



Sam's pragmatism

Actor Samantha Ruth Prabhu says it is crucial to break taboos and dated notions surrounding women's period cycle

LEISURE | P2



Cheap arms loans

India ramps up efforts to become a global arms supplier, targeting countries that have traditionally relied on Russian weaponry

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Gold rush continues

Gold prices soar ₹1,650 to hit a fresh peak of ₹98,100 per 10 grams Wednesday amid a trade war between the US and China

BUSINESS | P11



Suruchi shines

Suruchi Inder Singh combines with Saurabh Chaudhary to win the 10m air pistol mixed team gold medal, adding to her individual triumph

SPORTS | P12

China faces up to 245% retaliatory tariff: White House

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, April 16: China now faces tariffs up to 245 per cent on imports to the United States due to its retaliatory actions, the White House has said, as the trade war escalated between the world's two largest economies.

Separately in a post on Truth Social, President Donald Trump said Tuesday that China just reneged on the big Boeing deal, saying that they will "not take possession" of fully committed to aircraft. He appeared to be confirming reports that China has asked its airlines not to take deliveries of planes from American aircraft manufacturer Boeing.

In the post, he also vowed to protect the US and its farmers in a trade war with its adversaries, such as China.

In a fact sheet issued Tuesday, the White House said President Trump signed an executive order launching an investigation into the national security risks posed by US reliance on imported processed critical minerals and their derivative products.

On Day One, President Trump initiated his America First Trade Policy to make America's economy great again, it said.

More than 75 countries have already reached out to discuss new trade deals. As a result, the individualised higher tariffs are currently paused amid these discussions, except for China, which retaliated, it said.



China now faces up to a 245% tariff on imports to the United States as a result of its retaliatory actions, the fact sheet said, without giving details. China is the only country to have retaliated with tit-for-tat levies.

China Friday raised its additional tariffs on imports from the US to 125 per cent in retaliation to the Trump administration's 145 per cent levies on Chinese exports. China also filed a lawsuit with the WTO following the US tariff hikes.

China earlier retaliated with 84 per cent levies and imposed restrictions on imports of some US films, expressing its interest in holding dialogue with Washington to resolve the issue.

The fact sheet accused China of banning exports to the US of gallium, germanium, antimony, and other key high-tech materials with potential military applications.



VENTING IRE: Activists raise slogans after spraying an Enforcement Directorate (ED) signboard with black paint, amid nationwide protests by Congress members after the agency filed a chargesheet against Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi in the National Herald case, in Patna, Wednesday

Justice Gavai to be next CJ

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 16: Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna Wednesday recommended to the Centre the name of Justice Bhushan Ramkrishna Gavai as the next CJ.

Justice Gavai, the second senior-most Supreme Court judge after the incumbent CJ Khanna, is set to become the 52nd CJ May 14 after the retirement of CJ Khanna May 13. He will be the second Dalit to head the country's judiciary, after Justice KG Balakrishnan.



Justice Gavai, who was elevated as a judge of the Supreme Court May 24, 2019, would have a tenure of over six months as the CJ. He is due to retire November 23, 2025.

CJ Khanna, who was sworn in as the 51st CJ November 11 last year, recommended to the Union Law Ministry to appoint Justice Gavai as the next CJ.

The retirement age of Supreme Court judges is 65 years.

Born November 24, 1960 at Amravati, Justice Gavai has been a part of several Constitution benches in the apex court which delivered path-breaking verdicts, including upholding Centre's abrogation of Article 370.

Waqf Act: SC proposes stay on key provisions

The Supreme Court, while hearing pleas against the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025, raised serious concerns over its constitutional validity. It questioned the exclusion of 'waqf by user', a long-standing and judicially recognised practice, warning that undoing such endowments would erase genuine religious history. The bench stated that the legislature cannot nullify past judicial decisions and emphasised the risk of rewriting history. It also questioned the Centre on whether Muslims would now be allowed in Hindu religious trusts, highlighting concerns of religious parity. The court criticised the provision requiring individuals to prove five years of Islamic practice to create a waqf, calling it arbitrary. The bench further expressed concerns on the wide-spread violence during protests terming it as "disturbing"

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 16: In a significant development, the Supreme Court Wednesday proposed to stay certain key provisions of the contentious Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025, including the power to denotify properties declared as waqf by courts and inclusion of non-Muslims in central Waqf councils and boards.

The top court proposed to pass the order, which was opposed by the Centre as it sought a detailed hearing before any such interim order.

The hearing relating to 72 petitions against the constitutionality of the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025 took place before a bench of Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justices Sanjay Kumar and KV Viswanathan.

The bench, which will continue with the hearing Thursday, was miffed over the inclusion of non-Muslims in the central waqf councils and boards and asked the Centre whether it was willing to include Muslims in Hindu religious trusts.

After hearing solicitor general Tushar Mehta for the Centre and senior lawyers including



Kapil Sibal, Rajeev Dhavan, Abhishek Singhvi, CU Singh for Muslim bodies and individual petitioners, the CJ proposed to issue the notice and to pass an interim order, saying it will balance the equities.

Observing some provisions could have grave ramifications, particularly those that potentially undermine judicially recognised waqf properties, the CJ proposed the order.

The properties declared as waqfs by the courts should not be de-notified, whether they are by waqf-by-user or waqf by deed while the court is hearing the challenge to the Waqf Amendment Act 2025, the CJ proposed.

The bench also hinted to stay a provision of the amended law,

which says a waqf property will not be treated as waqf during the inquiry of the collector to decide if the property is a government land.

All members of waqf boards and the central waqf council must be Muslims, except the ex-officio members, the CJ said.

The bench took note of the provision-wise objections to the Act and expressed reservations on several aspects of the legislation, including the inclusion of non-Muslims in the central waqf council and state waqf boards.

It also objected to empowering district collectors to adjudicate disputes related to waqf properties and the provisions allowing de-notification of properties declared as waqf by competent courts.

Ordinarily, courts do not interfere at the admission stage when a law is passed. But this case may warrant an exception. If a property declared as waqf by user is denotified, it can have grave ramifications, the CJ said.

Custodial death of UTP sparks outcry

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, April 16: Tension prevailed after an undertrial prisoner (UTP) in Rourkela Special Jail died under mysterious circumstances Wednesday.

The deceased was identified as Rakesh Kujur, 45, of Dalki Dungaghat village under Raiboga police limits in Biramitrapur of Sundargarh district. Police registered a case of unnatural death over a complaint lodged by the jail authorities and started an investigation.

The incident triggered a protest as the deceased's wife Amrita Kujur lodged a complaint with Raghunathpali police. She alleged that her husband was beaten to death in the custody. She demanded a high-level probe into the matter and justice for the bereaved family.

Hundreds of villagers and the deceased's relatives staged a protest outside the RGH mortuary, refusing to receive the body until their demands are met.

Amrita alleged that Biramitrapur excise officials had picked up her husband from their house in a fake liquor case early Tuesday morning.

"He was in perfect health when he left home," she stated.

It was around 10pm Tuesday when the jail authorities informed the family over phone that Rakesh had fallen ill. By Wednesday morning, the family reached RGH only to discover Rakesh dead.

His body reportedly bore multiple injury marks and blood stains. His torn clothes raised suspicions of custodial torture. Amrita, in her complaint, alleged that he was either beaten up brutally in the excise police station or inside the jail and demanded a high-level inquiry into the incident.

Rourkela Special Jail official Ratikant Shukla said Rakesh had been arrested by the Excise department and produced before a local court Tuesday. He was remanded to judicial custody after his bail plea was rejected.

Shukla stated that Rakesh was examined at the jail's health centre at around 8:30pm Tuesday after he complained of uneasiness. As his health condition deteriorated, he was shifted to RGH, where he was declared dead at around 5:45am Wednesday.

SHORT TAKES

DARA SINGH AIDE FREED AFTER 25 YRS

Keonjhar: Mahendra Hembram, one of the convicts in the high-profile murder case of Australian missionary Graham Staines and his two minor sons, was released from Keonjhar jail Wednesday after serving 25 years. Now 50 years old, Hembram was released from prison on grounds of good behaviour during his incarceration. Hembram and Dara Singh, alias Rabindra Pal Singh, were convicted for the brutal murder of Staines and his sons, who were burnt alive by a mob allegedly led by Singh on the night of January 21, 1999. "I spent 25 years in jail after being falsely implicated in an incident related to religious conversion. Today, I have been released," Hembram told reporters outside the jail. P4

CM UNVEILS ₹7K-CR INVESTMENT PLAN

Baripada: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi announced Wednesday that the state would be the recipient of a massive boost in industrial development with ₹7,000 crores set to be invested in 10 new industrial projects in Mayurbhanj. Speaking at the PM Vishwakarma - National SC-ST Hub Conclave held at Maharaja Sriram Chandra Bhanja Deo University in Baripada, Majhi also revealed that the PM Vishwakarma Scheme has already benefited 1,05,361 artisans from 18 traditional trades in Odisha, including blacksmiths, carpenters, potters, and weavers. artisans and small entrepreneurs from the SC/ST communities. P5

'Historic' WHO pact to tackle future pandemics

This is only the second time in the WHO's 75-year history that member countries have reached a binding agreement - the last being a tobacco control accord in 2003

REUTERS

Geneva, April 16: Members of the World Health Organization reached a landmark agreement Wednesday on how to learn from COVID-19, which killed millions of people in 2020-22, and prepare the world for future pandemics. Sticking points on the road to the deal included how to share drugs and vac-

cines fairly between wealthy countries and poorer ones.

The legally binding pact is widely seen as a victory for the global health agency at a time when multilateral organisations like the WHO have been battered by sharp cuts in US foreign funding. "After more than three years of intensive negotiations, WHO member states took a major step forward in efforts to make the world safer from pandemics," the health body said in a statement.

US negotiators left the discussions after President Donald Trump began a 12-month process of withdrawing the US - by far the WHO's largest financial backer - from the agency when he took office in January. Given this, the US would not be bound by the pact.



"This is a historic moment and a show, that with or without the US, countries are committed to working together and to the power of multilateralism," Nina Schwalbe, the founder of global health think tank Spark Street Advisors, told Reuters. The agreement, still subject to adoption by the World Health Assembly in May and ratification by members, addresses structural inequities about how drugs or vaccines and health tools are developed. Its article nine requires governments to establish national policies setting access condi-

tions in research and development agreements and to ensure that pandemic-related drugs, therapeutics and vaccines are globally accessible - for the first time in an international health agreement.

"The deal essentially gives WHO members more teeth in terms of their preparedness, response and prevention of future pandemics," Ricardo Matute, Policy Engagement Advisor with the Governing Pandemics Team at the Global Health Centre, Geneva Graduate Institute, told Reuters.

Measures include allowing the WHO to have an overview of global supply chains of medical materials such as masks and vaccines. It will also enable more local production of vaccines and other treatments during a pandemic.

leisure



FLORENCE PUGH ISN'T AN EASY PERSON TO DATE

Hollywood actress Florence Pugh says she wants to make changes because she knows she is not an 'easy' person to date. The *Thunderbolts* actress said that her hectic work schedule means it can be hard for her to "make dates," reports *femalefirst.co.uk*.

GADOT'S SNOW WHITE BANNED IN LEBANON

Amidst the global tariff wars, the tension in the Middle East is trickling down to Hollywood productions. The live-action film *Snow White* has been banned from playing in movie theaters in Lebanon due to the presence in the film of Israeli actress Gal Gadot.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

ARIES
You are a touchy one. People will rub you the wrong way today. But remember that getting needlessly annoyed will bring nothing but more complications. Contemplate in seclusion about the root cause of the problem. Ganesha's hint? It is closer than you imagine.

TAURUS
Your enthusiasm will be as contagious as your smile today, predicts Ganesha. People will stand charmed by your high spirits. There will be stressful moments, but things will look up later in the day. Take some time off if things get too hectic for you.

GEMINI
Today, you are likely to focus on self-improvement, predicts Ganesha. Self-employed people may expect huge profits in their businesses. You may end up spending more time at work and less time with family. You need to strike a balance between work and family.

CANCER
A quintessential Scorpio that you are, sex and passion will figure at the top of your priority list today. At work, you will have a tough time holding yourself back from making a pass at good-looking colleagues. However, as the day progresses, you may start thinking from your brains again, says Ganesha.

LEO
Call it the momentary re-ignition of the spark of brilliance and energy, this day finds you at the peak of your dynamism. Ganesha predicts a fantastic day for all, especially those in the freelancing business, as your imagination and inspiration reach new heights and motivate others to excel. Recall the legendary Swami Vivekananda's words, "Arise, awake and stop not till your goal is reached."

VIRGO
Today is the day when you'll be like the Iron Man: heart of gold, nerves of steel - minus the shiny body armour, though. Tolerance, optimism and exceedingly artistic talents will rule the roost. Pursue academics in the arts, advises Ganesha. Your understanding of life will help you serve society better. Yes, like Iron Man.

LIBRA
You never let a favour go unacknowledged, or let a ridicule pass by unanswered. So, it's time to settle those old accounts that are so important to you, feels Ganesha. This will increase chances of interesting developments that will continue to surprise you throughout the day. All in all, Ganesha wishes you a vibrant day today.

SCORPIO
Ganesha warns you of a long, dreary day today. Though not completely at a loss, you may feel lost and desire to spend some time alone with yourself. The empty nest syndrome is likely to invade and hold your mental peace at ransom, says Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS
Today, your superiors at work are going to trust you with many complicated assignments. But, after exerting yourself, you are sure to come out with flying colors and have your work appreciated. Do not be surprised if cash incentives come your way. Such may indeed be your fortune, says Ganesha.

CAPRICORN
If you are a sports person, you will enjoy both good health and fame, while engineers will mull investing money in new business ventures, foresees Ganesha. But make sure you know what you are doing, a minor slip can cost you a fortune, and you would have realised by now that reporting won't undo anything. Your social standing may get stronger; people may develop a high opinion about, and your reputation may get a boost too.

AQUARIUS
Money matters are very important, and your family will demand your presence in all financial dealings. At work, things will be more comfortable. You may also get new projects. Ganesha predicts a trip in the offing.

PISCES
Your inherent dynamism and energy will sparkle forth today. Freelancers will be struck with inspiration, and will conjure masterpieces. Pleasant surprises await you in the evening, says Ganesha.

Sam breaks period taboos

Mumbai: Actress Samantha Ruth Prabhu, also known as Sam among her fans, has talked about menstruation and said conversations around periods are still met with silence, whispers, and shame. Talking about how periods are still considered to be a taboo subject, Samantha told this agency, "As women, we've come so far, yet conversations around periods are still met with silence, whispers, and shame."

The actress, in an episode of her podcast *Take20*, spoke to nutritionist Rashi Chowdhary about menstruation, cycle syncing, endometriosis, and the everyday (yet rarely acknowledged) health struggles that

women face. She told *IANS*, "Speaking with Rashi Choudhary reminded me how crucial it is to break these taboos and dated notions. Our cycles are powerful and, most importantly, life-affirming. Definitely not something to be ashamed of or hide or, for that matter, even taken lightly."

In the podcast, Samantha said, "The menstrual cycle and how it affects our mind and body is something we need to consistently keep learning about with every passing year. Rashi, with her wealth of experience and the depth of her knowledge, has a very clear manner of explaining things, and I'm glad, together, we could have such a well-rounded chat dedicated to truly understanding & harnessing the power of this life force that we as women are blessed with."



48TH BAISHAKHI FESTIVAL- DAY II

A vibrant display of Odia culture, tradition

Bhubaneswar: The second evening of the 48th Baishakhi Festival, organised by Chinta O Chetana (COC) at Rabindra Mandap Wednesday, showcased the vibrant culture and traditions of the state.

Several dignitaries and culture enthusiasts attended the event. Gracing the occasion as Chief Guest, **Orissa POST** and **Dharitri** Editor Tathagata Satpathy said, "I have traveled across the nation, but nowhere have I seen such a heartfelt gesture of devotion—the act of standing with hands up in complete surrender before Lord Jagannath. This posture isn't taught; it comes from within and is embedded in every Odia."

Emphasising the spiritual connection Odias have with Lord Jagannath, he added, "Odia people excel in every aspect—be it politics, literature, or art. Our strength comes from our deep-rooted faith in Lord Jagannath." Adyasha Satpathy, the Chief Executive of the dailies, said, "I'm truly grateful to have witnessed the entire Dibyapahandi ritual. I strongly felt the presence of Lord Jagannath here. I only wish I had brought more people with me to experience this. I congratulate the audience for being here and supporting such rich traditions. We stand with Chinta O Chetana and will continue to support their efforts."

COC's National General Secretary Surendra Das said, "We see people celebrating the New Year with cakes, hotel bookings, parties, and great excitement. In the midst of all this, we often forget our own traditions. For us, April 14 marks Pana Sank-



Orissa POST and **Dharitri** Chief Executive Adyasha Satpathy lighting the ceremonial lamp while among others the Editor of the dailies Tathagata Satpathy, Chinta O Chetana (COC)'s National General Secretary Surendra Das, COC President Sahadev Sahoo and former Commissioner-cum-Secretary of Culture department, Government of Odisha, Manoranjan Panigrahi are seen.

ranti, and we should cherish it. Our organisation is committed to celebrating this deeply rooted cultural occasion and reviving the spirit of our heritage."

Also present were Manoranjan Panigrahi, the former Commissioner-cum-Secretary of the Culture department, Government of Odisha, Kasturi Patnaik, wife of legendary Odia playback singer Pranab Patnaik, and COC President Sahadev Sahu.

Some stunning performances, including an Odissi dance based on the Ramayana by Bhubaneswar's Tridhara Dance Academy, a powerful Kali dance by Trinatre from Cuttack, and a vibrant Palli dance from Ganjam, were the highlights of the event. **Orissa POST** and **Dharitri** are the print media partners for the event.



A stunning Goti Pua dance show at the event. PHOTO: BIKASH NAYAK

Rashmika's new journey

Mumbai: Actress Rashmika Mandanna is set to narrate stories of joy, hope, and wholesomeness on social media through *Rashmika & Ru* (R&R), an all-new original IP. For the same, the actress has teamed up with storytelling platform Terribly Tiny Tales (TTT) under Collective Artists Network. The IP is designed to spread joy, hope, and wholesome vibes in the social universe. At the center of this uplifting initiative is Ru, an animated character

inspired by Rashmika's own spirit, the one that radiates warmth, kindness, and emotional connection. With R&R, the goal is simple yet powerful, to offer a refreshing break from the doomscrolling spiral and deliver a daily dose of lightness in an otherwise chaotic digital world. The journey begins with a tender and deeply relatable comic series that celebrates everyday companionship, feeling your feelings, and showing up for your people.

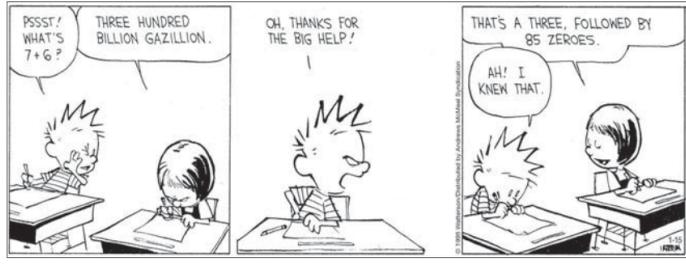
Talking about the initiative, Rashmika said in a statement, "As a person, I believe in joy and kindness as pillars, and Ru is an extension of me to the audience to spread that message, for us to be kinder to ourselves as well as others." With TTT's celebrated narrative sensibilities and Rashmika's uniquely uplifting presence, *Rashmika & Ru* is set to become a cultural touchstone for those seeking moments of light in the everyday.



PEANUTS



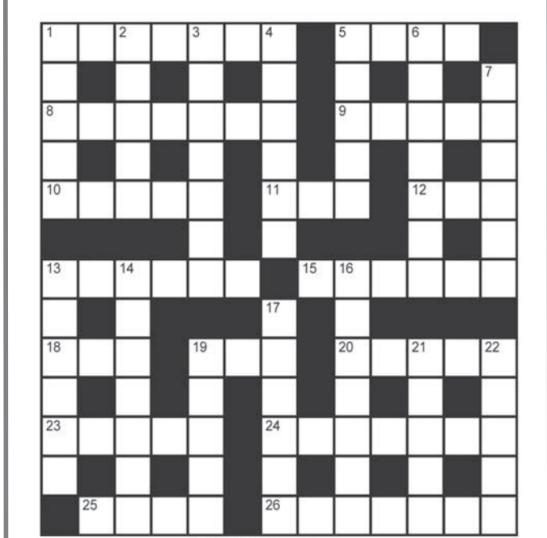
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



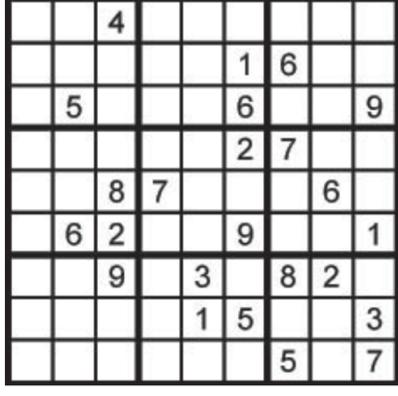
CROSSWORD



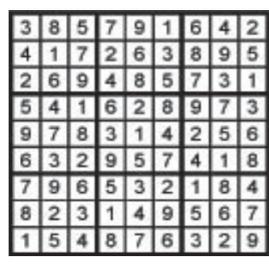
- Across**
1 Kind of cocktail
5 Vegetarian staple
8 Rust
9 Audacity
10 Scoundrels
11 Freudian topic
12 Paris assent
13 Tropical fruit
15 Sea horse
18 Quirky
19 Possess
20 Witch
- Down**
23 Shackles
24 Enumerate
25 Luau strings
26 Puts down roots
- Across**
5 Argentine dance
6 Passion
7 Brainiac
13 Fear
14 Pen for racehorses
16 Antediluvian
17 Escargot gastropods
19 Desert sight
21 Bay window
22 Fencing swords

SUDOKU

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, fill in the boxes in such a manner that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.



SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



Modi Government's dedication powers Odisha's new era of connectivity



21st century India is creating new and improved infrastructure. Better roads, rail network and airports are not just infrastructure projects but also change the fortunes of the region.

-Narendra Modi,
Prime Minister of India

Inauguration & Foundation Stone Laying of 19 Ground Breaking Road Projects of 154 Km. Length with an Investment of more than ₹4000 Cr

Foundation Stone Laying (Bhoomipujan)

4 laning Banarpal - Godibandha (NH 53 and 149, Length -17 Km., Cost-₹973 Cr.)	4 laning of Bangriposi Ghat inside Similipal Tiger Reserve (NH-49, Length - 10 Km., Cost- ₹135 Cr)	05 nos. VUP and 01 Flyover (NH-16, Length - 7 Km., Cost - ₹115 Cr)	VUP at Nirgundi Square and LVUP at Chhatia (NH-16, Length - 2 Km., Cost - ₹35 Cr)
4- Lane Viaduct in the Elephant Corridor of Singhara - Binjabahal section (NH-49, Length -2 Km., Cost - ₹48 Cr)	03 nos. VUP and 01 Flyover (NH-16, Length - 5 Km., Cost - ₹80 Cr)	Additional 2L bridge at Palasuni over Gangua Nallah (NH-16, Length - 1 Km., Cost - ₹40 Cr)	Titilagarh Town Bypass (NH-59, Length - 9 Km., Cost- ₹145 Cr)
Bypass road to Dharmagarh town (NH-130C, Length - 8 Km. Cost - ₹170 Cr)	Bridge over Ret river on NH-26 in Kalahandi district (Length - 2 Km., Cost - ₹40 Cr)	Bridge over Sagada river on NH-26 in Kalahandi district (Length - 3 Km., Cost - ₹40 Cr)	Widening of NH-20 from Mangalpur to Kayangola including spur to Aradi (Length -17 Km., Cost - ₹375 Cr)
Widening of Daringbadi Ghat portion (NH-59, Length - 27 Km., Cost - ₹720Cr)	H.L. Bridge over River Mahanadi at Pujaripalli Ghat connecting to Jarimuli (Length - 3 Km., Cost - ₹275 Cr)	H.L. Bridge over River TEL on Boria Gudtula Kundabandh Road of Kalahandi district (Length- 1 Km., Cost - ₹60 Cr)	
H.L. Bridge over River TEL on Pourkela to Ghunsar road of Kalahandi district (Length - 1 Km., Cost - ₹72 Cr)	H.L. Bridge over Hati River on Khanidangiriguda-Bankapala Road of Kalahandi district (Length - 1 Km., Cost - ₹25 Cr)		

Dedication to Nation:

4 Laning of Talcher to Kamakhyanagar (NH 149 and 53, Length- 41 Km., Cost - ₹800 Cr)	VUPs at Balikuda, Sikharpur and Badachana (NH-16, Length - 3 Km., Cost - ₹45 Cr)
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by
Nitin Gadkari
Minister of Road Transport & Highways
Govt. of India

and

Chairmanship of
Mohan Charan Majhi
Chief Minister of Odisha

Thursday, 17th April, 2025 at 04:30 PM, Venue: Baramunda Ground, Bhubaneswar

Advantages of the Projects

4 lane widening of Banarpal - Godibandha & Talcher - Kamakhyanagar sections improving connectivity to Angul, Talcher and Duburi	Six bridges over the Sand, Mahanadi, Tel, Hati, and Sagda rivers to enhance regional connectivity.	5 EUPs and 14 AUPs in the Bangriposi Ghat section of NH-49 aims to ensure smooth, safe travel and facilitate the safe crossing of wild animals
Permanent rectification of 15 black spots along the Cuttack-Ichhapuram section of NH-16 to enhance road safety and reduce accidents.	Titilagarh & Dharmagarh bypass will provide relief from traffic congestion within the city.	Additional two-lane bridge over Gangua Nallah at Palasuni aims to provide relief from traffic congestion and improve traffic flow.
		Enhanced connectivity to the Daringbadi tourist destination.

In august presence of

Dharmendra Pradhan
Minister of Education, Govt. of India

Ashwini Vaishnav
Minister of Railways, Govt. of India

Jual Oram
Minister of Tribal Affairs, Govt. of India

Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo
Deputy Chief Minister, Odisha

Smt. Pravati Parida
Deputy Chief Minister, Odisha

Prithviraj Harichandan
Minister of Excise, Law and Works
Govt of Odisha

Bibhuti Bhusan Jena
Minister, Commerce and Transport,
Steel & Mines, Govt of Odisha

Suresh Pujari
Minister, Revenue and Disaster Managanemet
Govt of Odisha

Ganesh Ram Singkhuntia
Minister Forest, Environment &
Climate Change, Govt. of Odisha

MPs from the constituency covering Projects

Rudra Narayan Pany | **Bhartruhari Mahtab** | **Naba Charan Majhi** | **Mamata Mohanta** | **Pradeep Purohit** | **Dr. Pradeep Kumar Panigrahy**
Smt. Aparajita Sarangi | **Baijayant Panda** | **Ananta Nayak** | **Dr. Rabindra Narayan Behera** | **Malvika Devi** | **Sangita Kumari Singh Deo**
Niranjan Bishi | **Sujeet Kumar** | **Sambit Patra** | **Avimanyu Sethi** | **Sukanta Kumar Panigrahi** | **Anita Subhadarshini**

MLAs from the constituency covering Projects

Braja Kishore Pradhan | **Pratap Chandra Pradhan** | **Sanjali Murmu** | **Bhadav Hansdah** | **Tankadhar Tripathy** | **Krushna Chandra Nayak**
Manoranjan Dyan Samantara | **Kundala Anil Kumar** | **Ashok Bendalam** | **Dr. Fakir Mohan Naik** | **Prasanna Acharya** | **Nihar Ranjan Mahananda** | **Bibhuti Bhusan Pradhan**
Satrughan Jena | **Sushanta Kumar Rout** | **Babu Singh** | **Sagar Charan Das** | **Manorama Mohanty** | **Sudhir Ranjan Pattajoshi**
Nabin Kumar Jain | **Laxman Kumar Bag** | **Dibya Shankar Mishra** | **Byomakesh Ray** | **Pramila Mallick** | **Sujata Sahoo** | **Nilamani Bisoyi** | **Chakramani Kanhar**

Committed to achieve green Odisha: Dy CM

Bhubaneswar, April 16: Odisha is fully committed to realising the goal of Clean and Green India, and will provide all possible facilities and support to achieve the ambitious goal of green energy in Odisha, stated Deputy Chief Minister Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo during a meeting with Apollo Green Energy Limited (AGEL) at Lokseva Bhawan conference hall here Wednesday.

Singh Deo who also holds the portfolio of Agriculture, Farmers' Empowerment and Energy chaired the meeting where AGEL proposed for setting up 1000 MW green energy projects in the state.

AGEL is currently constructing a 54 MWP power project worth ₹151 crore at Ganjam district in EPC-ground solar mode. Similarly, it has taken keen interest to implement green energy projects in other parts of the state. It has proposed to invest ₹4,500 crore for a total of 1000 MW green energy projects,

Apollo Green Energy Ltd (AGEL) plans to invest ₹4,500 crore in 1,000 MW green energy projects, expected to create around 3,000 direct and indirect jobs

ects, with which 3,000 people will be directly and indirectly get the employment opportunity along with the generation of solar power. As per the requirement, the facility of storing the surplus electricity in batteries (battery energy storage system) after consumption will also be introduced.

The meeting was attended by Energy department principal secretary Vishal Dev, OPTCL CMD Bhaskar Jyoti Sharma, Gridco MD Trilochan Panda, AGEL CEO Sanjay Gupta and president Rakesh Gupta and other senior officers of department.



Mahendra Hembram walks out of prison

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Keonjhar, April 16: Mahendra Hembram, one of the convicts in the 1999 high-profile triple murder case of Australian missionary Graham Staines and his two minor sons, was released from Keonjhar jail after 25 years Wednesday.

Hembram, now 50, was released from the prison on grounds of good behaviour during his incarceration.

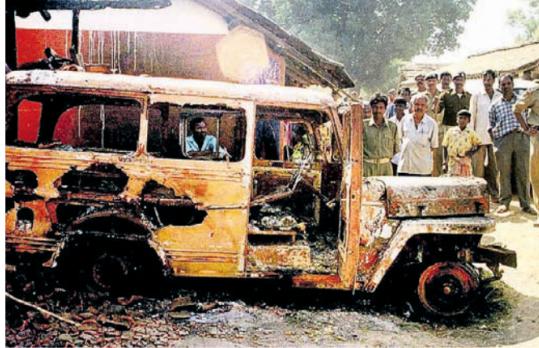
"Hembram has been released following a decision by the State Sentence Review Board. The prison directorate informed about it in a letter Tuesday. He has been released after 25 years because of good behaviour in accordance with the rules," said Jailor Manaswini Naik.

Jail authorities gave Hembram a cordial farewell, garlanding him as a mark of recognition for his good conduct during his prison term.

An official said Hembram was handed over a bank passbook, where his earnings from prison labour has been deposited.

"I spent 25 years in jail after being falsely implicated in an incident related to religious conversion. Today, I have been released," Hembram told reporters outside the jail.

Hembram and Dara Singh, alias Rabindra Pal Singh, were convicted of the brutal murders of Staines and his sons — Philip, 10, and Timothy, 6, — who were burned alive by a mob allegedly led by Singh on the night of January 21, 1999.



The victims were sleeping in a station wagon parked in front of a church in Keonjhar district's Manoharpur village, when the incident took place, triggering national and international outrage.

It was alleged that the Staines had spread straw over the vehicle to shield themselves from the cold, and the straw caught fire.

When they tried to escape, the mob — armed with lathis — prevented them from getting out, leading to their deaths. Their skeletal remains were later recovered.

A total of 14 persons, including Singh and Hembram, were accused in the case. However, 12 of them were acquitted, while Singh and Hembram were sentenced to life imprisonment.

Hembram, hailing from Manoharpur village, was arrested in 1999, while Dara Singh was picked up January 31, 2000 by then Mayurbhanj SP YB Khurania, who is now the DGP.

Initially kept as an undertrial prisoner at Jharpada Jail in Bhubaneswar, Hembram was sentenced to life imprisonment September 22, 2003.

Over the years, Hembram was incarcerated in several facilities, including Jharpada, Jamujhari Open Air Jail (Bhubaneswar), and jails in Cuttack, Berhampur, Baripada, Anandpur Sub-Jail, before being transferred to Keonjhar Jail September 28, 2011. He remained there until his release.

During the trial at the CBI court in Bhubaneswar February 1, 2002, Hembram reportedly lost mental composure and declared himself the sole culprit and claimed that others were innocent.

Trial started March 1, 2001 at the District and Sessions Court in Khurda, which was designated as a CBI court.

Evidence against Dara Singh was confirmed when one of the accused, Dayanidhi Patra, told the trial court that he was present when he (Dara Singh) set fire to the vehicle.

The trial concluded August 18, 2003, with Judge Mahendra Patnaik sentencing Dara Singh and 12 others, while acquitting Anirudha Dandapat, alias Andha Nayak, for lack of evidence.

On September 22, 2003, the court awarded Dara Singh the death penalty and sentenced 12 others to life imprisonment. However, in 2005, the Orissa High Court commuted Singh's death sentence to life imprisonment, a decision later upheld by the Supreme Court.

Dara Singh, currently serving a life sentence, filed a mercy petition in the Supreme Court in August 2024 seeking release. Another mercy plea was also submitted to the President of India.

Meanwhile, March 19, 2025, the Supreme Court directed the state government to take a decision on the remission plea of a 'repenting' Dara Singh, who continues to serve his sentence for the murders of Staines and his sons.

NATIONAL HERALD CASE

Cong stages dharna over ED chargesheet

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 16: Congress leaders and hundreds of party workers Wednesday staged a dharna near the office of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) here, protesting the agency's chargesheet against Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi in the National Herald case.

The protesters, including OPCC president Bhakta Charan Das and other senior party leaders, said the ED should function as per law, and not 'at the direction of the ruling BJP at the Centre'. "The charges framed against our leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi are false, fabricated and influenced by political vendetta," Das told reporters. He said Congress workers across the state are protesting against the ED action.

"The BJP is losing public support, and hence, making false cases against the Congress leaders," said former OPCC president Jayadev Jena.

The ED chargesheet against former Congress president Sonia Gandhi and Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and others before a special court in New Delhi in the National Herald case accuses them of laundering ₹988 crore. Meanwhile, in a press conference, Odisha BJP president Manmohan Samal came down heavily on the Congress, accusing it of creating hindrances in the way of law.

Milk prodn up in state, poor show in 13 dists

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 16: Livestock plays a crucial role in strengthening the national economy. Especially in rural areas, many families rely on milk production for their livelihood. India has established itself as the world's largest milk-producing country. According to the recently released data by Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, milk production in the country during the financial year 2023-24 stood at 239.3 million metric tonnes (MMT). Odisha - nestled on the eastern coast of India and which blends tradition with agriculture - contributed 1.1 per cent to it, placing the state at the 16th position nationally.

While milk production in Odisha has been steadily increasing since 2009-10, recent data reveals a decline in 13 districts during 2023-24 compared to 2022-23. A drop in milk output in 43 per cent of the districts reflects the fragile condition of the rural economy. However, the recently implemented Mukhyamantri Kamdhenu Yojana by the state government is expected to improve the situation.

In 2023-24, Uttar Pradesh had the highest milk production in the country with 38,780 thousand metric tonnes (TMT), whereas Odisha produced 2,636 TMT. These two states contributed 16.21 per cent and 1.1 per cent respectively to the national figure. Following Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan produced 34,733 TMT (14.51 per cent), Madhya Pradesh 21,326 TMT (8.91 per cent), Gujarat 18,312 TMT (7.65 per cent), and Maharashtra 16,045 TMT (6.71 per cent).



In the 2022-23 fiscal, Odisha's milk production was 2,476.42 TMT. It increased by 159.58 TMT in 2023-24. However, milk production decreased in 13 districts— Angul, Balasore, Bhadrak, Boudh, Gajapati, Jharsuguda, Kalahandi, Keonjhar, Koraput, Mayurbhanj, Nuapada, Sambalpur, and Subarnapur.

Cuttack district recorded the highest milk production of 391 TMT from 14,03,204 milch animals. On the other hand, Kandhamal recorded the lowest, producing only 11.11 TMT from 4,73,199 animals. In Mayurbhanj, despite having the highest number of milch animals at 3,761,128, milk production was very low. The annual production dropped from 72.87 TMT to 62.78 TMT.

The presence of more indigenous cows, which produce less milk, in these 13 districts is cited as the main reason for the decline.

Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services Director Vijay Amruta Kulange said, "Omfed currently collects 5.14 lakh litres of milk daily, out of which 2,500 litres come from indigenous cows. Private companies also collect around 2.74 lakh litres of milk daily from the state. In total, Odisha produces nearly 8 lakh litres of milk per day. Of this, Omfed collects 5-6 lakh litres, private companies purchase some, and the rest is used for household consumption.

To encourage dairy farmers, the state government is considering giving an incentive of ₹2 per litre annually to Omfed's milk suppliers.

To double daily milk production and meet the per capita milk requirement, the state government has launched Mukhyamantri Kamdhenu Yojana. Under this, 2,000 beneficiaries will annually receive two crossbred cows each to establish small dairy units. Additionally, 20,000 dairy farmers will receive subsidised cattle feed, and 1 lakh farmers will receive assistance for cattle insurance.

Kulange further mentioned that though various private companies from outside the state are selling milk in Odisha, they are not collecting milk from Odisha's farmers. He also informed that Omfed is exporting milk and milk products to states like Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Assam, and the north-eastern states.

Experts like Sabyasachi Behera, a farming consultant, pointed out that bank loans for farmers remain insufficient and payment rates from Omfed have not been as lucrative as farmers expect. "The financial system needs to work more efficiently to provide the necessary support to the dairy community. This includes fairer compensation and access to credit to upgrade their farms," Behera explains.

Soubhagya Ranjan Pradhan, General Manager of Omfed, said, "The government is focusing on Artificial Insemination (AI) services, which can significantly enhance milk production."

KHURDA ROAD-BOLANGIR NEW RAIL LINE PROJECT

TUNNEL T-4 DAY LIGHTING MARKS MAJOR PROGRESS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 16: A major milestone in the Khurda Road-Bolangir new rail line project was achieved Wednesday, with the successful breakthrough (day lighting) of the 4,185-metre-long tunnel T-4 between Adenigarh and Charichhak stations in Boudh district.

This marks the completion of the longest tunnel not only in the entire project but also in the state of Odisha. In the ongoing project, so far 226km of the total 301km stretch has been commissioned—from Khurda Road up to Daspalla on one end and from Bolangir up to Purnakatak on the other. The remaining 75km stretch between Daspalla and Purnakatak, which includes seven tunnels are currently under construction and is progressing steadily.

The successful day lighting of Tunnel T-4 is a significant achievement that will bring the project closer to its goal of connecting Odisha's coastal region with its western hinterland.

Fugitive husband held nine months after wife's murder

POST NEWS NETWORK

Gopalpur, April 16: Nine months after allegedly murdering his newly-wed wife, 32-year-old Lakshmikanth Moharana, alias Laxmi, was arrested Wednesday by Golanthara police. The accused, a resident of ODRP Colony in Jagannathpur, Ganjam district, had been on the run since the incident. His arrest was confirmed by Berhampur SP Saravana Vivek M.

According to sources, Lakshmikanth married Rani Moharana of Aruapalli village under Gopalpur police limits March 11, 2024. While the initial months were reportedly peaceful, Lakshmikanth later began harassing Rani over dowry, both physically and mentally.

July 15, Rani was found hanging, and Lakshmikanth claimed it was a suicide. He informed her family, who arrived to find her unresponsive on the bed. She was rushed to MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur, where she was declared dead.

Rani's brother, Rajesh Kumar Moharana, lodged a complaint at Golanthara police station, accusing Lakshmikanth of murder. A case (No. 291/24) was registered, but Lakshmikanth fled the hospital and went into hiding.

Despite continuous search operations, the accused remained untraceable. Meanwhile, Rajesh received threatening voice and video messages from Lakshmikanth, urging him to withdraw the case. This led to a second complaint and the registration of a fresh case (No. 154/25) for criminal intimidation.

Acting on a tip-off, a special police team traced Lakshmikanth to Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. He was arrested in a morning raid and produced in court the same evening.

Police also revealed that Lakshmikanth has four prior cases against him.



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CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an Affidavit sworn before Executive Magistrate Bhadrak, I Gita Swain (52 yrs), W/o - Kalakar Swain, Vill/Po : Karanpohari, PS : Bansada, Dist : Bhadrak, declare that I have changed my name in my Lic policy bearing No. 598669506 from Sita Swain to Gita Swain for all purposes.

'Education must prepare students for future'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 16: Education must go beyond textbooks and exams to truly prepare students for the future, Governor Hari Babu Kamhampati stated at the concluding ceremony of Diamond Jubilee celebrations of College of Basic Science and Humanities, Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT) here Wednesday.

He emphasised that in today's fast-changing world, students need more than just academic knowledge. "They must be able to think critically, solve problems creatively, and communicate effectively," he said. He praised the college for playing a key role in nurturing such qualities over the past 60 years.



Kamhampati also highlighted the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, calling it a timely and visionary step. "The NEP encourages flexible learning, interdisciplinary studies, and independent thinking—skills that are essential for innovation and personal growth," he said.

He urged educational institutions to keep evolving and align with global standards while staying rooted in Indian values. "We must shape young minds that are not only knowledgeable but also ethical, adaptable, and ready to face complex challenges," he added.

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CSIR-IMMT celebrates 62nd Foundation Day

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 16: CSIR-Institute of Minerals and Materials Technology (CSIR-IMMT) celebrated its 62nd Foundation Day with a series of commemorative events and a visionary lecture on leveraging science and technology for national development, here Wednesday.

Founded April 13, 1964 as the Regional Research Laboratory (RRL), the institute has played a key role in advancing India's capabilities in minerals and materials research. It was renamed CSIR-IMMT in 2007 to reflect its focused national mission. April 13 being a public holiday this year, the celebration was marked Wednesday. Inaugurating the programme, CSIR-IMMT director Ramanuj Narayan reflected on the institute's six-decade-long journey and its growing contributions to sustainable technological solutions.

"Over the years, CSIR-IMMT has become a cornerstone of scientific excellence. We continue to innovate, evolve, and strengthen our impact in the minerals and materials sector," Narayan said in his welcome address.

Former director general of CSIR and DSIR secretary Sekhar C Mande delivered the Foundation Day lecture titled 'S&T Road Map for Making of Viksit Bharat'. Mande stressed the importance of integrating traditional knowledge systems with modern science and fostering innovation to make India a developed nation.

WEATHER		
	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	34.8°	33.5°
Min Temp	23.6°	21.4°
Humidity	70%	86%
Rainfall	0.6	78.4

FORECAST
Partly cloudy sky with possibility of rain/thunderstorm

MARKET WATCH		
INDEX	VARIATION	
SENSEX	77,044.29	▲ 309.40
NIFTY	23,437.20	▲ 108.65
DOLLAR	85.60	▼ 0.07
EURO	97.47	▲ 0.66
GOLD	₹95,537	▲ ₹2086
SILVER	₹96,288	▲ ₹1514

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Mayurbhanj to receive ₹7K-cr investments: CM



POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, April 16: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Manjhi Wednesday announced that the state would receive a huge impetus in terms of industrial development as ₹7,000 crore will be invested in 10 new industrial projects lined up for Mayurbhanj district.

Speaking at the PM Vishwakarma – National SC-ST Hub Conclave held at Maharaja Sriram Chandra Bhanja Deo University in Baripada, Manjhi said that the PM Vishwakarma Scheme has already benefited 1,05,361 artisans from 18 traditional trades in Odisha, including blacksmiths, carpenters, potters and weavers.

In his address, the CM highlighted the significant role of the Central scheme in empowering Odisha's middleclass by providing targeted support to artisans and small entrepreneurs from SC/ST communities.

Union MSME Minister Jitan Ram Manjhi praised Odisha's growth in MSME sector and reaffirmed the vision laid out by the PM to transform India into world's third-largest economy by 2027-28

Addressing the gathering, Manjhi praised Odisha's growth in MSME sector and reaffirmed the vision laid out by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to transform India into world's third-largest economy by 2027-28. "The MSME Ministry is truly a ministry of vision. We are grateful for President Droupadi Murmu's guidance in driving these initiatives forward," the Union minister remarked.

& Medium Enterprises (MSME) brought together leaders, entrepreneurs and artisans to discuss and promote flagship schemes such as PM Vishwakarma and National SC-ST Hub. The event was inaugurated by Union MSME Minister Jitan Ram Manjhi, along with Odisha Chief Minister Manjhi, who began the proceedings with a ribbon-cutting and lamp-lighting ceremony.

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Launched in September 2023, PM Vishwakarma Scheme aims to uplift traditional artisans by providing skill training, modern toolkits, and financial support. The National SC-ST Hub, started in 2016, focuses on capacity building, facilitating credit access, and establishing market linkages for SC/ST entrepreneurs.

With over 6.25 crore MSMEs contributing 30 per cent to India's GDP and employing more than 26.7 crore people, the sector remains a cornerstone of India's economy.



SCINTILLATING SHOW: Artistes perform Odissi at 21st Lok Mahotsav during Hingula Jatra at Talcher in Angul district

OP PHOTO

SI arrested for taking bribe to register case

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 16: A sub-inspector (SI) posted at Sarankul police station in Nayagarh district was arrested by Vigilance sleuths on charges of taking ₹4,000 as a bribe for registering a case, an official release said Wednesday. The accused officer was identified as Rajesh Kumar Srichandan.

Acting on a complaint, a trap was laid and the accused policeman was nabbed by the Vigilance team in front of Sarankul police station Tuesday.

The bribe money was recovered from the possession of Srichandan and seized in presence of witnesses, it said.

He was forwarded to the court after demanding and accepting a bribe, the release said.

Later, simultaneous searches were conducted on the residential house of Srichandan at Bhubaneswar and his office room. A case was registered under Section 7 of the Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Act, 2018. Srichandan entered into the government service as SI of police in 2017 and was posted in various police stations in Nayagarh district.

Borewells go dry for open-pit mining

POST NEWS NETWORK



POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, April 16: Residents of Dhamasala block in Jajpur district are facing a severe water crisis due to unregulated extraction of minor minerals such as sand, granite, and morrum, in blatant violation of Odisha Minor Minerals Concession (Amendment) Rules, 2016.

With the onset of summer, the groundwater table has receded sharply, leaving many borewells dry. In various hills, open-pit mining operations have reportedly reached depths of up to 150 feet, accelerating

the depletion of groundwater. While regulations mandate the backfilling of mines post-extraction, nearly 50 mining pits have been abandoned as it is. Some of these pits resemble large ponds.

The activities of local authorities, who are supposed to ensure enforcement of rules, are limited to collecting data on active mines. Consequently, over a hundred villages at the foothills are now struggling to access clean water.

According to existing regulations, "long hole drills" should not exceed a depth of

six metres, and "short hole drills" are restricted to 1 to 1.5 metres. However, many operations have breached these limits, drilling all the way to the water table.

The gravity of the situation can be gauged from the status of groundwater table in villages like Dankari, Madhupurgarh, Kukudakhali, Bhubanpur, Panturi, Ragadipasi, Chadheidhara, Paitara, Daulatpur, Gogarsara, Barada, Jhatiapada, Kurikana, Batijoda, Baramana, Chadakamara, Sahanidiha, Antia, Kamagada, Bharatpur, Pachhukhundi, Ichhapur and Bedha.

In some areas, piped water supply schemes have become non-functional. While the local MLA has arranged water tankers for affected regions the assistance is reportedly insufficient to meet the rising demand in the summer.

Meanwhile, iron contamination in groundwater has come as a double whammy for several villages near mining zones. This has led to a surge in kidney-related ailments, with many reported cases of hospitalization, said locals.

Singareni Collieries starts ops in Angul

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 16: In a historic move, Telangana Deputy Chief Minister and Energy Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu virtually inaugurated the Singareni Collieries Company Limited's (SCCL) Naini coal block in Angul Wednesday. This marks SCCL's first mining operation outside Telangana in its 136-year history.

Speaking from Telangana's Mahatma Jyoti Rao Phule Praja Bhavan, the Deputy CM highlighted the event as the beginning of Singareni's expansion beyond state borders, with aspirations for global reach. Vikramarka extended gratitude to Union Coal Minister Kishan Reddy, Odisha CM Mohan Manjhi, Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, Chhendipada MLA Agasti Behera, and others for their support. He reaffirmed SCCL's commitment to social responsibility and local welfare, announcing plans to set up a 1600 MW thermal power plant near Naini.

Angul AEE under Vigilance scanner

POST NEWS NETWORK

Angul/Bhawanipatna, April 16: Vigilance sleuths Wednesday launched simultaneous raids at multiple locations linked to Rama Chandra Satapathy, assistant executive engineer (AEE) posted in Athamallik block of Angul district, in connection with allegations of possessing disproportionate assets (DA).

The raids were conducted at his official quarters in Athamallik, his office, and several other properties across Dhenkanal, Angul, Cuttack and Bhawanipatna. A team comprising seven DSPs and 15 inspectors raided altogether nine locations. Sources confirmed that the raids were based on complaints alleging that the AEE had demanded bribes for passing bills related to MGN-REGA works in the block and harassed contractors who refused to pay the bribe. A video

showing Kudagaon sarpanch Siddharth Kumar Ksheti touching the feet of Satapathy for clearing the bills had gone viral on social media. The sarpanch had also drawn the attention of state and Union ministers over the issue.

During the raids, Vigilance officials reportedly seized several incriminating documents, cash, and gold jewellery. Among the findings was ₹23.95 lakh in cash and gold ornaments from the residence of Satapathy's son-in-law, Tapan Tripathy at Junagarh in Kalahandi.

Officials also found details of 19 properties, including a plot in Barang, 16 plots in Dhenkanal, a two-storey building, 326 gram gold, ₹63.69 lakh in fixed and savings bank deposits, two four-wheelers and two motorcycles. The Vigilance team has taken Satapathy from Dhenkanal to Athamallik for questioning.

For this Koraput elderly, DBT is a bane

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nandapur, April 16: Direct benefit transfer (DBT) scheme might be providing relief to those who are digitally literate and able to visit banks/ATMs to withdraw money, but it has turned out to be a burden on Shukra Pangi, 79, a differently-abled elderly man of Khadakpur village under Nandapur block in Koraput district who has to spend ₹1,000 on transport to withdraw the same amount as monthly pension.

Reports said Shukra, who lives alone in a dilapidated mud house with no close family to support him, has made an emotional appeal to the administration to provide his monthly pension in cash rather than transferring it to his bank account.

Meanwhile, a few of his relatives have placed a bed on the verandah where he stays all the time as he is unable to move inside. Often, the relatives come, feed him and help him return to the bed, which has become his permanent resting place.

Shukra receives ₹1,000 under Indra Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme through State Bank of India in Balda. Since he is unable to register his fingerprints due to old age, and is illit-



erate, he is unable to use an ATM for which the bank has not given him a debit card. Without biometric access or assistance, he is forced to hire an auto-rickshaw to travel from Khadakpur to Balda branch of the bank, which costs him the entire pension amount.

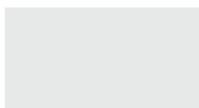
As a result, he can only afford to make the journey once every six months with the help from his relatives, essentially rendering the pension ineffective for his

regular needs, Shukra said. He has appealed to the government to transfer his name to a state-run Madhu Babu Pension Yojana (MBPY) scheme where the money can be delivered to his home via the panchayat-level distribution. Local officials from the block's social security department said they will forward his request through the district officer concerned to the state department, seeking permission to convert his pension into a hand-delivery system.

Shukra, who is turning 80 soon, says the current arrangement is not just inconvenient but a burden.

Close shave for 50 passengers

BALASORE: At least 50 passengers of a Kolkata-bound bus had a close shave following a head-on collision with a truck in Balasore Wednesday, police said. The incident took place near Soro College Chhak on National Highway-16. "It was a lucky escape for passengers of the bus. Some of them suffered only minor injuries," a police officer said.



EAST COAST RAILWAY

e-Tender Notice No. STConBBSOT21-MSDAC-04Stn, Dtd.: 09.04.2025
Name of work: "EXECUTION OF INDOOR AND OUTDOOR SIGNALLING WORK, SUPPLY OF CRITICAL MATERIALS AND SUPPLY, INSTALLATION & COMMISSIONING OF MULTI SECTION DIGITAL AXLE COUNTER (MSDAC), ALONG WITH ELECTRONIC INTERLOCKING (EI) ALTERATION FO M/S MEDIA SERVO DRIVES PRIVATE LIMITED FOR RESETTING FROM OPERATING VDU AT BUDHAPANK (BDPK), MANJURI ROAD (MZZ), KENDUAPADA (KED) AND BAUDPUR (BUDR) STATION IN KHURDA ROAD DIVISION OF EAST COAST RAILWAY."
Approximate Value: ₹ 26,88,90,696/-, EMD: ₹ 14,19,500/-, Completion period of the e-Tender: 12 Months.
Date & time of closing of e-Tender at 1100 hrs. of 08.05.2025, Date and time of opening of the e-Tender: at 1100 hrs. of 08.05.2025.
Complete details available at: website www.ireps.gov.in. In case of any discrepancy between the tender documents downloaded from internet and the master copy of the same available in the office, the latter shall prevail and will be binding on the tenderer (s). No claim on this account will be entertained.
Dy. Chief Signal & Telecom Engineer/Con/ PR-8/C/25-26 Bhubaneswar

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender Notice No. 06/ET/SBP/ENGG/2025-26 Dtd.: 08.04.2025
(1) Tender No.: 08-eT-DENE-SBP-25
Name of work: PROVISION OF DIVERSION ROAD OF 310M LENGTH FROM LC NO. JT-18 AT KM. 547/1-2 TO LHS IN LIEU OF LC NO. JT-19 IN CONNECTION WITH CLOSURE OF LC NO. JT-18 B/W RENGALI-SASON STATIONS IN JHARSUGUDA JN-SAMBALPUR SECTION OF SAMBALPUR DIVISION.
Approx. Cost of the Work: Rs. 1,01,67,161.25
Bid Security: ₹ 2,00,900/-, Completion Period: 6 (Six) Months
(2) Tender No.: 09-eT-DENE-SBP-25
Name of work: PROVISION OF SUBWAYS AT KM52/7-6 B/W BRUNDAMAL-LAPANGA, AT KM.552/12-14 B/W SARALA-SASON AND AT KM. 1117/1-8 B/W HANDAPA-BOINDA AT KM. 1117/1-8 B/W HANDAPA-BOINDA IN JHARSUGUDA ROAD-SAMBALPUR CITY-KEREJANGA SECTION OF SAMBALPUR DIVISION.
Approx. Cost of the Work: Rs. 16,27,47,625.23
Bid Security: ₹ 9,63,800/-, Completion Period: 8 (Eight) Months
Tender closing Date & Time: At 1500 hrs. on 01.05.2025 (For All Tenders)
No manual offers sent by Post/Courier/Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-Tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.
Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website: www.ireps.gov.in.
The tenderers/bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate and must be registered on IREPS portal. Only registered tenderer/bidder can participate on e-tendering.
Note: The prospective tenderers are advised to visit the website 15 days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/ corrigenda issued for this tender. Website: www.ireps.gov.in
Divisional Railway Manager (Engineering) PR-39/Q/25-26 Khurda Road

GOVT. OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS DIVISION NO.-II, KEONJHAR
E-mail : eerw_kjr2@yahoo.com
"e" Procurement Notice for Building Works
Identification No. Online NCB - 01/2025-26
No.O-57
1. Name of the work : Building Works, 2. Total Number of Work : 3 Nos., 3. Estimated Cost : Rs. 34.95 Lakhs to Rs. 44.24 Lakhs, 4. Class of Contractor : 'C' & 'B' Class, 5. Period of Completion : As per annexure of e-Procurement Notice No.01/2025-26, 6. Other Details :
Procurement Officer Bid Identification No. Availability of tender Online for bidding From To Last Date & Time of seeking Tender Clarification Date & Time of Opening of Tender in O/o S.E., R.W. Division-II, Keonjhar
1 2 3 4 5 6
Executive Engineer, Building Online NCB Dt.28.04.25 at 11.00 A.M. Dt.14.05.25 up to 5.00 P.M. Dt.13.05.25 up to 5.00 P.M. Dt.15.05.2025 at 11.00 A.M.
Rural Works Division-II, Keonjhar No.01
Further details can be seen from the Website www.tenderorissa.gov.in
OIPR-25093/11/0015/2526
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ଓଡ଼ିଆ ତଥା ଦେଶର କୋଣ ଅନୁକୋଣରୁ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠିତ ଓ ନୂତନ ପାରମ୍ପରିକ ଓ ଶାସ୍ତ୍ରୀୟ ନୃତ୍ୟ ସଜୀତ ବଳ-ବୈ ମହୋତ୍ସବର ପ୍ରତିଦିନ ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟାରେ ସେମାନଙ୍କର କଳା-ନୈପୁଣ୍ୟ ପ୍ରଦର୍ଶନ କରିବେ ।
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Vain indeed is all overweening pride in the conquest even of the entire universe if one has not conquered one's own passions

SRI AUROBINDO



Resisting Techno-Fascism

Big Tech's massive encroachment upon the levers of state authority under US President Donald Trump is creating a dangerous new power structure — one not confined to its homeland. Trump's threats against countries — US allies and adversaries alike — that dare to regulate their digital markets and communications systems are not merely a case of economic bullying. Rather, they are an attempt to export this power structure and undermine the rule of law and democratic governance worldwide.

For example, America's European allies risk tariffs and retaliation for enforcing much-needed digital regulations, as do countries, like the United Kingdom and Brazil, that impose a digital-services tax. But these challenges also create strategic opportunities for democracies. If they collectively refuse to submit to US pressure, it is less likely that any one government will bear the brunt of retaliation. These countries must therefore unite against the tech giants that mine their citizens' data, control key information and commercial infrastructure, and refuse to pay taxes or even acknowledge the jurisdiction of national governments.

Of course, defending national interests while fostering genuine innovation is a difficult balancing act. But the unprecedented alliance forged between Big Tech and the Trump administration underscores the urgency of this task. As head of Trump's "Department of Government Efficiency," Elon Musk, the world's richest person, has gained access to government data systems, fired thousands of federal workers, and taken aim at regulatory agencies. Musk has also used the Federal Trade Commission as a cudgel against businesses that are reticent to advertise on his social-media platform X, which he has turned into a megaphone for right-wing extremists and a tool for disinformation and political interference.

Musk is not the only tech boss to have bent the knee. When Mark Zuckerberg announced in January that Meta, which owns Facebook and Instagram, would end its fact-checking programme, he repeated Trump's talking points. More recently, Instagram concealed results when users searched for "Democrats," and Facebook amplified posts from Trump and Vice President JD Vance.

These are only the most prominent examples of how the world's most powerful tech CEOs have aligned themselves with an authoritarian leader, shaping public discourse to his (and their own) benefit. When tech interests capture the US government to this extent, other countries must stand up to Trump's threats to avert a global slide into techno-fascism.

Some will argue that by taking a strong regulatory stance, these countries risk losing access to technological innovation. But this fundamentally misreads the situation. Given the extraordinary protections and privileges they have secured at home, US tech giants don't need more favourable treatment from other countries. They need access to these countries' markets. Advanced economies with skilled workforces, including the UK, Japan, and those in Europe, are highly valuable, as are middle-income and emerging economies like Brazil, Indonesia, and India.

The revelation that China's DeepSeek developed a large language model comparable to those of dominant American AI firms at a fraction of the cost has underscored this point. It belies the narrative that only the biggest tech companies with the most advanced chips and the least restrictive regulatory environment can develop the best AI, and shows that alternatives to the Silicon Valley model exist.

So far, Brazil is the only country with the courage and conviction to challenge Musk (albeit before he joined the Trump administration). It is less clear whether Europe, which has recourse to its digital markets and AI directives, will defend its right to regulate and rein in the "broligarchs" power.

Because enforcing competition policy has implications beyond traditional market concerns, more countries should regulate digital services, focusing not just on market dominance, but also on a corporation's ability to shape public discourse, control information flows, and leverage data advantages in order to entrench its power. Allowing Big Tech to pursue unfettered AI development that is environmentally and culturally destructive — or, worse, subsidising such innovation — could pave the way for techno-fascism on a global scale.

Clear rules for protecting competition and intellectual property are far more likely to foster innovation than would enabling dominant players to strengthen their monopoly power. For example, the EU's General Data Protection Regulation has, despite initial resistance, become a global standard, spurring privacy-enhancing innovation and acting as a safeguard against corporate overreach, especially with regard to data mining.

Similarly, requiring credit and compensation for the use of copyrighted materials for AI training is not just about protecting creative industries. It is about integrating the development of these transformative technologies into the fabric of our economies and societies, before a handful of US companies get a chance to "move fast and break things" — like democracy and the rule of law — that are not easily repaired.

Instead of accepting a false choice between innovation and regulation, the world's democracies have an opportunity to create the conditions for genuine innovation, not imitation, and show how democratic oversight can enable technological progress while preserving fundamental rights. But this requires recognising that tech policy has become integral to resisting authoritarian tendencies.

Such a stance is not anti-American. In fact, it reflects concerns about the fusion of Big Tech and political power in the US that many Americans share. That makes it all the more important for other governments to ensure that digital technologies serve democracy and protect human dignity.

The writer is Director of the Center for Journalism and Liberty at the Open Markets Institute and a nonresident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

WISDOM CORNER

Love recognizes no barriers. It jumps hurdles, leaps fences, penetrates walls to arrive at its destination full of hope

MAYA ANGELOU

Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage

LAO TZU

Love recognizes no barriers. It jumps hurdles, leaps fences, penetrates walls to arrive at its destination full of hope

MAYA ANGELOU

DISABLED HEALTHCARE

FOCUS SOCIAL SECURITY

Eighty-two per cent of the persons with disabilities in the country do not have any healthcare protection despite the tall claims of the government to the contrary. Forty-two per cent of them are not even aware of the central government's flagship programme for people's health, Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, according to a recent national survey by the Centre for the Promotion of Employment for Disabled People.

The number of persons with different kinds of disabilities in the country is enormous, 26.8 million or 2.21% of the population, as per 2011 Census. While the next census, which was due in 2021 but postponed to this year, can provide the most dependable update since it covers the entire population, other studies, which, too, cannot be ignored since they are based on scientific statistical sampling methods, have shown a marked increase in this number; the NFHS-5 (2019-21) reported it to be 63.28 million, equivalent to 4.52% of the population.

This is not to say that those already covered under some government-sponsored schemes are getting hassle-free healthcare. No. The overall health of the health sector is not well. The experience of the enrolled suggests that many of the empanelled hospitals refuse the treatment with great impunity; the needy have either to pay, if they can, out of pocket or go without treatment if they can't, live or die with the disease.

Coming to healthcare in general, the pure commercial interest and market force's philosophy takes precedence over the public health responsibility of the government. The health infrastructure is neither adequate nor suitable for the masses. It encourages private profits and helps private insurance. It has a poor 1:15,000 doctor-to-patient ratio and 1.7 nurses to 1,000 people as per Indian Brand Equity Foundation's (IBEF) observation. The dimensions of the health



While people are worried about grossly inadequate and inaccessible healthcare, the sector flourishes and provides the best facilities to those who can afford them

sector neglect are multifold. The healthcare public spending in India as a percentage of GDP is set at 1.9% in 2026, whereas other countries are already spending between 5 to 12.5% of their GDP. The US, for instance, spent 16% in 2023, and OECD countries spent 9.2% in 2022.

The private sector in India dominates healthcare in many ways. It accounts for 58% of hospitals. The sector employs 81% of the medical professionals. By 2022-23, there were 43,186 private hospitals with 1.18 million beds and 29,631 ventilators.

The macro data doesn't reflect the true picture because there is a wide gap between rural and urban areas in availability of hospitals and doctors. Also, there are regional imbalances. For instance, Maharashtra has the highest number of allopathic doctors (2.10 lakh), followed by Tamil Nadu (1.49 lakh) and Karnataka (1.41 lakh), as per 2024 data; that means more than 38% of allopathic doctors in India are concentrated in three states.

The inefficient and inadequate healthcare is deepening and widening poverty in India. Due to heavy out-of-pocket spending, an estimated 7% of population — about 10 crore — falls below the poverty line every year, as a Niti Aayog report asserts.

Besides high medical costs, people have to put up with unethical medical practices by unscrupulous players in the system because there is no effective mechanism to prevent them. Unscrupulous hospitals

accept patients not based on their severity of disease and urgency for treatment but on their paying capacity; those with disease but no money are kicked out while those with sufficient money but no disease get unnecessary treatment.

Doctors prescribe tests lured more by the kickbacks the diagnostic centers offer than by the need for such tests. They write a battery of tests codenamed "sink tests" with one or two 'marked tests.' Patients are charged for all the tests and blood samples, for instance, are collected for all of them. But the actual test is conducted only for the 'marked test'; the fake normal results are given for rest of the tests. The excess blood collected is thrown in the sink, so the name 'sink' tests.

Patients are unnecessarily referred to other doctors just to get a cut from them; those who offer higher commissions get higher referrals. Prenatal sex determination tests are conducted defying the legal ban on it.

Unnecessary surgeries are conducted on gullible patients. The types of procedures to make money include hysterectomies, C-section, cataract, knee replacements, and lower back operations.

Pharmaceutical companies supply expensive gifts and medical equipment to entice doctors to prescribe their drugs. Not only gifts but they also offer foreign trips and five-star accommodations to doctors and their families. Poor and illiterate people are used as guinea

pigs for clinical trials.

The ambulance services are paid bribes for bringing emergency patients to private hospitals. Hospitals force doctors to generate a monthly targeted revenue to justify their high salaries, whereby doctors play mischief by subjecting innocent people to unnecessary tests and procedures.

The Medical Council of India prohibits all these unethical practices, but they have little impact on the errand doctors and hospitals. The National Health Policy 2017, too, commits itself "to the highest professional standards, integrity and ethics." These goals are not achievable without first halting the ongoing mindless commercialisation of the health sector.

While people are worried about grossly inadequate and inaccessible healthcare, the sector flourishes and provides the best facilities to those who can afford them. The IBEF says the Indian healthcare market, which was valued at \$110 billion in 2016, is poised to reach \$635 billion by end of this year.

Indian medical tourism was worth \$7.69 billion in 2024 and is expected to reach \$14.31 billion by 2029; about 6.34 lakh foreign tourists came for medical treatment in India in 2023.

All this suggests that India has a robust health sector and, given the will, that it can be further strengthened and reformed to meet the comprehensive needs of every Indian. What we need is universal healthcare. What we need is the de-commercialisation of the healthcare industry. What we need is to learn lessons from the damage market forces are causing to the health sector and public health. And what we need to do all this, to tell at the cost of repetition, is the will. Does our government have it? It has to prove it through its actions if it has it. The delay causes further damage, and that damage will be irreparable.

The writer is a development economist and commentator on economic and social affairs.



PSM Rao

WHAT WE NEED IS TO LEARN LESSONS FROM THE DAMAGE MARKET FORCES ARE CAUSING TO THE HEALTH SECTOR AND PUBLIC HEALTH



Courtney C. Radsch

Allowing Big Tech to pursue unfettered AI development that is environmentally and culturally destructive — or, worse, subsidising such innovation — could pave the way for techno-fascism on a global scale

SPECTRUM BENGAL

Boiling kettle & the price of ignored whistles



Sayan Chatterjee

BENGAL'S SOCIAL FABRIC HAS HISTORICALLY BEEN INCLUSIVE, LAYERED WITH RICH TRADITIONS OF SYNCRETISM. BUT IN RECENT YEARS, DIVISIVE NARRATIVES HAVE POLLUTED THAT SPACE

If you've ever watched a kettle come to boil, you know the sound—the shrill whistle that grows louder, sharper, more insistent until someone takes notice, turns off the heat, lifts the lid. But what if no one does?

West Bengal today is that kettle. For years, it has simmered with a complex brew of identity politics, economic stagnation, administrative decay, and ideological clashes. The recent surge in political violence, religious polarisation, and law-and-order breakdown is not a sudden phenomenon; it is the steam escaping from a vessel that's long been under pressure, ignored.

Like steam, unrest doesn't appear from nowhere—it builds. The rising communal tensions in places like Sandeshkhali, or the flare-ups between rival political groups in rural districts, aren't isolated sparks. They're symptoms. And they are linked inextricably to a deeper malaise—a governance model caught between populism and paralysis, between legacy politics and new-age opportunism.

Let's pull back. Bengal, once the cradle of the Renaissance and revolution, finds itself trapped in a cycle of reactive politics. The ruling regime positions itself as the custodian of secularism and cultural pride, while the Opposition, riding a wave of nationalistic fervour, taps into grievances and perceived cultural erosion. Caught in between are ordinary citizens who want jobs, education, safety—and silence from the kettle.

The analogy deepens. In a kitchen, the whistle of a kettle isn't just noise—it's a signal. It says, "Something's happening here. Pay attention." But what happens when those in the kitchen wear earplugs? When governance treats symptoms as sabotage, criticism as conspiracy, and protest as provocation?

Take the suppression of dissent. Activists, students, and even journalists who raise questions are branded as "anti-development" or "divisive." The chilling effect is palpable. But it's not silence that ensures peace. It's dialogue, reform, and accountability. A sealed kettle doesn't stop boiling; it explodes.

And there's another parallel: the quality of water in the kettle matters too. Bengal's social fabric has historically been inclusive, layered with rich traditions of syncretism. But in recent years, divisive narratives have polluted that space. Identity is now weaponised—either as a defence of culture or as a call for reclaiming it. When politics invades pujas, processions, and classrooms, the water turns murky. No tea can be brewed from that. Only bitterness.

The solution? First, acknowledgement. Recognise

the unrest not as isolated law-and-order issues but as the fallout of long-ignored systemic stress. Second, recalibrate. Bengal needs less theatrics and more therapy. Investment in jobs, education, decentralised decision-making, and transparent law enforcement isn't glamorous, but it's grounding.

Lastly, someone must lift the lid. Civil society, Opposition parties, the media, and responsible leaders must push for truth, not just triumph. Silence the kettle not by turning away but by turning down the heat. Because here's the thing about pressure cookers and democracies—they both need release valves. Without them, they don't just fail—they burst.

And when that happens, the spill burns everyone.

The writer is a Delhi-based independent contributor to print and online publications.

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

OrissaPOST
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War on ideas

Sir, This refers to "Trump freezes about \$2.3 in funding to Harvard," Orissa POST, April 16. After triggering a global trade war with his whimsical tariff regime, US President Donald Trump has now declared a war on ideas; the ideas that form the very foundation of the country's core values of freedom and liberty. The Trump administration's latest decision to freeze \$2.2 billion in grants to Harvard University, as a punishment for refusing to toe the line and comply with a list of 'unlawful' demands from the federal government, reflects an authoritarian mindset that is anathema to the principles of academic freedom and independence. The ugly showdown with one of the highly reputed universities underscores a disturbing trend of targeting high-profile institutions on flimsy grounds dressed up as serious national issues. The extraordinary set of changes demanded by the government would have reshaped the university and ceded an unprecedented degree of control over Harvard's operations to the federal government. The changes would have violated principles that are held dear on college campuses, including academic freedom. 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.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Helping China rise

Sir, US President Donald Trump's trade war, marked by steep tariffs on several countries, has created unintended opportunities for China to expand its influence in Southeast Asia. Nations like Vietnam, Malaysia, Cambodia, and Indonesia — some of which were actively seeking closer ties with the US — have been hit with high tariffs ranging from 24% to 49%. This has strained their economic relationships with the US, even as they sought to diversify away from China by attracting Western manufacturing and investment. In contrast, China is stepping in to fill the gap. President Xi Jinping is touring the region, promoting an anti-tariff, pro-trade message and signing economic agreements with Southeast Asian nations. Trump's trade war, intended to strengthen the US, may instead be helping China rise.

Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH

Vaishnaw sees longest rail tunnel breakthrough

Amravati airport inaugurated

South East Asia's 'biggest' pilot training school to come up nearby

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Amravati, April 16: Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis Wednesday inaugurated an airport at Amravati in eastern parts of the state, where he said a pilot training school coming up nearby will be the largest such institution in South East Asia.

The school, which will come up in five to six months, will produce around 180 pilots every year and will have at its disposal 34 aircraft for training, Fadnavis said after inaugurating the airport and commercial passenger flight service.

Union Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu was also present on the occasion.

"The pilot training school will be the largest in South East Asia and will put the city, around 150 km from Nagpur, on the world map," the CM said, adding that it was a big gift the city has received during the tenure of the Narendra Modi government. The PM Mitra textile park coming up in Amravati will generate about two lakh jobs, he said. He also said



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The PM Mitra textile park coming up in Amravati will generate about two lakh jobs

the existing airports at Akola and Yavatmal in the Amravati division are being expanded.

Speaking on the occasion, Naidu said the airport in Amravati will open new doors of progress for Vidarbha and Maharashtra.

"Under the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government, Maharashtra has reached

new heights in the last 10 years. Mumbai, Pune and Nagpur airports have been expanded as hubs, while regional airports like Kolhapur, Jalgaon, Nashik, Gondia and Sindhudurg have been developed with a budget of ₹7,000 crore under the UDAN scheme," he said.

Maharashtra has identified 160 routes and already started

105 routes under the Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS), he said.

The number of passengers in Mumbai, Pune, Nagpur and Shirdi airports has seen a 40 per cent rise in the last five years, the Union minister said.

The Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport in Mumbai will become the main airport hub, while the Navi Mumbai airport will start soon, he said.

Naidu said that while there were only 74 airports in India in 2014, the number of airports has gone up to 159 in 2025.

Similarly, the number of aircraft which was 400 in 2014, has now doubled to 800, he added.

He lauded Air India for inaugurating the Flying Training Organisation (FTO) for pilot training in Amravati.

"Today, India has an order of 1,700 planes and the country will have to generate 30,000 pilots in 10 to 15 years," he said, adding that the new airport in Amravati will help in Vidarbha's development and also contribute to the development of aviation in Maharashtra.



Vaishnaw called it a historic moment as the breakthrough coincided with the day rail service was started in India April 16, 1853

Hon'ble Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, who visited the site to mark this momentous milestone in Himalayan rail connectivity," a statement from RVNL said.

Earlier, RVNL CMD Pradeep Gaur had told PTI that this is the first time TBM technology has been deployed for rail tunnelling in mountainous regions of the country, and the progress sets a new global benchmark with a 9.11-m diameter silted-shield rock TBM.

Gaur has mentioned that the 9.69-m diameter Cabrera tunnel in Spain was built by a double shield TBM at an average rate of 423 m per month while the 14.58-km tunnel between Devprayag and Janasu has just been completed by Single Shield TBM at an average rate of 413 metres per month, becoming the second fastest in the world.

"This breakthrough marks a significant step in the government's mission to enhance

connectivity across India's hill states," Gaur said after the event.

"The Rishikesh-Karnaprayag project, executed from concept to commissioning by RVNL, aims to transform regional connectivity by linking key towns such as Devprayag, Srinagar, Rudraprayag, Gauchar, and Karnaprayag across five Himalayan districts," the RVNL statement said.

"More than 83% of the 125-km alignment passes through tunnels, involving over 213 km of tunnelling across main and escape routes," it added.

Officials present at the tunnel site stated that the TBM has faced extraordinary logistical and geological challenges, including transporting 165 MT components from Mundra port to site across narrow Himalayan roads and old bridges.

The tunnel also lies in tectonically active Seismic Zone IV, requiring sophisticated design and continuous advance geological probing, they added.

Divisional commissioners, DMs get more financial powers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dehradun, April 16: The financial powers of divisional commissioners and district magistrates in Uttarakhand have been increased to speed up reconstruction of public properties damaged in natural disasters.

A decision to increase their financial powers was taken by the state Cabinet at a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami Tuesday night, his secretary Shailesh Bagauli told reporters.

According to the decision, divisional commissioners can now give clearance to reconstruction works worth ₹1 to 5 crore and DMs to works worth up to ₹1 crore.

Earlier, divisional commissioners were authorised to clear reconstruction projects worth ₹20-50 lakh and DMs up to ₹20 lakh only.

This has been done to speed up reconstruction works in case of natural disasters in the state, Bagauli said.

The Cabinet also gave its nod to the state's first millet policy to promote cultivation of coarse grains besides a kiwi policy and a dragon fruit scheme, he said.

Cash incentives worth ₹1,500 to ₹4,000 per hectare will be given to farmers for growing millets. The kiwi policy is aimed at doubling the income of farmers in the hill areas. Subsidies will be given to dragon fruit growing farmers, Bagauli said.

The Cabinet also decided

to give 11 hectares of agricultural land for the expansion of a greenfield airport in Pant Nagar.

It also decided to declare one village each in every district as Sanskrit Gram. Every such village will have a Sanskrit instructor who will teach residents the language and encourage them to communicate with each other in it.

The appointment of Sanskrit teachers for each Sanskrit Gram will be done for a period of three years on a monthly honorarium of ₹20,000.

Sambhajinagar zoo helping tigers beat the heat with air coolers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, April 16: The tigers at the Siddharth zoo in Maharashtra's Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar are being given multiple showers, and air coolers are being used to help them cope with the rising temperatures, an official said Wednesday.

The zoo has a dozen big cats, which are warm-blooded animals. Dr Neeti Singh, a veterinarian at Siddharth zoo, said that the tigers are being given showers twice a day. The water supplied to the tank for the tigers to sit or drink is changed almost every hour so that it doesn't get hot, said Singh.



The zoo has installed air coolers to help the tigers beat the heat, she said.

According to the India Meteorological Department, the maximum temperature recorded in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar Wednesday stood at 41.4 degrees Celsius.

The more water the tigers consume, the better hydrated they will be, and their electrolyte balance will be maintained, said the vet.

"Food is being served to the tigers in the morning itself because they are not much interested in eating in the afternoon. Tigers are often less active these days (summer)," Neeti Singh.

Water showers have been also installed for other animals in the zoo, she added.

Silkyara tunnel achieves breakthrough

Dhami says it will be renamed after Baba Baukhnag

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Silkyara (Ukd), April 16: The breakthrough in the Silkyara bend-Barkot road tunnel, where 41 workers were trapped for over two weeks in 2023, was achieved Wednesday with the excavation from both sides completed.

A ceremony was held to mark the breakthrough. The day also saw the consecration ceremony of the Baba Baukhnag temple at the mouth of the tunnel.

The two ceremonies were attended by Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, who said the labourers trapped inside the tunnel in 2023 could be rescued due to the blessings of Baba Baukhnag and steps will be taken to rename the tunnel after the deity.

"Only three days after offering prayers to Baba Baukhnag, the world's longest and most challenging rescue operation led to the safe evacuation of all the 41 workers after 17 days. It was no less than a miracle made possible with the blessings of Baba Baukhnag," Dhami told the gathering at a function to mark the two events at the tunnel site.



He also thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his constant support and guidance during the prolonged rescue operation.

The 4.531-km tunnel is vital from the point of view of the Char Dham Yatra. The two-lane, two-directional tunnel is being built at a cost of about Rs 853 crore.

Once completed, it will reduce the distance between Gangotri and Yamunotri Dham by 26 km and make the

Char Dham Yatra more convenient for pilgrims, Dhami said.

"It will take only 5 minutes to reach from one end of the tunnel to the other. It will boost tourism and generate employment opportunities for locals," he said.

National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL) MD Krishna Kumar said it will take about 15-18 months more for the tunnel to become fully operational.

He said 15-16 of the 41 workers who went through the 17-day ordeal following the 2023 landslide are still working at the tunnel.

It was a highly challenging project from the safe evacuation of workers to the completion of the tunnel work, he said.

The workers were trapped after a portion of the under-construction tunnel collapsed November 12, 2023. They were rescued November 28.

Authorities order restoration of mangroves by removing encroachments

Officials of the forest and revenue departments, Mangrove Cell and local administration conducted separate surveys at Chikuwadi and Eksar villages in Borivali west after receiving complaints of encroachments in protected green zones

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 16: The Mangrove Cell of the Maharashtra government has directed the authorities to restore the mangroves by removing encroachments and debris at two locations in Mumbai's Borivali area

after site inspections showed unauthorised reclamation of the protected coastal zone.

Officials of the forest and revenue departments, Mangrove Cell and local administration conducted separate surveys at Chikuwadi and Eksar villages in Borivali west after receiving complaints of encroachments in protected green zones.

PTI is in possession of a copy of the order dated April 15. The first inspection was carried out April 11 following a complaint filed by former BJP MP Kirit Somaia, it said.

He accompanied officials to survey land parcels at Chikuwadi. The inspection team found encroachment, landfilling and use of green zone land for film shooting and construction of temporary film sets without



prior approval, the order said.

The inspected area was located within 50 metres of the mangrove zone as marked in the Maharashtra Remote Sensing Application Centre (MRSAC) maps of 2005 and 2018. These maps confirmed the presence of mangroves and mudflats in the concerned regions earlier, it added.

Officials cited violations under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, and recommended removal of unauthorised structures and restoration of the affected sites. The report was submitted to senior authorities for further legal action.

In the second inspection conducted last week at Eksar

village, officials examined two private plots following complaints from residents regarding alleged land reclamation. The complaint, filed by Somaia with the Mumbai Suburban Collector, alleged that approximately 30 acres of mangrove buffer zone had been illegally reclaimed through dumping of debris.

The collector's office submitted a report stating that the first plot, owned by a private developer, was surrounded by tin sheets and filled with debris to reclaim the land. Satellite imagery and maps from 2005 and 2018 showed the presence of mangroves and mudflats, confirming that the plot falls within the designated 50-metre buffer zone. The mangroves in the area were found to have

been removed.

The second plot was also found to have been reclaimed using mud, murum and debris. Mangroves at this location were found to have been similarly affected. The site also lies within the 50-metre buffer zone as per official records and satellite maps.

As per the order, this plot is owned by Niranjan Lakhumal Hiranandani, a prominent real estate developer in the state capital. In the order, the Mangrove Cell has recommended a detailed inquiry under the Environment (Protection) Act by the state environment department and the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC). Officials have also been advised to register appropriate offences under relevant environmental regulations.



“The revised PKC-ER-CP (Ramjal Setu Link) project will fulfil drinking water and irrigation needs in 17 districts of the state
”
BHAJANLAL SHARMA | RAJASTHAN CM

J&K CM LAUNCHES 'E-SEHAT' APP

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah Wednesday launched the 'e-SeHAT' app and asserted that it would "revolutionise" Jammu and Kashmir's healthcare sector



of the day quote

I parted ways with the BJP and not with Hindutva. I will not abandon Hindutva even if I die



UDDHAV THACKERAY | SHIV SENA (UBT) CHIEF

Facing such sudden economic challenges, India should not let its self-respect get affected in any way. It would be best in the national interest to take a decision by prioritising the welfare of the people



MAYAWATI | BJP SUPREMO

So, there is a need to revive that spirit (of sustainability). And, we need to create success stories on sustainability in the tourism sector and replicate them across the country



GAJENDRA SINGH SHEKHAWAT | UNION MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Kabirdham collectorate gets bomb threat

Kawardha (Chhattisgarh): The Kabirdham district collectorate in Chhattisgarh Wednesday received a bomb threat, which turned out to be a hoax after a thorough search of the premises, an official said. The threat message was received on the official email ID of the Kabirdham collector, following which police were alerted, Additional Superintendent of Police Pushpendra Singh Baghel told PTI. The email, sent by an unidentified person, stated "an improvised explosive device was planted in the Collectorate office and we will blow it up by 2.30 pm", he said.

Low-intensity blast triggers panic

Imphal/ Churachandpur: A low-intensity explosion triggered panic in Manipur's Churachandpur in the early hours of Wednesday, officials said. The blast happened at Elim Veng near the Jamsuan-Sahel roads junction, they said. No one was injured in the explosion, they added. Locals claimed that some persons came to the area around 1 am on a two-wheeler, hurled the bomb and left. Police said an investigation was underway to identify those behind the blast.

Four kids killed in cylinder explosion

Muzaffarpur: Four children were killed in a fire triggered by the explosion of multiple cooking gas cylinders in Bihar's Muzaffarpur district Wednesday, officials said. The incident happened in Rampurmani village in the Bariyarpur police station area in the morning, they said. The deceased were identified as Vipul Kumar (5), Beauty Kumari (8), Hansika Kumari (3) and Shrishti Kumari (4), they added. "Prima facie, it appears that the fire was caused by cylinder blasts. Four children were charred to death in the incident," District Magistrate Subrata Sen said.

AAP councillors stage protest

New Delhi: AAP councillors, led by Mayor Mahesh Kumar, staged a protest outside the MCD Commissioner's office Wednesday, demanding implementation of proposals to regularise 12,000 employees. Councillors holding poster cutouts that read "House Tax, Property Tax Maaf Karo," marched to the MCD headquarters to meet Commissioner Ashwini Kumar, but he was not present.

LANGUAGE NOT RELIGION: SC ON URDU

Dismissing a plea challenging the use of Urdu in the signboard of a municipality in Maharashtra, a bench of Justices Sudhanshu Dhulia and K Vinod Chandran Tuesday also said "language is not religion"

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 16: Urdu is born in this land, the Supreme Court has said while describing it as the finest specimen of 'Ganga Jamuni tahzeeb' and stating that considering it a language of Muslims is a "pitiable digression" from reality and unity in diversity.

Dismissing a plea challenging the use of Urdu in the signboard of a municipality in Maharashtra, a bench of Justices Sudhanshu Dhulia and K Vinod Chandran Tuesday also said "language is not religion". "Language is culture. Language is the yardstick to measure the civilisational march of a community and its people. So is the case of Urdu, which is the finest specimen of Ganga-Jamuni tahzeeb, or the Hindustani tahzeeb, which is the composite cultural ethos of the plains of northern and central India... We must respect and rejoice in our diversity, including our many languages," the bench said.

The top court was hearing an appeal filed by Varshatai, a former councillor of Patur in Maharashtra's Akola dis-



trict, who challenged the use of Urdu, along with Marathi, on the name board of the municipal council. According to her, the work of the municipal council can only be conducted in Marathi. The use of Urdu in any manner is impermissible even though it may just be a writing on the signboard of the council, she said in her plea.

The apex court noted that the municipal council had retained Urdu on the name board because many local residents understood the language. "All the municipal council wanted to do was to make an effective communication," it

and Urdu met a roadblock in the form of the puritans on both sides and Hindi became more Sanskritised and Urdu more Persian. "A schism exploited by the colonial powers in dividing the two languages on religion. Hindi was now understood to be the language of Hindus and Urdu of the Muslims, which is such a pitiable digression from reality; from unity in diversity; and the concept of universal brotherhood," it said.

The court said a municipal council provides services to the local community and caters to their immediate day-to-day needs.

"If people or a group of people, residing within the area covered by the Municipal Council are familiar with Urdu, then there should not be any objection if Urdu is used in addition to the official language i.e. Marathi, at least on the signboard of the Municipal Council. Language is a medium for exchange of ideas that brings people holding diverse views and beliefs closer and it should not become a cause of their division," the court said.

HC reserves order on Kamra plea against FIR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

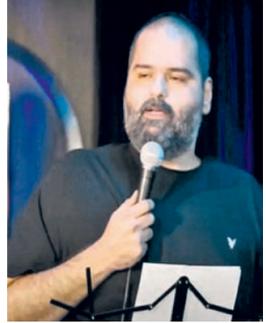
Mumbai, April 16: The Bombay High Court Wednesday reserved its order on comedian Kunal Kamra's petition seeking the quashing of an FIR registered against him for allegedly making defamatory remarks against Maharashtra deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, and granted him interim protection from arrest.

A division bench of Justices S Kotwal and S Modak, after hearing arguments from both sides, reserved its order.

It directed the Mumbai police not to arrest Kamra till the order is passed in the matter. A First Information Report has been registered at Khar police station here against the stand-up comedian for allegedly calling Shinde "gaddar" (traitor) during a show in the metropolis. Workers of Shinde's party, Shiv Sena, also vandalised the studio where the show had been recorded.

Kamra's lawyer Navroz Seervai pointed out that opposition leaders hurled the traitor slur at Eknath Shinde during the 2024 Maharashtra assembly polls campaign, but no action was taken. But the comedian has been terrorised and victimised, and in the process a stern message has been sent to artistes, through the police, that "if we don't like it, this is what we will do to you", he said.

During the show, Kamra sang a parody version of a song



from the film "Dil To Pagal Hai" which used the word "gaddar". He then went on to joke about how Shinde rebelled against Uddhav Thackeray and split the Shiv Sena in 2022.

Seervai submitted that in the past, NCP leader Ajit Pawar, now deputy chief minister, had commented that 'it's time to teach a lesson to the traitor who halts the good work of the government'. But no complaint was filed, the lawyer added.

Ajit Pawar was then part of the Maha Vikas Aghadi government, consisting of the undivided Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress, before Shinde broke away and joined hands with the BJP.

Seervai further highlighted that the opposition's entire campaign during the 2024 assembly elections was fought on this issue, with a booklet titled "Panchanama (inspection report) of the traitor Eknath Shinde government" being released.

Air hostess on ventilator sexually assaulted; police hands empty

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Gurugram, April 16: The man involved in the alleged sexual assault on a flight attendant who was on a ventilator in Medanta Hospital has not been identified so far, according to police even as the upscale NCR hospital said Wednesday that it is fully cooperating with the probe and her allegations have not been substantiated yet.

The 46-year-old woman, in her complaint, has alleged that the man carried out digital rape on her April 6 in the hospital ICU room where two other nurses were also present, and after getting discharged April 13, she narrated her ordeal to her husband. The police said they are investigating all aspects and are questioning the hospital staff.

"The police team is examining the footage of the hospital's CCTV cameras and trying to identify the accused," a spokesperson of Gurugram police said. In a statement, the hospital said, "We have been made aware of a complaint from a patient and have been fully cooperating with the investigations conducted by the relevant authorities."

"All relevant documents, including the hospital's CCTV camera footage of the time period in question, have been given to the Gurugram police," Dr Sanjay Durani, Medical Superintendent of Medanta, Medicity, Gurugram said in the state-



ment. No allegations have been substantiated so far, he said. According to the FIR, the woman said that she was admitted to Medanta Hospital at around 10 pm April 5 by her husband. She was kept on a ventilator in an ICU on the second floor.

"On April 6, around 9 pm, two nurses were taking care of her. They had changed her clothes and bedsheet, then she heard a man's voice," she said. As she was on the ventilator, she could not speak and was in a semi-conscious state, she claimed. "...I could hear all the sounds and proceedings there. The man asked for inventory from both the nurses. The nurses started giving their details." "Then I heard the man asking the nurse about the size of my waistband and said that he would check it himself. In the meantime, I felt that the man had put his hand under the bedsheet from my right side," she said and described how the man allegedly carried out digital rape on her in the presence of the nurses.

Murshidabad riots pre-planned: Mamata

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, April 16: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Wednesday termed the communal violence in Murshidabad as "pre-planned", accusing BSF, central agencies and the BJP of orchestrating tension by allegedly facilitating outsiders and enabling cross-border influx from Bangladesh.

Addressing a meeting with Muslim clerics, Banerjee urged PM Narendra Modi not to implement the "atrocious" Waqf (Amendment) Act, warning that it would divide the country, and requested him to rein in Union Home Minister Amit Shah, whom she accused of "harming the nation most for his own political agenda".

The TMC supremo claimed that despite the volatile situation in Bangladesh, the Centre rushed through the Act and allowed cross-border infiltration, both of which, she alleged, contributed to the unrest in Bengal. The Opposition BJP, however, dismissed the allegations as baseless and demanded Banerjee's resignation, accusing her of being more focused on

"appeasement politics".

Banerjee also alleged that a section of the BSF and certain central agencies under the home ministry played a "role in facilitating the violence", and ordered a probe into the role of the border force. "I came across news quoting home ministry sources claiming the role of elements from across the border in the Murshidabad unrest. Is it not the role of the BSF to guard the border? The BSF is under the MHA. The state government does not guard the international border. The Centre can't evade responsibility," the chief minister said.

"I will find out whom the BSF had financed in the border areas by paying money to local youths to pelt stones during the violence," she alleged. Banerjee announced compensation of ₹10 lakh each for the families of the deceased and instructed the chief secretary to initiate a formal inquiry into the BSF's actions, including the alleged opening fire during the violence. The CM accused Shah of misusing central agencies and orchestrating a systematic propaganda campaign to malign the image of Bengal.

India's first train with ATM on Panchavati Express installed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 16: The Central Railway (CR) has installed an automated teller machine (ATM) onboard the Mumbai-Manmad Panchavati Express on an experimental basis, officials said.

The ATM, provided by a private bank, has been installed in an air-conditioned chair car coach of the daily express service and will be made available to passengers shortly, they said. "The ATM has been installed on board the Panchavati Express on experimental basis," CR's chief public relations officer Swapnil Nila said Tuesday. According to the railway officials, the ATM has been put up in a cubicle at the rear end of the coach, a space earlier used as a makeshift pantry. A shutter door has been provided to ensure the safety and accessibility while the train is in motion, they said. The necessary coach modification was undertaken at the Manmad Railway Workshop, the official said.

The Panchavati Express, operating daily between Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus in Mumbai and Manmad Junction in neighbouring Nashik district, completes its one way journey in about 4.35 hours.



K'taka Cabinet to discuss contentious 'caste census' report today

Various communities, especially Karnataka's two dominant ones -- Vokkaligs and Veershaiva-Lingayats -- have expressed strong reservations about the survey that has been done, calling it "unscientific", and have demanded that it be rejected, and a fresh survey be conducted

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, April 16: Amid what looks like a caste conundrum, the Karnataka cabinet, led by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah will discuss the contentious Socio-Economic and Education Survey report, popularly known as 'caste census' Thursday.

Objections have also been raised by various sections of society, and there are also strong voices against it from within the ruling Congress. However, not everyone is opposed. Leaders and organisations representing Dalits and OBCs among others, are in support of it, and want the government to make the survey report public and proceed with it, stating the government has spent ₹160 crore public money on it.

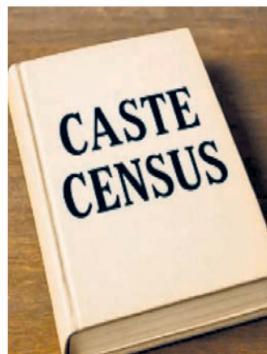
With strong disapproval from the two politically influ-

ential communities, the survey report may turn out to be a political hot potato for the government, as it may set the stage for a confrontation, with Dalits and OBCs among others demanding for it to be made public and implemented. Amid growing opposition to the survey report, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday assured that his government will not let any injustice happen to anyone.

After a long wait, the Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes' report was placed before the cabinet for the first time April 11.

The survey report, reportedly estimates the population of the Lingayat community at 66.35 lakh and the Vokkaliga community population is said to be at 61.58 lakh.

Both Veershaiva-Lingayats and Vokkaligs, also few other communities have alleged that



their various sub castes have been divided among different categories of OBC, resulting in decrease in their respective population numbers. They have alleged that many households were left out from the survey. The Vokkaligara Sangha, the apex body of the influential



Vokkaliga community, Tuesday officially registered its strong protest to the survey report, calling it "unscientific". They have urged the state government to reject it and conduct a fresh survey, while warning of strong agitation if the government proceeds with

it. Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar last night held discussions with Congress legislators from his Vokkaliga community. Not sharing details, he said they discussed what has to be told to the cabinet in one voice.

Veershaiva-Lingayats too, through their apex body, the All India Veershaiva Mahasabha, have expressed similar objections about the report. Some Congress ministers and legislators too have expressed their reservation, and so have prominent seers from the community like Rambhapuri math seer Veera Someshwara Shivacharya Swamy, Siddarama Swami of Tontadarya math, among others.

In a stern message to his own party government, senior Congress MLA Shamanuru Shivashankarappa, who also heads

the Veershaiva Mahasabha, asked whether those heading the government can continue their reign, facing opposition from Veershaiva-Lingayats and Vokkaligs, who are actually number one and two, among major communities.

Opposition BJP and JD(S) have strongly accused the government of dividing the communities in the name of caste census. They alleged that Hindu communities have been divided and shown in various subgroups, while the same has not been done for Muslims resulting in their population being shown bigger in size, than several dominant communities.

According to the survey report, out of a total 5.98 crore citizens covered under the survey that was carried out in 2015, about 70 per cent or 4.16 crore come under various OBC categories, according to official sources.

national

of the day quote

BJP tries to fear Congress leaders, but we won't fear or budge. We will always fight with your blessings and support. We will keep the country united, build the country and kick out the BJP government

I have tried to inform our legislators about the contents of the report to an extent. The legislators have shared their opinion. We have discussed on what has to be told to the cabinet in one voice and we will place it accordingly

My question is being from a political family, from where have you earned these business tricks to convert ₹50 lakh to ₹2,000 crore? If you teach us the same formula, at least I can reverse the fate of Assam

POST OF THE DAY

THIS IS HILARIOUS UP CM is not a Yogi; he is the biggest fraud. -WB CM Mamata Banerjee No fear, no filter, just fact

SHORT TAKES

Palakkad RDO office receives bomb threat

Palakkad (Kerala): A bomb threat received via email at the Office of the Revenue Divisional Officer (RDO) here Wednesday turned out to be a hoax, as no explosives were found during an inspection by the bomb and dog squads, police said.

Hyderabad: ED raids in money laundering case

Hyderabad: The Enforcement Directorate Wednesday carried out raids at multiple locations here as part of a money laundering investigation linked to alleged fraud with real estate investors, official sources said.

Stubble burning: 770 farmers booked

Indore: The Indore district administration in Madhya Pradesh has imposed fines of ₹16.7 lakh on 770 farmers for allegedly burning stubble, an official said Wednesday. Farmer organisations have objected to the action, demanding alternative arrangements.

TREE FELLING IN HYDERABAD

SC: Will go out of way for protection of environment

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 16: The Supreme Court Wednesday questioned the Telangana government over its "tearing urgency" to fell trees on a land parcel next to the University of Hyderabad and said it would go "out of the way" for the protection of the environment.

Making it clear that the apex court's first concern was restoration of the environment, a bench of Justices B R Gvai and Augustine George Masih said not a single tree more should be felled on this land.

The bench said it was surprised to see videos in which herbivore animals were running for shelter. It said it was also told that some of these animals were bitten by stray dogs.

Justice Gvai said, "You can have high rises in the company of the deer." The bench said rather than justifying it, the better course for the state would be to come up with a plan on restoring the tree cover.



The bench said it was surprised to see videos in which herbivore animals were running for shelter

it. "For the protection of the environment and ecology, we will go out of the way," it said, adding that under Article 142 of the Constitution, the top court can "do anything".

He said fake images of elephants were being circulated. The bench observed it was only concerned with how a large number of trees were felled without the permission of the competent authority and how bulldozers were used for erasing the 100-acre area.

Highlighting the importance of sustainable development and protection of the environment, the bench said that even for important projects like the Chardham project in Uttarakhand, the Centre had to fight for years

Unemployment in Haryana is 37.04 per cent, in Rajasthan it's 28.5 per cent, in Bihar it's 19.1 per cent, and in Maharashtra it is three per cent. But in Karnataka, it's only 2.5 per cent. Compared to other states, Karnataka fares far better, while the national unemployment rate is above 18 per cent

SIDDARAMAIAH | KARNATAKA CM

ANDHRA CM TO VISIT DELHI

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, after completing his engagements with the Sixteenth Finance Commission team, will leave for Delhi tonight, government said Wednesday.



US VP Vance to visit India early next week



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 16: US Vice President JD Vance and his wife Usha, the first Indian-American Second Lady, are set to visit India early next week that will see him hold talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The US vice president will travel to Italy this week and then to India, a spokesperson of Vance told CBS News. The Vances are expected to bring their three young children -- Ewan, Vivek, and Mirabel -- to India and the family is expected to travel to Jaipur and Agra besides visiting New Delhi.

The US vice president is travelling to India against the backdrop of Trump's policy on tariffs that triggered massive trade disruptions and fears of a global economic recession. Days after his reciprocal tariff kicked in this month, Trump announced a 90-day pause on it on all countries, except China as countries around the world wilted under the impact of the seismic action.

US National Security Adviser Michael Waltz had also planned to visit India early next week but the trip has been postponed, people familiar with the matter said. Vance's visit is likely to be more of a private trip though it will have official components, the people cited above said.

It is learnt that the US Vice President will hold talks with Prime Minister Modi April 21 which will cover various aspects of India-US ties including the issue of tariff and the ongoing negotiations between the two sides for a bilateral trade agreement. CBS News said Vance is undertaking a seven-day visit to Italy and India that will begin Thursday.

Mizoram delegation to leave for Assam for boundary talks



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Aizawl, April 16: A seven-member Mizoram delegation will leave for Guwahati April 24 to engage in official-level discussions with Assam to resolve the long-standing boundary dispute between the two northeastern states, a senior official said Wednesday.

The delegation will be headed by Home Secretary Vanlalawmia, while the Assam team is likely to be led by a principal secretary or secretary of the neighbouring state's Border Protection and Development Department, he said.

The meeting is scheduled to be held in Guwahati April 25. The official said the meeting will focus on preparing and finalising the groundwork and modalities for the next round of ministerial-level talks. It will also deal with technicalities related to the border issue, he said.

The last and fourth round of ministerial-level talks was held in Aizawl August 9 last year. In the meeting, which was attended by Mizoram Home Minister K Sapdanga and Assam's Border Protection and Development Minister Atul Bora, the delegations agreed to

continue to observe conditions agreed in the previous parleys, including maintaining peace along the interstate border.

The two states had also agreed to hold the next round of ministerial-level meeting in Guwahati before March 31 this year, which, however, did not happen. Meanwhile, Sapdanga Wednesday chaired a meeting of the Mizoram boundary committee ahead of forthcoming official-level talks. It reviewed necessary documents to be tabled during the April 25 talks.

Sapdanga said the state government's top priority is to ensure that Mizoram's border is secure. He also said "massive efforts" are underway to ensure that Mizoram does not lose its territory.

Three Mizoram districts -- Aizawl, Kolasib and Mamit -- share a 164.6-km border with Assam's Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi districts.

Mizoram claims that 509 square miles of the Inner Line Reserved Forest (ILRF) delineated in 1875 under the BEFR as its legitimate area or boundary.

In contrast, Assam asserts the border defined by a 1933 map prepared by the Survey of India in 1933 as its constitutional boundary.

The meeting is scheduled to be held in Guwahati April 25. The official said the meeting will focus on preparing and finalising the groundwork and modalities for the next round of ministerial-level talks

ED grills Robert Vadra for 5 hrs



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 16: Robert Vadra, the businessman brother-in-law of the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, was questioned by the Enforcement Directorate for the second consecutive day Wednesday for about five hours in a 2008 Haryana land deal-linked money laundering case.

The 56-year-old businessman termed the ED action a "political vendetta" and claimed the people of the country "do not trust the probe agencies". He reached the ED office

around 11 am accompanied by his wife Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, the Congress MP from Kerala's Wayanad. They hugged each other before Robert Vadra entered the office. Vadra went home briefly for lunch and re-joined the questioning session. He finally left the ED office after 6 pm. Priyanka Gandhi stayed in the visitors' room of the agency's office 'Pravartan Bhawan' at the APJ Abdul Kalam Road throughout the grill-ing session.

He has been called again Thursday for further questioning. Sources said Vadra has been confronted with about a dozen questions during the around 10 hours he spent at the ED office over two days. His statement was being recorded by the federal probe agency under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).



People from the Nindar village stage a protest over the Nindar Residential Scheme, at the Jaipur Development Authority office in Jaipur

Govt bans production of 35 combination drugs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 16: Apex drugs regulatory body CDSCO has directed drug controllers of all states and Union territories to stop manufacture, sale and distribution of unapproved 35 fixed-dose combination drugs that include painkillers, nutrition supplements and anti-diabetics.

They have also been asked to review their approval process for such fixed dose combination drugs (FDC) and ensure strict compliance of the provisions of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act 1940 and rules.

FDC drugs are those which contain a combination of two or more active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) in a fixed ratio. The regulator issued the directions after it found that certain FDC drugs have been licensed for manufacture, sale,



and distribution without prior evaluation of safety and efficacy, posing a serious risk to public health and safety.

In a communication sent April 11, Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) Dr Rajeev Raghuvanshi referred to the letter issued by his office January 2013 where concerns were raised regarding the grant of manufacturing licenses for sale of FDC drugs that fall under the definition of a

FDC drugs are those which contain a combination of two or more active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) in a fixed ratio

of this directorate that certain FDC drugs have been licensed for manufacture, sale, and distribution without prior evaluation of safety and efficacy as per the provision of NDCT Rules 2019 under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act 1940. This poses a serious risk to public health and safety," the letter said.

The approval of such unapproved FDCs compromises patient safety and may lead to adverse drug reactions, drug interactions, and other health hazards due to the absence of scientific validation, the letter

underlined. Upon issuance of show cause notices to the manufacturers, they have stated that these licenses were granted by the respective drug licensing authorities and have not violated any rules, it said.

"In view of the above, all state and union territory drug controllers are requested to review their approval process for such FDCs and ensure strict compliance of the provisions of the act and rules," the letter said.

The letter also listed out 35 unapproved FDCs which were earlier licensed by state/ UT drug controllers for manufacture, sale, and distribution without evaluation of safety and efficacy by Central Drugs Standard Organisation (CDS-CO) and later on cancelled by Drug Licensing Authorities (SLAs) or voluntarily surrendered by manufacturers following the issuance of show cause notices for reference.

YouTube kills hubby with help of friend; dumps body in drain

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, April 16: A 28-year-old YouTuber allegedly murdered her husband with the help of a male friend, also a content creator, after he objected to their "intimacy" and her social media activities. The duo carried the body on a motorcycle and dumped it in a drain in Haryana's Bhiwani, where it was found three days later, police said Wednesday.

"Both the accused -- Ravina and Suresh -- have been arrested and further investigations are on," the Station House Officer of Sadar Bhiwani, Inspector Narender, said. The police said that they found CCTV footage where the two accused were seen riding a motorcycle purportedly carrying the body on a deserted road late in the night.

The victim, identified as Praveen (32), was murdered March 25 after he had an argument with his wife Ravina in Suresh's presence at their home. "Ravina used her dupatta to strangle Praveen and he was also hit on the head by the two accused," the SHO said.

The woman returned to her home after the two threw the body in a drain. Concerned about Praveen's whereabouts, his family filed a complaint with the Bhiwani police March 26. A police official from Bhiwani said the couple got married eight years ago and have a six-year-old son.

It is claimed that arguments used to break out frequently between Ravina and Praveen, who objected to her posting videos on social media and devoting a lot of her time to such activities, the official said. The police said during the past few months their marriage had become strained over Ravina's "intimacy" with Suresh, whom she met on Instagram nearly two years ago.

international



We're going to give them a stipend. We're going to give them some money and a plane ticket, and then we're going to work with them - if they're good - if we want them back in, we're going to work with them to get them back in as quickly as we can
DONALD TRUMP | PRESIDENT, US

PAK'S FOREIGN SECY ARRIVES IN B'DESH

Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Amna Baloch arrived in Bangladesh Wednesday to hold the Foreign Office Consultation (FOC) Thursday after a gap of 15 years. Baloch will hold talks with her Bangladesh counterpart M Jashim Uddin at the state guest house 'Padma' Thursday



of the day quote

Unlike in the past, the (Israeli military) is not evacuating areas that have been cleared and seized. The military will remain in the security zones as a buffer between the enemy and (Israeli) communities in any temporary or permanent situation in Gaza - as in Lebanon and Syria
ISRAEL KATZ | DEFENCE MINISTER, ISRAEL



China welcomes more high-quality agricultural products from Malaysia to enter the Chinese market and encourages Chinese companies to invest and start businesses in Malaysia
XI JINPING | PRESIDENT, CHINA



America and China are now locked in a fierce contest for global supremacy. Neither country wants an open conflict, but there is a deep mistrust and suspicion on both sides
LAWRENCE WONG | PRIME MINISTER, SINGAPORE



India offers cheap arms loans, eyes Russian clients

REUTERS

New Delhi, April 16: India is ramping up efforts to become a global arms supplier, targeting countries that have traditionally relied on Russian weaponry. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government is offering long-term, low-cost loans through the state-owned Export-Import Bank (EXIM) to attract new buyers, including nations considered too risky for traditional financing.



like Algeria, Morocco, Guyana, and Cambodia are being targeted for their long-standing defense ties with Russia.

This push is part of a larger strategy to transform India into a defense manufacturing hub, adding helicopters, missiles, and battleships to the country's growing exports of iPhones, pharmaceuticals, and ammunition.

India, now the world's largest arms importer after Ukraine, is increasing its diplomatic footprint with more defense attachés posted in Africa, South America, and Southeast Asia. These officials will help identify potential buyers and promote Indian-made arms directly to foreign governments. Countries

The government aims to double defense exports to \$6 billion by 2029. In 2023-24, India exported about \$2.4 billion worth of arms, a steep increase from just \$230 million a decade ago. Domestically, defense production surged to \$14.8 billion, up 62% since 2020. Indian firms are positioning

India plans to expand cheap loans, including to countries with higher political or credit risks

Delhi sending more defense attaches abroad to help sell arms

Ukraine invasion's after-effects pushed some countries to consider Indian arms

Lack of track record selling higher-end wares has delayed some potential deals

themselves as cost-effective suppliers. For instance, they offer 155 mm artillery shells for \$300-400 each - well below the \$3,000 price tag for European versions. The country has also started brokering meetings between its arms producers and visiting foreign delegations, showcasing advanced equipment during military drills.

Private players like Adani Defence and SMPP are increasing production of large-caliber ammunition, with orders already coming in from abroad.

Meanwhile, EXIM Bank is stepping in to provide the financing muscle Indian exporters previously lacked, helping close deals that competitors from France, Turkey, and China might otherwise win with better loan terms.

India is already making headway. In Brazil, EXIM has opened a new office, and talks are underway for sales of Akash missiles and battleships. Bharat Electronics, which helps develop the Akash system, has set up a marketing base in São Paulo to support these efforts.

One standout example is Armenia, a former Russian ally now shifting toward Indian suppliers. From 2022 to 2024, India supplied 43% of Armenia's imported arms, up from nearly nothing earlier.

With EXIM-backed financing, a growing export portfolio, and geopolitical timing, India is fast becoming a serious player in the global arms trade - challenging Russia in markets where it once held near-monopoly status.

US judge stops deportation of Indian student

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New York, April 16: A US federal judge has temporarily blocked the Trump administration from deporting a 21-year-old undergraduate Indian whose student visa was cancelled.

Krish Lal Isserdasani has been pursuing a bachelor's degree in computer engineering at the University of Wisconsin-Madison with an F-1 student visa since 2021.

Court documents, as seen by PTI, said that "having maintained full-time enrollment and good academic standing, Isserdasani is now in the final semester of his senior year with less than 30 days remaining until an expected graduation May 10, 2025."

The documents filed in the US District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin said Tuesday that Isserdasani "acknowledges that he was arrested November 22, 2024, after he and his friends got into a verbal argument with another group while walking home late at night from a bar."

"Although Isserdasani was arrested for disorderly conduct, the District Attorney declined to pursue charges after reviewing the case. As a result, Isserdasani never had to appear in court and believed the matter was completely resolved with no possible immigration consequences," the court documents said adding that aside from this encounter, Isserdasani has had no other interactions with law enforcement.

However, April 4, 2025, the University of Wisconsin-Madison's International Student Services (ISS) office informed Isserdasani by email that his Student and Exchange Visitor System (SEVIS) record had been terminated.

The SEVIS has been terminated by the US Student and Exchange Visitor Programme operated by the Department of Homeland Security for "Otherwise failing to maintain status-Individual identified in criminal records check and/or has had their VISA revoked. SEVIS record has been terminated."

Xi to Asian nations: Reject conflict, protectionism

REUTERS

Kuala Lumpur, April 16: Chinese President Xi Jinping called Wednesday for Asian nations to unite in resisting geopolitical confrontation, unilateralism and protectionism, as he aims to consolidate ties with some of China's closest neighbours amid a deterioration of relations with the US.

Xi is in Malaysia as part of a three-nation Southeast Asian trip that includes Vietnam and Cambodia.

China and Malaysia reached a consensus on deepening cooperation in various fields, Xi said after witnessing the exchange of 31 agreements with Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, ranging from trade and tourism to railway transportation and agriculture. No details were provided for the agreements.

"In the face of shocks to the current international order and economic globalisation, our two nations will stand united with other countries in the region to jointly resist the undercurrents of geopolitical and camp-based confrontation, overcome the counter-currents of unilateralism and protectionism, and safeguard the promising prospects for development in our shared Asian home," Xi said at a function with Anwar.

Xi's comments come after US President Donald Trump, who took office in January, shocked markets by imposing sweeping tariffs on countries across the world. While some of the tariffs have since been delayed, Beijing faces 145% duties.

As part of his "America First" policy, Trump has also pulled the US out of the World Health Organization, hollowed out USAID and halted international aid.



Resist supply chain disruptions, excessive tariffs, Xi says

Beijing boosting ties with neighbours as US trade tensions rise

CHINA, MALAYSIA EXCHANGE AGREEMENTS ON TRADE, TOURISM

CHINA REMAINS MALAYSIA'S MOST SIGNIFICANT TRADE PARTNER, MALAYSIAN PM SAYS

China has said it is "tearing down walls" and expanding its circle of trading partners amid the trade war.

With an additional tariff of 24% on goods shipped to the US, Malaysia was among several Southeast Asian nations facing hefty US levies before Trump announced his 90-day pause. Malaysian officials have begun reaching out to the US for a reprieve.

Anwar said China remained Malaysia's most significant trading partner and continued to be a "rational, strong and reliable" ally during upheaval in global geopolitics.

"At a time when multilateralism is under tremendous strain, when some nations

abandon the principle of shared responsibility and others question long-standing commitments, China's global initiatives offer a new lease on hope," Anwar said.

China has been Malaysia's largest trading partner since 2009, with total trade valued at 484.1 billion ringgit (\$110 billion) last year, according to Malaysia's foreign ministry.

Xi urged Malaysia and other countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations regional bloc to jointly resist decoupling, supply chain disruptions and "excessive tariffs" with openness and greater cooperation, China's state-run CCTV reported.

Trump jumps in on tariff talks with Japanese officials

REUTERS

Washington/Tokyo, April 16: President Donald Trump said he will personally attend a meeting of Japanese and US trade officials Wednesday, a surprise move that underlines his eagerness to oversee negotiations triggered by his barrage of tariffs on global imports.

Tokyo sent its economic revitalisation minister Ryosei Akazawa to kick start the talks, expecting to face Trump's Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent in Washington, and had hoped to limit the scope of discussions to trade and investment matters.

But Trump weighed in early Wednesday, saying he would also be there to cover issues including the amount Tokyo pays towards the cost of hosting US troops in Japan, the biggest overseas deployment globally.

"Japan is coming in today to negotiate Tariffs, the cost of military support, and 'TRADE FAIRNESS,'" he said in a post on Truth Social.

"I will attend the meeting, along with Treasury & Commerce Secretaries. Hopefully something can be worked out which is good (GREAT!) for Japan and the USA!"

Bessent also wants to discuss the thorny issue of exchange rates with Japan, one of the first countries to begin face-to-face negotiations since Trump announced sweeping duties on dozens of countries - both friend and foe - earlier this month.

Japan has been hit with 24% levies on its exports to the United States although these rates have, like most of Trump's tariffs, been paused for 90 days. But a 10% universal rate remains in place as does a 25% duty for cars, a mainstay of Japan's export-reliant economy. Bessent said there is a "first mover advantage" given Washington has said more than 75 countries have requested talks. However, Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba said Monday that his country, a close US ally, won't rush to reach a deal and does not plan to make big concessions.

SHORT TAKES

Maldives bars Israeli passport holders

Male: The Maldives has changed its immigration law to bar Israeli passport holders from the country over the war in Gaza. The amendment was passed by Parliament Monday and approved by President Mohamed Muizzu Tuesday, according to a statement from the president's office. It was not immediately clear whether the law would apply to dual nationals who have passports from both Israeli and another country. The Cabinet took the decision nearly a year ago but the government did not formalise it until this week. "The ratification reflects the government's firm stance in response to the continuing atrocities and ongoing acts of genocide committed by Israel against the Palestinian people," the statement said.

Plane with Indians makes emergency landing

Kathmandu: An aircraft with 12 Indians on board Wednesday made an emergency landing at the Kathmandu airport here after experiencing a hydraulic system failure. Private airline Sita Air plane from Lukla, the gateway to Mount Everest region, to Ramechhap, about 140 kilometres southeast of Kathmandu, was diverted to the Tribhuvan International Airport after the technical fault was detected, an airline official said. The Dornier aircraft with 12 Indians, two Nepalese, and three crew members on board was towed to the parking bay with the help of a tractor after it landed at the airport, the official said.

Indian-origin doctor elected UK RCP prez

London: Dr Mumtaz Patel has been elected as the 123rd president of the Royal College of Physicians (RCP), a high-profile role heading the UK's medical professional membership body representing 40,000 members around the world. Dr Patel, born in Lancashire, north-west England, to Indian migrant parents, is a consultant nephrologist based in Manchester. The RCP welcomed her as the "first Indo-Asian Muslim president" and the fifth woman to lead the physicians' group dating back to the 16th century. The voting in the presidential contest concluded Monday and the official start date for her four-year term is yet to be confirmed. "As president, I will lead the RCP to be the best organisation it can be, supporting our members throughout every career stage to deliver the best possible healthcare for our patients," said Patel.

Legal definition of woman based on biology, rules UK SC

The Supreme Court's judgment related to whether a trans woman with a gender recognition certificate, a formal document that gives legal recognition of someone's new gender, is protected from discrimination as a woman under Britain's Equality Act

REUTERS

London, April 16: The United Kingdom's highest court ruled Wednesday that the definition of a woman under equality legislation referred to "biological sex", but it said trans people would not be disadvantaged by its landmark decision.

The Supreme Court's judgment related to whether a trans woman with a gender recognition certificate, a formal document that gives legal

recognition of someone's new gender, is protected from discrimination as a woman under Britain's Equality Act.

The landmark case is the latest example of the wider debate around transgender rights ending up before the courts.

Campaign group For Women Scotland had argued rights under the Equality Act should only apply based on a person's biological sex. It had challenged guidance issued by the devolved Scottish government that ac-



company a 2018 law designed to increase the proportion of women on public sector boards. Scottish ministers' guidance

said a trans woman with a gender recognition certificate was legally a woman.

After For Women Scotland had lost in the Scottish courts, the Supreme Court ruled in the campaign group's favour after an appeal last November, a decision greeted by cheering outside the building.

"The unanimous decision of this court is that the terms 'women' and 'sex' in the Equality Act 2010 refer to a biological woman and biological sex," Deputy President of the Supreme Court Patrick Hodge said. "But we counsel against

reading this judgment as a triumph for one or more groups in our society at the expense of another - it is not," he added.

Critics of the Scottish law had said its definition could impact single-sex services for women such as refugees, hospital wards and sports.

But transgender campaigners had said if the court ruled in favour of For Women Scotland, it could lead to discrimination against those with gender recognition certificates, especially over employment issues.

"The correct interpretation of the EA (Equality Act) as referring to biological sex does not cause disadvantage to trans people, whether or not they possess a gender recognition certificate," Hodge said.

FOR WOMEN SCOTLAND CAMPAIGNERS CHEER THE RULING

Latest instance of transgender rights debate ending up in court

JUDGE SAYS IT DOES NOT REPRESENT TRIUMPH OF ANY ONE GROUP



In India, 7 per cent of the Indian economy depends on travel and tourism. The global number is 10 per cent and I know the way India is growing at the moment that you will soon be getting to that sort of number

JULIA SIMPSON | PRESIDENT AND CEO, WORLD TRAVEL & TOURISM COUNCIL

RBI LAUNCHES QUARTERLY SERVICES, INFRASTRUCTURE OUTLOOK SURVEY

The Reserve Bank Wednesday announced the launch of a survey to assess the business situation for the first quarter of 2025-26 from selected companies in the services and infrastructure sectors and their expectations for the ensuing quarter. The survey will seek responses to a set of indicators pertaining to demand conditions, financial conditions, employment conditions and the price situation



of the day quote

Five years from now, I definitely feel when you compare Indian aviation to the rest of the world we will be flying the youngest feet in the sky, which basically means, by math, that we will be actually emitting the least



ADITYA GHOSH | CO-FOUNDER, AKASA AIR

Domestic CV volume should grow 3-5 per cent this fiscal, rebounding from last fiscal's slowdown and aligning with the sector's long-term growth trend



ANUJ SETHI | SENIOR DIRECTOR, CRISIL RATINGS

The huge spike in prices had already started to show its adverse impact on sales. With a global trade war now bringing new uncertainty, it is only natural for buyers to adopt a cautious approach to investment, particularly in something so big as real estate



DHRUV AGARWALA | GROUP CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, HOUSING.COM

Ferrari to unveil first fully-electric model in Oct

HYBRIDS MADE 51% OF FERRARI SALES IN 2024

REUTERS

Milan, April 16: Ferrari has been preparing for years for electrification, starting with Formula One powertrains, as it nears the launch of its first fully electric (EV) model in October. Chairman John Elkann said Wednesday.

Known globally for its roaring petrol engines, the luxury sports car maker started selling hybrid models in 2019 and is scheduled to unveil its first EV at a capital markets day October 9.

"Electrification has been a path that we've been pursuing



now for decades, starting in Formula One and then from our race cars to our sports cars," Elkann said during the company's annual shareholders' meeting. "We are very excited about un-

veiling the Ferrari Elettrica (electric)".

In Formula One, hybrid powertrains were first introduced in 2014, while "KERS" systems to recover kinetic energy from

Electrification has been a path that we've been pursuing now for decades, starting in Formula One and then from our race cars to our sports cars. We are very excited about unveiling the Ferrari Elettrica (electric)"

JOHN ELKANN | CHAIRMAN, FERRARI

vehicles when braking have been in place since 2009.

Elkann said Ferrari was committed to "complete control" over key components of its sports cars.

He said the facility Ferrari inaugurated in June in its

hometown of Maranello, the so-called e-building, would give the company increased manufacturing flexibility to develop its future models.

"Now, we can also claim that all our key electric components are developed and handcrafted in Maranello," Elkann said.

CEO Benedetto Vigna reaffirmed during the shareholders' meeting that Ferrari would continue to make petrol, hybrid and fully electric cars. "Indeed, in line with our strategy, we continue to invest in all three powertrains ... to offer our clients maximum freedom of choice," he said.

TRADE TALKS

India eyes ending import tax on US ethane and LPG

REUTERS

New Delhi, April 16: India plans to end taxes on US ethane and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) imports under broader negotiations with Washington as it looks to reduce its trade surplus and ease its tariff burden, three sources familiar with the matter said.

The proposal to get rid of duties for the products used for cooking gas and petrochemical production comes as India mulls scrapping import tax for US liquefied natural gas (LNG) and boosting purchases of the fuel from the United States.

As President Donald Trump's sweeping duties rattle economies and markets, several Asian countries running trade surpluses with Washington are looking to import more US energy in hopes of avoiding heavier tariffs.

India levies import taxes of 2.5% on ethane, mainly used as a feedstock for producing petrochemicals, and propane and butane, which are used for LPG used mostly as cooking fuel.

In the 2023-24 fiscal year, India imported 18.5 million metric tons of LPG worth \$10.4 billion, according to Indian government data, mostly from the Middle East.

It is the No 2 buyer of US ethane after China, according to the US Energy Information Administration, importing 65,000 barrels per day last year, compared with 227,000 bpd for China. However, the US-China trade war has sent tariffs surging and is likely to curtail China's imports.

New Delhi and Washington agreed in February to work on the first phase of a trade deal to be concluded late this year, with a view to growing bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030 and reducing India's \$45.7 billion trade surplus.

India to grow by 6.5% in 2025: UN

The country is set to maintain status as fastest-growing major economy, says UN report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

United Nations, April 16: India is expected to grow by 6.5 per cent in 2025 on the back of continued robust public spending and ongoing monetary easing, even as the world economy is on a recessionary trajectory, driven by escalating trade tensions and persistent uncertainty, a UN report said.

The UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in its new report, 'Trade and Development Foresights 2025 - Under pressure: Uncertainty reshapes global economic prospects', said that global growth is projected to slow to 2.3 per cent in 2025, placing the world economy on a recessionary path.

The report released Wednesday cites mounting threats, including trade policy shocks, financial volatility and a surge in uncertainty that risk derailing the global outlook.

India is projected to grow by 6.5 per cent in 2025, slightly lower than the 6.9 per cent growth of 2024 but still maintaining its status as the fastest-growing major economy, the report said.

UNCTAD "estimates that India will grow by 6.5 per cent in 2025 on the back of continued robust public spending and ongoing monetary easing. The decision of the central bank to cut the interest rate by 25 basis points for the first time in five years in early February will support household consumption as well as provide a boost to private investment plans," it said.

UNCTAD projects that the South Asia region will expand by 5.6 per cent in 2025, as declining inflation opens the way for monetary loosening across most of the region.

"Nevertheless, food price volatility will remain a risk and complex debt dynamics will continue to burden economies such as Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka," it added.

The report said that the world economy is on a recessionary trajectory, driven by escalating trade tensions and persistent uncertainty. Rising trade tensions are impacting global trade, with UNCTAD noting that recent tariff measures are disrupting supply chains and undermining predictability. "Trade policy uncertainty is at a historical high", the report notes, "and this is already translating into delayed investment decisions and reduced hiring".

The slowdown will affect all nations, but UNCTAD remains concerned about developing countries and especially the most vulnerable economies.

Many low-income countries face a "perfect storm" of worsening external financial conditions, unsustainable debt and weakening domestic growth. UNCTAD underlines the real threat to economic growth, investment, and development progress, particularly for the most vulnerable economies.

The UN agency pointed to the growth of trade among developing countries (South-South trade) as a source of resilience. Already accounting for about one-third of global trade, "the potential of South-South economic integration offers opportunities for many developing countries", the report noted.

Mumbai, April 16: In a shocking revelation, Gensol Engineering Limited (GEL) promoters Anmol Singh Jaggi and Puneet Singh Jaggi have been found to be diverting funds meant for electric vehicle (EV) procurement to buy a luxury apartment in Gurugram's upscale residential project - The Camellias by DLF.

The findings were part of an interim order issued by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) April 15, which has led to a major crackdown against Gensol Engineering Limited (GEL) and its promoters.

The SEBI has barred both Jaggi brothers from holding any directorship in the company and restricted them from accessing the securities market.

According to the regulator,



Global growth is projected to slow to 2.3% in 2025, placing the world economy on a recessionary path

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PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 16: Gold prices soared by Rs 1,650 to hit an all-time high of Rs 98,100 per 10 grams in the national capital Wednesday amid a global rush for the safe-haven asset triggered by an escalated trade war between the US and China.

According to the All India Sarafa Association, the precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had finished at Rs 96,450 per 10 grams Tuesday.

Gold prices logged the highest single-day gain since April 11 when the spot rates skyrocketed by Rs 6,250 per 10 grams -- the record steepest single day rise so far -- in the local markets.

Gold of 99.5 per cent purity also appreciated by Rs 1,650 to hit a fresh peak of Rs 97,650 per 10 grams against the previous close of Rs 96,000 per 10 grams.

Silver prices also climbed by Rs 1,900 to Rs 99,400 per kg. The white metal had closed at Rs 97,500 per kg Tuesday.

Sensex rallies for 3rd day to regain 77K-mark

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 16: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty closed higher for the third straight day Wednesday following buying in banking stocks and fresh foreign fund inflows as retail inflation slipping to near six-year lows raised hopes of further rate cuts.

Defying a weak global market trend, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 309.40 points or 0.40 per cent to settle at a two-week high of 77,044.29 in a volatile session. After a weak start, the index moved between gains and losses during the session. It hit a high of 77,110.23 and a low of 76,543.77, gyrating 566.46 points.

The NSE Nifty rallied 108.65 points or 0.47 per cent to 23,437.20.

Positive macro data and forecast of normal monsoon boosted investor sentiment, analysts



Gold surged to a record high, driven by growing trade war concerns after the US government tightened export rules to China

KAYNAT CHAINWALA | AVP (COMMODITY RESEARCH), KOTAK SECURITIES

On the Multi Commodity Exchange, gold futures for June delivery surged by Rs 1,984 or 2.12 per cent to touch a record high of Rs 95,435 per 10 grams. "Gold showed a solid rally



said. IndusInd Bank rose the most by 7.12 per cent among Sensex shares. The bank stated that external agency PwC has assessed a negative impact of Rs 1,979 crore on the bank's net worth due to accounting lapses in the derivatives portfolio.

Axis Bank jumped 4.26 per cent while Adani Ports rose by 1.81 per cent. Asian Paints, HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India and ITC were

among the gainers.

Maruti was the biggest loser, falling by 1.51 per cent. Infosys, Tata Motors, Larsen & Toubro, NTPC and Bajaj Finance were among the laggards.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) turned buyers after days of selling as they bought equities worth Rs 6,065.78 crore Tuesday, according to exchange data. As many as 2,636 stocks advanced while 1,309 declined

Globally, markets are undergoing fresh consolidation as tariff tensions intensify... Amidst global weakness, the Indian market exhibited a mild positive sentiment in anticipation that the trade fight between the US & China will not harm but benefit India, and March's CPI inflation which is at a nearly 6-year low is indicative of further rate cuts in the near future

VINOD NAIR | HEAD OF RESEARCH, GEJOIT INVESTMENTS

and 133 remained unchanged on the BSE.

Rallying for the second straight session Tuesday, the Sensex jumped 1,577.63 points or 2.10 per cent to settle at 76,734.89. The Nifty surged 500 points or 2.19 per cent to 23,238.55.

From EVs to deceit: BluSmart-Gensol scandal shocks startup world

BLUSMART PROMOTERS DIVERTED EV LOANS, BOUGHT FLAT IN DLF CAMELLIAS, SAYS SEBI ORDER

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, April 16: In a shocking revelation, Gensol Engineering Limited (GEL) promoters Anmol Singh Jaggi and Puneet Singh Jaggi have been found to be diverting funds meant for electric vehicle (EV) procurement to buy a luxury apartment in Gurugram's upscale residential project - The Camellias by DLF.

The findings were part of an interim order issued by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) April 15, which has led to a major crackdown against Gensol Engineering Limited (GEL) and its promoters.

The SEBI has barred both Jaggi brothers from holding any directorship in the company and restricted them from accessing the securities market.

According to the regulator,

loans taken to buy EVs for the ride-hailing service BluSmart were routed through multiple entities and ultimately used for personal gains.

"Funds availed by Gensol as loans for procuring EVs were, through layered transactions, partly utilised for buying a high-end apartment in The Camellias, Gurugram, in the name of a firm where the MD of Gensol and his brother are designated partners," the market regulator said in its interim order.

"It was separately noted that Rs 5 crore, which was initially paid as booking advance by Jasmin Kaur, mother of Anmol Singh Jaggi, was also sourced from Gensol. Further, it was noted that once DLF returned the advance to Kaur, the funds did not go back to the Company but were instead credited to another related party of Gensol,"



the SEBI added.

The market regulator found that Gensol Engineering had taken loans worth Rs 978 crore between 2021 and 2024 from two public lenders - the Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA) and the Power Finance Corporation (PFC).

Out of this, Rs 664 crore was

allocated specifically for buying 6,400 EVs, which were supposed to be leased to BluSmart.

However, the company revealed in a stock exchange filing in February 2025 that only 4,704 EVs had been procured so far.

Gensol's EV supplier, Go-Auto, also confirmed the same,

saying that the total cost of these vehicles was Rs 568 crore.

This left a gap of around Rs 262 crore, which, the SEBI noted, remains unaccounted for, even a year after the company received the last tranche of loan funds.

The SEBI's investigation showed that once the funds were transferred from Gensol to Go-Auto - allegedly for purchasing EVs, the money was often routed back to Gensol or to entities closely connected to the Jaggi brothers.

In one such case, a large part of the loan amount received from the IREDA in 2022 was transferred to Capbridge, a related party.

Capbridge then sent Rs 42.94 crore to DLF for an apartment in The Camellias project. DLF confirmed that the money was used to buy the property in the name of a firm where both An-

mol and Puneet Singh Jaggi are designated partners.

Gensol Engineering's shares crashed 5 per cent on the National Stock Exchange (NSE) Wednesday and remained stuck at the lower circuit limit of Rs 122.68.

Meanwhile, BluSmart Mobility has reportedly delayed salary payments for the month of March as the electric cab-hailing startup faces a financial crunch. According to media reports, co-founder Anmol Singh Jaggi, in an email to employees, assured that all pending dues will be cleared by the end of April.

"Due to current cash flow constraints, there will be a short delay in processing salaries. However, we want to assure you that all dues will be cleared within the month of April itself," Jaggi reportedly said in the email.

Stellar Suruchi steals the show

Suruchi combines with Saurabh to win mixed team pistol gold after individual glory

Shooters' exploits in the women's 10m air pistol competition has taken India to the top of the standings with three medals, followed by China



look back thereafter and needed just the next three series to wrap up the win as the Chinese misfired first under pressure. They did it in style too, closing out with 10.6 (Suruchi) and 10.5 (Saurabh) with both the Chinese failing to hit the 10-ring.

Earlier Tuesday, Suruchi produced a sterling performance in the 10m air pistol event to clinch her second consecutive ISSF World Cup gold, while Paris Olympics medallist Manu Bhakar bagged the silver to ensure India's domination in the competition.

The Jhajar-based Suruchi, 18, who had won her maiden

World Cup gold in the season's inaugural global event recently, tallied 243.6 in the 24-shot final, to leave Manu 1.3 points behind her. China's Yao Qianxun took the bronze.

Suruchi and Manu's podium finish meant that India collected one medal of each colour on the day, with men's 10m air pistol marksman Saurabh Chaudhary earlier winning a bronze.

There were clear indications during the 60-shot qualification round that the Indian duo would comfortably make it to the finals from a 28-strong field. Suruchi took the second spot with a regulation 582, while

Manu was fourth with 578. Sainyam, the third Indian in the fray, was 11th with 571.

Suruchi was at a different level in the final, carrying on her superb form in the last few months to quickly move to second after the first series of five shots.

Yao had taken an early lead and Manu was fourth with Uruguay's Julieta Jimenez, who shot a good final, in third at that stage.

The teenager scored better on the last two shots to beat the more experienced Manu and extend a sensational run of form, which began with the nationals in December last year.

DC beat RR in thrilling Super Over

Axar-led team goes on top of points table

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 16: In a match that had its ebbs and flows, Delhi Capitals (DC) held their nerve to emerge victorious over Rajasthan Royals (RR) in a thrilling Super Over and climb atop the points table at the Arun Jaitley Stadium here Wednesday.

On a slow pitch, late cameo by captain Axar Patel and Tristan Stubbs rescued DC from a precarious position and enabled them to post a formidable 188/5. In reply, Yashasvi Jaiswal and Nitish Rana threatened to take RR to victory by smashing 51 runs each. But Mitchell Starc's defending nine



RR had a bright start to the chase as Sanju Samson and Jaiswal clubbed a six each off Mukesh Kumar. Jaiswal then brought out the slice, swivel pull, and across-the-line swipe to take two fours and a six off Mitchell Starc. Samson continued to be at his aggressive best by dispatching Mukesh over long-on for six while edging Mohit Sharma for four.

After being dropped on 20 by Ashutosh Sharma, Samson nailed two pulled shots off Vipraj Nigam for six and four, respectively. But after he missed playing a cut-off Nigam, Samson picked up a rib injury and walked off the field for 31. After RR ended the power-play at 63/0, Axar Patel struck by

Brief scores:
Delhi Capitals 188/5 in 20 overs (Abishek Porel 49, KL Rahul 38; Jofra Archer 2-32, Wanindu Hasaranga 1-38) tied with **Rajasthan Royals** 188/4 in 20 overs (Nitish Rana 51, Yashasvi Jaiswal 51; Axar Patel 1-23, Kuldeep Yadav 1-33)

Super Over:
RR 12/2 in five balls lost to DC 13/0 in four balls

TEAM	M	W	L	NRR	PTS
DC	6	5	1	0.744	10
GT	6	4	2	1.081	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	7	2	5	-0.714	4
SRH	6	2	4	-1.245	4
CSK	7	2	5	-1.276	4

in the final over meant the game went into a Super Over, happening for the first time in the IPL after 2022.

DC went ahead with Starc in the Super Over against Shimron Hetmyer and Riyan Parag. The duo hit a boundary each off Starc, including off a no-ball, before being run out on successive balls and setting a target of 12 runs to win for DC.

After taking two runs on the first ball, KL Rahul sliced Sandeep Sharma for four, before taking a single. Tristan Stubbs then pulled Sandeep over deep mid-wicket for six to seal a thrilling win for DC, who have now won a Super Over for the fourth time.

TODAY'S MATCH
Indian Premier League
VS
Time: 07:30 pm
Telecast: Star Sports Network
Stream: JioHotstar

castling Riyan Parag with a slower delivery for eight. Jaiswal continued to be aggressive by lofting Kuldeep for six, before slog-sweeping Axar for four and hammering Stubbs over the long-on fence for another maximum, as he brought up his third IPL fifty in 34 balls.

Starc nailed a toe-crushing incoming yorker to trap Rana lbw for 51, giving DC some hope to make a late fightback. Dhruv Jurel and Shimron Hetmyer hit a couple of boundaries to ensure RR got home, but Starc bowling five pinpoint yorkers in the final over before Jurel was run out ensured the match went into a Super Over, which DC won in front of their jubilant home crowd.

SHORT TAKES

Gupta bags silver

New Delhi: India's Nitin Gupta won the silver medal in the 5000m race walk competition of the sixth Asian Under-18 Athletics Championship in Dammam, Saudi Arabia Wednesday. Gupta clocked 20:21.51sec to finish second on the podium. The 17-year-old Gupta had broken his own national record last month during the National Youth Athletics Championship in Patna by clocking a personal best of 19:24.48 sec.

Deodorant drama: Harriet apologizes

Paris: British tennis player Harriet Dart has apologized after asking the chair umpire to tell her opponent to put on deodorant because "smells really bad." Dart lost 6-0, 6-3 to French player Lois Boisson in the first round of the clay-court Rouen Open, and was picked up by a microphone during a changeover telling the umpire: "Can you tell her (Boisson) to wear deodorant? ... Because she smells really bad." After the footage spread on social media, Dart posted an apology on Instagram and said "it was a heat-of-the-moment comment that I truly regret."

OFC relegated from IWL

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhubaneswar, April 16: Sreebhumi FC ended the defending champions, Odisha FC's time in the Indian Women's League (IWL) with a 3-0 victory at the Kalinga Stadium that condemned the hosts to relegation.

Odisha needed to eke out a result to even stand a chance at staying up, and within the first half an hour their fate was sealed, courtesy of a Nongmeikapam Shibani Devi (10', 18', 32') hat-trick.

Despite the abjectly one-sided scoreline, it was Odisha who actually looked in the ascendency in the first 10 minutes of the game, marshalling the ball neatly in midfield.

In the 10th minute, though, Sreebhumi's scoring spree kicked off when Shibani picked up Anita Kumari's cross outside the box and unleashed a right-footer towards the goal. The shot took a deflection before nestling in the back of the net.

A double hammer-blow in the 18th and 32nd minute ef-

fectively finished off the game and Odisha's chances of survival. For her second, Shibani displayed an unteachable poacher's instinct to sneak in at the back post and volley in Anita's cross from inside the six-yard box.



The third goal came off a massive error at the back for Odisha FC. The combination of the first defender and goalkeeper failed to deal with a routine cross from the right, the latter spilling it loose inside the six-yard box. Shibani duly tapped it in.

CALANCE OPEN

Kshitij sets course record, moves into one-shot lead

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 16: Delhi's Kshitij Naveed Kaul fired a sensational course record score of 10-under 60 to move into a one-shot lead at a total of 12-under 128 at the halfway stage of the Rs 1 crore Calance Open 2025 at the Qutab Golf Course here.

The 28-year-old Kaul (68-60), a winner of four titles, who was four shots off the lead in tied 23rd place after Round One, put together an eagle and eight birdies Wednesday, to rise 22 spots and claim the second-round lead.

The legendary Mukesh Kumar of Mhow had registered an 11-under 59 at the DDA Open staged at the Qutab Golf Course back in 2005. However, the course was re-laid and changed in 2018. Kaul's extraordinary effort of 10-under 60 will thus count as the new course record.

BID TO HOST 2030 CWG

India face competition from Canada, Nigeria

All the bids are single rather than multi-nation, and India last hosted the Games in 2010 in New Delhi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, April 16: India will face competition from Canada, Nigeria and two other countries in its bid to host the centenary Commonwealth Games in 2030, Commonwealth Sport (CWS) announced Wednesday.

The confirmation from CWS comes less than a month after PTI, quoting a top sports ministry source, reported that India, also aiming to host the 2036 Olympics, submitted its bid to organise the 2030 Commonwealth Games in Gujarat.

CWS said that it had received 'Expression of Interests' (EOIs) from Canada and Nigeria, besides two more unnamed countries, to host the 2030 edition of the Games.

In all, seven countries have expressed interest in hosting future Commonwealth Games with five of those focused on staging the centenary edition. CWS also added that New Zealand are one of two nations that want to host the 2034 edition.

"Africa, Americas, Asia, and Oceania make up the regions from which the EOIs have been submitted. Canada, India, and Nigeria have already publicly confirmed that they

have lodged an EOI for the 2030 Commonwealth Games, with two additional nations also confirming their interest in 2030. Two EOIs are focused on the future Games pipeline, including New Zealand who have previously signalled their interest in hosting 2034, Commonwealth Sport said in a statement.

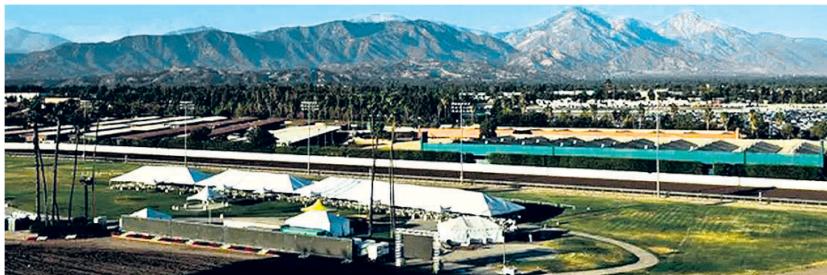
Commonwealth Sport CEO Katie Sadleir said the CWS is "thrilled with the incredible interest" in hosting the Games. "This positive response from four of our six regions underlines the importance and significance of the Commonwealth Games and its position as the major multi-sport event in the world sporting calendar alongside the Olympic Games and Paralympics and shows the strength and appeal of our reimagined Games model."

The future of CWG had looked uncertain in recent years with the Australian state of Victoria withdrawing as hosts for the 2026 Games due to budget constraints. Glasgow stepped in to salvage the event, but after making many alterations to the games programme.

The initial estimate for hosting the Games in Victoria was 2.6 billion Australian dollars. All the bids are single rather than multi-nation, and India last hosted the Games in 2010 in New Delhi. The last date to submit the 'Expression of Interest' to host the Games was March 31 and India's letter was sent by the Indian Olympic Association (IOA).

Pomona city to host cricket during LA 2028 Olympics

Cricket, which is returning to the Olympics after 128 years, will feature six teams each in the men's and women's competitions and will be held at the Fairgrounds in Pomona



titions and will be held at the Fairgrounds in Pomona.

The city is located 48km from Los Angeles, which is the main venue of the Games.

Fairgrounds or Fairplex, as it is more popularly known, is a facility that is used for conventions, and commercial, educational and sports (primarily motorsports) events through

the year. There is no designated cricket ground at the venue.

"We welcome the announcement of the venue for cricket at Los Angeles 2028 as it is a significant step towards the preparation for our sport's return to the Olympics," ICC chairman Jay Shah said in a release Tuesday night.

Cricket, which made its

only appearance in the Olympics at the Paris Games in 1900, was included in the Los Angeles Olympics programme after the International Olympic Committee's 141st Session at Mumbai in October 2023.

Cricket joined five new sports at LA28, including baseball/softball, flag football, lacrosse (sixes) and squash.

Although cricket is a hugely popular sport, it will be a fantastic opportunity to expand traditional boundaries when it features in the Olympics in the fast-paced, exciting T20 format that should appeal to new audiences

JAY SHAH | CHAIRMAN, ICC

The T20 format, recognised as the vehicle for the growth of the game by the ICC, has also featured in other multi-sport events in recent years.

The Asian Games in 2010, 2014 and 2023 featured both men's and women's T20 competitions while the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games staged a women's competition.

