group.

**यूनियन बैंक Union Bank of India**

**[RULE 8(1) OF SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES - 2002]**

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of **Union Bank of India, Redhakhol Branch** under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest (Second) Act, 2002 (Act. No. 54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice calling upon the Borrower/Mortgagor/Guarantor in loan A/c mentioned below to repay the amount mentioned in the notice plus interest thereon within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The Borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower/Mortgagor/Guarantor and the public in general that the undersigned has taken **Possession** of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said Rules. The Borrower/Mortgagor/Guarantor in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the **Union Bank of India** for an amount mentioned below & interest thereon. **The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of Sub-section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.**

**REGIONAL OFFICE: SAMBALPUR**  
1st Floor, Balaji Midtown, Budharaja, Sambalpur - 768004

**POSSESSION NOTICE**  
(For Immovable Property)

REDHAKHOL BRANCH / Name & Address of Borrower/Mortgagor/Guarantor / Legal heirs	Liabilities Due as per Notice	Demand / Possession Notice Date	Description of Secured Asset
<b>Borrower: M/s. Mahima Indane</b> , Legal heirs of the deceased Prop.: Kalpana Nayak represented by <b>Sri Pradyumna Kumar Naik / Mortgagor/Guarantor:</b> All the Legal heirs of the deceased <b>Kalpana Nayak</b> represented by <b>Sri Pradyumna Kumar Naik</b> , All are At: Sakasasinga, P.S.: Angul Sadar, Tahasil: Banarpal, Dist.: Angul-759123	₹ 17,32,558.58 + further Interest & expenses thereon	30.11.2024 / 11.04.2025	Land with commercial Building thereon (LPG gas godown) situated at Mouza: Barsikiakholi, P.S.: Rampur, Tahasil: Redhakhol, Dist.: Sambalpur bearing MS Khata No.: 39/14, Plot No.: 139/395 having Area: Ac 1.40 Dec., Plot No.: 139/396 having Area: Ac 0.20 Dec., Plot No.: 139/397 having Area: Ac 0.40 Dec., Total one Khata, three plot having Area: Ac 2.00 Dec., standing in the name of <b>Mr. Pradyumna Kumar Naik, Prithiv Raj Singh Mantri, Kharabdi Mahima &amp; Jayashree Mahima (Legal heirs of Late Mrs. Kalpana Nayak)</b>
<b>Place: Sambalpur</b>			<b>Sd/- Authorised Officer</b>
<b>Date: 15.04.2025</b>			<b>Union Bank of India</b>

**EAST COAST RAILWAY**

Tender Notice No. MSIM-STN-CLEAN-SBPY-625

**Name of the Work: CLEANING AND HOUSEKEEPING OF SAMBALPUR CITY STATION ALONG WITH WASTE MANAGEMENT SERVICES AND WATERING OF COACHES DURING HALT FOR A PERIOD OF TWO YEARS.**

Approx cost of the Work: ₹ 2,55,68,421.67

EMD: ₹ 2,77,900/- Cost of tender document: ₹ 11,800/- Completion period of the work: 2 years.

Tender closing date & time: at 1500 hrs. of 29.04.2025.

No manual offers sent by Post/Courier/Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.

Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available on website [www.reps.gov.in](http://www.reps.gov.in)

Sr. Divisional Mechanical Engineer, Sambalpur

PR-32/Q/25-26

FOCUS SUSTAINABILITY

# UNPROVEN INTERVENTIONS



**While anoxic zones might appear barren, they are by no means devoid of life. And the tiny organisms found there – such as the Synechococcus bacteria, which was recently discovered in the Black Sea’s anoxic basin – break down organic matter and release trapped carbon**

likely impose significant costs. Even if OSB were safe and efficient, with dumped biomass remaining durably sequestered in anoxic waters, its promise as a climate intervention would be dubious. The problem is one of scale. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, we should be removing 6-10 gigatons of CO2 from the atmosphere each year until 2050. Even assuming that only crop waste was used, locking up just one gigaton of CO2 would require around 500 million tons of dry biomass, an amount comparable to the entire annual US corn harvest. This is not the only significant constraint on the proposed method; another is the paucity of anoxic zones on our planet to dispose of the biomass.

communities adapt, or due to a breakdown in the structural integrity of the biomass. Moreover, while Puro.earth promises strict requirements for monitoring, environmental, and social safeguards, it plans to observe the effects of its activities for only 15 years after the last biomass bundle is dumped – a far cry from the 1,000 years of carbon sequestration being claimed. Without long-term observational data, it cannot credibly claim that OSB is a legitimate – let alone benign – means of carbon removal, especially because the carbon permanency and ecological consequences of such activities are difficult to predict and even harder to monitor in such remote and poorly studied environments.

Land considerations further challenge the logic of OSB. Terrestrial biomass has value in itself, both in terms of the nutrients it contains and because there may be better uses for it, such as in the synthesis of biofuels. A complete life-cycle analysis of the OSB process suggests it involves significant energy consumption in the harvesting, processing, transportation, and monitoring of the biomass. Puro.earth rightly asserts that any biomass used in the process “must be free from harmful impurities and compounds,” such as toxins and pesticides. Yet that requirement would necessitate chemical testing of entire batches, which would

Puro.earth, a self-appointed “carbon-removal certifier,” is seeking to establish a new accredited means of carbon sequestration: dumping bundled biomass (wood or crop waste) into the ocean. At least two companies are already selling carbon credits based on plans to dump biomass in the Black Sea. But “ocean storage of biomass” (OSB) lacks scientific verification and highlights the risks of commercialising unproven climate interventions.

The idea is that “degradation-resistant biomass” would be dumped into the Black Sea basin, where anoxic (oxygen-free) conditions would further slow, or even halt, degradation. As a result, the approach’s proponents claim, the carbon would effectively be removed from the biological cycle for over 1,000 years, with minimal environmental impact. But there is no scientific evidence that this is true.

While anoxic zones might appear barren, they are by no means devoid of life. And the tiny organisms found there – such as the Synechococcus bacteria, which was recently discovered in the Black Sea’s anoxic basin – break down organic matter and release trapped carbon. They simply use chemosynthesis, rather than photosynthesis, to do it. Since carbon can migrate across the “chemocline” (chemical transition zone) that separates anoxic zones from oxygen-rich waters, whatever is released within the Black Sea’s anoxic basin can return to the ocean’s carbon cycle and, ultimately, the atmosphere.

Two more processes could accelerate the release of carbon: dumping large quantities of baled biomass could – and likely would – induce turbulent chemical mixing in the chemocline, while the heat generated by decomposing biomass could further weaken the Black Sea’s stratification. Moreover, as the ballast makes contact with the seafloor, it will likely resuspend sediment that currently acts as a reservoir not only of carbon, but also hydrogen sulfide (which is toxic) and methane (a highly



James Kerry, Lisa Levin

**UNDER THE LAW OF THE SEA CONVENTION, THE STANDARD HAS BEEN, AND ALWAYS SHOULD BE, ONE OF PRECAUTION**

## Chaos & Order



THE MOTHER

Each new dawn brings the possibility of a new progress.

US President Donald Trump has created chaos in international trade and economic order through his skewed and short-sighted tariff war. But, out of the chaos a new order is slowly emerging in which China is positioning itself as the pivot. Chinese President Xi Jinping’s ongoing tour of the South-Asian countries of Vietnam, Malaysia and Cambodia this week, days after the imposition of new tariffs by the US administration on 2 April point to this realignment of economic forces. The flip flops and contradicting messages emanating from the White House on the quantum of tariffs seem to have only strengthened the Chinese resolve to formulate its new international economic policy that is likely to be far more effective than its Belt and Road Initiative. The crude escalation initiated by the American President has only reinforced China’s belief that it must minimize its dependence on the United States and introduce an entirely new dynamic that will lead to a decoupling of the world’s two largest economies, which till date seemed impossible.

The world at large, including China, now recognises the risks posed by exposure to the American market. This has already spurred different countries to scout for new markets to replace American consumers. Xi Jinping’s tour of Vietnam, Malaysia and Cambodia close on the heels of Trump’s tariff war shows that Beijing is seeking to strengthen its commercial ties with more reliable partners. The European Union and major emerging countries are also part of this strategy. Brazil has already surpassed the US as China’s leading supplier of agricultural products and it belongs to this category. China stands to gain as the wall of tariffs erected by Washington is forcing every targeted country to look elsewhere.

A favourite word of Trump is “smart,” but he does not seem to be acting smart as he is contributing to the emergence of a world aiming to bypass the US. Ironically, this significant realignment affects not simply trade. Washington’s withdrawal from international organisations and its avowed hatred for the established international order, time-tested alliances and American commitments, such as support for Ukraine against Russia, fit into this worldview.

Beijing can only be too pleased with America giving up its soft power that was once an integral part of its foreign policy. From China’s perspective an example of this is the abrupt closure of Radio Free Asia, which played a central role in informing the Uyghur community being brutally suppressed in China. By signaling that they are ready to relinquish, for whatever reason – weariness or fatigue –, the US is creating a space China may be too eager to fill.

The world has seen how since the beginning of Trump’s second term, Beijing is trying to project itself as a moral successor. However, if China succeeds in achieving its goal, this does not seem to augur well for countries like India, given China’s own track record of exploiting the resources in Africa and elsewhere. Beijing’s trade policy too aims to offload excess production at any cost because its sluggish domestic demand cannot absorb it. This poses a threat to jobs in Europe and many Asian countries. Xi’s disastrous human rights record remains a significant obstacle for many democracies, including European. Compromises with Beijing may appear to be necessary to offset American disorder, but China is a dubious ally and no one knows it better than India.

### WISDOM CORNER

**The friend in my adversity I shall always cherish most. I can better trust those who helped to relieve the gloom of my dark hours than those who are so ready to enjoy with me the sunshine of my prosperity.**

ULYSSES S. GRANT

**Life is a gamble. You can get hurt, but people die in plane crashes, lose their arms and legs in car accidents; people die every day. Same with fighters: some die, some get hurt, some go on. You just don’t let yourself believe it will happen to you.**

MUHAMMAD ALI

**The more a man can forget, the greater the number of metamorphoses which his life can undergo; the more he can remember, the more divine his life becomes.**

SOREN KIERKEGAARD

### THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1755:** Painter Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, known for her portraits of Queen Marie-Antoinette, was born in Paris.
- 1838:** French forces occupied Veracruz, Mexico, during the Pastry War; the conflict began after a French pastry cook living near Mexico City claimed that Mexican army officers had damaged his restaurant.
- 1912:** Harriet Quimby flies across the English Channel. On this day in 1912, the American aviator became the first woman to fly across the English Channel, guiding her French Blériot monoplane through heavy overcast from Dover, England, to Hardelot, France.
- 1917:** Vladimir Lenin ended his 17-year exile and returned to Russia to form a provisional government. The communist revolutionary became leader of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (SFSR) later that year. From 1922, he was the first Premier of the Soviet Union.
- 1943:** Swiss chemist Albert Hofmann discovered the psychedelic properties of LSD, a drug he had first synthesized in 1938.
- 1948:** In order to restore the economy of Europe after World War II, 16 European countries formed the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (later the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development).

### IN JEST THIS

## It’s good to be early, but not too early

There’s an old saying that the early bird catches the worm. But what about the early human? What does the early human catch?



Melvin Durai

**THE REAL REASON AIRLINES WANT YOU TO BE EARLY IS TO MAKE SURE YOU HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO GO THROUGH ALL THE EXPENSIVE STORES AT THE AIRPORT**

The early human catches flak. If you don’t believe me, just look at what happened to the man who recently interviewed to be an office administrator at a gutter-cleaning company in the US city of Atlanta. According to a post on LinkedIn, this candidate arrived 25 minutes early for his interview, which was a “major factor” in why the company’s owner, Matthew Prewett, didn’t hire him. “Showing up early is good,” Prewett wrote. “Showing up extremely early can suggest someone isn’t good with time or expects to be accommodated. It also made me feel rushed.”

Prewett believes that its proper interview etiquette to arrive five to 15 minutes early for an interview, but anything

earlier requires that you wait outside somewhere, not enter the office and disturb the schedule of the interviewer.

Indeed, 10 to 15 minutes early seems to be a common recommendation. You might get away with 16 minutes, but at 17 minutes, you might as well not bother with the interview. Just say to the interviewer, “Sorry, I’m too early. I messed up. I tried to time my arrival perfectly, but the stupid traffic did not delay me enough.”

I wonder if the job candidate who was too early has seen Prewett’s post. If so, perhaps he’s looking back on his life, thinking about all the times he was early, but didn’t get punished for it. Perhaps he was born a few weeks early, started school one year early and graduated from college two years early. Perhaps he showed up at his wedding one hour early, but the bride married him anyway.

Being too early is consid-

ered good practice in many situations in life. Airlines expect you to be three hours early for an international flight. This is for security reasons, of course. Studies show that people who have spent three hours standing and waiting in an airport do not have enough energy to hijack a plane. No, the real reason airlines want you to be early is to make sure you have enough time to go through all the expensive stores at the airport.

Being too early is considered a sign of true fandom. Anybody can show up three hours early for a Taylor Swift concert, but only a true fan can show up three days early. The same is true for sporting events. If the football game begins at 4 pm, some fans are already outside the stadium at 4 am. The ticket manager of the football team does not say to them, “Sorry, we’re confiscating your tickets. You came too early.”

A former American football coach named Tom Coughlin was renowned for demanding that his players be five minutes early for meetings. He believed that “if you’re not five minutes early, you’re late.” In other words, you had to be early to be on time. If you were 25 minutes early, he would give you a pat on the back, not a kick in the pants.

But what about being early for a dinner invitation? It depends on the venue. If it’s at a restaurant, being early may ensure that you get a good table. But if you’ve been invited to my house, for example, please try not to be early. It’s better to show up 25 minutes late than 25 minutes early. Being fashionably late is preferable to being awkwardly early.

Besides, if you show up early, you might have to help with some last-minute cleaning or cooking. Yes, unlike at the Atlanta company, the early human gets put to work.

### LOL CELEBRATING AN EVENT



An aged farmer and his wife were leaning against the edge of their pig-pen when the old woman wistfully recalled that the next week would mark their golden wedding anniversary. “Let’s have a party, Homer,” she suggested. “Let’s kill a pig.” The farmer scratched his grizzled

head. “Gee, Ethel,” he finally answered. “I don’t see why the pig should take the blame for something that happened fifty years ago.”

### 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)



### Fugitive fraudster

Sir, The long arm of justice finally caught up with Mehul Choksi, the fugitive Indian businessman accused of masterminding one of India’s largest banking frauds. Arrested in Belgium after years of evading authorities, Choksi’s detention marks a pivotal moment in the Rs 13,850 crore Punjab National Bank scam. The absence of checks enabled the scam to go undetected for years, highlighting the risks of unchecked financial operations. For the top-brass, navigating the complexities of corporate governance, this high-profile case serves as a stark reminder of the consequences of financial misconduct and underlines the necessity of stringent internal controls to prevent collusion between corporate entities and bank officials. The scam teaches an important lesson to implement rigorous auditing processes and ensure transparency in financial dealings to safeguard against fraudulent practices. **Ranganathan Sivakumar**, CHENNAI

### Fiddling Nero

Sir, “While Rome was burning, Nero was fiddling.” A metaphor that has endured through centuries, it speaks to a leader’s dangerous detachment from the suffering of their people. It echoes with haunting clarity today, as history appears to repeat itself—not in the distant past, but here and now. What once unfolded in the valleys of Kashmir is now playing out in the streets of West Bengal under Mamata Banerjee’s rule. The signs are unmistakable: rising unrest, deepening political polarisation, suppression of dissent, and the slow but steady erosion of trust. A culture of fear tightens its grip. The pattern is tragically familiar. And yet, just like Nero with his fiddle, much of our political class and intellectual elites remain disturbingly aloof. The flames are visible, the warning signs loud—but the silence from those who should speak is deafening. This is not mere negligence. This is complicity wrapped in the cloak of indifference. We are not merely witnessing a political episode; we are standing on the brink of a national reckoning. The silence of our academics, commentators, cultural voices, and self-styled conscience-keepers doesn’t just betray courage—it betrays the people. It grants impunity. It signals to those in power that anything can be done, so long as the right people stay quiet. **Amarjeet Kumar**, HAZARIBAGH

# Assamese mandatory for official work

Issuance of all government notifications, office memoranda, acts, rules, regulations, scheme guidelines, transfer and posting orders shall be both in English and Assamese

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Guwahati, April 15:** Assamese language shall be used compulsorily in all official work across the state barring three districts in the Barak Valley and five districts under the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), according to an official notification.

However, issuance of all government notifications, office memoranda, acts, rules, regulations, scheme guidelines, transfer and posting orders shall be both in English and Assamese, it said.

The notification will come into effect from April 15 ('Bohag'-Assamese New Year).

'Beginning this 'Bohag', Assamese will be the compulsory official language for all government notifications, orders, acts etc across Assam. In the districts of Barak Valley and BTRR, Bengali and Bodo languages shall be used, respectively,' Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said in a post on X.



In the districts of Cachar, Hailakandi and Sribhumi in the Barak Valley, Bengali will be used in addition to English for official purposes, said the notification issued by Additional Chief Secretary (Home and Political Departments) Ajay Tewari.

Similarly, in Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa, Udalguri and Tamulpur under the BTR, Bodo

language will be used in addition to English for official purposes, it said.

A decision to this effect was taken at the cabinet meeting of the council of ministers, presided by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, April 4.

All notifications, orders, acts, rules and guidelines issued by the central government shall be published by translating into

**A decision to this effect was taken at the cabinet meeting of the council of ministers, presided by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, April 4**

Assamese language (Bodo and Bengali wherever applicable) within 30 days of its receipt by the department concerned, the official order said.

Legacy documents comprising acts, rules, regulations and notifications shall also be translated into Assamese (Bengali and Bodo wherever applicable) in a phased manner over two years, it said.

The translation work shall be done with the assistance of language departments of universities.

In the event of any ambiguity, discrepancy or requirement of legal interpretation, the En-

glish version of such laws, notifications, rules, regulations and ordinances, shall prevail, it said.

The English language shall continue to be used for communication with the central government, its offices and other state government establishments, the notification said.

All enquiry reports, para-wise comments, instructions, affidavits and correspondences as required to be submitted before the courts shall be in English language, it said.

In case of interpretation of the provisions contained in any rules, acts, regulations, office order, court orders or judgments, the English version will prevail.

According to the notification, the 'Anuvad Bhasini App' may be used for the purpose of translation from English language to Assamese, Bengali and Bodo, but the officers shall exercise discretion and carefully review the translated versions to ensure accuracy and correctness.

# Delhi CM cracks down on school

FEE HIKE ISSUE

*These schools have been asked to respond, failing which strict action will be taken against them, the chief minister told and asserted that no school has the right to harass parents over fees or remove students unfairly*



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 15:** Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said Tuesday that notices have been issued to schools over complaints of arbitrary fee hikes and asserted that her government is committed to transparency and protection of children's rights in education.

These schools have been asked to respond, failing which strict action will be taken against them, the chief minister told PTI and asserted that "no school has the right to harass parents over fees or remove students unfairly".

Addressing a 'Jan Samvad' (public meeting), the chief minister said she received a complaint about a private school in Model Town allegedly increasing fees and expelling students.

Sharing the incident in a post on X, Gupta said, "Today, a case related to Queen Mary's School in Model Town came up, where parents complained about unjust fee collection and the expulsion of students."

The chief minister called an official and directed him to immediately cancel the registration of Queen Mary's School in Model Town. There was no immediate response from the school.

A parent, whose daughter studies the same school alleged that the school suddenly increased its fees last year.

"When we refused to pay the additional amount, the school kept my daughter in the library and did not allow her to attend any of her classes," he said.

The matter has been taken seriously and officials have been directed to carry out an immediate investigation and take necessary action, the chief minister said.

"No school has the right to harass parents over fees or remove students unfairly," she said, adding that all schools are expected to follow set rules and regulations, and any violation will result in action.

"A zero-tolerance policy is in place for any kind of injustice, exploitation or irregularity -- no negligence will be accepted. Our commitment is clear that every child deserves justice, dignity and quality education," Gupta said.

She emphasised that the Delhi government remains committed to transparency, equal opportunity and protection of children's rights in education.

"Notices have been issued to schools against which complaints of arbitrary fee hikes have been received. These schools have been asked to respond, failing which strict action will be taken against them," the chief minister told PTI.

# 'No protest against Waqf Act will be allowed in Assam'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Nalbari (Assam), April 15:** Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma Tuesday said no protest against the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025 will be allowed in the state and suggested that the agitators present their side before the Supreme Court.

After its enactment earlier this month, several individuals and groups have challenged the controversial legislation, which seeks to improve the functioning of Waqf properties, address complexities, ensure transparency and introduce technology-driven management.

"The case is with the Supreme Court. If anyone has anything to say, please present it before the apex court as it can be properly discussed there. If someone hits the streets in Assam against the Waqf Act, then people will also hit the streets in support of the legislation. It will lead to a clash, which we don't want," Sarma told reporters. He reminded the All Assam Minority Students' Union (AAMSU) that if the organisation opposes the law, then there are people who support it.

"We don't need any conflict. The brotherhood should be maintained for the progress of Assam. That's why we should be able to differentiate between good and bad. If anyone opposes the Waqf Act, I have nothing to say and I suggest him to go to the Supreme Court. Those who are supporting the Act should also go to the apex court. We went to the SC yesterday in support of the Act. But we will not allow anything to take place on the roads," Sarma said.

# Delhi's prisons severely overcrowded: Study

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 15:** Delhi's prisons remain severely overcrowded with undertrial inmates making up 91 per cent of the incarcerated population, according to the India Justice Report (IJR) 2025.

The IJR 2025, initiated by Tata Trusts and supported by several civil society organisations and data partners, tracked the performance of states across four areas - police, judiciary, prisons and legal aid.

The report highlighted a troubling trend. It said three of Delhi's 16 jails have recorded over 250 per cent occupancy consistently between 2020 and 2022.

Overall, the capital's jails have operated at over 170 per



cent capacity for more than a decade. "Delhi's prisons have consistently recorded over 170 per cent occupancy rates since 2012. In 2022, 15 per cent of its prisons recorded occupancy rates of over 250 per cent. Occupancy rates in three prisons have consistently been over 250 per cent since 2020," the report

read. It said staff shortages exacerbate the crisis. Delhi recorded a 27 per cent shortfall in overall prison staff, including a staggering 60 per cent vacancy among correctional staff and 34 per cent among officers.

Medical care remains strained, with just 90 doctors for 18,000 inmates --averaging one

**Delhi recorded a 27 per cent shortfall in overall prison staff, including a staggering 60 per cent vacancy among correctional staff and 34 per cent among officers**

**Medical care remains strained, with just 90 doctors for 18,000 inmates --averaging one doctor for every 206 prisoners.**

Despite being equipped with 100 per cent video conferencing facilities, the over-reliance on incarceration, especially of undertrial prisoners, continues to clog the system, the report said.

The IJR has called for urgent and foundational corrections, pressing for justice delivery to be treated as an essential service.

# Assam rings in New Year with Rongali Bihu festivities

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Guwahati, April 15:** The Assamese New Year was welcomed with festive fervour by people across the state Tuesday, with all praying for a prosperous and fulfilling year ahead.

Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya and Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma wished the people on the occasion, hoping that the Rongali, or Bohag, Bihu celebrations will reaffirm the age-old harmony in the state.

"I extend my heartiest greetings on the occasion of Rongali Bihu and Assamese New Year," Acharya said in a post on X.

"May this Rongali Bihu strengthen further our age-old harmony and bring prosperity and happiness to all," he added. The Rongali Bihu celebrations



had started Monday with 'Garu Bihu', centring around cattle, with the first day of the month of Bohag Tuesday marked as 'Manuh Bihu', when people greet each other.

The festivities typically continue for nearly the entire month, with the first week of Bohag dedicated to celebrating different aspects and elements of nature and people. The CM, taking to

the micro-blogging site, affirmed his government's commitment to the welfare of the people.

"Today, from Kamakhya to Kachakanti, people across Assam are welcoming the new year and celebrating Assam's success in the year gone by," he said.

"On this special day, our Govt renews its commitment to make Assam as one of Bharat's Top 5 States and ensure the welfare of

every citizen," Sarma added.

Bihu songs and dances form an integral part of Rongali Bihu, with 'husori' troupes, comprising of local youngsters, a popular tradition, who visit households to perform and bless the families.

In Sivasagar, the capital of the Ahom kingdom, the first day of Bohag is celebrated with Bihu performances at the courtyard of the 'Rangghar', a historic amphitheatre.

Similar open-air performances are also organised in different parts, as people also exchange gifts and wear new clothes on the first day of Bohag.

# Delhi Police faces rising officer vacancies: Report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 15:** Delhi Police leads the country in spending on training its personnel and has more women among its ranks but rising vacancies in officer posts could slow decision-making, a report released Tuesday said.

The India Justice Report (IJR) spotlights both progress and systemic gaps in the capital's police force. The report, which is prepared in collaboration with several civil society organisations among others, tracked the performance of states across four areas - police, judiciary,

prisons and legal aid. Delhi allocated 2 per cent of its police budget to training -- well above the national average of 1.25 per cent, with a per-person spend of ₹28,614, the highest in India, according to the report. The city's force also boasts 88 per cent coverage of CCTV at police stations and an equal proportion with women help desks, reflecting a robust push towards better-equipped stations.

Women comprise 15 per cent of Delhi's total police force and 11 per cent of its officers, exceeding national averages of 12 per cent and 8 per cent respectively.

# COW DUNG ON CLASSROOM WALLS

# DUSU chief defaces principal's office

In the video, widely shared on social media, principal Pratyush Vatsala was seen coating classroom walls with cow dung

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 15:** DUSU president Ronak Khatri Tuesday smeared cow dung on the walls of Lakshmbai College principal's office, escalating a row that ignited after she was caught on video coating classroom walls with cow dung for "cooling" them.

In the video, widely shared on social media, principal Pratyush Vatsala was seen coating classroom walls with cow dung.

"No consent was taken from students for such an initiative," Khatri told PTI Videos while arguing with a faculty member inside the principal's office.

"If you want to do research, do it at your home," he said.

The principal told PTI April 13 that the faculty-led initiative was part of an ongoing research aimed at exploring indigenous and sus-



**The principal told that the faculty-led initiative was part of an ongoing research aimed at exploring indigenous and sustainable cooling techniques**

his supporters had gone to "help" her by plastering her office walls as well.

"We have full faith that madam will now get the AC removed from her room and hand it over to students, and run the college in this modern and natural cool environment smeared with cow dung," he wrote.

In defense of her now-viral video, Principal Vatsala April 13 said

it was part of an ongoing research project conducted in porta cabins.

"It is under process. I will be able to share details of the full research after a week," she had said, stressing that misinformation was being spread without full context.

"There's no harm in touching natural mud," she added.

The principal reportedly shared the video in a teachers' WhatsApp group, noting that the indigenous method was being used to cool classrooms in C Block.

"Those who have classes here will soon get these rooms in a new look. Efforts are being made to make your teaching experience pleasant," she wrote.

The administration maintains that the method is part of scientific inquiry into sustainable practices amid rising temperatures in the capital.

**OFFICE OF THE BARIPADA MUNICIPAL COUNCIL, BARIPADA**  
Phone: 06792-252703, Fax: 06792-252703, Email: baripadam.hud@nic.in  
Website: www.baripadamunicipality.in  
No. 696, Date: 11.04.2025

**Tender Reference No. BPDM 1 of 2025-26 and BPDM 2 of 2025-26**  
**CORRIGENDUM DETAILS**

No. C-113: In partial to this Office "e" Procurement Tender Reference No. BPDM 1 of 2025/26 and No. BPDM 2 of 2025/26 the extension of last date and time submission of bids required due to unavoidable technical reason.

Sl. No.	Description	Previously Critical Dates	Presently changed to Critical Dates
(i)	Period of availability of tenders online for bidding	From Dt. 22.03.2025 (01.00 P.M.) to Dt. 15.04.2025 (01.00 P.M.) & From Dt. 24.03.2025 (01.00 PM) to Dt. 15.04.2025 (01.00 P.M.)	From Dt. 22.03.2025 (01.00 PM) to Dt. 19.04.2025 (05.00 P.M.)
(ii)	Last Date and Time of bidding online (submission of Bids)	Dt. 15.04.2025 (01.00 P.M.)	Dt. 19.04.2025 (05.00 P.M.)
(iii)	Date and Time of opening of the Bid Received online	Dt. 16.04.2025 (10.30 A.M. onwards)	Dt. 21.04.2025 (10.30 A.M. onwards)

The Tender Call Notice vide e-procurement Tender Reference No. BPDM-01 of 2025-26 and Tender Reference No. BPDM-02 of 2025-26 are being amended to the above extent through this 2nd Corrigendum.  
All other terms and conditions are remain unchanged. Further details may also be seen from the procurement portal i.e. www.tendersorissa.gov.in.  
OIPR-13078/11/0036/2526

**Sd./- Executive Officer, Baripada Municipality**

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
**PANCHAYATIRAJ & D.W. DEPARTMENT**  
**OFFICE OF THE PANCHAYAT SAMITI, BALIKUDA**  
'e' mail ID: ori-balikuda@nic.in

**No. I-23**  
**'e' Procurement Notice No. BDO-BKD/PS-02 of 2025-26**

1	Number of the works	2 (Two) Nos.
2	Tender Amount (Approx.)	Rs. 14.96 Lakh (Each)
3	EMD (Online)	Rs. 15,000.00
4	Tender Paper Cost (Online) (Non-Refundable)	Rs. 6,000.00
5	Class of Contractor	'D' & 'C' Class Contractor
6	Period of Completion	06 (Six) Calendar Months

Procurement Officer	'e' Procurement Notice No.	Availability of Tender From To	Last date & time for seeking tender clarification	Date & Time of Opening of BID	Place of Opening of Bid
Block Development Officer, Balikuda	BDO-BKD/PS-02/2025-26	19.04.2025 at 10.00 hours	01.05.2025 at 17.30 hours	25.04.2025 upto 11.00 P.M. during office hours on working days	02.05.2025 upto 11.00 A.M. during office hours

Further details can be seen from the Govt. website "https://tendersodisha.gov.in".  
All Corrigendum/Cancellation of tender if any, will only be uploaded in the above website.  
OIPR-19282/11/0003/2526

**Sd./- Block Development Officer, Balikuda**



**The BJP government's intention is to gradually make the Congress financially incapable through such efforts**  
ASHOK GEHLOT | EX-RAJASTHAN CM

## T'GANA DECLARES SUNSTROKE AS STATE SPECIFIC DISASTER

Telangana Government Tuesday issued orders to declare heatwave/sunstroke as a "State Specific Disaster" henceforth for the purpose of providing relief to the families of the victims. Under the new Government Order ₹4 lakh ex gratia will be provided to the kin of the deceased



### of the day quote

Despite all this, its arrogance is such that it thinks the burden of the country is on it. Despite being the opposition, it behaves like the ruling party. Congress, which believes in 'monarchy' under the Gandhi family's shadow instead of democracy, has never cared about the Constitution



KESHAV PRASAD MAURYA | UP DEPT CM

Moreover, the shortage of suitable employment opportunities for educated unemployed youth and skilled individuals, and the proliferation of insecure jobs such as courier services, salesmen, security guards and other unorganised sectors have made people quite troubled and unhappy



MAYAWATI | BSP CHIEF

Today, a case related to Queen Mary's School in Model Town came up, where parents complained about unjust fee collection and the expulsion of students



REKHA GUPTA | DELHI CM

# India to get above-normal rainfall this monsoon: IMD

According to the long-range monsoon forecast, the IMD said large parts of Tamil Nadu and the northeastern region were likely to get below-normal rainfall, while the rain-deficient parts of Marathwada and adjoining Telangana are expected to witness above-normal showers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 15:** India is expected to get above-normal rainfall in the upcoming southwest monsoon season, the India Meteorological Department said Tuesday, raising hopes for a bountiful harvest for the largely agri-based economy.

According to the long-range monsoon forecast, the IMD said large parts of Tamil Nadu and the northeastern region were likely to get below-normal rainfall, while the rain-deficient parts of Marathwada and adjoining Telangana are expected to witness above-normal showers.

"India is likely to see above-normal rainfall in the four-month monsoon season (June to September), with cumulative rainfall estimated at 105 per cent (with a model error of 5 per cent) of the long-period average of 87 cm," M Ravichandran, secretary in the Earth Sciences Ministry, told a press conference here.

The southwest monsoon lasts from June 1 to September 30. He said that of all the global factors that influence monsoon rainfall over India, two will have a neutral impact, and one will have a positive impact on rainfall this year.

"There is a 30 per cent chance of normal rainfall, a 33 per cent chance of above-normal rainfall, and a 26 per cent chance of excess precipitation during the monsoon season," IMD Director General Mrityunjay Mohapatra said.

According to the IMD, rainfall between 96 per cent and 104 per cent of a 50-year average of 87 cm is considered 'normal'.

Category	Rainfall Range (% of LPA)	Forecast Probability (%)	Climatological Probability (%)
Deficient	< 80	2	16
Below Normal	80 - 95	9	17
Normal	96 - 104	30	33
Above Normal	105-110	33	16
Excess	> 110	26	17

Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) Secretary M. Ravichandran, centre, Director General of Meteorology, India Meteorological Department (IMD), Mrityunjay Mohapatra, right, and Head of National Weather Forecasting Center (NWFC), IMD, R.K. Jenamani address a press conference regarding the Southwest Monsoon, in New Delhi

## According to the long-range monsoon forecast, the IMD said large parts of Tamil Nadu and the northeastern region were likely to get below-normal rainfall

Rainfall less than 90 per cent of the long-period average is considered 'deficient', between 90 per cent and 95 per cent is 'below normal', between 105 per cent and 110 per cent is 'above normal', and more than 110 per cent is considered 'excess' precipitation. Parts of Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Tamil Nadu, Bihar and the northeastern states are likely to experience below-normal rainfall during the monsoon season.

Normal to above-normal monsoon rainfall is expected in large parts of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, which form the core monsoon zone (agriculture primarily rain-fed) of the country.

Parts of the country are already battling extreme heat, and a significantly high number of heatwave days are expected in the April to June period. This could strain power grids and result in water shortages.

The monsoon is crucial for India's agriculture sector, which supports the livelihood of about 42.3 per cent of the population and contributes 18.2 per cent to the country's GDP.

It is also crucial for replenishing reservoirs critical for drinking water, apart from

power generation across the country. A prediction of normal rainfall during the monsoon season, therefore, comes as a huge relief.

However, normal cumulative rainfall does not guarantee uniform temporal and spatial distribution of rain across the country, with climate change further increasing the variability of the rain-bearing system.

Climate scientists say the number of rainy days is declining, while heavy rain events (more rain over a short period) are increasing, leading to frequent droughts and floods.

Three large-scale climatic phenomena are considered for forecasting monsoon season rainfall.

The first is ENSO -- a climate pattern characterised by fluctuations in sea surface temperatures in the tropical Pacific Ocean, which in turn affects global weather patterns.

The second is the Indian Ocean Dipole, which occurs due to differential warming of the western and eastern sides of the equatorial Indian Ocean while the third is the snow cover over the northern Himalayas and the Eurasian landmass, which also impacts the Indian monsoon through differential heating of the landmass.

## Hemant Soren elected as JMM central president

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ranchi, April 15:** Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren was Tuesday elected as the central president of the ruling JMM, while his father Shibu Soren was made the "founding patron" of the party, a JMM leader said.

Shibu Soren had been the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha's chief for the past 38 years, while his son Hemant served the party as its executive president since 2015, he said.

Senior party leader and Dumka MP Nalin Soren proposed the name of Shibu Soren as the founding patron during the JMM's 13th Central Convention and it was seconded by the Maheshpur MLA Stephen Marandi. Thereafter, Shibu Soren proposed the name of Hemant Soren as the central president of JMM, which was passed unanimously.

"The responsibility that respected Baba Dishom Gurujii (Shibu Soren) has given me, the faith that lakhs of party colleagues have shown in me, I will work hard day and night to fulfill it. This support of all of you is my strength," Hemant Soren later posted on X.

Addressing the concluding ceremony of two-day convention, the JMM central president said, "The party will decide its future journey from this point. We will move towards a long road after the end of this convention."

The CM said that Shibu Soren devoted his life to the uplift of the poor and marginalised people of Jharkhand.

## INSV 'Tarini' flagged off from Cape Town for final leg of journey



SAYAN CHATTERJEE

**New Delhi, April 15:** INSV Tarini was ceremonially flagged off today from the Royal Cape Yacht Club (RCYC) at 1030 hrs local time (1400 hrs IST), marking the commencement of the final leg of her inspiring journey back to Goa as part of the Navika Sagar Parikrama II.

The flag-off ceremony was graced by the presence of the Officiating Consul General of India in Cape Town, the Defence Attaché of India to South Africa, members of the RCYC Governing Council, and members of the Indian diaspora. The occasion marked a significant milestone in the voyage, as dignitaries and supporters gathered to bid farewell and celebrate the crew's remarkable progress.

Navika Sagar Parikrama II, the Indian Navy's flagship initiative, promotes ocean sailing in India, highlights the strength and resilience of women in uniform, and showcases India's capabilities in indigenous shipbuilding. INSV Tarini, an Indian-built vessel crewed by Lieutenant Commander Dilna K and Lieutenant Commander

Roopa A, has powerfully embodied these values throughout her circumnavigation.

During her scheduled stopover in Cape Town, Tarini transformed into a vibrant platform for diplomatic engagement, cultural exchange, and outreach. Among the prominent visitors onboard were Shri Prabhat Kumar, Hon'ble High Commissioner of India to South Africa; Mr Reagan Allen, Deputy Speaker of the Western Cape; former international cricketer and long-time friend of India Mr Johnathan 'Jonty' Rhodes; Ms Kirsten Neuschäfer, solo circumnavigator and winner of the 2022-23 Golden Globe Race; and Smt Ruby Jaspreet, Consul General of India at Cape Town. They were joined by members of the Indian community and local dignitaries, all of whom expressed admiration and support for the mission. The crew's engagement in Cape Town extended far beyond ceremonial events. Aimed at fostering greater awareness around gender equality, maritime cooperation, and India's advancements in ocean sailing, the visit included several meaningful interactions.

### SHORT TAKES

#### 145 kg sea cucumbers seized by coast guard

**New Delhi:** The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) Tuesday said it has seized 145 kilograms of sea cucumbers worth ₹58 lakh during an anti-poaching operation. Sea cucumber harvesting and trade are banned in India under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

#### Family of 4 killed in road accident

**Kota:** A family of four was killed after their motorcycle was hit by a speeding car on the Itawa state highway Tuesday morning, police said. According to police, the motorcycle flung 5 feet in the air and fell into a ditch, killing Ilyas (29), his wife Sitara (27) and his niece Joya (17) on the spot. His 8-month-old son succumbed to injuries during treatment.

#### Two tribals killed in wild elephant attack

**Thrissur (Kerala):** Two tribal persons who had gone to collect forest produce were found killed, allegedly in a wild elephant attack, in the Athirappilly forests of this district, police said Tuesday. Congress leader V D Satheesan criticised the government for failing to prevent such incidents from occurring. However, State Forest Minister A K Saseendran said the incident had happened inside the forest and that he had sought an immediate report from the Chief Conservator of Forests (CCF) on what exactly had occurred.

# BENGAL VIOLENCE Adityanath tears into Mamata

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Hardoi (UP), April 15:** Launching a scathing attack on Mamata Banerjee over the violence during protests in West Bengal against the Waqf law, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath Tuesday said "Bengal is burning" but its chief minister is "silent" and even calling the rioters "messengers of peace".

Adityanath also said that stick is the only treatment for rioters, as "those who respond only to thrashing don't understand words (Laton ke bhoot

baaton se kahan manne wale hain)". Speaking in Hardoi after inaugurating and laying the foundation for 729 developmental schemes worth ₹650 crore, Adityanath said, "You all can see how Bengal is burning but the chief minister of the state is silent. She even calls the rioters messengers of peace. They have given a complete free hand to the rioters in the name of secularism."

"This type of anarchy must be controlled. The entire Murshidabad has been burning for the past week. I would like to thank the court there for ordering the deployment of central



forces and taking steps for the safety of the minority Hindus in the district," he said. Hailing the Waqf (Amendment)

Act, 2025, Adityanath said, "We are thankful to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, who got the

Waqf (Amendment) Bill passed (in Parliament), thereby reining in the loot of poor people's land.

"Now, hospitals, schools and universities will come up on those lands, and no one will be allowed to grab them. That's why these people are worried, because the loot will stop now and their goons will be rendered jobless."

Adityanath's remarks came after violent protests erupted on Friday and Saturday in pockets of Murshidabad district, including Suti, Dhulian and Jangipur, triggered by anger over the Waqf law.

## Tejashwi meets Kharge, Rahul Gandhi to discuss election preparedness

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 15:** RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav met senior Congress leaders, including party president Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi, here Tuesday to discuss the Mahagathbandhan's preparedness for the upcoming Bihar Assembly polls and exuded confidence that an INDIA bloc government will be formed in the state.

Yadav, along with RJD MPs Manoj Jha and Sanjay Yadav, met the Congress leadership at Kharge's residence. He urged the media not to speculate over the Mahagathbandhan's (grand alliance's) chief ministerial face and said the constituents would talk among themselves and decide.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting with Congress leaders, Yadav alleged that Bihar Chief Minister and JD(U) president Nitish Kumar has been "hijacked" by the BJP.

"Nitish ji has been hijacked. Amit Shah has been saying that they will fight elections under his leadership but does not say he will become the CM," Yadav said. "The government that is there for 20 years in Bihar and PM Modi is at the helm for 11 years... amid all this, Bihar has been given step-motherly treatment. Bihar is the most economically backward, has the lowest per capita income, lowest farmers' income and highest migration. We all want to fight the elections on real issues," Yadav said.

# Close to 6L people in Meghalaya don't have Aadhaar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Shillong, April 15:** The Meghalaya government is working overtime to enrol close to 6 lakh people in the state who are yet to register themselves under the Aadhaar database to avail both development and welfare schemes of the government, officials said Tuesday.

The Aadhaar enrolment was slow in East Khasi Hills and West Garo Hills districts with both registering 75 per cent and 83 per cent respectively which indicates that these two districts have over 3.27 lakh people out of the system, they said. "We are working overtime to get everyone enrolled under the

Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) which allots the Aadhaar number. At present close to 28 lakh people are enrolled in the state," a senior official told PTI.

He said there is some kind of apathy among the people to register themselves for the Aadhaar number.

East Khasi Hills district alone has over 2.31 lakh people who are yet to be enrolled due to various reasons while over 96,400 people in West Garo Hills are not registered, according to the figures available till February this year, the official said.

West Khasi Hills and South Garo Hills are among the districts with the least enrolment



with each registering 68 and 67 per cent enrolment respectively, the official said. The Meghalaya government recently bagged two awards for best-performing state in carrying out mandato-

ry biometric updates (MBUs) of children and in the verification of adult Aadhaar enrolment.

The authorities have completed registering over 37,000 children below 5 years of age

**West Khasi Hills and South Garo Hills are among the districts with the least enrolment with each registering 68 and 67 per cent enrolment respectively, the official said**

**The Meghalaya government recently bagged two awards for best-performing state in carrying out mandatory biometric updates (MBUs) of children and in the verification of adult Aadhaar enrolment**

while over 6.93 lakh were among those between 5 and 18 years old, the official said. Over 20.67 lakh people above 18 years of age have enrolled under the Aadhaar database, he added.

State Nodal Officer for Aadhaar Joram Beda expressed satisfaction and appreciation for the achievement and the award the Aadhaar authorities have given the state recently.

He said, "This recognition reflects the unwavering commitment and dedication of our Aadhaar team from field-level staff to district officials and technical staff. I congratulate everyone who contributed to this outstanding performance." "Everyone in the government is working to further improve the delivery and outreach of Aadhaar services in Meghalaya, ensuring that every resident has access to their unique identity and to essential government schemes," he said.



We think the appropriate time has come, six months have passed after since the assembly elections. (Union Home Minister Amit) Shah came here, I had a separate meeting with him, a good one ... I am still hopeful that J&K will soon get its statehood back

MAHA: ROBOTS TO REPLACE MANUAL MANHOLE CLEANING Maharashtra Minister Sanjay Shirsat Tuesday said that the state government will procure 100 robots for 27 municipal corporations for cleaning manholes, the work currently being done manually



of the day quote

Had the BJP won 400 seats in the Lok Sabha elections, swords and rifles would have been out on the streets and the Constitution would have been abolished

We don't need any conflict. The brotherhood should be maintained for the progress of Assam. That's why we should be able to differentiate between good and bad. If anyone opposes the Waqf Act, I have nothing to say and I suggest him to go to the Supreme Court

A disturbing trend is taking place in the country where minority communities are being treated as enemies by the central government and in states ruled by the BJP's so-called double engine government

ALLAHABAD HC RAPE CASE REMARKS

Judges should be very careful: SC

The apex court's observations came when it was hearing a suo motu case over the Allahabad High Court's separate order of March 17 in which the high court said grabbing breasts and pulling the drawstring of a woman's "pyjama" or lowers did not amount to the offence of attempt to rape



Allahabad High Court

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 15: The Supreme Court Tuesday took exception to the Allahabad High Court's recent remarks in a rape case as reportedly saying the complainant "herself invited trouble", and said judges should be "very careful".

rate order of March 17 in which the high court said grabbing breasts and pulling the drawstring of a woman's "pyjama" or lowers did not amount to the offence of attempt to rape.

The high court's March 17 order held that the attempt to rape offence was not made out against the accused and they were liable to be summoned for the lesser offence of assault or use of criminal force to woman with intent to disrobe her.

"If one wants to grant bail that is okay but why make such observations that she invited trouble and all that... One has to be very careful on this side (bench) also," Justice B R Gavai said, wondering why such remarks were made while deciding a bail plea.

"There is another order passed by another judge of the same high court," a bench of Justices Gavai and Augustine George Masih observed.

The high court's order had come on a petition by the accused challenging the order of a special judge in Kasganj through which they were summoned for the alleged offence under Section 376 (rape) of IPC among other sections.

The high court recently granted bail in the rape case, observing the complainant "herself invited trouble" by agreeing to go to the applicant's house after getting drunk.

Solicitor general Tushar Mehta said how a common man perceived such observations was required to be kept in mind.

In the other case, the high court passed an order granting bail to an accused and said, "Having heard counsel for the parties and examined the matter in its entirety, I find that it is not in dispute that victim and applicant both are major. Victim is student of MA, hence she was competent enough to understand the morality and significance of her act as disclosed by her in the FIR."

The apex court's observations came when it was hearing a suo motu case over the Allahabad High Court's separate

The top court had said some of the observations made in the order reflected total "insensitivity" and "inhuman approach".

The court said even after accepting "as true" the allegations of the survivor, it could be said that she "herself invited trouble and was also responsible for the same".

POST OF THE DAY

Two years ago, a massive campaign was run in Madhya Pradesh regarding prohibition of liquor, as a result of which a new liquor policy was announced in early January 2023

@umasribharti

SHORT TAKES

Woman shot dead by lover

New Delhi: A 20-year-old woman was allegedly shot dead by her lover following an argument in Delhi's Shahdara, police said Tuesday. The accused has been identified as Rizwan (20), they said. He shot Saira twice Monday night - once on the left side of her head and another on her back. Sources in the police said that Rizwan and Saira were a couple and were on a walk when the incident happened.

Over 15,000 workers under CSS stage strike

Aizawl: Responding to a call given by the All Mizoram CSS Employees Coordination Committee (AMCECC), over 15,000 workers employed under the Centrally Sponsored Schemes in the state began a three-day strike Tuesday demanding regularisation of jobs under the state government. The Mizoram government said that it has been taking measures for regularisation and asserted that only those workers, who are recruited following appropriate recruitment procedure under the existing rules, could be regularised.

Truckers' stir to continue in K'taka

Bangalore: The indefinite strike of the truckers in Karnataka will continue as talks with Chief Minister Siddaramaiah failed to yield any breakthrough, a truckers' body office bearer said Tuesday. Despite the Chief Minister's appeal to the truckers to call off the strike in public interest, the truckers refused to relent, citing the state government's failure to meet their demands including a reduction in diesel prices and concrete assurances on toll-related issues. The strike launched at midnight between Monday and Tuesday, brought the movement of Karnataka-based trucks to a standstill affecting transportation of goods within and outside the state.

ED raids Raj Congress leader, AAP MLA in ₹48K-cr scam



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

A security team of the CRPF has also been deployed with the ED teams at both the locations linked to the politicians.

The 55-year-old Congress leader served as minister for transport, food and civil supplies in the cabinet of former chief minister Ashok Gehlot. He has represented the Civil Lines (Jaipur) seat in the Rajasthan Assembly.

Jaipur/Mohali, April 15: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) Tuesday raided the premises of Rajasthan Congress leader and former minister Pratap Singh Khachariyawas and Punjab AAP MLA Kulwant Singh as part of a ₹48,000-crore PACL Ponzi "fraud"-linked money laundering probe, official sources said.

Singh, 63, is the promoter of a real estate firm named Janta Land Promoters Limited (JLPL). He is reported to be Punjab's richest MLA with assets reportedly worth ₹1,000 crore. Addressing reporters outside his ancestral house here, Khachariyawas, nephew of former vice president Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, said the ED action was "politically motivated" because he has been speaking against the government. He asserted he had done nothing wrong and that he was "not afraid" of the ED. There was no response till evening hours from Singh or his family on the ED action.

About 15 premises including Khachariyawas' house in Jaipur and Singh's premises in Punjab's Mohali apart from some others are being searched by the federal probe agency.



Farmers engaged in threshing freshly harvested wheat crop at a village on the outskirts of Gurugram

Bangladeshi radicals 'aided by local leaders' in violence: Intel

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 15: Bangladeshi radicals, allegedly aided by local leaders of a political party, were "involved" in the recent violence triggered by anti-Waqf law agitations in West Bengal's Murshidabad district, sources said.

a political party, sources said quoting the report. The Union home ministry is closely following the situation in Murshidabad, where central forces have been deployed along with the state police to restore peace and maintain law and order, sources said. The Border Security Force (BSF), which is deployed along the India-Bangladesh border, has also been instructed to keep a strict vigil so that illegal infiltration does not take place in the West Bengal sector, the sources said. On April 12, Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan held a virtual meeting with the chief secretary and DGP of West Bengal after large-scale violence led to loss of lives in Murshidabad district.

ANTI-WAQF LAW AGITATIONS



During their talks, the Centre asked the state government to keep a close watch on the other sensitive districts and put in place adequate steps to ensure normalcy at the earliest. Vi-

NHRC takes cognisance of Murshidabad violence

New Delhi: Taking cognisance of the violence in West Bengal's Murshidabad during protests over the Waqf (Amendment) Act, the NHRC Tuesday said it will send a team to conduct an on-spot inquiry, given the "seriousness" of the matter. The National Human Rights Commission said the action comes after submission of a complaint to it. The inquiry report should be submitted within three weeks, it said. The complaint pertains to various "social media news articles" highlighting the alleged murder of two named persons - father and son, amid the ongoing protest against the legislation. The complainant has alleged that "goons" had been on an "attacking spree, targeting men and women of the Hindu community and their properties, and had murdered three people", including the father-son duo, according to the proceedings of NHRC.

India trashes Pak's criticism of Waqf Amendment Act

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 15: India Tuesday strongly rejected Pakistan's criticism of the Waqf Amendment Act and said Islamabad should look into its own "abysmal" record in protecting the rights of minorities instead of preaching to others.

External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal described Pakistan's comments on the law as "motivated and baseless", asserting that the neighbouring country has no locus standi to comment on a matter that is internal to India.

New Delhi's reaction came after a spokesperson of the Pakistan Foreign Office alleged that the Waqf law is an "infringement" over the religious and economic rights of Indian Muslims.

"We strongly reject the motivated and baseless comments made by Pakistan on the Waqf Amendment Act enacted by the Parliament of India," Jaiswal said.

lent protests erupted on Friday and Saturday in pockets of the district, including Suti, Dhulian and Jangipur, following anger over the amended Waqf Act. The demonstrations soon escalated into clashes, leaving at least three people dead and several injured. Personnel of the BSF, CRPF, state police and RAF have been deployed in large numbers in Jangipur, Dhuliyani, Suti and Shamsheganj, where no new incident of violence was reported in the past 48 hours, officials said. The state police said the situation in the riot-hit parts of Murshidabad is gradually returning to normal, with shops reopening and displaced families starting to return to their homes.



Our programme aims to support the Palestinian people in building a sustainable future, it's about the governing capacity. It's about advancing economic recovery. It's about strengthening the resilience of the private sector

**DUBRAVKA SUICA**  
EU MEDITERRANEAN COMMISSIONER

## NY CITY DECLARES APRIL 14, 2025 AS DR BR AMBEDKAR DAY

Mayor Eric Adams has proclaimed April 14 this year as Dr BR Ambedkar Day in New York City, with its 8.5 million residents celebrating the day, a top official in the mayor's office said. Deputy Commissioner for the New York City Mayor's Office for International Affairs Dilip Chauhan made the announcement here



### of the day quote

The Lebanese government has made a decision that weapons will only be in the hands of the state, but there are discussions around how to implement this decision

**JOSEPH AOUN** | PRESIDENT, LEBANON

I have instructed security agencies to thoroughly investigate this crisis and identify those responsible for orchestrating these violent acts

**BOLA TINUBU** | PRESIDENT, NIGERIA

The brutal war in Sudan has devastated the lives of millions - and yet much of the world continues to look away. We need to act now to stop the crisis from becoming an all-out catastrophe, ensuring aid gets to those who need it the most

**DAVID LAMMY** | FOREIGN SECRETARY, UK

## Trump freezes about \$2.3bn in funding to Harvard

REUTERS

**Boston, April 15:** Harvard Monday rejected numerous demands from the Trump administration that it said would cede control of the school to a conservative government that portrays universities as dangerously leftist.

Within hours of Harvard taking its stand, the administration of President Donald Trump announced it was freezing \$2.3 billion in federal funding to the school.

The funding freeze comes after the Trump administration said last month it was reviewing \$9 billion in federal contracts and grants to Harvard as part of a crackdown on what it says is antisemitism that erupt-



ed on college campuses during pro-Palestinian protests in the past 18 months.

A Department of Education task force on combating antisemitism accused America's oldest university of having a "troubling entitlement mindset

that is endemic in our nation's most prestigious universities and colleges - that federal investment does not come with the responsibility to uphold civil rights laws."

The exchange escalates the high-stakes dispute between

Department of Education freezes funding, citing civil rights

Harvard says federal demands violate academic freedom

Some Harvard professors already sued Trump administration

the the Trump administration and some of the world's richest universities that has raised concerns about speech and academic freedoms.

The administration has frozen hundreds of millions of dollars in federal funding for numerous universities, pressing the institutions to make policy changes and citing what it says is a failure to fight antisemitism on campus.

Deportation proceedings have begun against some de-

tained foreign students who took part in pro-Palestinian demonstrations, while visas for hundreds of other students have been canceled.

Harvard President Alan Garber wrote in a public letter Monday that demands made by the Department of Education last week would allow the federal government "to control the Harvard community" and threaten the school's "values as a private institution devoted to the pursuit, production, and dissemination of knowledge."

"No government - regardless of which party is in power - should dictate what private universities can teach, whom they can admit and hire, and which areas of study and inquiry they can pursue," Garber wrote.

## Pak court grants Khan right to undergo medical check-up, speak with sons



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Islamabad, April 15:** A Pakistani court Tuesday approved two petitions filed by jailed former premier Imran Khan, granting him the right to undergo a medical check-up and to speak with his children living in the UK.

Islamabad-based Special Court Judge Shah Rukh Arjumand approved both of Khan's requests in the presence of his lawyers, Usman Riaz Gill and Zaheer Abbas.

Advocate Gill argued that although a previous court order had called for a medical check-up, this should now be conducted by Khan's personal doctors in the presence of prison staff. He also requested that regular monthly check-ups be ensured.

Lawyer Abbas added that earlier medical examinations had already been carried out under the Islamabad High Court's orders.

The lawyers also requested the court to uphold Khan's right to contact with his sons.

The judge granted both requests and ordered jail authorities to arrange a phone conversation with his two sons living in the UK with their mother and his ex-wife Jemima Goldsmith.

The court also directed that a medical check-up be carried out by his personal doctors, with a compliance report to be submitted by April 28.

Khan, 72, has been imprisoned since his arrest in August 2023, where the issue of meeting with lawyers and relatives remains a thorny issue and his sisters were not allowed to meet him at Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi.

## FIRST TIME IN 15 YEARS

# B'desh, Pakistan to hold first foreign office talks

**Bangladesh resumed direct trade with Pakistan for the first time since its 1971 independence, with the first shipment of 50,000 tonnes of rice leaving Port Qasim under a government-to-government deal in February**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dhaka, April 15:** Bangladesh will hold its first foreign office consultation (FOC) with Pakistan after a gap of 15 years in the capital Thursday, officials said Tuesday.

"Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Amna Baloch is scheduled to arrive in Dhaka Wednesday to lead her country's delegation at the talks," the state-run BSS news agency reported, quoting a senior foreign ministry spokesman.

It said Bangladesh's foreign secretary M Jashim Uddin will lead the Bangladesh side at the FOC, where the two sides are expected to discuss the entire range of bilateral issues.

The official said no specific agenda was fixed for the talks as all areas of mutual interest were likely to be covered during the discussion.

"After such a long hiatus, it is difficult to prioritize topics in advance, but the talks will be comprehensive," the official said.

Baloch is expected to pay courtesy calls on interim government Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus and Foreign Affairs Adviser M Touhid Hossain fol-



**Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Amna Baloch is scheduled to arrive in Dhaka Wednesday to lead her country's delegation at the talks**

lowing the FOC.

Bangladesh's High Commissioner to Pakistan M Iqbal Husain Khan, currently in Dhaka to attend the meeting, told BSS that Islamabad is particularly keen to enhance trade ties with Dhaka.

"Pakistan sees potential for boosting exports to Bangladesh, especially if their products are price competitive," he said, citing cotton as a major item that Pakistan was interested in exporting.

He added that as Pakistan serves as a gateway for goods from Afghanistan and Iran, there was scope for Bangladesh to explore imports via Pakistan, provided transport costs were low.

Bangladesh resumed direct

trade with Pakistan for the first time since its 1971 independence, with the first shipment of 50,000 tonnes of rice leaving Port Qasim under a government-to-government deal in February.

Business sources, however, said the price of Pakistani rice is higher than that of rice from Vietnam, which Bangladesh was importing at \$474.25 per ton.

Dhaka-Islamabad relations were at the lowest ebb during the deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina's regime, particularly since 2010 when Dhaka initiated the trial of hardened collaborators of Pakistani troops during Bangladesh's 1971 Liberation War.

But, the ties took a positive course since Yunus's interim government assumed power after the ouster of Hasina in a student-led uprising August 5 last year.

Officials said Pakistan's private airline Fly Jinnah has obtained Bangladesh clearance for operating flights between Dhaka and Karachi, while another Pakistani private carrier, Air Sial, applied to the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) for its flight operation as well.

## China orders airlines to suspend Boeing jet deliveries amid trade war

REUTERS

**Beijing, April 15:** China has ordered its airlines not to take any further deliveries of Boeing jets in response to the US decision to impose 145% tariffs on Chinese goods, Bloomberg News reported Tuesday, citing people familiar with the matter. Shares of Boeing - which looks at China as one of its biggest growth markets and where rival Airbus holds a dominant position - were down 2% in early trading.

The global aerospace industry is in the middle of a full-blown tariff war, with plane-makers, airlines and suppliers reviewing contracts worth billions of dollars, after US supplier Howmet Aerospace ignited an debate over who should bear the cost of the tariffs.

China's top three airlines - Air China, China Eastern Airlines and China Southern Airlines had planned to take delivery of 45, 53 and 81 Boeing planes, respectively, between 2025 and 2027.

Beijing has also asked that Chinese carriers halt purchas-



es of aircraft-related equipment and parts from US companies, the Bloomberg report said.

China's move to halt purchases of aircraft-related components is expected to raise maintenance costs for the jets flying in the country.

The Chinese government is also considering ways to provide assistance to airlines that lease Boeing jets and are facing higher costs, Bloomberg News reported.

It was China that first grounded Boeing's 737 MAX jets after two fatal crashes in 2018 and 2019 killed nearly 350 people. China had also suspended most orders and deliveries of the jet in 2019.

Boeing did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment.

The halt in deliveries to China marks yet another setback for the planemaker.



This image provided by Commonwealth Media Services shows damage after a fire at the Pennsylvania governor's mansion while Democratic Gov. Josh Shapiro and his family slept inside Sunday

PTI PHOTO

### SHORT TAKES

#### 3 policemen killed, 18 hurt in IED blast

**Karachi:** Three policemen were killed and 18 others injured Tuesday when an improvised explosive device (IED) hit a constabulary vehicle in the restive Balochistan province of Pakistan. Balochistan government spokesperson, Shahid Rind, said the Balochistan Constabulary vehicle was hit in the Dasht area of Mastung district while returning from duty. He said three policemen were killed on the spot while 18 others were moved to a hospital in Quetta where the condition of three of them is critical. The Balochistan Constabulary is part of the provincial police service.

#### Fresh arrest warrant against Hasina

**Dhaka:** A court in Bangladesh Tuesday issued fresh arrest warrants against deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, her son Sajeeb Wajed and 16 others in two cases related to alleged irregularities in allocating residential plots on the outskirts of the capital. "Dhaka Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's court issued the warrants in two cases over the irregularities in acquiring plots in Purbachal New Town, taking into consideration the Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) chargesheets," a court official said. According to a prosecution lawyer, most accused were government officials. The court ordered police to submit a report April 29 if the now self-exiled ex-premier and other accused were arrested.

#### Indian held for carrying drug

**Kathmandu:** An Indian national has been arrested from Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu for allegedly carrying nearly seven kg of hemp. The airport security during checking arrested Vishak Vijayan Monday night as he was carrying almost seven kg narcotic drugs in his baggage. He had just landed in Kathmandu from Bangkok on board Thai Airways' flight. He was arrested at the terminal gate when his luggage was being checked.

#### Singapore to hold Election May 3

**Singapore:** Singapore dissolved its parliament Tuesday and will hold the next General Election May 3, officials announced here. President Tharman Shanmugaratnam dissolved parliament on the advice of Prime Minister Lawrence Wong, paving the way for Singapore's 14th General Election with the nomination day set for April 23.

# London's iconic Indian restaurant fights closure threat

*The Crown Estate, the landlords of Victory House which houses the Michelin-star restaurant for nearly 100 years since April 1926, has decided not to renew the lease to carry out a "comprehensive refurbishment" of the building*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**London, April 15:** Veeraswamy, one of Britain's oldest Indian restaurants, is fighting back against the threat of losing its iconic central London location on Regent Street in a lease extension stand-off.

The Crown Estate, the landlords of Victory House which

houses the Michelin-star restaurant for nearly 100 years since April 1926, has decided not to renew the lease to carry out a "comprehensive refurbishment" of the building.

MW Eat, the company that owns Veeraswamy, has applied to the court to seek a renewal under its protected tenancy rights as the lease expiry date nears in June. "Veeraswamy is not just an institution, but a living institution and an integral part of the current gastronomic landscape of London," said Ranjit Mathrani, director of MW Eat, the group which has been operating the restaurant since the 1990s.

"Our guests have included her late majesty the Queen (Elizabeth II), the Princess Royale (Princess Anne), and other overseas royals. The Crown Estate have declined



to extend our lease past 24 June, and require us to vacate, ostensibly to enable them to take back and use parts of our restaurant and the ground and first floors for their development plans," he said.

MW Eat has been in discussions since it became aware of the plans of the Crown Estate,

which operates the British monarch's property portfolio, and tabled alternatives that would allow the restaurant to continue operating from its historic premises.

"But they have not been will-

ing to compromise and appear determined to want to convert the whole building into offices, without much regard for history," said Mathrani.

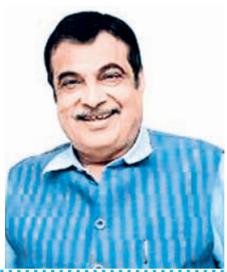
While the restaurant does not face any immediate threat of closure as a court decision on the legal challenge is expected towards the latter part of 2026, the fear of losing its century-old Regent Street location looms large.

"I am sorry to say that I feel

that the representatives have had their minds closed in respect of the retention of Veeraswamy in their various discussions with me," Mathrani notes in his witness statement to the court. Veeraswamy was founded by Edward Palmer, the great-grandson of General William Palmer who was the military and private secretary to Warren Hastings - the first Governor General of India - and Mughal Princess Faisan Nissa Begum. Palmer is said to have been greatly influenced by his great-grandmother when devising the first menu.

"We have nurtured it, nourished it and kept it apace with the times. It's probably the oldest surviving restaurant in the world now with such a rich history and will be a tragedy if it were to lose its location," added Mathrani.

**MW Eat, the company that owns Veeraswamy, has applied to the court to seek a renewal under its protected tenancy rights as the lease expiry date nears in June**



Infrastructure development is very important for India...I am working to accelerate the pace of highway construction in the country to 100 km per day

RUPEE SURGES 30 PAISE

Rising for the second straight session, the rupee jumped 33 paise to end at 85.74 (provisional) against the US dollar Tuesday due to a sharp rise in equity markets and continuing weakness in the American currency amid global uncertainties.



of the day quote

It is difficult to imagine life without iron and steel, which is made from iron. Our homes, our vehicles, our gadgets, all require iron and steel.



ANIL AGARWAL | VEDANTA GROUP CHAIRMAN

It's difficult to say how it will evolve, but my own sense is that at the end of it, I think India is going to be much better placed, because we do see the possibility of several FTAs being inked, which industry has been looking forward to for some time, hopefully during the year, whether it's the EU, UK, and, of course, the US, where there is, I think discussions, dialogue happening at a faster rate



SANJIV PURI | ITC CHAIRMAN

This year, we continued to build scale in each of the brands with Ginger crossing a 100-hotel portfolio and Vivanta reaching the over 50 hotel mark



SUMA VENKATESH | IHCL EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

Stock markets surge over 2% on global rally

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 15: Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty surged over 2 per cent Tuesday, tracking a rally in global markets after US President Donald Trump relaxed some of the tariffs on electronics products and hinted at duty revision for automobiles.

Rallying for the second straight session, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 1,577.63 points or 2.10 per cent to settle at 76,734.89. During the day, it zoomed 1,750.37 points or 2.32 per cent to 76,907.63, driven by the across-the-board rally.

The NSE Nifty surged 500 points or 2.19 per cent to 23,328.55. Intra-day, it rallied 539.8 points or 2.36 per cent to 23,368.35. The key indices have recovered almost all the losses induced by Trump's reciprocal tariffs announced on April 2.

All the BSE sectoral indices closed in the green. BSE Realty, Auto, Capital Goods and Industrials were lead gainers, jumping up to 5 per cent.

IndusInd Bank was the lead gainer among Sensex shares, surging by 6.84 per cent. Tata Motors rallied 4.50 per cent. Larsen & Toubro, Axis Bank, Adani Ports, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank and HCL Tech were also among the gainers.

ITC and Hindustan Unilever were the only laggards.

Trump has suggested that he might temporarily exempt the auto industry from tariffs that were imposed earlier.



Sensex recover all losses since tariffs announcement

New Delhi: The BSE benchmark Sensex has recovered all the losses it suffered since the US reciprocal tariffs were announced earlier this month thanks to a remarkable bounce back in the index. Rallying for the second straight session Tuesday, the BSE benchmark gauge jumped 1,577.63 points or 2.10 per cent to settle at 76,734.89.

"The rally is fuelled by the surprise pause in reciprocal tariffs which continued today led by the exemption on electronics goods also. Auto stocks gained on potential tariff relief and banking stocks benefited from deposit rate cuts. Domestically, the focus has shifted to the earnings season which has a weak forecast while global recovery and RBI's accommodative stance are supporting

sentiment," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

The BSE smallcap gauge jumped 3.21 per cent and mid-cap index rallied 3.02 per cent.

All BSE sectoral indices ended higher. Realty zoomed 5.81 per cent, Industrials soared 3.76 per cent, capital goods (3.67 per cent), auto (3.39 per cent), consumer discretionary (3.12 per cent), financial services (2.94

Retail inflation slips to 5-yr low



AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 15: India's retail inflation slipped to a more-than-five-year low as food prices continued to moderate, creating room for deeper central bank rate cuts amid fears the US-China trade war may hit global growth.

Annual retail inflation in March eased to 3.34%, below economists' estimate of 3.60%. The print was the lowest since August 2019, the government said in a statement. February retail inflation was 3.61%.

"Retail inflation is getting a repeated breather from a softer food inflation," amid prospects of better farm output, said Dipanwita Mazumdar, economist at Bank of Baroda. The main driver for lower inflation prints has been food prices, which have seen a sharp reversal in recent months from eye-watering levels most

of last year.

In March, food inflation eased to 2.69% from 3.75% in the previous month. Food inflation in March was the lowest since November 2021.

Vegetable prices fell 7.04% year-on-year, compared with an 1.07% increase in February.

Last week, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) lowered its key policy rate for a second consecutive time, signaling more cuts in the coming months to boost domestic demand. It also softened its monetary policy stance and cut the GDP growth estimate for the current fiscal year to 6.5% from 6.7%.

The central bank, however, warned that lingering global market uncertainties and recurrence of adverse weather-related supply disruptions pose upside risks to the inflation trajectory. It forecast retail inflation of 4% for the current fiscal year, assuming a normal monsoon for the year.

CENTRAL BANK OF INDIA HOLDS CREDIT CAMP TO CELEBRATE 10 YEARS OF MUDRA SCHEME

BHUBANESWAR: As PMMY completed a remarkable milestone, celebrating 10 glorious years of empowering small & micro entrepreneurs, Central Bank of India, Uttara Chhak branch, organised a mega credit camp Tuesday at Trupti Convention, Dhauli Square in presence of Babu Singh, MLA Bhubaneswar (Ekamra), to commemorate the occasion.



MEGA

Trade deficit widens to \$21.54bn

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 15: India's exports turned positive after four months recording a marginal 0.7 per cent increase to USD 41.97 billion in March, while the trade deficit widened to USD 21.54 billion, the government data showed Tuesday.

Cumulatively, during the 2024-25 financial year (April-March), the country's exports moved up a tad by 0.08 per cent to USD 437.42 billion, whereas imports climbed by 6.62 per cent to USD 720.24 billion, leaving a trade deficit of USD 282.82 billion. The trade deficit in February this year was USD 14.05 billion. In March last year, the difference between exports and imports stood at USD 15.33 billion. During 2023-24, it was USD 241.14 billion.

As regards imports, the growth rose to a four-month high of 11.3 per cent year-on-year to USD 63.51 billion in March. The country's overall exports of goods and services



are estimated to reach a "record" of USD 820.93 billion in 2024-25, an increase of 5.5 per cent over 2023-24 when these outbound shipments stood at USD 778.13 billion.

Services exports are estimated at USD 383.51 billion last fiscal against USD 341.06 billion in 2023-24. The imports stood at USD 194.95 billion in 2024-25 against USD 178.31 billion in 2023-24. Commenting on the data,

Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said despite global challenges, the merchandise exports touched the "highest" ever figures in 2024-25.

The overall shipments were also "highest" ever, he told reporters here. The major drivers of growth include engineering, electronics, pharma, ready-made garments of all textiles, rice, cotton yarn/fabrics, plastics, coffee, spices, tea and tobacco.

In 2024-25, engineering exports touched a maximum of USD 116.67 billion against USD 109.3 billion in 2023-24. It was followed by electronics (USD 38.38 billion against USD 29.12 billion), pharma (USD 30.47 billion against USD 27.85 billion), ready-made garments of all textiles (USD 15.99 billion against USD 14.53 billion), rice (USD 12.47 billion against USD 10.42 billion), cotton yarn/fabrics (USD 12.06 billion against USD 11.68 billion), plastics (USD 8.92 billion against USD 8.09 billion).

Sectors which recorded negative growth last fiscal include petroleum products (USD 63.34 billion against USD 84.16 billion), gems and jewellery (USD 29.81 billion against USD 32.17 billion), and chemicals (USD 28.7 billion against USD 29.38 billion).

According to the data, gold imports have increased to USD 58.01 billion last fiscal against USD 45.54 billion. In volume terms, the imports dipped to 757.15 tonnes in 2024-25 against 795.32 tonnes in 2023-24.

India going for trade liberalisation with US

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

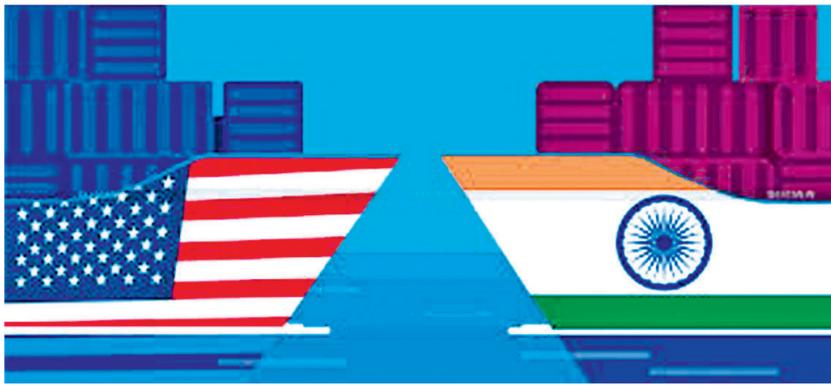
New Delhi, April 15: India has decided to follow the trade liberalisation path with the US, and both countries are negotiating a bilateral trade agreement (BTA) for which in-person talks are expected to begin next month, senior government officials said Tuesday.

India and the US are starting negotiations in virtual mode from this week. They have also finalised and signed the terms of reference (ToRs) for the pact.

India and the US have been engaged in negotiating a bilateral trade agreement (BTA) since March. Both sides have targeted to conclude the first phase of the pact by the fall (September-October) of this year, with an aim to more than double the bilateral trade to USD 500 billion by 2030 from about USD 191 billion currently.

Negotiations of the various track groups for the pact will start virtually within this week.

"We hope to get into physical mode of negotiations by the second half of May. So we are on schedule as far as the BTA and its negotiations are concerned," Additional



Secretary in the Department of Commerce Rajesh Agrawal told reporters here. He is also the chief negotiator of India for this pact.

Speaking on the agreement, Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said that the agreement, if finalised, will open huge opportunities for both India and US businesses.

"...There are both concerns as well as opportunities for India in terms of the current tariffs (globally). India has already taken a path, where we will be going for trade liberalisation with the US. There is a clear

pathway which we have decided at the leaders' level, and then subsequently meetings have been held. Negotiations are going on and we have taken a path of trade liberalisation and BTA. So if we follow that path, then I think not only India's trade with the US will grow... that will also open up opportunities for India and for US as well," he said.

Barthwal added that both countries will gain from this BTA and that is the assumption based on which such trade agreements are finalised and negotiated.

Citing examples of India's trade pacts with Australia and the UAE, he said India's trade has improved with the countries.

"So, I expect that a lot of opportunities will come, and there will be a higher trade with the US in case this BTA materialises," Barthwal said. India, he said, is also looking at non-tariff barriers as well as tariff barriers in the agreement. If these barriers are reduced by both sides, it will lead to higher trade growth for the US and India.

He added that "we will try to

see that negotiations close as quickly as possible with the US. That is the path we have taken. So I am very hopeful that we will be able to negotiate a good BTA with the US".

In a trade pact, two countries either significantly reduce or eliminate customs duties on the maximum number of goods traded between them. They also ease norms to promote trade in services and boost investments.

While the US is looking at duty concessions in sectors like certain industrial goods, automobiles (electric vehicles particularly), wines, petrochemical products, dairy, agriculture items such as apples, tree nuts, and alfalfa hay; India may look at duty cuts for labour-intensive sectors like apparels, textiles, gems and jewellery, leather, plastics, chemicals, oil seeds, shrimp, and horticulture products.

From 2021-22 to 2023-24, the US was India's largest trading partner.

The US accounts for about 18 per cent of India's total goods exports, 6.22 per cent in imports, and 10.73 per cent in bilateral trade.

With America, India had a trade surplus (the difference

between imports and exports) of USD 35.32 billion in goods in 2023-24. This was USD 27.7 billion in 2022-23, USD 32.85 billion in 2021-22, USD 22.73 billion in 2020-21, and USD 17.26 billion in 2019-20.

In 2024, India's main exports to the US included drug formulations and biologicals (USD 8.1 billion), telecom instruments (USD 6.5 billion), precious and semi-precious stones (USD 5.3 billion), petroleum products (USD 4.1 billion), gold and other precious metal jewellery (USD 3.2 billion), ready-made garments of cotton, including accessories (USD 2.8 billion), and products of iron and steel (USD 2.7 billion).

Imports included crude oil (USD 4.5 billion), petroleum products (USD 3.6 billion), coal, coke (USD 3.4 billion), cut and polished diamonds (USD 2.6 billion), electric machinery (USD 1.4 billion), aircraft, spacecraft and parts (USD 1.3 billion), and gold (USD 1.3 billion).

US President Donald Trump last Wednesday announced a 90-day pause on most tariff hikes for major trading partners including India, while raising levies on China, providing temporary relief for Indian exporters.

# Chahal's spell pulls off a thriller

ISL SUMMIT CLASH

'This one will linger'

AGENCIES

**New Chandigarh, April 15:** Yuzvendra Chahal returned with career-best tournament figures of 4-28 while pacer Marco Jansen picked three scalps to stage a thrilling 16-run win for Punjab Kings against Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL 2025 at Maharaja Yadavindra Singh International Cricket Stadium Tuesday.

Punjab bowlers bowled with a plethora of courage to pull off a thriller as they defended the lowest total in the IPL's history.

Earlier, Harshit Rana claimed three wickets while the spin duo of Varun Chakaravathy and Sunil Narine bagged two scalps each to bundle out Punjab Kings for 111 in 15.3 overs.

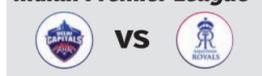
Chasing 112, Kolkata lost both their openers Sunil Narine (5) and Quinton de Kock (2) in quick intervals as Marco Jansen and debutant Xavier Bartlett gave the early breakthroughs to Punjab.

Captain Ajinkya Rahane and Angkrish Raghuvanshi took a cautious approach and steered the side to 55/2 at the end of the powerplay. The duo stitched a 60-run partnership as the KKR were looking confident to win the match.

However, Yuzvendra Chahal brought Punjab back into the game with the wicket of Rahane (17) in the eighth over. Chahal, in his next over, sent Raghuvanshi back to the pavilion. He scored 37 including five

## TODAY'S MATCH

Indian Premier League



Time: 07:30 pm

Telecast: Star Sports Network  
Stream: JioHotstar



fours and a six after coming as an impact substitute.

It was a horror show from KKR's middle order as Venkatesh Iyer (7), Rinku Singh (2) and Ramandeep Singh (0) played foolish shots on spinners to end up on the losing side. Harshit Rana and Vaibhav Arora too failed to cope with the pressure and threw their wickets cheaply.

In the end, Andre Russell gave some sigh of hope with his counterattacking stroke play but Marco Jansen ended his 17-run stay to make it possible for Punjab to defend the lowest total in IPL's history.

Opting to bat first, Punjab Kings had a flying start with openers Prabhsimran Singh and Priyansh Arya pressing on

throttle against Anrich Nortje and Vaibhav Arora in the powerplay. It was Arya who took the charge on speedster Nortje, who was making his KKR debut, and slamming two fours in his first over.

In the next over, Prabhsimran stepped on the gas and scored two fours and a six before Arya joined with a boundary to make it 20 runs from the over.

Pacer Harshit Rana's introduction to the attack in the fourth over gave some respite to KKR as he sent back Delhi opener Arya for 22 with Ramandeep Singh completing a fabulous catch in the deep. A ball before, Arya hammered the pacer over extra cover for an 82-metre maximum.

Punjab captain Shreyas Iyer joined Prabhsimran in the middle but the former's stay was cut short after he was dismissed for a two-ball duck. It was the start of a horrific batting collapse for the home side.

To maximise the situation, Rahane brought in Varun Chakaravathy and the move worked well as the spinner clinched IPL debutant Josh Inglis (2) to give another blow to Punjab in the powerplay.

However, Prabhsimran tried to release the pressure with two successive sixes off Harshit but it was the latter who had a last laugh. The opener departed after scoring 15-ball 30 including three sixes and two fours as Punjab were 54/4 after the end

## 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
PBKS	6	4	2	0.172	8
LSG	7	4	3	0.086	8
KKR	7	3	4	0.547	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

of the powerplay.

The scenario didn't improve for Punjab as Nehal Wadhwa (10), who got a promising start, gave away his wicket to Nortje in the ninth over. Chakaravathy got the better of Glenn Maxwell (7) in the next over to bag his second scalp of the night.

Narine, from the other end, sent back the impact substitute Suryansh Shedge (4) and Marco Jansen (1) in the same over to leave Punjab tottering at 86/8 in 11 overs.

Shashank Singh, who was trying to take the side to a respectable total, was trapped in front of the wickets by Vaibhav Arora to make sure he didn't miss out on the golden opportunity. Shashank contributed 18 runs with the help of a six and a four.

In the end, a mix-up between Arshdeep Singh and Xavier Bartlett resulted in the dismissal of the latter as Punjab Kings were bundled out for 111/10 in 15.3 overs.

**Brief scores:** Punjab Kings 111/10 in 15.3 overs (Prabhsimran Singh 30, Priyansh Arya 22; Harshit Rana 3-25, Varun Chakaravathy 2-21, Sunil Narine 2-14) beat Kolkata Knight Riders 95/10 in 15.1 overs (Angkrish Raghuvanshi 37, Andre Russell 17; Yuzvendra Chahal 4-28, Marco Jansen 3-17) by 16 runs.



**Mohun Bagan Super Giant beat Bengaluru FC 2-1 in extra time to become the Indian Super League (ISL) Cup champion in the 2024-25 season Saturday**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 15:** He had a dream run in an eventful year both for club and country but the prized domestic trophy eluded him this time and Bengaluru FC captain Sunil Chhetri admitted that the loss to Mohun Bagan Super Giant in the Indian Super League (ISL) final will hurt him immensely.

Bengaluru FC lost 1-2 to Mohun Bagan Super Giant in the ISL summit clash April 12 in Kolkata with the latter lifting the Cup after winning the League Winners' Shield earlier in the season. "I know how all of you are feeling. Losing stinks. And this one will linger for a while," the 40-year-old Chhetri wrote on his social media accounts.

"I did what everyone does after losing a final. I sat with all the what-ifs and should-haves. The freekick. The header. Every half chance."

It's not that Chhetri and BFC have not won the ISL Cup. They had claimed it in the 2018-19 season with the talismanic striker as the captain. But lifting the Cup as a 40-year-old after retiring and making a comeback for

the national team would have been a fairy-tale story.

He scored 14 goals in 28 matches this ISL season to be the highest scorer among the Indians and second only overall to Moroccan and North East United striker Alaeddine Ajaraie - 23 goals from 28 matches.

Chhetri had also scored 14 goals from 21 matches in the 2017-18 season. He has scored 75 goals from 183 matches since 2015 in the ISL. He has turned up for BFC since then till now.

"And so, in what is uncharacteristic advice, go and sink into that tub of ice cream. Call for that cheat meal on a Monday. Skip the gym. Whatever it takes for you to feel better. Then after a few days, acknowledge that this hurt will end only when we win," he wrote.

"You love this team because you know how we're built. Don't let anything change that. We have lost many finals and have only come back stronger. That's the only way we at BFC know how to operate."

"We'll hurt for now, and then we'll brave it till we get over the line. That's how we'll do it. That's how we've always done it at this football club." Chhetri announced international retirement in June 2024 but made a shocked return to play for India's two matches in March - against Maldives in an international friendly and against Bangladesh in an AFC Asian Cup qualifying round matches - when the ISL was in recess due to FIFA international window.

## Amar Sarin creates national record at Delhi Horse Show

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, April 15:** In a historic moment for Indian equestrian sport, Amar Sarin, astride his magnificent Belgian stallion Bajrang, soared to a record-breaking height of 1.90 meters in the open jumping six bar at the prestigious Delhi Horse Show 2025, held at JPC.

This remarkable feat has now been officially recognised as a national record.

Representing TARC Equestrian Centre, Amar's achievement stands as a testament to his unmatched athleticism, precision, and years of dedicated training under the expert guidance of renowned international coach Nick Verlies.

Bajrang, born in 2014 and imported from Belgium, has consistently delivered top-tier performances and once again proved his class in a packed arena filled with equestrian enthusiasts.

Adding to the celebratory weekend, Amar's eight-year-old daughter, Shivaaya Sarin, secured gold in the Future Star Show Jumping category, riding her pony Mistral and silver in Fault and Out on her pony Fairy Tale. It was a heartwarming and symbolic moment - father and daughter both standing atop their podiums, united by their shared love for the sport.

"Balancing the world of high-performance sport with the responsibilities of leading a major corporation is challenging, but deeply fulfilling," said Amar Sarin. "Moments like these - standing in the arena with my daughter - make it worth it."



## Shreyas Iyer wins ICC Men's Player of the Month award

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dubai, April 15:** Stylish Indian batter Shreyas Iyer Tuesday secured the ICC Men's Player of the Month award for March after playing a stellar role in India's Champions Trophy triumph.

Iyer finished as the highest run-scorer with 243 runs during the ODI event to win the honour, overcoming competition from New Zealand's Jacob Duffy and Rachin Ravindra.

"I'm truly honored to be named the ICC Men's Player of the Month for March. This recognition is incredibly special, especially in a month where we lifted the ICC Champions Trophy - a moment I will cherish forever," Iyer said in an ICC release. "Being able to contribute to India's success on such a big stage is something every cricketer dreams of. I'm grateful to my teammates, coaches, and support staff for their unwavering support and belief."

"A heartfelt thank you to the fans as well - your energy and encouragement keep us going every step of the way."

India thus won the award



back-to-back, with Shubman Gill winning the honour for February. Iyer helped India progress through the middle overs with his masterful strokeplay and his knack for anchoring the innings and forging crucial partnerships played a vital role in steering his side through a victorious campaign.

The 30-year-old scored 172 runs across three matches in March, averaging 57.33, with a modest strike rate of 77.47, which included some spectacular knocks.

Iyer scored 79 off 98 balls which included 4 fours and 2 sixes in a win against New Zealand in a Group A fixture of the Champions Trophy, an innings that gave India a competitive total of 250 in the first innings on a tricky pitch.

## SUDIRMAN CUP FINALS

# Sindhu, Sen to lead India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 15:** The women's doubles pair of Gayatri Gopichand and Treeasa Jolly will miss out due to injury, but PV Sindhu and Lakshya Sen will spearhead a strong Indian singles challenge at the Sudirman Cup Finals to be held in Xiamen, China from April 27 to May 4.

It has been learnt that both Treeasa and Gayatri, currently ranked 10th in the world, are recuperating from shoulder issues attributed to a packed schedule last year. The duo have already featured in five tournaments this season, adding to the 22 events they contested in 2024.

The pair had enjoyed a successful run last year, clinching the D alongside former champions Indonesia, two-time runners-up Denmark, and a strong English outfit. The tournament will see the return of the formidable men's doubles duo of Satwik Sairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty after an injury break.

In their absence, the young combination of Priya Konjengbam and Shruti Mishra will shoulder the responsibility in the women's doubles event after



being named in the 14-member Indian squad by the Badminton Association of India (BAI).

India, who qualified for the prestigious mixed team championships based on their overall world ranking, have been clubbed in a challenging Group D alongside former champions Indonesia, two-time runners-up Denmark, and a strong English outfit. The tournament will see the return of the formidable men's doubles duo of Satwik Sairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty after an injury break.

Chirag had suffered a back injury during the second round

of All England Championships in March. The young pairing of Hariharan Amsakarunan and Ruban Kumar Rethinasabapathi has been named as backup for Satwik and Chirag in men's doubles.

Besides Sen, the men's singles line-up also features HS Prannoy, while Sindhu will be joined by former national champion and world No 45 Anupama Upadhyaya in women's singles. In mixed doubles, Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto, who reached the quarterfinals at the Asia Championships, will lead the challenge.

## GEORGE FOREMAN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Houston, April 15:** George Foreman was remembered Monday in a memorial service in his hometown of Houston for his legendary boxing career as well as for his love for God, family, horses and cheeseburgers and for his desire to help his fellow man.

"He preached love all the time. That's what this life is all about. It's all about love and George was pure because George lived and believed what he preached," said James Douglas, a longtime friend and former president of Texas Southern University in Houston.

During a nearly 1 1/2 hour memorial service, Foreman's family and friends recalled anecdotes about a man who was a two-time boxing heavyweight champion but who was also a pastor who delivered life-affirming sermons at his church

in northeast Houston and a savvy businessman best known for the George Foreman Grill.

Foreman even addressed the crowd posthumously at the Wortham Theater Centre, a performing arts centre that hosted the memorial, with audio messages recorded previously.

"Winning and losing can never assure a lasting smile. But saying to the face you see daily, I did my best, I can," Foreman said on the recording.

Many of the people who spoke at the memorial, including George Foreman IV, one of five sons of the boxing legend, highlighted the importance of faith in the elder Foreman's life and how God guided his efforts to help others.

"How well do I remember how Jesus brought me through? I prayed, I walked a night or two. I said, Lord, why don't you take and

use me? That's all that I can do. I give my life to Jesus, what about you?" That was a song my grandmother gave to my father. He was going through a hard time. So now I've given it to you," George Foreman IV said as his four brothers stood behind him.

Foreman had 12 children, including five sons who are all famously named George Edward Foreman.

"Rest well, dad. We will carry your

love with us always," said George Foreman IV, who is also a pastor.

Former boxer Michael Moorer, who Foreman defeated in 1994 to become the oldest man at age 45 to win the heavyweight championship, told the crowd that the two went from being competitors to having a relationship "built on respect for over 30

years." "George was a champion in life. His faith transformed the shy country boy from Texas to a successful businessman and a voice for the less fortunate," Moorer said.

Dr Adan Rios, a longtime friend of the boxing great, recalled how Foreman bought land to create a food bank for AIDS patients and donated \$1.7 million to help treat adolescent patients with cancer.

Foreman died March 21 at age 76. Foreman's family has not disclosed his cause of death, only saying on social media that he "peacefully departed ... surrounded by loved ones."

Born in Marshall, Texas, Foreman was raised in Houston's Fifth Ward, one of the city's historically Black neighborhoods. He began his boxing career as an Olympic gold medalist in 1968, turning pro the next year. Foreman became the

heavyweight champion of the world when he beat Joe Frazier in 1973. But he lost the title the following year when Muhammad Ali beat Foreman in the famous "Rumble in the Jungle" fight in Zaire. Foreman then gave up boxing and after a religious awakening, became an ordained minister in 1978. He began preaching in Houston, later founding The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ in 1980.

The middle-aged fighter returned to the ring after a 10-year absence and in 1994 pulled off one of the most spectacular knockouts in boxing history, flooring Moorer - 19 years his junior - with a surgical right hand to claim Moorer's two heavyweight belts.

Foreman retired in 1997 with a 76-5 career record. He then moved on to the next chapter in his life as a businessman, pitchman and occasional actor.

