



## Malavika's revelation

Actor Malavika Mohanan shatters the myth about Mumbai, considered among the safest cities for women in India

LEISURE | P2



## Jharsuguda 2nd hottest

Jharsuguda records 45.4 degrees Celsius Monday to become the second hottest place in the country

DOWNTOWN | P3



## Gold nears ₹1L-mark

Gold prices inch closer to the psychological mark of ₹1 lakh per 10 grams as the bullion rates surge by ₹1,650

BUSINESS | P11



## Iyer & Kishan return

The out-of-favour duo of Shreyas Iyer and Ishan Kishan returns to the fold in lower brackets in a 34-strong list of BCCI contracts

SPORTS | P12



CULTURE CONNECT: US Vice President JD Vance, along with Second Lady Usha Vance and their children, visits Akshardham temple in New Delhi Monday (Report P9)

PTI PHOTO

# Make no deals with US: China

In a strongly-worded message to countries seeking to strike bilateral deals with US, China has said that it would not hesitate to impose countermeasures on them, if its interests are hampered. The Dragon's tough stand comes in the backdrop of reports that a number of countries against whom US President Donald Trump has imposed varied amounts of tariffs are now seeking to work out bilateral trade deals with Washington to resume their exports to access the lucrative US market. Since a host of countries, including Japan and the ASEAN, have lucrative trade with both China and the US, China's firm stand is very likely to leave these countries in a quandary. Significantly, US has recently imposed 245% tariffs against China but paused tariff hikes against around 70 countries. Observers, meanwhile, said that the move would likely to give advantages to Indian exports to China and the United States vis-a-vis Japan and ASEAN countries.

ners while pressuring them to engage in so-called "reciprocal tariff" negotiations, the spokesperson said. "This is essentially using the banner of 'reciprocity' as a pretext to pursue hegemonic politics and unilateral bullying in the field of international economy and trade," the spokesperson said. China's tough stand came against the backdrop of reports that a number of countries against whom US President Donald Trump imposed varied amounts of tariffs are now seeking to work out bilateral trade deals with Washington to resume their exports to access the lucrative US market. The Wall Street Journal last week reported that the US plans to use tariff negotiations to pressure dozens of countries into imposing new barriers on trade with China. Countries, including Japan and the ASEAN, have lucrative trade with both China and the US. China's firm stand will leave these countries in a quandary. The spokesperson emphasised that appeasement does not bring peace, compromise does not lead to respect, and attempts to trade the interests of others for tariff exemptions are doomed to fail and will ultimately harm all the parties. China respects all parties that seek to resolve their trade disputes with the US through equal consultation, the spokesperson said, calling on all parties to stand on the side of fairness and justice, align with the right side of history, and uphold international economic and trade rules and the multilateral trading system. In the face of unilateralism and protectionism, no country can remain unaffected, the spokesperson said. "Once international trade reverts to the law of the jungle, where the strong prey on the weak, all countries will suffer," the spokesperson said. Meanwhile, experts observed that the move would keep India in an advantageous position when it comes to exports to China and US vis-a-vis Japan and ASEAN nations.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, April 21: China Monday threatened to impose countermeasures on countries seeking to strike trade deals with the US at the expense of Chinese interests. The Chinese Commerce Ministry spokesperson made these remarks while responding to reports that the US is preparing to pressure other countries to restrict trade ties with China in exchange for tariff exemptions, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. China firmly opposes any deal between the US and its trading partners at the expense of Chinese interests, the spokesperson said in a statement. "If such a situation arises, China will not accept it and will resolutely take corresponding countermeasures," the statement said, adding that China has the right to resolve and the capability to safeguard its legitimate rights and interests. Under the guise of so-called "reciprocity", the US has been recently arbitrarily imposing tariffs on all its trading part-

# 88% grievances addressed: Majhi

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, April 21: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Monday said that 88 per cent of the 9,377 grievance petitions received by the Chief Minister's Grievance Cell have been resolved. The CM said this during a public grievance hearing at Sambalpur in Western Odisha. This is for the first time that an Odisha chief minister held a public grievance hearing session outside the state capital. "We will take the government to different regions of the state so that the people can come for redress of their grievances," Majhi told reporters after the session. He said people from Western Odisha, during the previous BJD government, could not meet the CM and seek justice from the government.



Majhi said: "As it is said that 'Arakhita Ku Daiba Saha', our government is committed to providing assistance to all distressed people." He claimed that 88 per cent of the 9,377 grievance petitions received by the Chief Minister's Grievance Cell have been addressed and people have got benefits. P5

# Pope Francis dies at 88

AGENCIES

Vatican City, April 21: Pope Francis, the first Latin American leader of the Roman Catholic Church, has died, the Vatican said Monday, ending an often turbulent reign marked by division and tension as he sought to overhaul the hide-bound institution. He was 88, and had suffered a serious bout of double pneumonia this year, but his death came as a shock after he had been driven around St. Peter's Square in an open-air popemobile to greet cheering crowds on Easter Sunday. "Dear brothers and sisters, it is with profound sadness I must announce the death of our Holy Father Francis," Cardinal Kevin Farrell announced on the Vatican's TV channel. "At 7:35 (0535 GMT) this morning the Bishop of Rome, Francis, returned to the house of the Father," it said.

The Vatican said a ceremony planned for Sunday, April 27, when Carlo Acutis was to become the first Catholic saint of the millennial generation, had been postponed. Francis had Sunday made his first prolonged public appearance since being discharged March 23 from a 38-day hospital stay for pneumonia. In an Easter Sunday message read aloud by an aide as the pope looked on from the main balcony of St. Peter's Basilica, the pontiff had reiterated his call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. At the Vatican, locals, tourists and pilgrims visiting for Easter expressed their shock and grief. "This is something that really hits you hard," said Emanuela Tinari, from Rome. "He was a pope who brought so many people closer to the church.

He was not appreciated by everyone. But he definitely was by ordi-



1936-2025  
12-YEAR PAPACY  
Jorge Mario Bergoglio was elected pope March 13, 2013, surprising many Church watchers who had seen the Argentine cleric, known for his concern for the poor, as an outsider. MORE P10

## Bengal STF arrests 8 from Jharsuguda

Jharsuguda: The STF of West Bengal Police, with assistance of Jharsuguda police, Monday arrested eight persons, including two prime suspects, from Jharsuguda in connection with the violence in the neighbouring state's Murshidabad district, official sources said. The arrested were identified as Bani Israel and Sefaul Haque - sons of Ziaul Sheikh, one of the prime suspects in the murder of a father-son duo in Murshidabad's Jafraabad earlier this month. Others were identified as Saba Karim, Babul Seikh, Abdul Khalek, Roni Sk, Manrul Seikh and Afjarul Seikh, all residents of Murshidabad district. P3

BENGAL VIOLENCE

## Missing Delang minor found dead; uncle held

POST NEWS NETWORK

Delang, April 21: An 11-year-old boy, who had been missing since April 15 evening, was found dead in a septic tank just 200 metre from his home at Ratanpur under this police limits in Puri district, police said Monday. Deceased Ashirbad Sahoo's uncle Pravakar Sahoo, 34, alias Bapi has been arrested from Chandanpur late Sunday night on the charge of killing the minor, they added. Reports said Ashirbad 'disappeared' mysteriously from near his home April 15 evening following which his parents lodged a missing complaint with Delang police. Police, fire services personnel, dog squad and forensic officials searched for the missing minor the next day, but to no avail. The mysterious disappearance of the minor and subsequent failure of the police to trace him saw widespread resentment among the villagers. On Sunday, villagers, led by former MLA Rudra Mahara-

thy and local political activist Ashok Pradhan, staged a dharna in front of Delang police station, demanding that the case be handed over to Crime Branch for a detailed probe. About cracking the case, police said Pravakar was among those who had been quizzed during the investigation. "However, we grew suspicious over him when he was called to Delang police station for questioning Sunday evening and immediately he switched off his mobile phone to remain incommunicado," said Additional SP Bishnu Charan Pati. The official said Pravakar was nabbed from his in-laws' house Sunday night when he confessed to the crime. "On the basis of his admission, we recovered Ashirbad's mutilated and decomposed body from the septic tank," he said. The boy's private parts were missing, said the police. "We suspect Pravakar sodomised the minor before killing him. The boy's body has been sent to Puri district headquarters hospital for an autopsy.

# Humanoid workers, drones reshaping daily life in China

AGENCIES

Shenzhen, April 21: In Shenzhen's Central Park, a group of teenage girls huddle under a canopy, singing along to Mandopop hits. Their laughter echoes across the lawn, only to be interrupted by a mechanical hum. A drone from Meituan, China's leading food delivery platform, glides into view, delivering char siu pork and a waffle to an "airdrop cabinet." With over 40 such stations in Shenzhen, hungry park-goers can order everything from noodles to bubble tea, unlocked via a phone number. Meituan's drones, zipping through the skies, aim to outpace human delivery by 10 per cent, though the food arrives slightly chilled in its polystyrene box. This scene encapsulates China's bold push into "embodied AI," a cornerstone of its strategy to counter a shrinking workforce, bolster military prowess, and assert technological dominance amid a trade war and strained US relations, according to a report by "The



China's leaders see AI as key to upgrading military strength, solving problems created by a shrinking workforce, and a source of national pride

Guardian'. Artificial intelligence is not just a tool but a source of national pride, especially as Chinese firms navigate US sanctions on critical tech. Under Xi Jinping's leadership, Beijing is embracing tech firms once sidelined in favour of state control, now seen as vital to restoring private-sector confidence and driving innovation, the report said. Guangdong, home to the

tech hub of Shenzhen, is leading this charge. The provincial government recently allocated 60 million yuan (£6.4m) for AI innovation centres. Shenzhen, dubbed China's drone capital, benefits from progressive regulations fostering the "low altitude economy". The Civil Aviation Administration projects this sector's value will soar to 3.5 trillion yuan in a decade, a five-fold increase. Meituan's drones are just one piece of a broader robotics revolution reshaping urban life. Humanoid robots are stealing the spotlight. At this year's Spring Festival Gala, viewed 17 billion times, Unitree's humanoid robots dazzled with a dance performance. Meanwhile, Beijing hosted the world's first humanoid-versus-human half marathon, signalling AI's growing integration into daily life. These advancements reflect China's ambition to lead in embodied AI, where machines mimic human actions, from dancing to racing, the report added.

## Flute, tabla sound for vehicle horns likely

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 21: Union Road Transport and Highways minister Nitin Gadkari Monday said he is planning to bring a law under which only the sound of Indian musical instruments can be used as a horn for vehicles. Addressing the 78th Foundation Day Celebration of 'Navbharat Times', Gadkari said, "I am planning to make a law that horns of all vehicles should be in Indian musical instruments so that it is pleasant to hear. Flute, tabla, violin, harmonium." The transport sector contributes to 40 per cent of the air pollution in the country, he said, adding that the Modi government is promoting vehicles that run on green and bio-fuel, including methanol, ethanol. Gadkari noted that India gets maximum revenue from exports of two-wheeler vehicles and cars. The minister said in 2014, Indian automobile sector was valued at ₹14 lakh crore, which has now grown to ₹22 lakh crore. India has surpassed Japan to become world's third-largest automobile market, following US and China, he added.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



We already have only one well-a few kilometres from here-without any water

# leisure



## DYER WARNS BURGLARS NOT TO BREAK INTO HIS HOME

Actor Danny Dyer has warned burglars not to try breaking into his house - revealing he has a 'naughty dog' waiting for them and he also keeps a weapon by his side whenever he's at home.

## KRISTEN STEWART TIES KNOT WITH DYLAN MEYER

Hollywood actress Kristen Stewart has tied the knot with Dylan Meyer in Los Angeles. The couple exchanged vows at home in front of an intimate group of loved ones - including Ashley Benson and her husband Brandon Davis.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
Sometimes, pressure is a good thing, as it brings out the best in you. You will outshine your colleagues in whatever you choose to do. But your expectations may far exceed the outcome. Ganesha asks that you have patience. Results take time.

**TAURUS**  
Planning your own milestones and celebrating the success of friends is the agenda for the day. Your thoughts will be progressive in business or at work, and any plans you make will make a rock-solid foundation for your future. Social gatherings and parties will beckon with bubbly and bruschetta.

**GEMINI**  
You need to guard against hurting anyone's feelings because of your ill-temper or harsh language. You need to help others in their troubles. You ought to reflect on the toll that the troubles that have visited you have taken on you, and accordingly empathise with others, says Ganesha.

**CANCER**  
Intimate friends will be impressed with your attitude. You will try to make them happy and spend a happy evening with them. Affection and cordial ties will linger for long and prove fruitful.

**LEO**  
Your mind will be filled with conflicting emotions, says Ganesha. You will feel extreme happiness one moment, and then will be depressed the next. You need to guard against mood swings and find a balance to achieve success in your work today. Financial gains are indicated.

**VIRGO**  
The remarkable manner in which you function at work will earn for you a lot of accolades and supporters. Your seniors will appreciate your dedication to work. There will be fun and entertainment in the evening. Ganesha says you can look forward to relaxing with some soft music.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesha says governmental work will be beneficial today. Those of you who are officials in the government will be having a positive and good day ahead. Your family members will show their support for you and this is something that you will need from them. Children will progress in life. This is a good time to take important decisions.

**SCORPIO**  
The stars are aligned in a way that they produce a constructively favourable day for you today, predicts Ganesha. You know the importance of a team and treat everyone - seniors & juniors as equals. This will make the work environment harmonious.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Your imagination knows no boundaries. Your kind heart is ready to forget and forgive the evil. As Ganesha puts it, this attitude will take you a long way! Charity and donation, too are on your mind today. You enjoy a benevolent time today.

**CAPRICORN**  
Aren't you tired of doing the same thing again and again? Ganesha advises you to come out of your shell and breathe in some fresh air. Moving to a bigger and better house is on the cards for you, foretells Ganesha. It will take a major chunk out of your savings, but you are not complaining. You are not a spendthrift. You understand that money can't buy you everything, but it can certainly add to your comforts.

**AQUARIUS**  
You are loaded with work, but you will be able to complete the pending assignments. It is, however, necessary that you keep on marching ahead otherwise your growth may become stagnant, advises Ganesha. Keep yourself guarded and watch the moves your opponents make to be prepared for any challenge.

**PISCES**  
You will have no idea how time flies by today, while you struggle to complete an unceasing flow of tasks. You might end up missing out on the smaller details owing to your work load. Hence you need to concentrate on your daily routine.

### WOMEN'S SAFETY IN MUMBAI

## Malavika busts myths

**Mumbai:** Actor Malavika Mohan opened up about women's safety in a city like Mumbai. Speaking to *Hauterfly* in a new interview, the actor said that now that she has her own car and driver, she can vouch for the fact that the city is safe, but the scenario is different for the women who are out there, and it depends on luck at times.

During the interaction, Malavika shared her take on how safe the city is for women, and said, "People often say Mumbai is safe for women, but I would like to correct that perception. I remember that once I and two of my closest friends. We were coming back in a local train. And I think it was 9.30 pm. And we were in first class. So, the compartment was quite empty."

She carried on: "There was actually nobody else except for the three of us. And we were sitting, like, close to one of the window grills, right? And this man, just like he sees the three girls sitting, comes very close to the grill, kind of like sticks his face on the grill, and he's just like, 'Will you give me a kiss?' The three of us just froze. What if he just jumps inside the train?"

Malavika shared that if we ask any woman who travels in public, they will share countless such stories, and no place feels fully safe.

AGENCIES



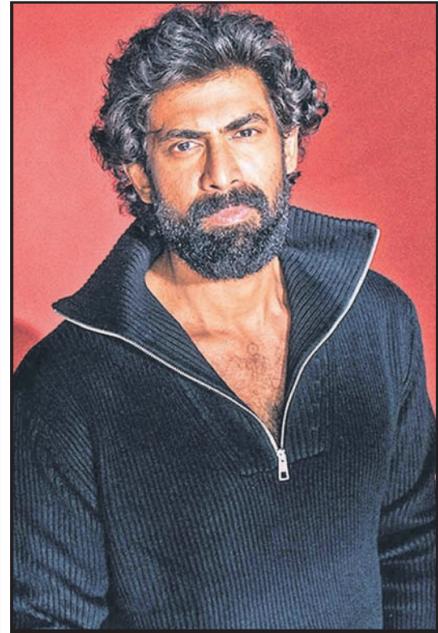
## Rakul's aspirations

**Mumbai:** Known for her discipline, charm, and girl-next-door relatability, Rakul Preet Singh is more than just a pretty face.

Coming from Delhi to being the 'IT girl' of Bollywood, the process has been seamless for the actor. But she doesn't pay much heed to it. She said, "When I entered the industry, I didn't know what is the 'IT girl'. I just wanted to be a heroine and be on the big screen. When I started, people said that five to six years is the shelf life of a girl in cinema but things are changing. As long as you look good and work well, age is just a number. I want to aim at longevity, and I aspire to be like Amitabh Bachchan sir or Tabu ma'am."

Talking about her source of confidence, she revealed in a recent interview with an entertainment portal, "It comes from your childhood. If you are made to believe that you're good enough, then you believe that you're good enough. Never have I heard my parents say to me or my brother that 'tumse nahin hoga'. They brought us up in a fearless and confident manner that for me, it has been 'main apni favourite hoon, hamesha'."

AGENCIES



## DAGGUBATI'S UNIQUE MILESTONE

**Mumbai:** Actor Rana Daggubati has made history by becoming the first Indian celebrity to feature at *WrestleMania*.

Known for his powerful roles in films like *Baahubali*, Rana's appearance at the iconic wrestling event marks a significant milestone in his career, bridging the worlds of cinema and sports entertainment in a way never seen before. It was a historic weekend for India at *WrestleMania 41*, WWE's most anticipated annual event, which is now streaming on Netflix. Rana, a lifelong WWE fan and star of the hit Netflix series *Rana Naidu*, made history as the first Indian celebrity to be invited to witness the spectacle from the front row.

His presence was celebrated with a special shoutout that was broadcast live to millions of WWE fans worldwide. Netflix also shared a video and photos of the actor on its Instagram handle and captioned the post, "Heels. Faces. Familiar faces @ranadaggubati is at *WrestleMania* Jo line cross kiya, woh gaya #RanaNaidu."

Speaking about the milestone, Daggubati shared, "Being at *WrestleMania 41* is a surreal experience—WWE has been a part of all our childhoods. Now, to witness it live and to be able to represent India on a global stage, especially with both WWE and *Rana Naidu* streaming on Netflix, feels like a full-circle moment."

IANS



## Sumbul opens up about her dream

**Mumbai:** Television actress Sumbul Touqeer has revealed a long-held dream close to her heart - starring in a dance-based film.

Sumbul shared that dance is a deep passion of hers, and she hopes to showcase it on the big screen someday. Expressing the same, the Imlie actress stated, "I would love to do a film, a series, or even a reality show that's centered around dancing. It's not just an art form for me. It's a feeling. It's where I find my calm amidst the chaos. Dance has been my silent friend on the loneliest days, my celebration on the happiest ones."

Sumbul went on to add, "There were times in my life when words failed me, when the world seemed too heavy, and it was dance that helped me breathe again. When I dance, I feel seen - even if no one is watching."

Sumbul started her acting journey in 2014 with supporting roles as a child artist in the shows *Har Mushkil Ka Hal Akbar Birbal* and *Jodha Akbar*.

IANS



### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

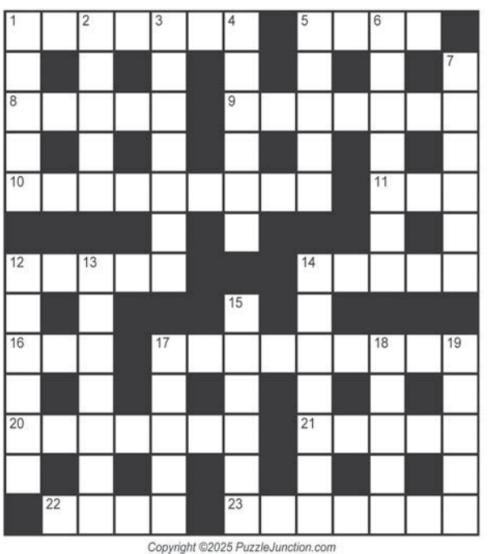


### BREVITY



### FUN POST

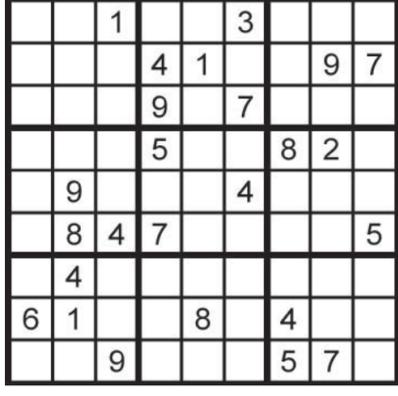
### CROSSWORD



- Across
- 1 Kind of magazine
  - 5 Cobblers' tools
  - 8 Swears
  - 9 Arc in the clouds
  - 10 Yummy
  - 11 Malaysian export
  - 12 Punches
  - 14 Digress
  - 16 Aspiration
  - 17 Musical group
  - 20 Spanish artist who lived in France
  - 21 Princess topper
  - 22 Austrian peaks
  - 23 Snoozes, in Mexico
  - 4 Thin
  - 5 Assumed name
  - 6 Shellfish
  - 7 Chic
  - 12 Urchins
  - 13 Rib-tickling
  - 14 Ghost, maybe
  - 15 Role players
  - 17 Desert sight
  - 18 Breakfast bread
  - 19 Stockpile
- Down
- 1 Impostor
  - 2 Go bad
  - 3 Picnic pests

### 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



### CROSSWORD

### SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court Collegium has recommended the transfer of seven high court judges, including Karnataka HC's Justice Dixit Krishna Shripad to Orissa HC, official sources said Monday. The Collegium, headed by Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna, took the decision in meetings held April 15 and 19. The recommendations asked Justice Hemant Chandangoudar from Karnataka HC to be sent to Madras HC, Justice Krishnan Natarajan to Kerala, Justice Naranahalli Srinivasan Sanjay Gowda to Gujarat, and Justice Dixit Krishna Shripad to Orissa HC. Among others, the Collegium recommended transfer of Telangana HC Justice Perugu Sree Sudha to Karnataka HC.

# downtown

## MURSHIDABAD VIOLENCE

# Bengal STF arrests 8 from Jharsuguda



PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar/Jharsuguda, April 21:** The Special Task Force (STF) of the West Bengal Police, with assistance of Jharsuguda police, Monday arrested eight persons, including two prime suspects, from Jharsuguda in connection with the violence in the neighbouring state's Murshidabad district, official sources said.

The arrested prime accused were identified as Bani Israel and Sefaul Haque - sons of Ziaul Sheikh, one of the prime suspects in the murder of a father-son duo in Murshidabad's Jafrabad earlier this month. Others were identified as Saba Karim, Babul Sheikh, Abdul Khalek, Roni Sk, Manrul Sheikh and Ajarul Sheikh, all residents under Shamsheganj police limits in Murshidabad district of West Bengal. All were arrested from Bandhbahal area under Banharपाली police limits of Jharsuguda.

Ziaul Sheikh had already been arrested.

"During the raid, the accused persons attempted to flee. The police team fired four rounds as warning shots in the air to deter them. However, due to the quick response of the police team, the accused were successfully nabbed," IGP (Northern Range) Sambalpur, Himanshu Lal told PTI over phone.

The police also recovered a country-made pistol from the possession of the accused persons, the IGP said, adding that two 7.62 mm live ammunition and four 9 mm empty cartridges have also been seized.

The West Bengal Police STF was searching for the accused as part of its investigation into the murder case of the father-son duo—Haragobindo Das and his son Chandan Das—registered in Murshidabad district.

On the requisition of the West Bengal STF, Banharपाली police, with the assistance of

other officers from Jharsuguda district, conducted raids at various locations under the Bandhbahal area.

The accused were taken to the Banharपाली police station for questioning, an officer said, adding that all these people used to work as labourers in Bandhbahal area. The six others were arrested for helping the siblings.

They had gone home to Murshidabad during Eid celebrations and allegedly took part in the violence, he said, adding that they returned to Jharsuguda and were in hiding.

A case (88/2025) has been registered in this connection under multiple Sections of the BNS and Arms Act, police said.

Several persons were killed, and scores of shops and houses were vandalised as violence rocked parts of Murshidabad district during protests over the Waqf (Amendment) Act.



**COOLING OFF:** A roadside ice apple vendor near Barabati Stadium in Cuttack makes brisk business as daytime temperatures soar

# At 45.4°C, Jharsuguda 2nd hottest in India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, April 21:** At least 14 places in Odisha Monday recorded maximum temperature at or above 40 degrees Celsius with Jharsuguda the hottest in the state at 45.4 degrees Celsius, the IMD said.

The industrial town of Jharsuguda was the second hottest place in the country after Chandrapur in Maharashtra which recorded a maximum temperature of 45.6 degrees

Celsius, the IMD said in its evening bulletin.

Jharsuguda was followed by Boudh (43.2), Titilagarh, Sambalpur and Sundargarh (43), Bhawanipatna (42.5), Hirakud (42.4), Bolangir (42.3), Sonepur (42.1) and Rourkela (42).

The twin cities of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack recorded maximum temperatures of 36 degrees Celsius and 35.8 respectively. However, Bhubaneswar experienced uncomfortable sultry weather due to

the high humidity level of 89 per cent.

The IMD also said that the day temperature is expected to rise by 3-5 degrees Celsius during the next three days.

"Maximum temperature is likely to be above 42 degrees Celsius in Angul, Jharsuguda, Sambalpur, Sundargarh, Bolangir, Sonepur, Boudh, Bargarh, Kalahandi, and Nupada," the IMD said.

The IMD issued a 'Yellow warning' (be aware) of heat

wave conditions likely in the western Odisha districts of Jharsuguda, Bolangir, Sundargarh and Sambalpur for Tuesday and Wednesday.

The weather office also said that thunderstorms with lightning with gusty surface wind speed reaching 30-40 kmph very likely to occur in the afternoon/evening hours of Tuesday at one or two places over the southern Odisha districts of Malkangiri, Koraput and Nabarangpur.

# Cong questions Naveen over Waqf Bill flip-flop

MANOJ KUMAR JENA, OP

**Bhubaneswar, April 21:** The Odisha Congress Monday accused the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) leadership of dragging its feet over acting against those responsible for the Waqf Bill vote fiasco in the Rajya Sabha April 4.

Questioning the BJD's ideological stand and inaction on the Rajya Sabha flip-flop, senior Congress leader Panchanan Kanungo charged party president Naveen Patnaik with giving a tacit approval to the 'voting as per conscience' move.

"First of all, a whip was not issued by BJD which makes it clear that the split voting was done with the prior knowledge of Naveen Patnaik. He (Naveen) should make things clear and review the situation as soon as possible. People have the right to know where BJD's true political ideology lies."

Reacting to the Congress leader's charge, BJD spokesperson Lenin Mohanty said, "BJD stands firm on its secular ideology. Party president Naveen Patnaik has made the matter very clear and assured Munna (Muz-



ibulla) Khan to take necessary steps into the matter. Whatever actions will be taken, we will let people know."

It is to be noted that the split voting incident raised several questions over the developments within the BJD, including its ideological positioning. Even party MP Khan who voted against the Bill had met party president Naveen Patnaik along with his supporters and demanded disciplinary action against MP Sasmit Patra who has been blamed for the post on X ahead of the crucial voting that saw the contentious bill voted into an Act.

# 4 held in ₹8.1cr bank fraud case

AGENCIES

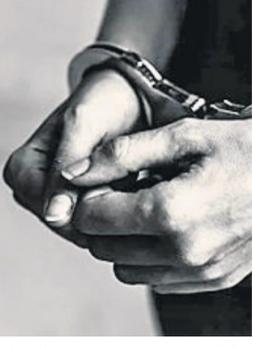
**Bhubaneswar, April 21:** The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) Monday arrested four fraudsters in connection with a Rs 8.1 crore bank fraud case here, officials said.

The EOW, in a press statement, revealed that accused persons -- Smruti Ranjan Sethy and M Dibyashree Jyoti Ranjan -- were arrested from Jagatsinghpur district, while the sleuths nabbed accused Niranjana Behera and Debasish Behera from Nayapalli area of the Capital City.

These arrested were in connection with a case registered on the written report of Shiba Sundara Sahoo, Regional Manager, State Bank of India, Regional Business Office, Bhubaneswar, April 7.

Sahoo in his complaint alleged that the accused persons by entering into a conspiracy availed 234 Xpress credit loans amounting to Rs 8.1 crore from different branches of the State Bank of India during 2021 and 2023 using fake and fabricated documents.

They produced forged employment records as employees



of different organisations like Capital Trust Limited, Corporate Infotech Private Limited, Falcon Marine Exports Limited, G4S Secure Solutions Private Limited, Global Innovsource Solutions, Innovsource Services Private Limited, Muthoot Microfin Limited, Narayana Hrudayalaya Limited and Orion Security Services Solutions Private Limited.

"The accused persons in connivance with the loanees and others managed to avail 234 Xpress Credit loans meant for the corporate sector in favour of 234 different ineligible individuals by producing fake/fab-

ricated employment records, like salary certificate, employment details, bank statements and KYC documents. After availing the loan by fraudulent means, the loanees stopped making payment of the EMI and the loan accounts became NPA leaving the outstanding amount of Rs 4,77,96,009," the EOW said.

During the investigation, the EOW personnel also ascertained that Rs 19,08,385, Rs 2.42 lakh, Rs 94,000 and Rs 50,000 have been transferred to the accounts of Smruti Ranjan, Dibyashree, Niranjana and Debasish respectively, from the loan account of the loanees.

The police also added that the accused persons were acting as middlemen in preparing the fake documents for financial gain.

Police, during the arrest of the accused, have also seized many incriminating materials like one laptop and five mobile phones from their possession.

The accused were Monday produced before the Odisha Protection of Interests of Depositors Court in Cuttack that later sent them to 14-day judicial custody.

## NATIONAL HERALD CASE

# ED acting like BJP's election dept: Baghel



AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, April 21:** Senior Congress leader and former Chhattisgarh chief minister Bhupesh Baghel Monday alleged that the Enforcement Directorate (ED) is functioning as BJP's 'election department', referring to the National Herald case.

The ED recently filed a chargesheet against Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and others on charges of money laundering in connection with the National Herald case.

"Whenever the Congress raises major issues in the interest of the country and its people, such as caste-based census and reservation according to population, the BJP government starts attacking the Congress with false and unrealistic allegations to defame the party," Baghel said during a press conference.

"A blatant example of this is the National Herald case. A petition was filed in this matter before the Election Commission in 2012, and the Commission rejected it. Then, BJP leader Subramanian Swamy moved the Enforcement Directorate, which also closed the case in 2015," Baghel recalled.

He claimed that after the then chief of the ED was removed, the Central agency registered a fresh FIR in the same case and subjected senior Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi to prolonged questioning.

"The ED, which is functioning as the election de-

partment of the BJP, filed the chargesheet on the last day of the court's given time. We came to know about the chargesheet against Sonia and Rahul through the media. No notice was served to either of them or to any director of the company," he added.

Responding to BJP leaders' claims that the National Herald owns property worth Rs 5,000 crore, Baghel said, "The Income Tax Department has estimated the value to be around Rs 400 crore. This shows the extent of lies being spread by BJP leaders. The property of the National Herald cannot be sold or transferred to any other party."

He further alleged that the BJP has been campaigning for a 'Congress-mukt Bharat', but has failed to destroy the party despite 'misusing' Central agencies such as the ED, CBI, Income Tax Department, and even the Election Commission.

"Congress governments, from Nehru to Manmohan Singh, established numerous institutions and assets for the benefit of the people of this country. But now, the BJP government is selling these one after another to a single person, with the entire government machinery working towards that end," Baghel claimed.

Asked about the ongoing Mahanadi water dispute between Odisha and Chhattisgarh, Baghel said, "Now that there is a triple-engine BJP government in Odisha, Chhattisgarh and at the Centre, they should resolve the matter mutually."

# Nagaraju asks banks to improve performance of edu, housing loans

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, April 21:** Financial Services Secretary M Nagaraju has asked bankers to improve performance in terms of education and housing loans.

The Financial Services Secretary, while chairing a meeting with MDs & CEOs and senior officers of public sector banks (PSBs) Saturday in Bhubaneswar, reviewed the progress of various social security schemes.

Nagaraju advised banks to improve performance under education and housing loans, Department of Financial Services (DFS) said in a series of posts on X Monday. He appreciated Odisha's State Level Bankers Committee (SLBC) performance under Social Security Schemes, Customer Service Point (CSP) Plus initiative and support of state government for implementation of various schemes, it said.

# BP treatment could lower dementia risk

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 21:** Addressing high blood pressure (BP) could lower one's risk of developing cognitive impairment by 16 per cent and dementia by 15 per cent over the following four years, according to clinical trial results published in the journal 'Nature Medicine'.

Cognitive decline usually precedes dementia, an ageing-related condition that steadily impairs one's speech, memory and language.

The phase 3 clinical trial involved nearly 34,000 patients aged over 40 in rural China. People in 163 villages were provided hypertension treatment through medicines and lifestyle changes, while people in other 163 villages continued their usual care.

Researchers, including those at The University of Texas, US, found that over a follow-up period of four years, systolic



blood pressure fell by 22 mm Hg and diastolic blood pressure by 9.3 mm Hg, among the people treated for hypertension.

Further, at the end of the four-year follow-up, 'anti-hypertensive treatment was associated with a 15 per cent reduction in dementia events,' the authors wrote.

Dementia cases around the world are expected to triple over the coming decades, with low- and middle-income coun-

tries projected to bear a disproportionate burden.

Blood pressure is known to be a risk factor for developing dementia. A study, published in the journal 'Neurology' in January, showed that an aggressive control of blood pressure for over three years can provide sustained benefits in preventing cognitive decline.

However, the research team said that few trials have looked at whether treating blood pres-

sure through medicines could impact one's risk of dementia.

Reacting to the study, Julia Dudley, head of research at Alzheimer's Research UK, said, "This large trial of over 33,000 people in rural China provides further evidence that addressing high blood pressure could be one way to reduce dementia risk."

The study is consistent with a Lancet Commission report, released in August 2024 that newly added 'high cholesterol' to a list of risk factors for dementia, added Dudley, not involved with the study.

The list now consists of 14 risk factors, all of which together account for nearly half of the world's dementia cases.

However, 'while the results from this trial are reassuring, further studies are needed to understand how other risk factors like genetics interact with factors like high blood pressure to influence dementia risk,' Dudley said.

# Civil servants pillars of Odisha's progress: CM

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 21:** On National Civil Services Day 2025, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi emphasised the crucial role of civil service officers in driving Odisha's development. Reflecting on Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's words, which called civil services the "steel frame of India," Majhi highlighted their significance in the state's progress.



erty" of the state, pointing out that their sincerity and efforts form a crucial link between the government and the public.

Speaking via video message at an event organised by the Centre for Modernising Government Initiative (CMGI) under the General Administration and Public Grievance department at Lok Seva Bhawan, Majhi commended the dedication, expertise, and commitment of officers from both central and state departments.

He urged them to prioritise the timely delivery of essential public services, including housing, water, electricity, and communication.

"Our government is of the people and for the people," the Chief Minister stated, stressing that addressing grassroots issues, particularly those impacting the poor and vulnerable, is the government's foremost priority. He described civil servants as the "intellectual prop-

## KORAPUT WINS PM'S EXCELLENCE AWARD

**Bhubaneswar:** Koraput district has been awarded the Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Public Administration 2024 under the Holistic Development of Districts category. Collector V Keerthi Vasan received the award from PM Narendra Modi in New Delhi on Public Service Day. The recognition honours Koraput's successful implementation of 11 key Central schemes, significantly benefiting tribal communities. One of only five districts selected nationwide, Koraput stood out for its inclusive, impactful, and citizen-focused governance.



retary Anu Garg, who stressed the importance of collective cooperation among officers from various sectors to ensure effective implementation of government services.



## OHPC celebrates 30th Foundation Day

RESHMI YADAV, OP

**Bhubaneswar, April 21:** Odisha Hydro Power Corporation Ltd (OHPC) marked its 30th Foundation Day Monday with a celebration at the IMMT Auditorium, Bhubaneswar, reaffirming its commitment to clean energy and service excellence.

Gracing the occasion as chief guest, retired IAS officer and chairperson of the Odisha Elec-

tricity Regulatory Commission, Pradeep Kumar Jena, emphasised the importance of operational efficiency and the adoption of renewable energy sources. "In the energy sector, we must promote renewables like solar and wind to ensure climate resilience and energy security," Jena said. "Operational inefficiencies directly impact electricity consumers. We must deliver services within stipulated timelines and adhere strictly

to regulatory norms," he added. Energy and Electronics & IT department principal secretary, and OHPC CMD Vishal Kumar Dev presided over the event. He was joined on stage by Directors Pranab Kumar Mohanty (Finance), Amiya Kumar Mohanty (Operations), and Sandeep Patnaik (HR).

Awards were presented for outstanding performance in 2024-25. The Upper Kolab Hydro Electric Project, Bari-

niput, received the Best Performing Unit Award, followed by the Upper Indravati Hydro Electric Project, Mukhiguda. The Rengali Hydro Electric Project was honored with the Best Housekeeping Award.

The celebrations concluded with cultural performances, including Sarve Sang by composer Laxmikant Palit and a captivating Odissi dance drama, Ananya Odisha, by the Orissa Dance Academy.

## Grievance camp held in Balipatna

**Bhubaneswar:** A joint public grievance redressal camp was held at Amanakuda GP office in Balipatna block, Khurda, Monday. Supervised by Khurda Collector Chanchal Rana, the camp saw participation from Jayadev MLA Naba Kishor Mallick, local leaders, and senior officials. Amid intense heat, the 7am session addressed 523 grievances—479 individual and 33 community-related. Five were resolved on the spot. Financial aid of ₹85,000 from the CM's Relief Fund and ₹10,000 from the District Red Cross Fund was sanctioned. ADM Bhubaneswar, the Sub-Collector, and other key officials were present during the camp.

## MODERNISATION WORK Rourkela route disrupted

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 21:** Several train services between Rourkela and Bondamunda railway stations will face temporary or partial cancellations until April 26 as the South Eastern Railway's (SER) Chakradharpur Division is undertake critical safety-related modernisation work in the sector.

The work involves track linking and non-interlocking operations as part of the commissioning of multi-tracking lines in the Rourkela-Bondamunda section. According to railway officials, the project aims to boost the efficiency, capacity, and safety of train movement in the busy corridor.

The officials said an advisory has already been issued requesting passengers to check train schedules in advance and plan their journeys accordingly during the six days.

They said the cancelled trains include: 18452 Puri-Hatia Tapaswini Express, 18451 Hatia-Puri Tapaswini Express, 18125 Rourkela-Puri Express,

18126 Puri-Rourkela Express and 18118/18117 Gunupur-Rourkela-Gunupur Rajyarani Express

Similarly, some trains have been partially cancelled. Those are: 22862/12872 Kantabanji/ Titilagarh-Howrah Ispat Express which will operate up to Jharsuguda only, and then return to its originating station. The 22861/12871 Howrah-Kantabanji/Titilagarh Ispat Express will run up to Tatanagar only, and return thereafter.

Meanwhile, the 15028/15027 Sambalpur-Gorakhpur-Sambalpur Maurya Express will remain cancelled April 21 and April 25, while 15027 Sambalpur-Chakradharpur Maurya Express will be cancelled April 23 and April 26, they added.

A senior railway official stated, "This modernization initiative is part of Indian Railways' ongoing commitment to improve safety and infrastructure. While the temporary inconvenience is regrettable, the long-term benefits will significantly enhance service reliability and safety for passengers."

## 100 KISS students secure major campus placements

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 21:** In a remarkable achievement, 100 students from the Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS), currently pursuing their studies at KIIT Deemed to be University, have secured prestigious placements in top national and multinational companies.

Hailing from humble tribal backgrounds, many of these students are first-generation learners, making this milestone all the more significant. Their success marks a turning point—not just in their lives, but for their communities.

The placement list for the 2025 graduating batch features several success stories, with offers from reputed companies such as PRA India Ltd, Tata Power, Essar Power Gujarat Ltd, Skipper Ltd, and Megha Engineering & Infrastructures Ltd. The highest package offered stands at ₹9.5 LPA, while the lowest is ₹4 LPA. Students from ITI, Polytechnic, Engi-



neering, Management, and Rural Management streams have been selected.

Each year, around 200 meritorious KISS students are provided the opportunity to pursue higher technical education at KIIT free of cost. The initiative, led by KIIT & KISS founder Achyuta Samanta, ensures quality education and employment opportunities for tribal youth.

The newly-placed students met Samanta today to express their gratitude. Congratulating them, he said, "These first-generation learners have become

a source of inspiration. With quality education and assured employment, KISS continues to fulfill its mission of reducing illiteracy and empowering tribal communities."

Samanta added that KISS remains a sought-after institution among tribal families, as it provides a comprehensive pathway from education to employment. Present on the occasion were KIIT vice-chancellor Saranjit Singh, registrar Jnyana Ranjan Mohanty, KISS University registrar Prashanta Kumar Routray, and additional registrar Pramod Kumar Patra.

## SAI shines in JEE 2025

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 21:** SAI International School has once again demonstrated its academic prowess, with students achieving stellar results in the JEE Main 2025 Session 2, recently declared by the National Testing Agency (NTA).

Leading the achievers are Ayushman Dibyasingh Behera and Suvram Jyoti Behera both securing an outstanding 99.92 percentile and emerging as school toppers.

Close behind were Biswajit Barik (99.83 percentile), Baibhaba Moharana (99.81), and Dibyanshu Sekhar Sahu (99.77), forming an impressive top-tier cohort. In total, 16 students crossed the 99 percentile mark, while 10 students scored in the 98 percentile range and 6 in the 97 bracket—underscoring the school's consistent academic excellence.

Ayushman said, "With SAI's relentless mentoring and my family's support, I've turned a dream into reality."

SAI International Education Group chairperson Silpi Sahoo said, "Our students' stellar JEE Main results celebrate their resilience, visionary guidance, and collaborative learning. At SAI, we nurture limitless potential."

## Experts link living heritage to future at DHW event

*The event brought together experts and learners to examine the architectural, historical, and educational value of Odisha's cultural legacy*

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Dhenkanal/ Bhubaneswar, April 21:** Heritage is not just a reflection of the past—it is a vision for the future. This was the resounding message at the second anniversary celebration of Dhenkanal Heritage Walks (DHW), held at the historic Old Zilla Parishad Auditorium in Kunjakanta.

The event brought together an eclectic mix of scholars, historians, students, and heritage enthusiasts to explore the role

of cultural legacy in shaping a rooted and resilient future.

Professor Sanjay Acharya, a leading expert in temple architecture, delivered the keynote address, offering a fascinating journey through the evolution of Kalingan temple styles.

He drew attention to the sophisticated craftsmanship of Odisha's ancient builders. "The architects built like titans, but finished like jewellers," he said, describing how the state's signature temple forms—Rekha, Pidha, and Khakhara—emerged from the Nagara tradition and eventually left a mark as far as Southeast Asia through ancient maritime exchanges.

The conversation also steered toward the pressing need for responsible heritage conservation. Maharani of Gadamadhapur Palace Aparna Dhir Narendra Singh Bharadwaj expressed concern over unplanned urban



development. "In the name of development, society is murdering history," she warned, urging a more thoughtful approach to progress.

Cuttack Heritage Walks convener Dipak Samantarai emphasised incorporating heritage education into mainstream curricula to help younger generations connect with their roots. Meanwhile, author and researcher Sanjay Baral under-

scored the global significance of Odisha's architectural wonders, quoting Charles Fabri: "Had Konark been discovered first and the Taj Mahal later, Taj would have taken second place in the world's mind."

The event, coordinated by DHW convener Suresh Mishra, concluded with the felicitation of individuals who have contributed to heritage awareness in the region, including Sadasiv Moha-

Heritage advocates called for integrating cultural education at all levels to instill pride and awareness among youth

Author Sanjay Baral highlighted Konark's global significance, quoting Fabri: "Had Konark been found first, Taj would take second place"

Maharani Aparna Dhir condemned reckless redevelopment, calling it a 'murder of history' in the name of progress

patra, Ratan Nayar, and Jeetendra Kumar Pattanaik. The active participation of students from Dhenkanal Autonomous College infused the event with youthful enthusiasm and energy.

DHW's second anniversary served as a poignant reminder that preserving heritage is not about nostalgia—it's about forging ahead with pride, identity, and purpose.

WEATHER		
	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	36.0°	35.8°
Min Temp	28.4°	27.0°
Humidity	79%	79%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
FORECAST		
Forecast: Partly cloudy sky..		

MARKET WATCH		
INDEX		VARIATION
SENSEX	79,408.50	▲ 855.30
NIFTY	24,125.55	▲ 273.90
DOLLAR	85.159	▼ 0.271
EURO	97.10	▼ 0.20
GOLD	₹96,752	▲ ₹1,968
SILVER	₹95,196	▲ ₹203

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WESTERN OUTREACH

# In a 1st, CM hears public grievances away from capital



of the 9,377 grievance petitions received by the Chief Minister's Grievance Cell have been addressed and people have got benefits.

On the 10th round of the Chief Minister's public hearing programme here, as many as 1,000 people had registered their names. Another 1,368 people who could not register on the portal, also submitted their petitions. A total of 6,000 petitions were received. "Action will be taken on all the petitions," he said.

The Chief Minister said that clear instructions have been given to officials to resolve all the complaints at the earliest.

Majhi said as part of the programme here, 18 individuals suffering from terminal illnesses were provided immediate medical assistance totalling ₹19.5 lakh from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund through the Single Window System. A medical team was present in the grievance hearing hall and they recommended treatments after which assistance was sanctioned from the CM-RF, he said.

Majhi said the public hearing sessions are being held in different locations as per the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

People from 10 western Odisha districts — Sambalpur, Bargarh, Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Bolangir, Boudh, Deogarh, Kalahandi, Nuapada and Subarnapur attended the session. Even the people from Koraput also submitted their petitions, Majhi said, adding that physically challenged and elderly persons were given priority in the hearing.

Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water Minister Rabi Narayan Naik said the initiative will ease people's hassle of travelling to Bhubaneswar for hearing of their grievances by the CM.

**Sambalpur, April 21:** Accompanied by 10 ministers and departmental secretaries, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Monday held a public grievance hearing session at Sambalpur in Western Odisha.

This is for the first time that an Odisha Chief Minister held a public grievance hearing session outside the state capital of Bhubaneswar.

"We will take the government to different regions of the state so that the people can come for redress of their grievances," Majhi told reporters after the session.

He said the people from western Odisha during the previous BJD government could not meet the Chief Minister and seek justice from the government.

Majhi said, "As it is said that 'Arakhita Ku Daiba saha', our government is committed to provide assistance to all distressed people."

He said the BJP government since July 2024 has held nine such sessions in Bhubaneswar and it was decided to provide such facility to the people in the western region of the state.

He claimed that 88 per cent



**WATER WIN:** Women collecting drinking water after the administration arranged a tanker following their road blockade over non-availability of potable water owing to a defunct Basudha project at Pujariguda village under Tentulikhunti block in Nabarangpur district Monday

## Infiltration from B'desh sparks alarm

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kendrapara, April 21:** A growing number of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh have reportedly settled in Kendrapara district by forging identity documents and securing government jobs using fake caste certificates, raising alarm among local authorities and civil society groups.

Despite presence of three dedicated marine police stations, weak coastal surveillance and lax enforcement have reportedly made Kendrapara a haven for Bangladeshi nationals entering the district illegally via the Bay of Bengal. The sea route from Bangladesh to Odisha takes only about eight hours by boat, enabling a steady flow of unauthorised migration into the coastal district.

In March, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi told the state Assembly that 3,738 Bangladeshi nationals were residing illegally in Odisha, with Kendrapara accounting for the largest share — 1,649 individuals. However, these figures have not been updated since 2004, when the district

administration first identified infiltrators.

Although 1,551 individuals were served deportation notices in 2005, little progress has been made in executing these orders. Most continue to reside in the district, said Amarabar Biswal, a local social activist.

Authorities have also flagged cases of illegal immigrants obtaining false caste certificates to secure jobs in public-sector undertakings (PSUs). A formal complaint filed by Mahakalapara resident Amitabh Chand led to an investigation by the state-level SC/ST scrutiny committee.

The panel confirmed that members of one Debanath family, who migrated from Bangladesh in 1972, had illegally acquired caste certificates and used them to gain employment in government-run corporations, including Odisha Hydro Power Corporation Ltd. (OHP-CL) and Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd. (MCL). The committee recommended administrative and criminal action against Nilima Debanath, Subhranshu Sekhar Debanath and other family members.

Voter ID fraud has emerged



as another concern. Ahead of the 2024 general election, the Kendrapara district administration cancelled 137 voter ID cards linked to Bangladeshi nationals. However, no public update has been issued regarding legal proceedings against those involved.

## 3 arrested from Andhra for stabbing contractor

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Berhampur, April 21:** Police Monday arrested three persons for allegedly stabbing a 46-year-old contractor, an officer said here.

The accused were arrested from Srikakulam in Andhra Pradesh, Superintendent of Police, Berhampur, Saravana Vivek M said.

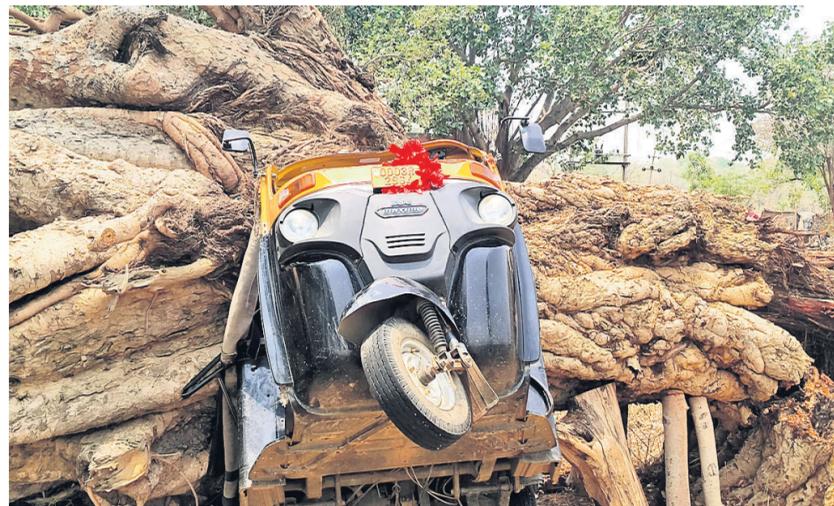
The injured person was identified as Sonu alias Dheeraj Mohan Choudhury of Gosaniuagaon, who was allegedly stabbed by the accused persons near Ramalingam Park here Sunday evening.

After committing the crime, the accused fled to Andhra Pradesh to evade arrest. A police team arrested the trio near Srikakulam, the SP said.

"Long-standing enmity between them was stated to be the cause of the incident. However, we are still investigating to find out the exact cause of the stabbing," he said.

The weapons used to commit the crime and the blood-soaked dresses of the victim and accused were seized, the police said.

The injured person is undergoing treatment at MKCG Medical College and Hospital here and his condition was stated to be stable.



**LIVELIHOOD LOST:** An auto-rickshaw crushed under the weight of a large Peepal tree after it got uprooted during a thunderstorm and fell on the vehicle parked at Sagada Ghat village under Titilagarh block in Bolangir district, Sunday night

## Loot bid foiled, 5 arrested

**Bhawanipatna:** Police Monday arrested five persons for attempting to loot money from two employees of a business house at Bhawanipatna in Kalahandi district. Three bike-borne miscreants attempted to loot the employees using chilli powder. However, it was foiled due to the timely intervention of locals, a police officer said. At around 10.30am, when the two employees of a local business organisation were going on a scooter to deposit money in a bank, the three miscreants attempted to loot the money. They threw chilli powder and hurled a country made bomb on them causing injuries. When they were trying to snatch the money bag, local people gathered at the spot and nabbed one of the miscreants while the other two fled from the spot, said Kalahandi SP Nagaraj Devarakonda. Later, the police arrested the two persons, who escaped from the spot. During the investigation, the involvement of two more locals was found and they were also arrested, he said. One motorcycle, one US-made pistol and five mobiles were seized from the accused persons.

## 35-year-old man shot, bludgeoned to death

**Dhenkanal:** A 35-year-old man was shot in his legs and then bludgeoned to death with stones in Dhenkanal town allegedly over old enmity, police said Monday. The incident happened at Karigara Sahi around 11.30pm Sunday, they said. The deceased, identified as Maheswar Behera alias Titan, was first shot in his legs while he was returning home on his motorcycle. As he fell, the attackers took him to another place and bludgeoned him to death, police said. Past enmity could be the reason behind the murder, Dhenkanal's SDPO RC Dora said. A case has been registered at the Dhenkanal Town police station, he said. Titan's wife alleged that her husband had been attacked by the same people a month ago, and in that attack, his hand was fractured.

## Koraput Collector wins PM's award

**Koraput/Nandapur:** Koraput District Collector V Keerthi Vasani has been awarded the prestigious Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Public Administration for the outstanding implementation of various Central government schemes in 2024. The award was presented by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi during the Civil Services Day celebration Monday. Koraput was recognised in the category of "Holistic Development of Districts". Out of 712 districts assessed across the country, only five were selected for the honour, with Koraput ranked among the best-performing. The Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Public Administration is one of the highest accolades for outstanding governance in India. The district received praise for its successful execution of major national schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan Abhiyaan, PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana, PM Vishwakarma, Kisan Credit Card scheme, Mission Indradhanush, Ayushman Bharat (PM-JAY), Har Ghar Jal (Jal Jeevan Mission), and both the urban and rural Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojanas.

## Vedanta Aluminium's 'Matri Van' initiative flourishes on Earth Day

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar/Jharsuguda, April 21:** As the world gathers to observe Earth Day 2025 Tuesday, this year's theme of 'Our Power, Our Planet' is a compelling reminder that the duty to protect and nurture our planet lies in our own hands and definite actions. In Odisha's fast-growing industrial landscape, Vedanta Aluminium has emerged as a beacon of proactive environmental stewardship. While the company consistently champions sustainability through diverse initiatives round the year, it has recently achieved an important milestone through its 'Matri Van' initiative. Having pledged to plant one lakh saplings in Jharsuguda, Vedanta has now announced the successful completion of this significant goal.

Interestingly, the company has achieved this feat within the span of a year, a testament to its deep-rooted commitment to ecological restoration and preservation. The 'Matri Van' initiative had commenced in July 2024 with a mass plantation drive aligned with the Government of India's 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' campaign. Organised in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC), the event saw several district officials, Vedanta employees and school children come together to plant over 2,000 saplings on a reclaimed ash storage area in Kapumal, located within Jharsuguda district.

The successful completion of the one lakh sapling plantation target underscores Vedanta Aluminium's dedication to enhancing Jharsuguda's green cover. It is set to have a significant impact on the local environment by contributing to better air quality, more carbon absorption, and wider natural habitats.

## Woman declared dead in records after first Subhadra instalment

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Paralakhemundi, April 21:** Believe it or not, a woman in Gajapati district was declared dead in government records after receiving the first instalment under the state-sponsored Subhadra Yojana.

The woman was identified as Rajani Devi, 34, a resident of Jhami village under Paralakhemundi police limits in Gajapati district. The matter came to fore as Rajani approached the district administration after she was reportedly declared dead in official records despite being alive, and thereby, prevented from receiving the second instalment of benefits under the Subhadra Yojana.

Rajani has demanded a thorough investigation into the matter and appropriate corrective action from the administration.

According to reports, Raja-



**Rajani** submitted a memorandum to the district administration alleging that such errors were not limited to her case alone

**She** claimed that many women in the district had been similarly affected and deprived of Subhadra Yojana benefits due to inaccuracies in government records

ni had applied for the benefits under Subhadra Yojana and received the first instalment November 24, 2024. However, she faced a delay in receiving the second instalment and after a long wait, finally visited the nearest Jan Seva Kendra to check her status. To her shock, Rajani discovered that she had been marked as 'dead' in the official database. Despite being alive, government records showed her as dead, disqualifying her from further benefits under the scheme.

Finally, Rajani submitted a

memorandum to the district administration, alleging that such errors were not limited to her case alone. She claimed that many women in the district had been similarly affected and deprived of Subhadra Yojana benefits due to inaccuracies in government records.

She also pointed out other discrepancies in the system, stating that landless women had been shown as owners of five-acre plots and that some daily wage laborers were misrepresented as government employees in the scheme's status documents.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

This is to inform the general public and concerned individuals that as per hospital policy and in compliance with the guidelines laid down by the National Medical Commission and the Medical Council of India regarding the retention period of medical records, **MAA SHAKTI HOSPITAL**, located at Plot No-168, Ekamra Marg, Unit-6, Bhubaneswar, intends to dispose of old medical records that are from the period of 01-04-2016 to 31-03-2022, which are no longer required to be retained. Patients or their authorized representatives who wish to obtain copies of their records before disposal are requested to contact the Medical Records Department on or before [7th May 2025]. After the mentioned date, the records will be securely destroyed as per prescribed protocols to ensure patient confidentiality and data protection. For further queries, please contact:

**Maa Shakti Hospital  
Medical Records Department**

**GOVT. OF ODISHA  
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES  
O/O THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER  
PRACHI DIVISION, BHUBANESWAR-12**

E-mail:prachi.division@yahoo.co.in,eprachidivision@gmail.com  
No. 2663, Dt. 17.4.25

**e-PROCUREMENT NOTICE NO-SEPRD-02/2025-26**

No. A-56: Bid Documents consisting of work, estimate cost, cost of tender paper, EMD, time of completion, class of contractor, the set of terms & conditions of contract and other necessary documents can be seen in e-procurement portal www.tendersorissa.gov.in complete online process only.

01. Nature of Work	Civil works (Canal/River Bank restoration)
02. No. of Works	31 (Thirty One) Nos.
03. Bid Identification No.	SEPRD-02/2025-26
04. Estimated Cost (in Rupees)	Rs. 7.00 Lakhs to Rs. 45.00 Lakhs
05. Earnest Money Deposit	Referred to DTCN
06. Cost of Tender Paper	Referred to DTCN
07. Period of Completion	Referred to DTCN
08. Date & Time of availability of bid documents in the Portal	From 24.04.2025 (10.00 AM) to 04.05.2025 (5.30 PM)
09. Date and Time of Opening of Tender Documents & online bids	05.05.2025 at 11.00 AM
10. Date of Lottery (In Case of situation arises)	14.05.2025 at 3.00 PM
11. Name and Address of the Officer Inviting Bid	Superintending Engineer, Prachi Division, Bhubaneswar-12, E-mail: prachi.division@yahoo.co.in, eprachidivision@gmail.com

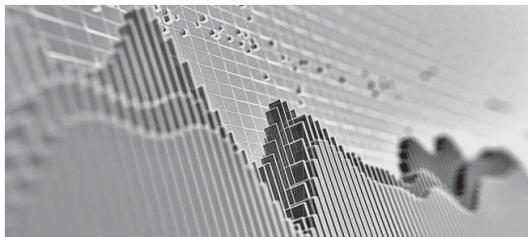
Further details (corrigendum, addendum, cancellation) can be seen from the State Govt. Portal www.tendersorissa.gov.in.

**Sd/- Superintending Engineer  
Prachi Division, Bhubaneswar**

OIPR-32096/11/0008/2526

FOCUS GLOBAL ECONOMY

# HEADING FOR A SLUMP



**Although it is premature to assert that a worldwide recession is around the corner, the breakdown of global trade and elevated policy uncertainty will undoubtedly suppress growth**

ket and developing countries, especially those that are heavily reliant on exports (such as in Southeast Asia). At the same time, trade disruptions, growing debt-service burdens, and scaled-back foreign-aid flows will exact an especially high toll on low-income countries in Africa and elsewhere.

As the Trump tariffs trigger a surge of protectionist measures around the world, the era of increasingly free, unfettered trade has come to a crashing end. While a full-scale retreat from free trade is unlikely, global trade patterns will continue to shift, regardless of how the tariffs play out.

Even before Trump wielded his tariff hatchet, international trade was already becoming more fragmented as a result of growing geopolitical fissures. And since finance tends to follow trade, fragmentation of global trade will result in weaker cross-border economic linkages overall. Even if the tariff wars subside as the economic consequences sink in, corporations around the world will be navigating a far more uncertain and volatile global landscape.

Although it is premature to assert that a worldwide recession is around the corner, the breakdown of global trade and elevated policy uncertainty will undoubtedly suppress growth. Each country will need to conserve whatever economic-policy space it has, so that it can deploy these tools to maximum effect if growth slows sharply. Reforms to promote economic flexibility and resilience, along with measures to boost domestic demand, will become crucial for weathering the turbulence.

*Eswar Prasad is a professor at Cornell University. Caroline Smiltneks is a student at Cornell University.*

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Meanwhile, the eurozone economy continues to operate on two tracks. Core countries such as Austria, France, and Germany are underperforming and facing enormous fiscal pressures, especially now that political turmoil is pushing up borrowing costs. By contrast, Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain have held up better. Looking ahead, escalating trade tensions are likely to take a toll on the manufacturing powerhouses. Elsewhere, the Japanese and British economies had been experiencing modest growth, but this may soon end, given their underlying fragilities, lack of room for policy maneuver, and exposure to global trade tensions.

China's economy, which had been showing signs of stabilizing, now faces a major challenge. Its expanding industrial capacity has not been matched by domestic demand, and now it is facing an all-out trade war with the US. China has confronted Trump's escalating tariffs with bravado, imposing retaliatory tariffs and other measures meant to inflict pain on the US economy. But there is a limit to this strategy, given China's weak consumer demand and the

rush by other countries to prevent a flood of Chinese exports from landing on their shores. While China has room to use fiscal and monetary policies to bolster domestic consumption, doing so will only work if supplemented with broader confidence-building reforms.

India's economy continues to perform well, owing to strong rural consumption and a robust services sector. It has been insulated from the worst effects of the tariffs by its expanding domestic demand, resilient financial markets, and role as an alternative supply-chain base for US corporations shifting out of China. In Brazil, an uptick in consumer spending helped offset declining exports in 2024, but loose fiscal policy resulted in inflation and weaker real (inflation-adjusted) growth. With consumer and business confidence tumbling, this could be quite a challenging year. Similarly, South Africa will continue to struggle, owing to persistent power shortages, sluggish growth, and a weakening currency.

Finally, the twin shocks of US tariffs and rising excess capacity in China will severely crimp growth in emerging-mar-

The timing could hardly have been less propitious. Just as the world economy was showing signs of stabilising, the odds of a policy-induced global recession have risen significantly. The latest update to the Brookings-FT Tiger index reveals a mixed picture, with the financial index declining and private-sector confidence crumbling even as macroeconomic data suggest a more benign scenario.

Obviously, the biggest factor is US President Donald Trump's tariff policy, which has disrupted world trade and fueled turmoil in financial markets, undermining growth prospects that had looked promising at the start of the year. The US economy performed well in the first quarter of 2025: output and employment grew robustly through March, and inflation fell gradually. But that all changed in April with Trump's announcement of "reciprocal" tariffs aimed at practically all US trading partners.

Since then, financial markets have been reeling, and a subsequent pause on tariffs (except on imports from China) and various carve-outs have done little to quell the whiplash effect. The uncertainty has severely dented consumer confidence and is likely to take a toll on business investment and employment growth. Making matters worse, as the costs of tariffs are passed on to US consumers and drive up inflation, the US Federal Reserve's ability to support the economy and forestall financial turmoil will be constrained. The tariff bloodbath has already increased the probability of the US economy stalling, and US policymaking will remain fundamentally unpredictable and lacking any clear economic logic.



*Eswar Prasad & Caroline Smiltneks*

**EACH COUNTRY WILL NEED TO CONSERVE WHATEVER ECONOMIC-POLICY SPACE IT HAS, SO THAT IT CAN DEPLOY THESE TOOLS TO MAXIMUM EFFECT IF GROWTH SLOWS SHARPLY**

SPECTRUM EARTH DAY

## Living in sync with Nature

God's words to Adam in the Book of Genesis, "Dost thou art and, and to dust thou shalt return" encapsulate what life essentially is: the material component of each living being merging into Earth and the consciousness i.e. Atma subsumes into super consciousness, i.e. Paramatma of which it is integral part. The precept subtly also urges to shed "ego" that creates man-to-man barriers that deprive man of abiding bliss.



*Harish Barthwal*

To the early man Earth was not just a 5.972 billion trillion tons astronomical body orbiting around Sun but a mysterious divine entity offering ample resources for growth, rather survival of all flora and fauna including mankind. It sustained and maintained all living beings like a mother does, so it came to be addressed as 'Mother Earth' in most communities. That belief stays. In wide recognition of Earth's patronising role in feeding the world, after celebrating Earth Day since 1970 annually on 22 April, UN befittingly renamed it as 'International Mother Earth Day' in 2009.

The therapeutic wonders of Earth have been outlined by Alma Hutchens: "Mother Earth was the first physician and healer. Someday, everyone will realise that She alone owns the true pharmacy in medicine, for all

drugs are made from Her garden." Apropos of the mud therapy, a natural therapy that is fast gaining ground. Earth's blessings continue to be solicited by people of all faiths. In religious ceremonies of all descriptions Earth's blessings are invoked. Foundation laying observance of residential, industrial, scientific, or other structures is deemed to augur well only after Bhumi Pujan at the outset that is known to keep evil spirits at bay.

Scientists are yet to unravel the myriad biological, mineral and other facts about Earth. India has so far undertaken preliminary prospecting of just 12 per cent of its land surface, not to speak of complex layers within. Ditto with mechanism of plants and animal life of which we have little knowledge. Publication of journals on specific body parts or diseases, and plants attests that much remains to be known. Deriding at know-it-all human elation of conquering Nature, Thomas Alva Edison observed, "Until a man duplicates a blade of grass, Nature can laugh at his so-called scientific knowledge. Remedies from chemicals will never stand in favourable comparison with the products of Nature, the living cell of a plant, the final result of the rays of the Sun, the mother of all life." Closeness to Mother Earth

helped early men stay fit and kicking. They walked barefoot; sat, ate, and slept on Earth thus deriving benefits of its healing power. Knowledge about congruence between Earth's electric system vis-a-vis man's is in fledgling stage though many animals including whales, rodents, bats, cows, dogs, fish, birds and reptiles are known to respond to Earth's magnetic stimuli. In microbial realm, bacteria have a sort of compass that helps it swim. California-based Caltech Institute of Technology is studying how the Earth's electromagnetic system could impact human brain cells. It is hypothesised that our hunter-gatherer ancestors used electro-magnetic sense for survival.

Variegated beauties of Earth have inspired artists, authors and other creatives to produce masterpieces. Rachel Carson believed that those who dwell among the beauties and mysteries of the Earth are never alone or weary of life. Present practice of insulating our body from Earth deprives us from grounding benefits leading to many physical and mental disorders. Thanks to the emerging trend of walking and running barefoot, endorsed by health experts.

In the aftermath of Latur (Maharashtra) earthquake of 6.4 magnitude with 8,000 lives lost and over 150,000 houses de-

stroyed in September 1993, an anthropological team found that the traditional mud houses remained intact, only concrete structures were devastated. Implications of staying, thinking, planning and machinating against Mother Earth's plan are witnessed in disturbed eco-system, climate change, carbon emissions, et al. Tampering with the structure of Earth, diverting water ways, increased carbon emissions, have all led to disastrous outcomes. Over 40 per cent of land surface once under dense forests is under farming, storms are becoming stronger, polar bears are vanishing, droughts are more severe now, sea levels are encroaching habitations, onset of seasons is becoming erratic, and so on.

As with biological mother, Mother Earth must not be taken for granted. Divine powers don't machinate against human interests, their benediction is beyond doubt. After perpetrating numerous anti-humanitarian misdeeds Devi Parvati, an all-mother figure, forgave several devils in row when they took U-turn and begged for salvation. Once we humans too realise, and set on righteous trajectory, Mother Earth shall oblige and help us.

*The author, a freelancer & blogger, writes on health, social, and human interest issues.*

**SCIENTISTS ARE YET TO UNRAVEL THE MYRIAD BIOLOGICAL, MINERAL AND OTHER FACTS ABOUT EARTH**

### Planet under pressure

Sir, The most precious treasure people have in common is the Earth. Human beings are living on Earth as if they have another one to go in times of crisis. Natural resources like air, water, wind, energy, paper, fuel, have to be used with prudence. Earth is not there to be conquered, it is there to be loved and respected for a peaceful coexistence with humans. A study has shown that the pressure exerted on the planet has doubled in the last 50 years while the rich natural resources have declined by more than 30 per cent. Adding to the Earth's burden are deforestation, wildlife destruction and pollution. And people are paying a heavy price. Man has polluted the Earth and nature; it is his own duty to work towards its rectification. Waste recycling, water treatment plants, rainwater harvesting, solar energy, water recycling are steps in the right direction. After all, it is "our power, our planet."

*Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA*

### Balance of power

Sir, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar's recent remarks attacking the Supreme Court for its verdict that set deadlines for the President and Governors to act on Bills have sparked widespread outrage across the country. His comments imply that judicial independence – a cornerstone of our democracy – is "hostile" or "dangerous." His rhetoric seeks to undermine public trust in the judiciary and risks damaging separation of powers between branches of government. By calling Article 142 as a "nuclear missile," the VP appears to be portraying the judiciary as a "threat" rather than a "guardian of constitutional rights." Attacks on judicial legitimacy can embolden other political actors to disregard court rulings, weakening the rule of law. Framing the judiciary as a malevolent institution and questioning its constitutional powers without nuance is fraught with danger. Safeguarding democracy requires mutual respect and balance among all the three pillars of governance – executive, legislature and judiciary. When this balance is disturbed through incendiary remarks by none less than the Vice President, echoing the voice of the ruling BJP, it threatens not just institutions, but the very foundation of our constitutional democracy.

*Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI*

## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

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

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



When one does not progress one feels bored.

THE MOTHER

## Poor Man's Pope

With the passing away of Pope Francis on 21 April at the age of 88, a great chapter of the papal history has been closed. Born Jorge Mario Bergoglio to Italian migrants in Buenos Aires in 1936, he made history through his elevation as the first Latin American and member of the Jesuit order to be elected Pope in the church's existence for over 2000 years. He proved that he was extraordinary when he became the first Pope to call himself Francis, shorn of the pomp and grandeur associated with the title.

After assuming office, the Argentinean pontiff soon attracted global attention as a moderniser, with an outward-looking approach that propelled him to speak out boldly on humanitarian crises, such as migration, war and climate change. While the church was riddled with allegations of corruption and varied forms of malpractices the world over, he sought to reform it by taking head-on the elitist mentalities among the clergy. He exhorted them to display a compassionate approach to divorced and gay Catholics insisting that the church welcome everyone. This was not an easy task, given the fact that there were ultra-conservative elements within the papal establishment that found his new approach abhorrent. But, he could not care less and went on taking a series of measures to clean up financial corruption in the Vatican and fight against the scourge of clerical sexual abuse, introducing laws to hold bishops accountable for cover-ups. Francis also sought an enlarged role for women working in the Vatican and authorised priests to offer blessings to same-sex couples.

In a world fraught with religious conflicts, fanaticism and mindless wars caused by autocrats, Pope Francis tried to build bridges with the Moslems and play the role of peacemaker in the face of global conflicts, including in Ukraine and the Middle East. It is a reflection of his lofty idealism that he never took possession of the ornate papal apartments in the Apostolic Palace used by his predecessors. With a typical remark he explained his position asserting he preferred to live in a community setting for his "psychological health."

It is a measure of his leadership that he was elected with a clear mandate to cleanse the church that had been under attack over child sexual abuse scandals and torn by infighting in the Vatican bureaucracy. But as in the case of many religious reformers, Francis too had to face fierce criticism from both the conservatives, who accused him of trampling down cherished traditions, and also the progressives, who felt he should have done much more to stem the rot.

But, as he went on with his mission in the teeth of internal dissent, Francis became a virtual global superstar. He drew huge crowds on his many foreign travels as he spared no pains to promote interfaith dialogue and peace and take the side of the marginalised, such as migrants. There is no doubt he should have done more, as progressive Catholics felt, allowing the ordination of married men as priests, shifting official teaching on homosexuality and giving a greater space for women in ministry. Despite taking a series of tough measures, Francis was unable to curb child sexual abuse and other forms of abuse that have plagued the Catholic Church.

However, at a time when the US President Donald Trump has started to rewrite world history with his ideas, including a war against migrants, the Pope tirelessly championed the causes of the underprivileged. He also became a symbol of staunch opposition to the rise of nationalist populism. It is a great tribute to him that he is known as the Pope of the poor. His humble background and work for the poor are seen as a contrast to the perceived opulence of the papacy. He came from a working-class family and throughout his career emphasised his commitment to serve the ordinary people, often speaking out against wealth inequality and advocating social justice.

His absence at this hour of global crisis would be noticeable.

### WISDOM CORNER

Look up at the stars and not down at your feet. Try to make sense of what you see, and wonder about what makes the universe exist. Be curious. *STEPHEN HAWKING*

Make the most of your regrets; never smother your sorrow, but tend and cherish it till it comes to have a separate and integral interest. To regret deeply is to live afresh. *HENRY DAVID THOREAU*

There are things known and there are things unknown, and in between are the doors of perception. *ALDOUS HUXLEY*

### THIS DAY IN HISTORY

**1500:** Portuguese explorer Pedro Álvares Cabral, while on a voyage tracing Vasco da Gama's 1497-99 water route to India, sighted the mainland of South America near the present-day city of Pôrto Seguro, Brazil.

**1724:** German philosopher Immanuel Kant was born in Königsberg, Prussia (now Kaliningrad, Russia).

**1870:** Vladimir Ilich Lenin—who founded the Bolshevik political faction (1912-17), inspired and led the Bolshevik Revolution (1917), headed (1917-24) the Soviet state, and founded the organization known as the Comintern (Communist International)—was born.

**1904:** American theoretical physicist and science administrator J. Robert Oppenheimer, who served as director of the Los Alamos laboratory in New Mexico during development of the atomic bomb, was born.

**1915:** During World War I, German forces introduced the systematized use of chemical warfare when they released chlorine gas along a 4-mile (6-km) front at the Second Battle of Ypres.

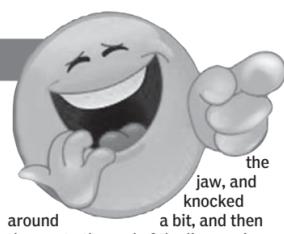
**1945:** Adolf Hitler admits defeat. The German dictator announced in the underground Führerbunker that he plans to commit suicide after learning that Soviet forces had entered Berlin.

**1970:** First celebrated on this day in 1970 in the U.S., Earth Day—founded by American politician and conservationist Gaylord Anton Nelson—helped spark the environmental movement and quickly grew into an international event.

### LOL

#### SALE RUSH

It was the day of the big sale. Rumours of the sale (and some advertising in the local paper) were the main reason for the long line that formed by 8:30, the store's opening time, in front of the store. A small man pushed his way to the front of the line, only to be pushed back, amid loud and colourful curses. On the man's second attempt, he was punched square in



the jaw, and knocked a bit, and then thrown to the end of the line again. As he got up the second time, he said to the person at the end of the line... "That does it! If they hit me one more time, I won't open the store!"

# As Delhi sizzles, govt mulls heatwave action plan

THE PLAN, AIMED AT COMBATING THE EFFECTS OF RISING TEMPERATURES, WAS LAUNCHED BY CHIEF MINISTER REKHA GUPTA, WHO ALSO INAUGURATED THREE COOL ROOF PILOT PROJECTS IN THE CITY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 21: An early warning system for heatwaves, green roofs at bus stops and special wards for heatstroke patients at all hospitals are part of the Delhi Heat Action Plan 2025 launched Monday.

The plan, aimed at combating the effects of rising temperatures, was launched by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, who also inaugurated three Cool Roof pilot projects in the city. "Our mission is to make Delhi heat-resilient, protect lives and make every season livable for its residents," the chief minister said.

She said the government has been working extensively to reduce the impact of heatwaves, which have become increasingly frequent and intense, with the temperature



in Delhi going as high as 52.9 degrees Celsius. As part of the plan, the government has

asked hospitals to create dedicated wards equipped with ICU beds and essential medi-

cines for heatstroke patients. Cooling centres will also be set up in densely populated areas,

especially near footpaths and slums. Other initiatives include green roofs, shaded areas at bus stops and an early warning system for heatwaves, Gupta said.

The government will issue heatwave alerts through medical portals and text messages, she said. Government schools will follow stricter routines to ensure regular water intake among children and slums will be equipped with cool shelters and have access to chilled drinking water, she said.

The Chief Minister also virtually inaugurated three Cool Roof pilot projects at Kashmere Gate, Anand Vihar and Delhi Secretariat. The number of such projects will be increased soon, she said. Health Minister Pankaj Singh, PWD and Water Minister Parvesh Rana and senior officials attended the event.

# AAP to boycott MCD mayor polls



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 21: The AAP Monday announced that it will not contest the upcoming elections for the posts of mayor and deputy mayor in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi.

The polls are scheduled to be held April 25. Addressing a press conference, former Delhi Chief Minister and Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly, Atishi, said, "The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) will play the role of a strong opposition in the MCD as well. BJP did a lot of rigging during the MCD

elections but still it lost badly. Even after this, it did not stop and all the councillors were poached."

She said her party does not believe in the "politics of sabotage and horse-trading" and has therefore, decided not to participate in the mayoral contest.

"Now the BJP should form its triple engine government and fulfil its promises made to the people of Delhi without any excuses," Atishi said. AAP's Delhi unit chief Saurabh Bhadraraj, who was also present at the press conference, accused the BJP of indulging in malpractice during the delimitation process.

"The BJP had stopped the MCD election earlier too. Wards were shifted during delimitation. There was huge fraud and corruption during the process.

# Booze busts, drug hauls surge in national capital



ACCORDING TO THE DATA, BETWEEN JANUARY 1 AND MARCH 31, 2025, DELHI REGISTERED A TOTAL OF 2,496 CASES UNDER THE EXCISE ACT WHILE A TOTAL OF 1,382 CASES WERE REGISTERED IN 2024 DURING THE SAME PERIOD

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 21: Delhi witnessed a two-fold increase in drug-related offences in the first three months of 2025 as compared to 2024, while offences under the Excise Act saw a jump of more than 80 per cent, as per the data shared by the police Sunday.

According to the data, between January 1 and March 31, 2025, Delhi registered a total of 2,496 cases under the Excise Act while a total of 1,382 cases were registered in 2024 during the same period. Similarly, Narcotics Drugs &

Psychotropic Substances Act violations climbed from 257 to 544 cases, averaging around six drug-related cases every day, the data read. Cases under the Arms Act also increased, from 957 last year to 1,049 this year, while those under the Gambling Act rose to 1,018 from 677 in 2024.

The spike is attributed to increased enforcement and crackdown operations across Delhi, a senior police officer said. Crimes registered under different acts, including the Arms Act and Gambling, also shot up significantly with 6,836 cases registered in the first

three months of 2025 -- a steep rise from 4,143 cases in 2024 and 4,080 in 2023 for the same period.

"The rise in Excise and NDPS cases reflected proactive policing efforts and targeted operations against bootlegging and drug peddling networks. Police are also using surveillance tools and informant networks to track syndicates across the city," the officer said.

In contrast, overall cases under the Indian Penal Code and Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita crimes saw a slight decline. Delhi recorded 63,898 such cases in the first quarter of 2025, about 710 cases a day, as compared to 64,256 last year and 82,534 in 2023.

Burglaries also dropped to 1,725 from 2,017, house thefts dropped to 3,578 from 3,644. Motor vehicle thefts remained largely unchanged, with 9,070 cases in 2025 compared to 9,080 in 2024, the data revealed. However, "other theft" cases saw an uptick, rising to 27,066 in 2025 from 24,226 last year, nearly 300 cases per day.

Delhi has emerged as a critical hub for drug trafficking, acting as a transit point for shipments across states and internationally. A senior police official explained, "Delhi's connectivity to all states and its access to international flights make it an ideal hub for drug shipments. Most of the drugs that reach Delhi are meant for bulk sale in nearby states or across the nation. Residents of Delhi are not the primary consumers; the drugs are largely transported elsewhere."



A man rests under a bridge in the backdrop of graffiti based on the capital city, on a hot summer day in New Delhi

PTI PHOTO

# Akhilesh flays Dubey's remarks against Quraishi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, April 21: Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav Monday slammed BJP MP Nishikant Dubey for his remarks against former CEC S Y Quraishi, saying he should refrain from commenting on a former constitutional authority who has served the nation with distinction.

In a post on X, Yadav wrote, "One who has already been discredited by his own party for making a 'personal opinion' that is not worthy of endorsement should maintain silence on a retired constitutional officer. That would be more respectful."

Dubey had said Sunday, "You (SY Quraishi) were not an elec-



tion commissioner, you were a Muslim commissioner. The maximum number of Bangladeshi infiltrators were made voters in Santal Pargana in Jharkhand during your tenure". The former Uttar Pradesh chief minister targeted the BJP over alleged electoral malprac-

tices and cited multiple instances that, according to him, raise questions on the party's democratic conduct.

"Before making any statements, BJP leaders should revisit their own long list of electoral misconducts," he said, listing out incidents like alleged manipulation in the 2022 Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections. He also cited alleged intimidation of voters in the Mirapur bypoll using armed policemen, an incident that went viral, coercion and forced withdrawal of nominations in Madhya Pradesh to ensure unopposed wins for BJP candidates and cash-for-votes allegations in Maharashtra involving a senior BJP leader.

Yadav also highlighted "unexplained spikes" in voter turnout in Haryana and Maharashtra during the last hours of voting, use of fake voters in the Milkipur bypoll in UP, where a man claimed on television that he cast six votes in favour of BJP and allegations of bribing a police officer with ₹10 lakh in Maharashtra to ignore EVM tampering.

"BJP's moral compass was never intact, and never will be. Yet, reminders are necessary," Yadav said adding those sidelined in the BJP should not attempt a comeback into the limelight with inflammatory remarks. "BJP leaders are not loyal even to their own," he said.

# UP govt plans ₹2,500cr push for natural farming

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, April 21: The Uttar Pradesh government Monday said it plans to bring over 2.5 lakh farmers into the fold of natural farming across 282 blocks and 2,144 gram panchayats with investments of more than ₹2,500 crore over the next two years.

The alarming rise of heavy metals in agricultural soil has emerged as a major crisis for the farming sector, the state government said in a statement. A global report reveals that around 15 per cent of the world's cultivable land is contaminated with toxic heavy metals, affecting 1.4 billion people.

Harmful elements like arsenic, cadmium, cobalt, chromium, copper, nickel, and lead have reached alarming proportions in many regions. According to biologists from the University of York, these metals enter the food chain through soil, water, and air, posing long-term health risks to humans, animals, and aquatic life, the statement said.

"In view of the looming threat, the central and Uttar Pradesh governments led by

THE ALARMING RISE OF HEAVY METALS IN AGRICULTURAL SOIL HAS EMERGED AS A MAJOR CRISIS FOR THE FARMING SECTOR, THE STATE GOVERNMENT SAID

A GLOBAL REPORT REVEALS THAT AROUND 15 PER CENT OF THE WORLD'S CULTIVABLE LAND IS CONTAMINATED WITH TOXIC HEAVY METALS, AFFECTING 1.4 BILLION PEOPLE



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath are promoting organic and natural farming. These practices are not only chemical-free but also sustainable, climate-resilient, and environmentally friendly."

"The Yogi Adityanath government plans to bring over 2.5 lakh farmers into the fold of natural farming across 282 blocks and 2,144 gram panchayats. The initiative will be implemented through

50-hectare clusters, with an estimated investment of ₹2,500 crore over the next two years," the government said.

The government noted that natural farming is people-friendly, land-friendly, and water-friendly. After successful implementation in Bundelkhand, along the Ganga's coastal areas, natural farming is now being expanded to both banks of its tributaries, it said.

To raise awareness and provide grassroots support, 'Krishi

Sakhis' will be appointed at a monthly honorarium of ₹5,000, it said. Experts from Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) will train these women farmers in their respective districts. Additionally, two Bio-Input Research Centers (BRCs) will be established in every district to support this initiative, it added.

A unique initiative being run in Bundelkhand's seven districts -- Jhansi, Lalitpur, Jaunpur, Hamirpur, Mahoba, Banda, and Chitrakoot -- focussing on cow-based natural farming.

Farmers are being trained to produce organic inputs, such as Jeevamrit, Beejamrit, and Ghanjeevamrit, using cow dung and urine. These bio-formulations are being used as natural fertilisers and pesticides in the fields. So far, 470 clusters have been formed, benefiting 21,934 farmers. A 50-hectare cluster is being developed in every gram panchayat, with financial assistance provided to farmers cultivating up to two hectares, the government said.

# UP govt to install 8L solar rooftop plants by March 2027

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, April 21: Yogi Adityanath-led Uttar Pradesh government has set an ambitious target of installing eight lakh solar rooftop plants across the state by March 2027, under the Pradhan Mantri Surya Ghar Yojana.

The goal for the current financial year has been set at 2.65 lakh units, with a monthly target of 22,000 installations -- averaging around 300 installations per district.

As of now, more than one lakh rooftop solar systems have been installed in the state. Nearly 11,000 units are being installed every month, with daily average of more than 500.

The scheme is being closely monitored through integration with the Chief Minister's dashboard, enabling real-time progress tracking, said a government official. The Uttar Pradesh New and Renewable Energy Development Agency (UPNEDA) is spearheading the implementation of the scheme,



with a mission to bring solar energy to every household.

To ensure systematic implementation, targets have been set at the district, DISCOM, municipal corporation, and municipality levels.

Of the 10.73 lakh applications received on the portal up to March 2025, the listing of vendors is currently underway, and the installation process is progressing rapidly.

As of April 2025, more than 2,500 vendors had been em-

paneled, and around 1,800 had received formal training to support the rollout.

To enhance their financial capacity, vendors are also being provided access to loans and credit guarantee schemes through banks.

Notably, the PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana is the world's largest domestic rooftop solar initiative. It has achieved a mega milestone of 10 lakh homes getting solar-powered, as March 10, 2025.



**“The entire Congress party will resist and fight back this political assault on its leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi. Truth will prevail, justice will prevail, we will prevail”**  
P CHIDAMBARAM | EX UNION MINISTER

## GOVT TO RELEASE UNEMPLOYMENT DATA EVERY MONTH, SAYS OFFICIAL

The government will start releasing the unemployment data on monthly basis beginning May 15, as against quarterly, a senior official said Monday. The data to be released May 15 will include figures for January, February and March, and thereafter it will be released every month, the official told reporters



### of the day **note**

Development under Congress was confined to the distribution of lungis, dhotis, 'suta' (yarn) and 'athuwa' (mosquito net). They understood only that language  
**HIMANTA BISWA SARMA** | ASSAM CHIEF MINISTER

I will advise Gandhi to work among people rather travelling abroad and defaming the country. This (such statements) will not get him votes. Frequent electoral defeats have disturbed Gandhi mentally  
**DEVENDRA FADNAVIS** | MAHARASHTRA CM

Different parties rule in different provinces, which increases the importance of the role civil services play  
**JAGDEEP DHANKHAR** | VICE-PRESIDENT

### SHORT TAKES

#### Lioness Rupa gives birth to three cubs

**Etawah (UP):** Lioness Rupa has given birth to three healthy cubs during her third pregnancy, a major success for the Asiatic Lion Breeding Centre at Etawah Lion Safari Park, officials here said Monday. The birth took place in the early hours of Monday, and both the mother and the cubs are said to be in good health, they added. Anil Kumar Patel, Director of Etawah Lion Safari Park and the Asiatic Lion Breeding Centre, said, "Lioness Rupa gave birth to her first cub at 12:35 am, the second at 1:42 am, and the third at 5:59 am on the night of April 20-21. All three cubs and the mother are healthy, and Rupa is actively nursing and caring for them."

#### Six killed as MUV overturns in Raisen

**Bhopal:** At least six persons were killed and three others injured after a multi-utility vehicle (MUV) overturned in Madhya Pradesh's Raisen district Monday, police said. The accident occurred around 7 am near a roadside eatery under the Sultanpur police station area. Additional Superintendent of Police Kamlesh Kharpuse said. He said nine persons were returning to Indore from Patna, Bihar, in the MUV after attending a marriage function. Six persons were killed in the accident. The three injured persons were admitted to the District Hospital in Raisen and undergoing treatment, he said.

#### Former Congress MP Tilakdhari Singh dies

**Ranchi:** Senior Congress leader and former MP Tilakdhari Singh died Monday while undergoing treatment at a hospital in Jharkhand's Giridih district, a party official said. He was 87. According to a hospital official, Singh had been suffering from chronic illnesses, including diabetes. Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren, senior leaders from the Congress and other political parties expressed their condolences on Singh's demise.

#### Top court junks students' plea

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court Monday dismissed a plea seeking a direction to allow students, who had cleared their Class 12 exams in 2023, to participate in JEE-Advanced 2025 for securing admissions in the prestigious IITs. A bench of Justices B R Gavai and Augustine George Masih observed the matter was in the policy domain and courts should be slow in interfering in matters of academia.

## WB school job loss: Teachers on warpath



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, April 21:** The agitating teachers Monday decided to launch an indefinite sit-in outside Acharya Sadan, the West Bengal School Service Commission (WBSSC) headquarters, Monday night after the recruitment body failed to release, by the 6 pm deadline, the list of 2016 SSC qualifiers whose jobs were annulled by the Supreme Court. SSC Chairman Siddhartha Majumdar said he needs to talk to lawyers before making any statement on the issue. Alleging that they have run out of patience, the protestors clashed with the police and tried to breach barricades at the recruitment body failed to release, by the 6 pm deadline, the list of 2016 SSC qualifiers whose jobs were annulled by the Supreme Court.

Besides putting up a gherao to stop SSC chairman Siddhartha Majumdar and other staff from leaving the building, the agitating teachers also laid siege before the adjacent Derazio Bhavan, the office of the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education, to prevent the board president Ramanuj Ganguly from leaving office. A 13-member delegation from the agitating teachers held a meeting with Majumdar, which ran for several hours since 4.30 pm. Agitating teachers, numbering about 2,000, blocked roads before the SSC office and announced their intention to stay put till the commission published the list as promised. "We received information from our representatives inside that the SSC is planning to upload the list of untainted candidates up to the third counselling since they claim most of

the tainted recruitments took place in the next nine rounds in upper classes of secondary and higher secondary level," Suman Biswas, an agitating teacher, said. "This is grossly unfair and amounts to a further attempt by the commission to obliterate transparency. We will not accept this and will remain here until the complete list of untainted candidates from all counselling sessions along with certified OMRs is presented to us," he added. Prafulla Bera, a school teacher from Purba Medinipur district, alleged that the SSC was still trying to shield the tainted candidates and present a distorted picture before the court. "What about the tainted candidates who are there in the first three and the remaining counselling rounds? Where is that list?" Bera asked. Emerging from the meeting, one of the 13 teachers said, "The SSC could not shed much light about posting a full list of tainted and untainted candidates. The agitating teachers also demanded the resignation of the SSC chairman and state Education Minister Bratya Basu. Earlier in the day, hundreds of teaching and non-teaching staff, whose appointments were invalidated by the Supreme Court, staged a protest march to the SSC office demanding the immediate publication of the list of candidates who had qualified in the 2016 SSC recruitment test. The education minister had April 11 said the WBSSC would publish the complete list of untainted and tainted candidates separately on its website within two weeks. A spokesperson for the De-servicing Teachers Rights Forum also claimed that during discussions, WBSSC chairman Siddhartha Majumdar and Basu had promised the list would be uploaded by April 21. Contacted late evening, SSC Chairman Siddhartha Majumdar told PTI "I will do some conferring with our lawyer before giving any official statement on the issue."



Workers at a wholesale grain market in Amritsar, Punjab

PTI PHOTO

## SC takes note of plea alleging Samay Raina ridiculed disabled

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 21:** In what could spell fresh trouble for "India's Got Latent" host Samay Raina, the Supreme Court Monday said it would examine a plea alleging he ridiculed the disabled, including a person with visual disability and those suffering from a rare disorder like Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA). Calling it a serious issue, a bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh asked senior advocate Aprajita Singh, appearing for NGO Cure SMA Foundation of India to file a proper petition instead of an interim intervention plea in the pending matter of influencer and podcaster Ranveer Allahbadia. "This is a serious issue. You file a writ petition. We will see what can be done. In writ jurisdiction we have larger scope," the bench told Singh. The bench also took note of the statements that the probe against Allahbadia was over and said it would April 28 hear a plea for the return of his passport in a case over



his distasteful remarks during Raina's show. On February 18, the top court protected Allahbadia from arrest in multiple FIRs filed over his comments during a YouTube show and directed him to deposit his passport with the investigating officer of Police Station Nodal Cyber Police, Thane. During the hearing, solicitor general Tushar Mehta, appearing for Assam and Maharashtra police, said in the Guwahati FIR, the statement of one co-accused would be recorded whereas investigation was complete in the FIR in Mumbai but a chargesheet remained to be filed.

The bench recorded Mehta's statement and observed the investigation qua Allahbadia was complete. The Assam Police counsel said they summoned the accused for recording their statements and except one, all of them, including Allahbadia, appeared and recorded their statements. He informed co-accused Apoorva Makhija was twice issued notices for recording the statements but she did not turn up. "The next date for recording of her statement is Tuesday," the counsel said, assuring the court of completing the probe as early as possible.

## SC refers to larger bench issues over ex-CM Yedi's plea

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 21:** The Supreme Court Monday referred to a larger bench the legal issues stemming from a plea of BJP leader B S Yediyurappa, including the question whether a prior sanction to prosecute is needed under the Prevention of Corruption Act after a magisterial court order of inquiry. The bench was in the process of dictating its judgement on Yediyurappa's plea against an order of the Karnataka High Court reviving a corruption case against him when it found that a matter with similar legal issues was referred to a larger bench. A bench of Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, therefore, refrained from passing the judgement on the ground of judicial propriety. The bench then directed its registry to place the matters before the Chief Justice of India for appropriate orders. The verdict was reserved April 4.

## Maintaining humanity in the age of AI is essential, says Tiwari



On the occasion of National Public Relations Day, a discussion on the topic "Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence: Role of Public Relations" was organised by the PRSI Dehradun Chapter. As the chief guest, the Director General of Information, Shri Banshidhar Tiwari, emphasised the importance of maintaining humanity in the age of AI. He stated that the responsible use of AI is our collective responsibility. Additional insights were shared by Joint Director of Information, Dr Nitin Upadhyaya, CEO of BKTC, Shri Vijay Thapliyal, and Editor of News 18, Shri Anupam Trivedi. Shri Akash Sharma provided information on the technical aspects of AI. Mr Anil Verma efficiently conducted the program. The event was attended by PRSI Dehradun Secretary Mr Anil Kumar Sati, Treasurer Mr Suresh Chandra Bhatt, Deputy Director of Uttarakhand Information Department Mr Ravi Bijarniya and members Sudhakar Bhatt, Vaibhav Goyal, Rakesh Dobhal, Ajay Dabral, Deepak Sharma, Prashant Rawat, Jyoti Negi, Shivangi, Manmohan Bhatt, Sanjay Singh, Pratap Singh Bisht, and others.

and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 and had continued support towards education. The top court observed trafficking in India took diverse forms -- each prevailing across states. "An overall analysis of trafficking patterns across states reiterates the prevalence of trafficking in large numbers with the number of cases sharply rising with time. What is of concern is the rapid spread of the problem with previously unknown factors getting embedded in the web of traffickers," it said. The changing trafficking patterns, the court said, brought "changes in the traffickers, their modus operandi, their manipulation of the victims and their understanding of the limitations in the criminal justice system".

### SNIPPETS

#### Wife held in Om Prakash murder case

**Bangalore:** Police probing former Karnataka DGP Om Prakash's murder case have arrested his wife Pallavi on a complaint by their son Kartikesh that he suspected that his mother and sister were involved in the murder. "Investigation Officer has arrested Pallavi Om Prakash (64). She will be produced before the Magistrate," an officer said Monday. He added that the case has been transferred to the Central Crime Branch of Bengaluru (CCB) for further investigation. Meanwhile, when police took Pallavi to the scene of crime, she told reporters present there that "domestic violence" was the reason behind the extreme step. Prakash, a 1981 batch IPS officer hailing from Bihar, was found dead in a pool of blood in the ground floor of his three-storeyed house in the posh HSR Layout in the city Sunday.

#### SC directs Khedkar to appear before Delhi Police

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court Monday directed former IAS probationer Puja Khedkar, accused of cheating, and wrongly availing of OBC and disability quota benefits in the civil services examination, to appear before Delhi Police May 2. A bench comprising Justices B V Nagarathna and Satish Chandra Sharma said no coercive steps will be taken against Khedkar till May 21, the next date of hearing. "It appears there has been no concrete investigation against the petitioner as such. In the circumstances, we direct the petitioner to appear before the Assistant Commissioner of Police, Central Range, Crime Branch, 2d Floor, Kamla Market Police Station, Delhi May 2, 2025, at 10.30 am," the bench said.

### CHILD TRAFFICKING

## Situation gone from bad to worse: SC

THE TOP COURT OBSERVED TRAFFICKING IN INDIA TOOK DIVERSE FORMS -- EACH PREVAILING ACROSS STATES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 21:** While asking Delhi Police to take steps to arrest an accused behind a children trafficking racket in the capital, the Supreme Court Monday said the "situation seems to have gone from bad to worse". A bench comprising justices J B Pardiwala and R Mahadevan made the observations while interacting with a Delhi police inspector entrusted with the probe in a case over trafficking of several newborns in Dwarka area. "The situation seems to have gone from bad to worse," Justice Pardiwala said and directed the police station concerned to take all necessary steps to arrest gang leader Puja and three missing infants.

Taking a dim view of the alleged involvement of parents in trafficking of infants, the bench said "You never know where these children will land up. In the case of a girl child, you know where she lands." The judge added, "Unfortunately, the parents of the infants seem to have sold off their own children." The bench posted case after four weeks and asked the police officer to apprise it of the steps taken in the case at hand. "You have to find these missing children at any cost and arrest the kingpin," the bench said. Delhi Police was represented by additional solicitor general Archana Pathak Dave. The top court April 15 delivered a significant judgement on the issue of inter-state child trafficking



rackets in another case. It then cancelled the bail granted to 13 accused in that case and said the "cry of the collective for justice, its desire for peace and harmony" couldn't be trivialised. The top court asked the government to ensure the trafficked children were admitted in schools in accordance with the provisions of the Right of Children to Free

and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 and had continued support towards education. The top court observed trafficking in India took diverse forms -- each prevailing across states. "An overall analysis of trafficking patterns across states reiterates the prevalence of trafficking in large numbers with the number of cases sharply rising with time. What is of concern is the rapid spread of the problem with previously unknown factors getting embedded in the web of traffickers," it said. The changing trafficking patterns, the court said, brought "changes in the traffickers, their modus operandi, their manipulation of the victims and their understanding of the limitations in the criminal justice system".

AGENCIES



It is an Act of the Parliament and it is Parliament which has corrected it  
MUKHTAR ABBAS NAQVI | SENIOR BJP LEADER

## ISRO PERFORMS 2ND DOCKING OF SATELLITES

ISRO has performed the second docking of satellites as part of its Spadex missions successfully, Union Minister Jitendra Singh said Monday. He said more experiments are planned in the next two weeks



## PM Modi holds talks with US Vice President Vance

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 21: India and the US Monday welcomed the "significant progress" in the negotiations for a mutually beneficial bilateral trade pact as Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US Vice President JD Vance held wide-ranging talks to enhance cooperation in areas of defence, energy and technologies.



expected to address a variety of issues including tariff and market access. Prime Minister Modi and Vice President Vance "reviewed and positively assessed" the progress in various areas of bilateral cooperation, an Indian readout said.

"They welcomed the significant progress in the negotiations for a mutually beneficial India-US Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) focused on the welfare of the people of the two countries," it said.

It is for the first time that the two sides publicly announced that there has been "significant progress" in the negotiations for the BTA first tranche of which is likely to be finalised by this fall.

A delegation of Indian negotiators are set to travel to the US Wednesday to hold talks with American officials on the BTA. "The Prime Minister fondly recalled his visit to Washington DC in February and his fruitful discussions with President Trump, which laid down the roadmap for close cooperation between India and the US, leveraging the strengths of Make America Great Again (MAGA) and Viksit Bharat 2047," the Indian readout said.

## JUDICIARY VS EXECUTIVE SC responds to allegations

Vice President Dhankhar had last week questioned the Supreme Court over setting a timeline for the President to take decisions on Bills referred to her by governors



said, "Who can control it? It is for the Union to frame a regulation in that regard."

"As it is, we are now criticised that we are interfering with the executive's function, the legislative functions," Justice Gavi told advocate Vishnu Shankar Jain who was appearing in the matter.

After Jain said it was a "very serious matter", the bench posted the hearing next week. Earlier in the day, Jain mentioned an application filed in a separate pending PIL of 2021 which sought President's Rule in West Bengal in the wake of violence following Assembly polls, and urged the bench to take it up for hearing Tuesday along with the main petition.

Jain said the 2021 plea was listed for hearing Tuesday and the fresh application bringing out more incidents of violence in West Bengal also be heard.

"In tomorrow's list, item 42 pertains to imposition of President Rule in the state of West Bengal. That petition is filed

by me. In that petition, I have filed an IA (application) for directions and impleadment bringing out certain more incidents of violence which have happened in the state of West Bengal," he said. Jain said deployment of paramilitary force and immediate action was required.

He referred to Article 355 of the Constitution, which pertains to duty of the Union to protect states against external aggression and internal disturbance, and said the apex court can call for a report as to what was happening in the state. Jain said the top court had previously issued notice on the 2021 petition.

Justice Gavi then said, "As it is, we are alleged of encroaching upon the parliamentary and executive functions". The fresh plea urged the court to appoint a three-member committee headed by a retired top court judge to inquire into the incidents of violence, human rights violation and crime against

women from 2022 till April 2025, particularly the recent violence in West Bengal's Murshidabad.

The application also sought a direction to the Centre to consider to issue necessary directions to West Bengal under Article 355. Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar and BJP MP Nishikant Dubey recently made disparaging remarks against the judiciary.

Dhankhar questioned the judiciary setting a timeline for the president to make decisions and acting as a "super Parliament", saying the Supreme Court cannot fire a "nuclear missile" at democratic forces. Soon after, BJP MP Nishikant Dubey said Parliament and assemblies should be shut if the apex court had to make laws.

He also blamed Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna for "civil wars" in India.

In July 2021, the apex court agreed to hear the PIL, which also sought a direction to the Centre to deploy armed/paramilitary forces in West Bengal. It then issued notice to the Centre, West Bengal and the Election Commission on the plea. Fresh incidents of newly-enacted Waqf (Amendment) Act-related violence rocked Bhargar area in West Bengal's South 24 Parganas district April 14, even as police claimed the law and order situation in the previous riot epicentre of Murshidabad remained largely under control.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 21: "As it is, we are alleged of encroaching upon the parliamentary and executive functions," Supreme Court's Justice B R Gavi said Monday in an apparent reference to recent attacks on the judiciary while hearing a matter over West Bengal violence.

Justice Gavi, who was heading a bench also comprising Justice Augustine George Masih, made a similar observation in another matter.

While one matter was over the recent violence in West Bengal during anti-Waqf law protests, the other plea sought a direction to the Centre to take appropriate steps to prohibit streaming of sexually explicit and pornographic content on OTT and social media platforms.

While hearing the plea over online content, Justice Gavi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

## UP: Woman, lover kill Dubai-returned husband

**Gorakhpur (UP):** In a stark reminder of the gruesome murder of a former merchant navy officer in Meerut, a woman and her lover killed her husband who returned from Dubai 10 days ago, cut the body in two and stuffed it in a suitcase before dumping it in a field far away from home. Police identified the man from the airline tag that was still attached to the suitcase. Uttar Pradesh has recently witnessed two diabolical spousal murders in Meerut -- one in which the merchant navy officer's body was stuffed in a drum and the other where the husband was strangled and an attempt was made to pass it off as a case of snakebite -- that made the nation shiver in fear. Another man in Auraiya met with the same fate when just 15 days after their wedding, his new bride and her lover hired a contract killer to eliminate him. On Sunday morning, a farmer in Gorakhpur's Patkhali village discovered a trolley bag abandoned in his field.

## SNIPPETS

## Mamata Banerjee lays foundation stone of 1,600 MW power plant

**Salboni (WB):** West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Monday laid the foundation stone for a 1,600 MW ultra-supercritical thermal power plant at Salboni in Paschim Medinipur district, asserting that the greenfield project marked a significant milestone in the state's industrial and infrastructure development. Addressing an event after laying the foundation stone, Banerjee also slammed the opposition for lambasting her government for alleged non-implementation of investment proposals in Bengal and said, "You can criticise me but you cannot ignore me... We don't say much, we do things in the right way." "I want everyone to love each other... India is a vast country but unique. We have to remember that we have different states, food, languages, cultures, religions and festivals, but we are together. We want to strengthen it, not to divide it," she added. The power plant, to be developed by JSW Energy at an investment of Rs 16,000 crore, will have two units of 800 MW each.

## Chandrapur hottest in country at 45.6 degrees Celsius

**Chandrapur:** Chandrapur recorded a temperature of 45.6 degrees Celsius Monday, becoming the hottest city in the country, an official said. The district administration has issued a heatwave alert for three days, advising citizens to take precautions when they step out. As per the Regional Meteorological Centre (RMC), Nagpur, 11 cities in Vidarbha have recorded temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius, with Chandrapur recording the highest 45.6 degrees Celsius, which was 3.6 degrees Celsius above normal. Amravati recorded 44.6 degrees Celsius, Akola 44.1 degrees Celsius and Nagpur 43.6 degrees Celsius, the IMD said. The district has been facing intense heat waves since last week, and a heatwave alert has been issued in one or two places in Chandrapur district till April 24.

## 2024 PROTEST CASE Court pulls up TMC leaders

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 21: A Delhi court Monday summoned TMC leaders Derek O'Brien, Sagari-ka Ghose, Saket Gokhle and other party functionaries for a holding protest in front of the Election Commission of India despite a prohibitory order in April last year.

Additional chief judicial magistrate Neha Mittal also summoned TMC leaders Santanu Sen, Dola Sen, Nadimul Haque, Vivek Gupta, Arpita Ghosh, Abir Ranjan Bishwas and Sudip Raha to appear April 30.

Delhi Police alleged April 8 last year the accused persons gathered outside the main gate of Election Commission of India (ECI) and started protesting with placards and banners without a requisite permission and despite the fact that Section 144 (prohibit gathering) of Code of Criminal Procedure was in

place. The police alleged they continued to protest despite warning on the imposition of Section 144 following which an FIR was registered. "I have perused the chargesheet as well as the complaint... I take cognisance of the offences punishable under Section 188 (disobedience to order promulgated by a public servant) 145 (unlawful assembly) and 34 (common intention) IPC. All the accused persons be summoned through IO for April 30, 2025," the court ordered.

The TMC leaders held the protest against central probe agencies CBI, NIA, ED and the Income Tax Department and demanded changing their chiefs. A 10-member delegation of the TMC had announced the protest after meeting a full bench of the ECI to press their demand. The party alleged the central probe agencies were targeting opposition parties at the behest of the BJP-led Centre.

## Patanjali claims breakthrough in psoriasis cure



**Haridwar, April 21:** A significant breakthrough by Patanjali has been published in the prestigious Journal of Inflammation Research, a renowned research journal by Taylor & Francis. The research highlights Patanjali's success in treating psoriasis using Psorogrit tablets and Divya-Taila. Acharya Balkrishna, on this occasion, shared that Patanjali's scientists have conducted extensive research, leading to the development of Psorogrit tablets and Divya Taila, which have proven to be effective treatments for psoriasis. Psoriasis, a chronic autoimmune condition, results in red patches and shiny, silver-like scales on the skin, often accompanied by severe itching. Traditional allopathic treatments tend to only suppress the symptoms and come with a range of side effects.

## of the day quote

Rahul Gandhi tarnishes the country's image on foreign soil. I had said (yesterday) that he should not do this. I said yesterday that may Lord Mahakal give him wisdom and he may not do it this time  
MOHAN YADAV | MP CM

Deeply saddened to hear of the death of His Holiness Pope Francis. His life was a testament to compassion, hope and humility. May his soul rest in eternal peace  
HEMANT SOREN | JHARKHAND CM

Dulat Sahab is very sympathetic and a friend of the Abdullah family. He said that Farooq Sahab had told him, why didn't the BJP take confidence in me? What was the need to deploy so many troops? If they had consulted me, I would have helped in ending Article 370 through the assembly. There was no need to create such a commotion  
MEHBOOBA MUFTI | PDP SUPREMO

## POST OF THE DAY

Almost 99% of my posts are NOT about my courses. But, such people give me an opportunity to plug my courses :-)  
(which I gladly do)  
Now: why should you buy my course. Very simple

- 1) Anyone can sign up for my course. And, see my portfolio performance
  - 2) They can judge it: if my portfolio is generating an above market return (an alpha)
  - 3) If it is: then I am good. If it is not, then I am bad.
- My courses thrive on my stock market performance. I compete on pure merit.

@Akshat\_World

## SHORT TAKES

### IAF officer alleges assault; one held

**Bangalore:** A man was arrested in connection with an incident in which a 40-year-old IAF officer was allegedly assaulted and verbally abused by a group of Kannada-speaking individuals who chased him on a bike in Bangalore early Monday morning, police said. The accused, Vikas Kumar, works as a team head at a software company's call centre, they added. The incident occurred while the officer was on his way to the airport with his wife, who is also an Indian Air Force (IAF) officer. Based on a complaint lodged by the officer's wife, Squadron Leader Madhumita Dutta, a case has been registered at the Byappanahalli police station against unknown individuals, police said. Deputy Commissioner of Police (East) Devaraj D told PTI: "This is a case of road rage. An altercation took place between them—both attacked each other."

### Pope Francis dies: Govt declares 3-day mourning

**New Delhi:** The government Monday announced a three-day state mourning as a mark of respect on the passing away of Pope Francis. Francis, who was the first non-European Pope in nearly 1,300 years, died Monday. He was 88. In a statement, the Ministry of Home Affairs said, "His Holiness Pope Francis, Supreme Pontiff of the Holy See passed away April 21. As a mark of respect, three-day state mourning shall be observed throughout India." As per the schedule, two days' state mourning will be April 22 (Tuesday) and April 23 (Wednesday). Besides, one day's state mourning will be on the day of the funeral, the statement said.

## Pressure tactics go by many names

It takes a big heart to light a memorial candle and a small mind to start a bushfire. A surefire formula that involved cleaving to conquer, over two decades ago, is now showing signs of becoming a nation-devouring blaze. Tiny fragments seem flawless from a distance but are, in fact, explosive fuses awaiting ignition. There are numerous instances, documented from time to time, of the selective use of law and justice by an executive dribbling in favour of the ruling party in their unabashed pursuit of majoritarian electoral politics. The latest case is that of the demolition of a dargah in Nashik, Maharashtra, which spiraled into violence. Published reports state that the Maharashtra Waqf Tribunal and the civic body had acknowledged its decades-old existence. The judicial melee that followed saw the dargah panel move the Supreme Court, but before the plea could be heard, the civic body demolished the entire dargah. The top court in the country has undertaken the task of putting the legal aspects under the

scanner. However, the issue of political accountability for outcomes resulting from such actions remains unaddressed. And therein hangs a tale. The 2002 Sabarmati train carnage at Godhra in Gujarat was an unfortunate tragedy, which unleashed a macabre communal holocaust that left over a thousand people—largely belonging to the minority community—dead. The figures remain mired in controversy, and its aftermath, in slander. The country's current Prime Minister was the Chief Minister of Gujarat at the time. In 2012, he was cleared of complicity in the riots by the Supreme Court, a ruling that was upheld in 2022. However, the Gujarat Gaurav Yatra that Chief Minister Modi undertook—covering 5,000 kms, all 25 districts, and 182 Assembly constituencies between September 8 and October 1, 2002—not only helped him reap an electoral bonanza but also consolidated his hold over power in the state. This period of politics delivered two critical takeaways: One, it anointed Narendra Modi as the Hindu Hriday Sam-

rat (Hindu heartthrob). Two, it established majoritarianism as a political shortcut to power in the country. With some tinkering, permutations, and a plethora of combinations, it seemed to work well for him as he cruises into his third term as Prime Minister. In 2014, the BJP won 282 of the 542 Lok Sabha seats compared to a miserable 44 for the Congress. In 2019, the BJP scaled up to 303. But by 2024—after declaring its independence from the RSS—it was down to 240, short of the majority mark of 272, despite boasting of crossing 400 seats. The Congress is now up to a respectable 99 seats, while the BJP is precariously perched on the stilts of Chandrababu Naidu's Telugu Desam Party (TDP) in Andhra Pradesh and Nitish Kumar's Janata Dal (U) in Bihar. The BJP may be adept at dislodging and rolling boulders downhill, but it has scant ability to control them and little intention to guide. These

have acquired a momentum of their own and have become loose cannons swaying at will. And a loose cannon eventually turns your way. The bulldozers that went to work on set minority targets—conveniently termed "illegal"—are now careening toward new attractions. Thousands of Jain community members marched in protest April 19, anguished over the recent demolition of a 90-year-



ter (April 20), shouting "Jai Shri Ram" and terrorising women and children. It was as if no law and order machinery existed. Skirmishes between the Swaminarayan sect and the Sanatanis—both belonging to the Hindu fold—just before the last state Assembly elections had ruling party politicians burning the midnight oil in a bid to settle the row, lest it affect their vote bank. In an Agra village in Uttar Pradesh, a Dalit wedding procession faced a violent attack, allegedly from upper-caste Hindus. The groom was pulled off the mare, abused, thrashed, and his gold chain forcibly taken away. What began as an inter-religious affair is now increasingly turning into an intra-caste one—with more likely to follow. This is not an isolated case. A pattern is discernible in many others. Notably, the targeting of Opposition-ruled states through the office of the Governor. In a landmark verdict, a Supreme Court bench termed the prolonged refusal of the Tamil Nadu Governor to give his assent to ten bills as illegal

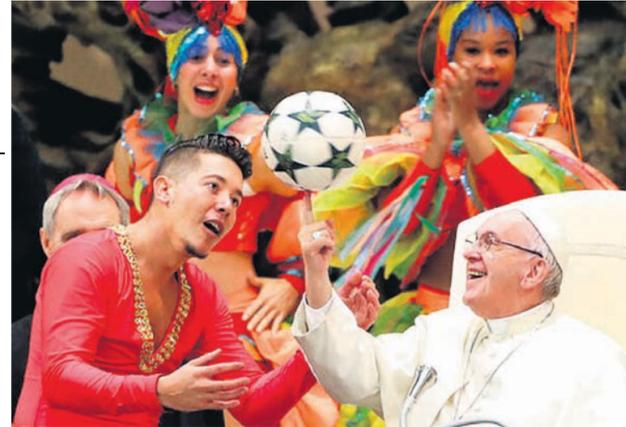
and erroneous in law. The governments of many such states, which are a thorn in the Centre's flesh, now have the Apex Court to thank. Over time, a clear pattern has emerged: key constitutional functionaries are targeted by politicians holding eminent positions in the ruling BJP. Mr Nishikant Dubey is a BJP MP, as is Dinesh Sharma, a former Deputy Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh. The two have, in no uncertain terms, attacked the judiciary—and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in particular. All that BJP President JP Nadda had to say after such a vicious tirade was that the party disassociated itself from the criticism of the Supreme Court and rejected their comments as personal views. "It neither agrees with them nor does it ever support such remarks," he said. Pressure tactics go by many names. A spiritual guru once recited an interesting folktale. The moral of the story? When you are in deep shit, the least you can do is to keep your mouth shut.



Pope Francis puts on an indigenous headdress during a meeting with Indigenous communities, including First Nations, Metis and Inuit, at Our Lady of Seven Sorrows Catholic Church in Maskwacis, near Edmonton, Canada



Pope Francis, surrounded by shells of destroyed churches, leads a prayer for the victims of war at Hosh al-Bieaa Church Square, in Mosul, Iraq, once the de-facto capital of IS



Pope Francis twirls a soccer ball he was presented by a member of the Circus of Cuba, during his weekly general audience in the Pope Paul VI hall, at the Vatican

# A pontiff who shook up the Catholic Church

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Vatican City, April 21:** Pope Francis, history's first Latin American pontiff who charmed the world with his humble style and concern for the poor but alienated conservatives with critiques of capitalism and climate change, has died Monday. He was 88.

"At 7:35 this morning, the Bishop of Rome, Francis, returned to the home of the Father. His entire life was dedicated to the service of the Lord and of his Church Cardinal," Kevin Ferrell, the Vatican camerlengo, said in an announcement.

Francis, who suffered from chronic lung disease and had part of one lung removed as a young man, was admitted to Gemelli hospital on February 14, 2025, for a respiratory crisis that developed into double pneumonia.

He spent 38 days there, the longest hospitalisation of his 12-year papacy. From his first greeting as pope — a remarkably normal "Buonasera" ("Good evening") — to his embrace of refugees and the downtrodden, Francis signalled a very different tone for the papacy, stressing humility over hubris for a Catholic Church beset by scandal and accusations of indifference.

After that rainy night March 13, 2013, the Argentine-born Jorge Mario Bergoglio brought a breath of fresh air into a 2,000-year-old institution that had seen its influence wane during the troubled tenure of Pope Benedict XVI, whose surprise resignation led to Francis' election.

But Francis soon invited troubles of his own, and conservatives grew increasingly upset with his progressive bent, outreach to LGBTQ+ Catholics and crack-down on traditionalists. His greatest test came in 2018 when he botched a notorious case of

clergy sexual abuse in Chile, and the scandal that festered under his predecessors erupted anew on his watch.

And then Francis, the crowd-loving, globe-trotting pope of the peripheries, navigated the unprecedented reality of leading a universal religion through the coronavirus pandemic from a locked-down Vatican City.

**REFORMING THE VATICAN**

Francis was elected on a mandate to reform the Vatican bureaucracy and finances but went further in shaking up the church without changing its core doctrine. "Who am I to judge?" he replied when asked about a purportedly gay priest.

The comment sent a message of welcome to the LGBTQ+ community and those who felt shunned by a church that had stressed sexual propriety over unconditional love. "Being homosexual is not a crime," he told The Associated Press in 2023, urging an end to civil laws that criminalise it.

Stressing mercy, Francis changed the church's position on the death penalty, calling it inadmissible in all circumstances. He also declared the possession of nuclear weapons, not just their use, was "immoral".

In other firsts, he approved an agreement with China over bishop nominations that had vexed the Vatican for decades, met the Russian patriarch and charted new relations with the Muslim world by visiting the Arabian Peninsula and Iraq.

He reaffirmed the all-male, celibate priesthood and upheld the church's opposition to abortion, equating it to "hiring a hitman to solve a problem".

**ROLES FOR WOMEN**

But he added women to import-

ant decision-making roles and allowed them to serve as lectors and acolytes in parishes. He let women vote alongside bishops in periodic Vatican meetings, following longstanding complaints that women do much of the church's work but are barred from power.

Sister Nathalie Becquart, whom Francis named to one of the highest Vatican jobs, said his legacy was a vision of a church where men and women existed in a relationship of reciprocity and respect.

**THE CHURCH AS REFUGE**

While Francis did not allow women to be ordained, the voting reform was part of a revolutionary change in emphasizing what the church should be: a refuge for everyone — "todos, todos, todos" ("everyone, everyone, everyone") — not for the privileged few.

Migrants, the poor, prisoners and outcasts were invited to his table far more than presidents or powerful CEOs.

Francis demanded his bishops apply mercy and charity to their flocks, pressed the world to protect God's creation from climate disaster, and challenged countries to welcome those fleeing war, poverty and oppression.



**World leaders mourn**

**Rest in Peace Pope Francis! May God Bless him and all who loved him!**  
DONALD TRUMP | PRESIDENT, US

**Pope Francis will always be remembered as a beacon of compassion, humility and spiritual courage by millions across the world**  
NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER, INDIA

**Our heavy hearts have been somewhat eased, however, to know that His Holiness was able to share an Easter Greeting with the Church and the world he served with such devotion throughout his life and ministry**  
KING CHARLES | BRITAIN

**I had the privilege of enjoying his friendship, his advice, his teachings, which never ceased not even during times of trial and suffering**  
GIORGIA MELONI | PM, ITALY

**Throughout his pontificate Pope Francis had always sided with the most vulnerable and the most fragile, and that he did this with a lot of humility. In this time of war and brutality, he had a sense for the other, for the most fragile**  
EMMANUEL MACRON | PRESIDENT, FRANCE

**He inspired millions, far beyond the Catholic Church, with his humility and love so pure for the less fortunate**  
URSULA VON DER LEYEN | PRESIDENT, EUROPEAN COMMISSION

**I truly hope that his prayers for peace in the Middle East and for the safe return of the hostages will soon be answered**  
ISSAC HERZOG | PRESIDENT, ISRAEL

## WHAT'S NEXT AFTER POPE FRANCIS' DEATH?

The death of a pope starts a centuries-old ritual involving sacred oaths by the cardinals electing a successor, the piercing of ballots with a needle and thread after they're counted, and then burning them to produce either the white or black smoke to signal if there's a new leader for the world's 1.3 billion Catholics.

The election itself is shrouded in secrecy, with cardinals forbidden from communicating with the outside world what happened during the voting in the conclave behind the frescoed walls of the Sistine Chapel.

St John Paul II rewrote the regulations on papal elections in a 1996 document that remains largely in force, though Pope Benedict XVI amended it twice before he resigned.

Here is what happens when a pope dies, a period known as the "sede vacante", or the "vacant See".

**Who's in charge?**

If the pope has died, the camerlengo, or chamberlain, must certify the death and seal the papal apartment. He runs administrative and financial duties of the Holy See until a new pope takes over. The largely ceremonial job of camerlengo is currently held by Cardinal Kevin Farrell, the Irish-born American head of the Vatican's laity office. Nearly all prefects of Vatican offices lose their jobs when a pope dies, but a few stay on, including the foreign minister and the master of liturgical ceremonies, who plays a key role in assembling the conclave. The dean of the College of Cardinals summons the cardinals for the funeral, presiding at the Mass before the conclave begins. That position is currently held by Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, the retired head of the Vatican's office for bishops. In November 2024, Francis reformed the rites to be used for his funeral, simplifying them to emphasize his role as a mere bishop and allowing for burial outside the Vatican. Francis has chosen to be buried in St Mary Major Basilica, where his favourite icon of the Virgin Mary, the Salus Populi Romani, is located.

**Who can elect a pope?**

Only cardinals under age 80 are eligible, and current regulations limit the number of electors to 120. According to the most recently updated Vatican statistics, there were 135 cardinals under age 80 and eligible to vote, though that number may change before the conclave begins. Those over 80 can't vote but can participate in pre-conclave meetings, known as general congregations, in which church problems are discussed. It was in these meetings in 2013 that then-Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio spoke about the need for the church to go to the "existential peripheries" to find those who suffer — an off-the-cuff speech that helped his election.

**What's the timing?**

The death of a pope begins a precise sequence of events that include the confirmation of death in the pontiff's home, the transfer of the coffin to St. Peter's Basilica for public viewing, a funeral Mass and burial. Interment must take place between the fourth and sixth day after his death. After the funeral, there are nine days of official mourning, known as the "novendiali". During this period, the cardinals arrive in Rome. To give everyone time to assemble, the conclave must begin 15-20 days after the "sede vacante" is declared, although it can start sooner if the cardinals agree.

**WHO ARE POSSIBLE CANDIDATES?**

- Any baptized Roman Catholic male is eligible to be pope, but since 1378, only cardinals have been selected. Some current leading candidates:
- Cardinal Pietro Parolin of Italy, 70, Francis' secretary of state and a veteran Vatican diplomat.
- Cardinal Marc Ouellet of Canada, 80, head of the Vatican's bishops office from 2010 to 2023.
- Cardinal Christoph Schoenborn of Austria, 80, a student of Pope Benedict XVI, and thus ostensibly having appeal for conservatives.
- Cardinal Luis Tagle of the Philippines, 67, brought by Francis to head the Vatican's massive missionary office.
- Cardinal Matteo Zuppi of Italy, 69, a Francis protégé who headed the Italian bishops conference.

## Hindu temple vandalised

**Toronto, April 21:** A temple in Canada's Surrey has been defaced by vandals with pro-Khalistan graffiti at its entrance and the pillars, authorities said.

The incident took place April 19 at the Shree Lakshmi Narayana Mandir in Surrey, the temple said in a statement.

"It is with deep sorrow that we inform the community of a disturbing incident that took place in the early hours of April 19, 2025, at approximately 3:00 AM. Two unidentified individuals vandalised the Shree Lakshmi Narayana Mandir in Surrey by defacing the entrance sign and the temple pillars with the word 'Khalistan', the statement said.

Also, the security camera was stolen during this act.

"We strongly condemn this hateful act of vandalism and theft, which is not only a crime



but a direct attack on a sacred space that serves as a spiritual and cultural centre for many families, including elderly members and children," it said.

"An FIR has been officially registered with the Surrey Police, and we are cooperating fully with the authorities in their investigation," the statement added.

"We urge members of the public and leaders at all levels of government to join us in condemning this hate crime. Attacks on places of worship have no place in a respectful and diverse society of Canada," it said.

## Russia 'positive' on peace proposals

**Moscow, April 21:** Fighting in Ukraine has resumed after the Easter ceasefire, Russia's President Vladimir Putin said Monday, adding that Moscow was open to any peace initiatives and expected similar attitude from Kyiv.

Both Ukraine and Russia accused each other of thousands of strikes and violating the Kremlin's unilateral ceasefire during the Easter celebrations.

"We always have a positive attitude towards a truce, which is why we came up with such an initiative, especially since we are talking about the bright Easter days," Putin told a state TV reporter, Pavel Zarubin.

"We have always talked about this, that we have a positive attitude towards any peace initiatives. We hope that



representatives of the Kyiv regime will feel the same way," he added.

Washington had said it would welcome an extension

## Kremlin pleased with US position on NATO

The Kremlin said Monday that the position of US President Donald Trump's administration on ruling out NATO membership for Ukraine gave Moscow satisfaction, but declined to comment on Trump's hopes for a peace deal this week. Trump, seeking to be remembered as a peacemaker, has repeatedly said he wants to end the "bloodbath" of the three-year conflict in Ukraine — which his administration casts as a proxy war between the United States and Russia. US envoy General Keith Kellogg said Sunday that NATO alliance membership was "off the table" for Ukraine. Trump has said past US support for that was a cause of the war. "We have heard from Washington at various levels that Ukraine's membership in NATO is excluded," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters. "Of course, this is something that causes us satisfaction and coincides with our position." Ukrainian membership of the US-led alliance would threaten Russian interests, Peskov added. "And, in fact, this is one of the root causes of this conflict." Trump said Sunday he hopes Russia and Ukraine will make a deal this week to end the conflict. "BOTH WILL THEN START TO DO BIG BUSINESS WITH THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, WHICH IS THRIVING, AND MAKE A FORTUNE!" Trump said in a post on Truth Social.

of the truce, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy reiterated several times Ukraine's willingness to agree a pause strikes on civilian infrastructure for 30 days in the war.

Putin said Russia has to carefully study this and other proposals.

## Sudan's paramilitaries kill over 30 in Darfur

**Cairo, April 21:** Sudan's notorious paramilitary group attacked a city in the western Darfur region, killing more than 30 people, an activist group said, in the latest deadly offensive on an area that is home to hundreds of thousands of displaced people.

The Rapid Support Forces and allied militias launched an offensive on el-Fasher, the provincial capital of North Darfur province, Sunday, the Resistance Committees in the city said. Dozens of other people were wounded in the attack, said the group, which tracks the war.

El-Fasher, more than 800 kilometres southwest of the capital, Khartoum, is under the control of the military, which has fought the RSF since Sudan descended into civil war more than two years ago, killing more than 24,000 people, according to the UN.



**If you look at the number of jobs we need to create, it's about 8 million jobs a year. And Artificial Intelligence may have a big role in taking away entry-level jobs, or low IT-enabled services jobs may come under threat**

**V ANANTHA NAGESWARAN**  
CHIEF ECONOMIC ADVISOR

## RUPEE JUMPS 23 PAISE

Extending the winning run to the fifth straight session, the rupee rose by 23 paise to settle at 85.15 against the US dollar Monday, boosted by a sharp fall in the greenback in overseas markets and a rally in domestic stocks. The US dollar index has fallen below the 99 mark and is trading at its lowest level in three years. Moreover, fresh foreign fund inflows and decline in crude oil prices also favoured the rupee, forex traders said.



## of the day quote

**We are one of the countries which is actively engaged with the new administration of the United States of America to see how best we can get a bilateral trade agreement done**

**NIRMALA SITHARAMAN** | FINANCE MINISTER



**India should not be drawn into binary geopolitical rivalries. Instead, it must engage with both China and the US on equal terms, guided by strategic autonomy, economic interest, and global trade principles not by external pressure**

**AJAY SRIVASTAVA** | GTRI FOUNDER



**Customers and their feedback are at the heart of everything we do. After carefully analysing customer feedback, we have enhanced our solutions to better serve the linguistic diversity of India**

**SIDDHARTH SHARMA** | DIRECTOR MARKETING, BHARTI AIRTEL



# Gold nears ₹1 lakh-mark

**The yellow metal prices have risen ₹20,850, or 26.41 per cent, per 10 grams since December 31**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 21:** Gold prices inched closer to the psychological mark of ₹1 lakh per 10 grams as the bullion rates surged ₹1,650 in the national capital Monday on weak dollar and uncertainties over US-China trade war driving demand. According to the All India Sarafa Association, the yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity reached ₹99,800 per 10 grams Monday. Its value had declined ₹20 to close at ₹98,150 per 10 grams Friday.

Gold of 99.5 per cent purity bounced ₹1,600 to hit a fresh peak of ₹99,300 per 10 grams in the local markets. It had fallen marginally to settle at ₹97,700 per 10 grams in the previous market close.

So far this year, the yellow metal prices have risen ₹20,850, or 26.41 per cent, per 10 grams since December 31, last year. Silver prices also appreciated ₹500 to ₹98,500 per kg. The white metal had traded flat at ₹98,000 per kg Friday.



"This year, gold and silver prices have experienced significant movements due to ongoing trade tensions, rate cut expectations, geopolitical uncertainties and weakening dollar. So far, gold has soared over 25 per cent, including a 6 per cent gain since April 2 tariff announcement by the US administration," Satish Dondapati, Fund Manager at Kotak Mahindra AMC, said.

On the Multi Commodity Exchange, gold futures for June

delivery jumped ₹1,621, or 1.7 per cent, to touch a fresh high of ₹96,875 per 10 grams.

In the international markets, spot gold rose to hit a fresh peak of USD 3,397.18 per ounce. Later, it pared some gains to trade at USD 3,393.49 per ounce.

Globally, gold futures breached the psychological USD 3,400-mark for the first time ever, rising USD 80 per ounce, or 2.4 per cent.

"Gold prices continued their positive momentum and have

risen briefly above USD 3,400 per ounce, as trade tariff related uncertainty, weakness in the US dollar and rising Treasury yields continue to keep the bullion supported. There has been increased buying activity among ETF investors, while upcoming festive demand in India is seen fuelling additional support," Pranav Mer, Vice President, EBG of Commodity & Currency Research at JM Financial Services, said.

Kaynat Chainwala, AVP of Commodity Research, Kotak Securities said gold prices continued its rally as the US dollar fell to a new three-year low and safe-haven buying intensified following US President Donald Trump's threat to fire Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell.

Spot silver in the Asian market hours rose nearly 1 per cent to USD 32.85 per ounce.

According to Abans Financial Services' Chief Executive Officer Chintan Mehta, market participants will closely watch President Trump's evolving tariff strategy and its broader economic impact, alongside commentary from Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) members for clues on interest rate direction. Any signals of further easing or prolonged uncertainty could reinforce gold's appeal and keep safe-haven demand elevated, Mehta said.

# Minors above 10 yrs can operate bank a/c

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, April 21:** The Reserve Bank Monday permitted banks to allow minors above the age of 10 years to open and operate savings/term deposit accounts independently.

The Reserve Bank of India has issued revised instructions on opening and operation in the deposit accounts of minors.

Minors of any age may be allowed to open and operate savings and term deposit accounts through his/her natural or legal guardian, the RBI said in a circular addressed to commercial banks and cooperative banks.

They may also be allowed to open such accounts with their mother as guardian.

"Minors above such an age limit not less than 10 years and up to such amount and such terms as may be fixed by the banks keeping in view their risk management policy, may be allowed to open and operate savings/term deposit accounts independently, if they so desire, and such terms shall be duly conveyed to the account holder," the circular said.

Further, on attaining the age of majority, fresh operating instructions and specimen



signature of the account holder should be obtained and kept on record.

"The banks are free to offer additional banking facilities like internet banking, ATM/debit cards, cheque book facility, etc, to the minor account holders basis their risk management policy, product suitability and customer appropriateness," the circular said.

The banks will have to ensure that accounts of minors, whether operated independently or through a guardian, are not allowed to be overdrawn and that these always remain in a credit balance.

Also, the banks shall perform customer due diligence for opening of deposit accounts of minors and undertake ongoing due diligence, RBI added.

The RBI has asked banks to make new or amend existing policies to align them with the revised guidelines, latest by July 1, 2025.

## BoB opens new zonal office in City



**Bhubaneswar:** Bank of Baroda, one of India's leading public sector banks, inaugurated its new Zonal Office premises in Bhubaneswar, reaffirming its commitment to deepening customer outreach and strengthening its presence in Eastern India. The Bhubaneswar Zone encompasses Odisha and Jharkhand and plays a strategic role in the Bank's regional operations. The new Zonal Office will oversee five Regional Offices located in Sambalpur, Ranchi, Jamshedpur, Cuttack, and Bhubaneswar, managing a network of 337 branches. Notably, nearly 67% of these branches are situated in rural and semi-urban areas, reinforcing the Bank's efforts to expand financial inclusion and banking access in under-served regions. The new zonal office was inaugurated by M Nagaraju, IAS, Secretary, Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance, Government of India, in the presence of Debadatta Chand, Managing Director & CEO, Bank of Baroda, and Manoranjan Mishra, Director (RBI Nominee), Bank of Baroda. Senior bank officials, stakeholders, and esteemed customers also attended the event.

# Govt slaps 12% safeguard duty on steel products for 200 days

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 21:** India Monday imposed a 12 per cent provisional safeguard duty for 200 days on five steel product categories, including hot rolled coils, sheets and plates, to protect domestic players from surge in imports.

The decision follows a recommendation for the same by the Commerce Ministry's investigation arm DGTR. Last month, the DGTR suggested to impose the duty.

"...the Central Government after considering the said findings of the Director General (Trade Remedies), hereby imposes...a provisional safeguard duty at the rate of twelve per cent ad valorem," according to a notification of the Department of Revenue. It said that the safeguard duty imposed under this notification shall be effective for a period of 200 days (unless revoked, superseded or amended earlier) from the date of publication of this notification. The government has set the



import prices between USD 675 per tonne to USD 964 per tonne for the five steel product categories. Any shipment imported below these import prices would attract the safeguard duty. The safeguard duty shall not be imposed on the product categories when imported into India at or above the specified import price on CIF (cost insurance freight) basis, according to the notification.

The product categories are Hot Rolled coils, sheets and plates; Hot Rolled Plate Mill Plates; Cold Rolled Coils and Sheets; Metallic Coated Steel Coils and Sheets; and Colour

Coated coils and sheets, whether or not profiled.

Last year in December, the Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) started the investigation into the sudden surge in imports of 'Non-Alloy and Alloy Steel Flat Products', used in various industries, including fabrication, pipe making, construction, capital goods, auto, tractors, bicycles, and electrical panels.

The investigations were conducted following a complaint from the Indian Steel Association on behalf of its members including ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India; AMNS Khopoli; JSW Steel; JSW Steel Coated Products; Bhushan Power & Steel; Jindal Steel and Power; and Steel Authority of India Limited.

The directorate in its probe had found that there is a recent, sudden, sharp and significant increase in the imports of these products into India, causing and threatening to cause serious injury to the domestic industry/producers.

# Key infra sectors growth slows to 3.8 pc in March

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 21:** The output of eight key infrastructure sectors slowed down to 3.8 per cent in March, as against 6.3 per cent growth registered a year ago, according to official data released Monday. On a monthly basis, the growth rate in the production of these sectors was slightly higher than the 3.4 per cent expansion recorded in February.

In March, production of crude oil and natural gas recorded a negative growth. The production growth of coal, refinery products, steel and electricity moderated to 1.6 per cent, 0.2 per cent, 7.1 per cent, and 6.2 per cent, respectively. Fertiliser production rose by 8.8 per cent in March 2025 against 1.3 per cent contraction in the same month last year. Cement production growth rose to 11.6 per cent in March 2025 from 10.6 per cent in the year-ago month.

The growth of core sectors -- coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertiliser, steel, cement and electricity -- was 4.4 per cent during April-March 2024-25 fiscal.

# Stock markets rally for 5th day

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, April 21:** Rallying for the fifth day in a row, benchmark Sensex jumped 855 points to close above the 79,000 mark on heavy buying in banking and IT shares following strong quarterly results and foreign fund inflows.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 855.30 points or 1.09 per cent to settle at 79,408.50 with 23 of its components ending in green. During the day, it surged 1,081.85 points or 1.37 per cent to 79,635.05.

The NSE Nifty climbed 273.90 points or 1.15 per cent to close at 24,125.55 as 39 of its constituents advanced and 11 declined. In the five-day rally, Sensex jumped by 5,561.35 points or over 7 per cent and Nifty surged by 1,726.40 points, recouping all the losses triggered by imposition of reciprocal tariffs by US President Donald Trump tariffs April 2.

Among Sensex scrips, Tech Mahindra, IndusInd Bank, Power Grid, Bajaj Finserv, Mahindra & Mahindra, HCL Tech, State Bank of India, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Infosys, HDFC Bank and Reliance Industries were the biggest gainers. Adani Ports, Hindustan



Unilever, ITC, Asian Paints and Nestle were among the laggards.

HDFC Bank shares climbed over 1 per cent after the leading private lender reported a 7 per cent growth in its consolidated net profit for the March quarter to ₹18,835 crore.

Infosys shares rallied over 2 per cent after the company's March quarter net profit rose by 3.3 per cent sequentially.

Reliance Industries shares surged nearly 2 per cent which also boosted the rally in benchmark indices.

quality and credit growth attracted investors, analysts said.

"A contrarian bet on IT due to its attractive valuation with an expectation of improvement in spending in the latter half of FY26 is keeping the counter busy. While the dollar index slumps to a three-year low, another layer of uncertainty may attract more FII inflows into the domestic market in the near term," Nair added.

All BSE sectoral indices ended higher, with oil & gas soaring 2.61 per cent, power (2.49 per cent), BSE Focused IT (2.42 per cent), IT (2.31 per cent), realty (2.27 per cent), auto (2.12 per cent) and metal (2 per cent).

As many as 2,918 stocks advanced while 1,168 declined and 161 remained unchanged on the BSE.

In the past five days, the BSE benchmark gauge zoomed 5,561.35 points or 7.53 per cent, and the Nifty surged 1,726.40 points or 7.70 per cent.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi index and Shanghai SSE Composite settled in the positive territory while Tokyo's Nikkei 225 ended lower. Markets were closed in Hong Kong.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 2.71 per cent to USD 66.25 a barrel.

# Google settles Android Smart TV case with CCI



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 21:** Technology major Google Monday settled with the Competition Commission a nearly four-year-old case related to alleged unfair business practices with respect to Android Smart TV market and has agreed to modify its agreement with vendors.

This is the first case that has been settled under the amended Competition Act, wherein the settlement and commitment provisions were introduced in 2023. In the nearly four-year-old case, Google proposed settlement, including a modified agreement with the vendors that would address anti-competitive concerns and also paid a settlement amount of ₹20.24 crore.

The settlement order Monday also came at a time when US Vice President JD Vance started his four-day India visit. Al-

so, India is hoping to reach an agreement with the US within the 90-day pause on steep tariffs announced by President Donald Trump.

"The Commission considered the settlement proposal and observed that under the 'New India Agreement', Google will provide a standalone licence for the Play Store and Play Services for Android smart TVs in India, thereby removing the requirement to bundle these services or impose default placement conditions. Additionally, by waiving the need for a valid Android Compatibility Commitments (ACC) for devices shipped into India that do not include Google apps, OEMs can now sell and develop incompatible Android devices without violating the Television App Distribution Agreement (TADA)," the regulator said in a release Monday.

# Axed duo makes comeback

IYER AND KEEPER-BATTER KISHAN WERE DROPPED FROM BCCI LIST LAST YEAR FOR ALLEGEDLY IGNORING DOMESTIC CRICKET

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 21: The BCCI Monday retained megastars Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli in the top bracket of its annual players contract list, less than 24 hours after they played sublime knocks to win IPL games for their respective franchises.

The out-of-favour duo of Shreyas Iyer and Ishan Kishan also returned to the fold in lower brackets in a 34-strong list of centrally-contracted players, which also includes pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah and Ravindra Jadeja in the highest-paid A+ category.

Both Rohit and Kohli figure in A+ category but it remains to be seen if the Mumbai batter will be asked to lead the team in England in the upcoming five-Test series when his red ball form has been patchy.

The BCCI mandarins are however tight-lipped on the issue since head coach Gautam Gambhir's view will also matter in taking a final decision.

The BCCI offers contracts in four categories: A+, A, B and C with annual retainer valuation of Rs 7 crore, Rs 5 crore, Rs 3 crore and Rs 1 crore respectively. It is learnt that national selectors after discussion with head coach Gambhir and secretary Devajit Saikia had prepared the contract list at least two weeks back but held back the announcement.

Interestingly, it was announced hours after both veterans hit sparkling knocks -- especially skipper Rohit, who was going through a lean patch. While Kohli hit an unbeaten 73-run knock against Punjab Kings, Rohit came up with an unbeaten 76-run knock against Chennai Super Kings.



BCCI CENTRAL CONTRACTS

Iyer was included in B category while wicketkeeper-batter Ishan Kishan made a comeback in category C.

Rishabh Pant, who was demoted to category B during the 2023-24 season as he didn't play due to his recovery from a life-threatening accident, is back in A category in place of the retired Ravichandran Ashwin.

How central contract are awarded

Central contract is offered based on a player's performance in the year gone by.

The A+ category is meant for all-format automatic choices. The A category is for players, who are Test match certainties and also play the other two formats from time to time. The category B is for players who at

least play two formats regularly and C is for newcomers and one-format specialists.

Many would question how Rohit, Kohli and Jadeja were retained in the A+ grade when the troika has already announced retirement from the shortest format?

A top BCCI official explained the reasoning.

"The period of fresh central contract is from October 1, 2024 to September 30, 2025. But the assessment year is October 1, 2023 to September 30, 2024. Kohli, Rohit and Jadeja played the T20 World Cup final in June, 2024 and hence at

that time, they were all-format regulars. Going by that technicality, they are supposed to be in A+ category," the official PTI on condition of anonymity. "Similarly, Ishan (2 World Cup matches) and Shreyas played 15 ODIs and a handful Tests in the 2023-24 season and hence got their respective categories."

Rishabh Pant was downgraded to 'B' from A in last contract because he hadn't played any cricket during the year due to a life-threatening car accident.

After he returned to action in 2024, Pant played regularly in at least two of the three formats and hence is back in category 'A' in place of retired Ravichandran Ashwin.

Suryakumar Yadav has been retained in grade B because in last year's list he was a two-format regular having played most games of ODI World Cup in 2023 and also regular T20 skipper.

While there is not much change in terms of contracts offered in the top three categories,

Grade C now has 19 players compared to 17 in the last list following the inclusion of Sarfaraz Khan and Dhruv Jurel.

Newcomers in Grade C

The category C features new players such as Nitish Kumar Reddy and Harshit Rana, both of whom made their debuts between October and December 2024.

A player has to play three Tests or 8 ODIs or 10 T20Is in a calendar year to qualify for a central contract.

The lowest category has five new entrants in Harshit Rana, Varun Chakravarty, Abhishek Sharma, Nitish Kumar Reddy and Akash Deep, who earlier had a fast bowling contract.

The only notable name missing in the list is Mumbai all-rounder Shardul Thakur, who last played for India in the 2023 ODI World Cup game against Bangladesh in Pune.

Fast bowler Avesh Khan, keeper-batters Kona Bharat and Jitesh Sharma have also been excluded from the list.

CONTRACTS LIST

**A+ category:** Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, Jasprit Bumrah, Ravindra Jadeja

**A category:** Mohammed Siraj, KL Rahul, Shubman Gill, Hardik Pandya, Mohammed Shami, Rishabh Pant

**B category:** Suryakumar Yadav, Kuldeep Yadav, Axar Patel, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shreyas Iyer.

**C category:** Rinku Singh, Tilak Verma, Rituraj Gaikwad, Shivam Dube, Ravi Bishnoi, Washington Sundar, Mukesh Kumar, Sanju Samson, Arshdeep Singh, Prasidh Krishna, Rajat Patidar, Dhruv Jurel, Sarfaraz Khan, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Ishan Kishan, Abhishek Sharma, Akash Deep, Varun Chakravarty, Harshit Rana.

# Is it to develop sports or just have an event? Moses' poser to India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Madrid, April 21: Perplexed by India's interest in hosting events like the 2030 Commonwealth Games, American athletics legend Edwin Moses says the country, which is yet to have a consistent supply line of world-class athletes, needs to decide whether such bids are meant to develop sports or simply make a statement.

India has submitted its Expression of Interest (EOI) to host the 2030 Commonwealth Games and is also in the running to bid for the 2036 Olympics after handing a letter of intent to the International Olympic Committee. India is also among the seven bidders to host the 2031 AFC Asian Cup in men's football, a sport that is in shambles both in terms of performance and administration in the country.

"It depends on what the vision is for having a Commonwealth Games. Is it just to have an event in India, or is it to really develop sports? That's going to be the big question," Moses, a Laureus World Sports Acad-

emy member, told PTI when asked if hosting mega events like the Commonwealth Games could help find better athletes. "You can put on the Commonwealth Games or any other event and have all the fanfare and the government involved, and people who have nothing to do with sports-but sit on the front row. That's what you want to avoid. That's generally what happens," the 69-year-old former hurdler added in a blunt assessment of how he perceives India's interest in these events.

Moses was at his wit's end to



There's a lot of other countries in the world, much smaller, with much less financial capabilities than India, that produce good athletes

EDWIN MOSES | AMERICAN ATHLETICS LEGEND

understand why a country of over billion people can't consistently produce world-class athletes.

"...it's going to depend on the people who have been athletes, who are able to make things happen. That's for the people in India to determine. I don't

keep up with the politics of sports over there or what's gone wrong and why isn't a country with a billion people better than others in sports, which doesn't even make sense," he added.

Moses, who won 107 consecutive finals and set the world record in the 400m hurdles four times between 1977 and 1987, said India needs to spend on coaches and infrastructure.

"There's a lot of other countries in the world, much smaller, with much less financial capabilities than India, that produce good athletes," he said.

## SHORT TAKES

### Humpy takes sole lead

**Pune:** Indian Grandmaster Koneru Humpy defeated China's Zhu Jiner to jump into sole lead with 5.5 points after the seventh round of the FIDE Women's Grand Prix here Monday. In another good result for India, Divya Deshmukh scored a crushing victory over Munguntuul Batkhuyag and along with Zhu is trailing half a point behind Humpy. With just two more rounds remaining of the 10-player round robin event, the race for the title will be amongst these three players. R Vaishali and Dronavalli Harika had to stay content with draws and are out of the race for the title.

### Fixtures cancelled

**New Delhi:** Following the death of Pope Francis, all Italian football fixtures scheduled for Monday have been postponed. Pope Francis, suffering from respiratory ailments and pneumonia, died at the age of 88 at his residence in the Vatican's Casa Santa Marta, the Vatican said in a statement Monday afternoon (IST). "Following the passing of His Holiness, Lega Nazionale Professionisti Serie A can confirm that today's league games in Serie A and Primavera 1 have been postponed. The date of the rearranged fixtures will be announced in due course," the Serie A statement read. Several European football clubs have also mourned the demise of the leader of the Roman Catholic Church.

# PIASTRI WINS SAUDI ARABIAN GRAND PRIX

It was the second win in a row for Piastri, who took the victory in Bahrain last week and has three wins from five races this year

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

**Jeddah (Saudi Arabia), April 21:** McLaren's Oscar Piastri won the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix Sunday from Red Bull polesitter Max Verstappen to lead the world championship for the first time in his career.

Charles Leclerc's Ferrari completed the podium for this fifth round of the season under the floodlights at the Jeddah Corniche Circuit.

Piastri's third win this year was in large part decided at the first turn, when Verstappen picked up a five-second penalty for gaining an advantage after going off the track. He becomes the first Australian to lead the drivers' standings since his agent,



Mark Webber, 15 years ago.

"Very happy to have won, made the difference at the start. Great race. "Max was still a bit too close for my liking!" Piastri said, after crossing the line 2.843 seconds clear of the four-time world champion.

## VERSTAPPEN KEEPS MUM

Verstappen refused to discuss a time penalty which dropped him out of the lead of the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix, saying after Sunday's race that he fears being punished for any criticism. Verstappen started on pole position and went off the track at the first corner under pressure from McLaren's Oscar Piastri. He kept the lead but received a five-second penalty for gaining an advantage by going off-track. That helped Piastri take his third Formula 1 win this season. Verstappen told his Red Bull team over the radio during the race that he felt Piastri had forced him off the track. The four-time champion repeatedly refused to go into any more detail in a televised interview and a later news conference. "The start happened, turn one happened and suddenly it was lap 50 (the last lap). It just all went super fast," Verstappen said in response to one question. "The problem is that I cannot share my opinion about it because I might get penalized also, you know, so it's better not to speak about it."

# All-round display by Titans

Bowlers set up GT's 39-run win over KKR after top three batters make big runs

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Kolkata, April 21:** Prasidh Krishna and Rashid Khan picked two wickets each in a disciplined bowling performance to set up Gujarat Titans' 39-run win over Kolkata Knight Riders at the Eden Gardens Monday. The clinical victory also means that GT maintain their top ranking in the points table.

After captain Shubman Gill's excellent 55-ball 90, along with B Sai Sudharsan's 52 and Jos Buttler's 41 helped GT a competitive 198/3 on a slow pitch, Krishna and Rashid were the standout players in a relentless bowling performance as KKR never looked to complete the chase and ended up at 159/8 in their 20 overs.

KKR's change at the top-order didn't work as Mohammed Siraj trapped Rahmanullah Gurbaz lbw in the opening over, with the batter burning a review as well. Ajinkya Rahane continued his good run by flicking, ramping, flat-batting and driving to fetch four quick boundaries.

Though Sunil Narine tried



## IPL STANDINGS

TEAM	M	W	L	NRR	PTS
GT	8	6	2	1.104	12
DC	7	5	2	0.589	10
RCB	8	5	3	0.472	10
PBKS	8	5	3	0.177	10
LSG	8	5	3	0.088	10
MI	8	4	4	0.483	8
KKR	8	3	5	0.212	6
RR	8	2	6	-0.633	4
SRH	7	2	5	-1.217	4
CSK	8	2	6	-1.392	4

to break free by whacking a four and six off Siraj, he pulled straight to deep backward square leg off Rashid, as KKR ended power-play at 45/2. With the ball gripping and holding along with variable bounce in play, it meant GT spinners'

were very disciplined in keeping KKR at a tight leash, as they didn't concede a boundary from overs 5-10.

Rahane finally got a move on when he lofted and pulled Washington Sundar for four and six. Despite Venkatesh Iyer holing out to deep mid-wicket off R Sai Kishore, Rahane went on to bring up his fifty off 36 balls. Shortly after, he reached out to a quicker wide ball off Washington Sundar, but missed it and was duly stumped by Jos Buttler.

## BRIEF SCORES

**Gujarat Titans 198/3 in 20 overs** (Shubman Gill 90, B Sai Sudharsan 52; Andre Russell 1-13, Vaibhav Arora 1-44) beat **Kolkata Knight Riders 159/8 in 20 overs** (Ajinkya Rahane 50, Angkrish Raghuvanshi 27 not out; Prasidh Krishna 2-25, Rashid Khan 2-25) by 39 runs

# Shooter Simranpreet wins silver, Bhaker finishes 4th in WC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Lima (Peru), April 21:** Indian shooter Simranpreet Kaur Brar clinched her maiden senior international medal with a silver in the women's 25m pistol event while Paris Olympics double medallist Manu Bhaker finished fourth at the ISSF World Cup here Monday.

The 20-year-old Indian shot 33 hits across 10 rapid-fire series to finish just one behind China's Sun Yujie, who claimed her second successive World Cup gold in the event.

Another Chinese shooter, Yao Qianxun, secured the bronze with 29 hits.

This was India's fourth silver of the competition, adding to two golds and a bronze.

Esha Singh, who won silver in the last World Cup in Argentina, ended sixth.

The Chinese burst off the blocks going to the top after the first series, as the Indians warmed up to the task from the second. In the sixth series, both Bhaker and Simranpreet nailed fives, while Esha shot a four.



This led to a shoot-off between Bhaker, Esha and Germany's Doreen Vennekamp.

Esha was the first to bow out. Bhaker then edged out Doreen in another shoot-off to move into the top four. By now Simranpreet on 23-hits had found herself sandwiched between Sun with 25-hits and Yao with 22.

However, Bhaker's luck ran out in the next series as the one-point difference between the top three remained constant till the end of the contest.

Earlier in the day, the trio of Bhaker, mixed team pistol world champion Esha and Simranpreet, ensured all three Indians made the finals.

Bhaker was second in qualifying with a solid 585 while Simranpreet was fifth with 580.

Esha shot 575 to take the eighth and final qualifying spot. The three Chinese contenders also made the finals as did German ace Doreen Vennekamp and multiple times continental champion Andrea Perez Pena.

## KALINGA SUPER CUP

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Bhubaneswar, April 21:** Punjab FC delivered a clinical performance to cruise past Odisha FC 3-0 and book their place in the quarterfinals of the Kalinga Super Cup Round of 16 match which was played here at the Kalinga Stadium.

Goals from Asmir Suljic, Ezequiel Vidal, and Nihal Sudeesh ensured the Shers get the better of the hosts. They will face FC Goa in the quarterfinals on 26th which was the better of I-League side Gokulam Kerala FC in a similar score line.

Punjab FC head coach Panagiotis Dilmpertis opted for an aggressive 4-2-4 formation, trusting his all-Indian defence line of Khaiminhang Lungdim, Suresh Meitei, Paramveer, and Abhishek Singh. With Muheet Shabbir in goal and Ricky Shabong and Nikhil Prabhu anchoring

the midfield, the attacking line was led by Muhammad Suhail, Asmir Suljic, Ezequiel Vidal, and Petros Giakoumakis. On the other side, Odisha FC—last season's runners-up—lined up in a 3-4-3 under Sergio Lobera, with Amrinder Singh in goal and a solid backline featuring Mourtaada Fall and Carlos Delgado; their frontline included the likes of Hugo Boumous, Isak Vanlalruatfela, and Dorielton Silva.

Odisha FC dominated possession early on, but it was Punjab FC who fired the first warning shot, Suljic testing Amrinder in the 5th minute. The Shers, pressing high and showing intent, took the lead in the 14th minute. A sharp through ball from Vidal found Suljic, who cleverly dinked it over the onrushing keeper to make it 1-0. Punjab's high press and compact shape kept Odisha frustrated, and they nearly



doubled their lead on multiple occasions. Suhail came close after a deflected effort in the 33rd minute, while Ricky Shabong saw his shot saved after a flowing move involving Suljic. Odisha's best chance came

in the 36th minute when Dorielton found himself one-on-one with the Shers' Muheet but missed the target. A minute later, Boumous tested Muheet again, only to be denied by a brilliant reflex save. Just be-

fore halftime, Suljic and Shabong combined beautifully, but the final shot lacked sting. The Shers went into the break with a deserved 1-0 lead.

Punjab FC faced an early change in the second half with Ashish Pradhan replacing Nikhil Prabhu. But the change did not slow down their momentum. The Shers continued to threaten Odisha's high line with swift transitions and clever link-ups between Vidal and Suljic. In the 56th minute, Vidal nearly scored with a two-shot attempt, his second going just wide. Odisha, meanwhile, struggled with their finishing despite some promising build-up play. The Shers defense stood tall, with goalkeeper Muheet once again stepping up when required.

In the 69th minute, Vidal turned on the flair, skipping past his marker and unleashing a sublime left-footed shot

from outside the box that nestled into the far corner to double Punjab's lead. From there, the Shers stuck to their game plan, absorbing pressure, staying compact, and waiting for their moment. Odisha's errors in the final third continued, while the Shers maintained their discipline. With the match heading into the final stretch, Odisha pushed hard but were repeatedly shut down by the Shers' all Indian backline.

In the 90th minute, the Shers sealed the match in style. Substitute Manglenhang Kipgen played a perfectly timed ball from half-line to Nihal Sudeesh, who calmly beat the keeper and slotted in Punjab's third of the night. Punjab FC kept pushing even in stoppage time, trying to find their fourth. At the final whistle, it was a complete performance from Dilmpertis' men to sail into the quarter finals.