



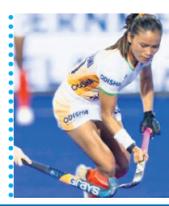
**Shruti's perspective**  
 Actor and musician Shruti Haasann speaks about the evolving space for women in creative industries  
 LEISURE | P2



**7 dead in soil collapse**  
 Seven workers died and four sustained injuries when a mound of soil collapsed at a construction site in Gurugram  
 NATIONAL | P8



**Sensex rebounds**  
 Sensex ends nearly 1% higher after two days of massive decline, following a drop in crude oil prices  
 BUSINESS | P11



**Eves eye semifinals**  
 India to aim for a draw against Wales in final pool match to advance to semifinal of the FIH Women's Hockey WC Qualifiers  
 SPORTS | P12

**5-yr-old girl raped**  
 POST NEWS NETWORK

**Tirtol, March 10:** A five-year-old girl was allegedly raped at a slum under Tirtol police limits in Jagatsinghpur Monday night, police said Tuesday, adding that a 35-year-old man has been taken into custody.  
 According to police, the alleged incident occurred when the girl and her father were returning home from a friend's house around 10pm Monday.  
 "On their way home, they met the accused Manoj Das of the locality. Manoj allegedly made the girl's father consume liquor and raped her," Tirtol IIC Pradipta Kumar Sethy said. Police registered a case (158/26) and arrested Manoj Tuesday evening.

PLEA TO SCRAP SHARIAT LAW  
**SC bats for UCC**

**NEW DELHI, March 10:** The Supreme Court Tuesday observed that time has come for a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) as it termed a plea seeking striking down of provisions of the Shariat law of 1937 for being discriminatory to Muslim women as a "very good case" which advisably only the legislature should look into.  
 A bench of Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and justices Joymalya Bagchi and R Mahadevan said if the court struck down the Shariat inheritance law, it would create a legal vacuum, as there is no statutory law governing Muslim inheritance.  
 The CJI told advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for petitioners, "In our over-anxiety for reforms, we may end up depriving them, and they might end up getting less than what they are already getting. If the Shariat Act of 1937 goes away, then what is the question? Will it not create an unnecessary void?"  
 Justice Bagchi said, "You have a very good case on discrimination, but would it not be appropriate for the court to defer it to the wisdom of the legislature, which has the mandate to enact a Uniform Civil Code as per the Directive Principles of State Policy." The CJI said, "The answer is Uniform Civil Code."  
 Justice Bagchi pointed out that the rule of 'one wife for one man' is not being uniformly applied to all communities.  
 "But does that mean that the court can declare all bigamous marriages as unconstitutional? So, we have to defer to legislative power to bring the directive principles into effect," he said, adding that it is best to defer the issue to the legislative wisdom.  
 Justice Bagchi further said, "This court has time and again recommended to the legislature to enact a Uniform Civil Code."  
 At the outset, Bhushan submitted that the court can make a declaration that Muslim women are entitled to equal inheritance rights as men, and the provisions of the Indian Succession Act will apply if the court strikes down the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act of 1937.



**Ex-Balasore MP Rabindra Jena quits BJD**

**BALASORE:** Ahead of the ensuing Rajya Sabha polls, senior BJD leader and former Balasore MP Rabindra Kumar Jena Tuesday resigned from the primary membership of the regional outfit. In a letter to BJD president Naveen Patnaik, Jena said, "I have taken a hard decision to separate from the party in view of some personal reasons and prevailing situation. My resignation may be accepted forthwith." Jena had also worked as the Balasore district president of the BJD. He was defeated by BJP candidate Pratap Sarangi in the 2019 general elections in Balasore seat and was denied a party ticket in 2024.

3001/10/2526

**ଶାସ୍ତ୍ରୀୟ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା ଦିବସ ୨୦୨୬**  
 ଅବସରରେ ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀଙ୍କ ଶୁଭେଚ୍ଛା

ଆମ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା ଏକ ଶାସ୍ତ୍ରୀୟ ଭାଷା । ଏହା ଆମ ଗୌରବ, ଆମ ଅସ୍ଥିତା । ଏହାର ମାୟୂର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଆମକୁ କରାନ୍ତି ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର । ଆମ ଭାଷାର ସୁରକ୍ଷା ଓ ପ୍ରସାର ଦ୍ୱାରା ହିଁ, ଆମ ପରମ୍ପରା, ଆମ ସଂସ୍କୃତି ଓ ଆମ ଐତିହ୍ୟ ସୁରକ୍ଷିତ ରହିବ । ଆସନ୍ତୁ, ଆମେ ସମସ୍ତେ ମିଶି ଆମ ଭାଷାର ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ରତା ଓ ଗରିମାକୁ ଅକ୍ଷୁର୍ଣ୍ଣ ରଖିବା ପାଇଁ ଉଦ୍ୟମ କରି ଚାଲିବା ।

ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା

OIPR- 3001/3029/2/25-26/0005

**AM/NS INDIA** ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India

**BANAUNGA MAIN, BANEGA BHARAT.**  
 Before the energy is harvested, the steel must endure.

Across India's landscapes, new sources of energy rise with every turning blade, flowing current, and captured ray. Supporting this progress is AM/NS India steel, which is resilient, enduring, and engineered for the long run. Each structure carries the strength of our steel and the commitment of our people. When our steel powers the nation's energy, India moves forward with confidence.

**SMARTER STEELS BRIGHTER FUTURES**

Creative visualisation

# leisure



## ANNA CAMP PROUD TO BE BISEXUAL

American actress Anna Camp has declared she is really proud to be bisexual even though being open about her private life felt scary. The Pitch Perfect star, 43, unveiled her relationship with Jade Whipkey when they walked the red carpet together at the Los Angeles premiere of her movie *Bride Hard* last summer.

## HILARY DUFF REVEALS 'DEVASTATING' FAMILY RIFT

Lizzie McGuire star Hilary Duff has opened up on her strained relationship with parents Bob and Susan, and her sister Haylie. "It's devastating. It doesn't matter what age you are, you want your parents to feel like they care about you. And a big portion of my existence hasn't felt like that," she shared.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

**ARIES**  
Whip up some excitement in your life — put on your walking shoes and go explore some unknown destination, suggests Ganesh. Keep yourself busy, but take care not to overdo anything. Today, you will be the centre of attention in group activities.

**TAURUS**  
You will find yourself at the crossroads and each turn and twist will come with its share of pros and cons, says Ganesh. Your sentiments may have an ill-effect on your health. You may spend quality time with family members and friends, hoping to shed the burden thrust upon your soul.

**GEMINI**  
Today, you are likely to be rather emotional and sentimental, says Ganesh. Your love for performing arts may make you take up lessons in classical music or traditional dance. And much to your delight, your sweetheart will treat you to a surprise candlelit dinner.

**CANCER**  
You will be in a joyous mood. You will be de-lightened in whatever task you do. Financial matters will confound you, with even a petty issue causing tension. Ganesh says it will be a colourful day, with happy tidings.

**LEO**  
The passionate Scorpio might be the master of arousing passionate emotions, but it is the very same emotions that enslave it. But today is different, says Ganesh. You are all set to be lively on this lovely day, as your energy levels touch new peaks. Ganesh guesses it's your healthy eating habits that are the reason behind this super-charged feeling!

**VIRGO**  
The booster rockets of your ambitions and spirit to work will kick in at the maximum today. Seek recreation after a hard day's work and look to relax at private parties, social-dos and even weddings, says Ganesh.

**LIBRA**  
Today is the day when you seem to agree with everything that people say, without striking even a note of criticism. It's just one of those days when you are amazed by all things around you. Such an elastic approach will enable you to be reasonable in your views and sensible in your ways. Ganesh wishes you the very best.

**SCORPIO**  
You will find yourself thinking with your heart rather than your head today, says Ganesh. You may not be able to repress your feelings, and you should not even try. But you should be careful about how you express them, particularly in public as people may judge you wrongly on the basis of it, advises Ganesh.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
No wonder, if you feel like you are stuck in a rut. Your energy level and enthusiasm has gone for a toss due to mundane routine. Unfortunately, your stars too seem to be lazy today, and there's nothing on the cards that can cheer you up. Ganesh advises to let the day pass calmly and wait for a better tomorrow.

**CAPRICORN**  
Duping the wisest with your extraordinary power of convincing may have been your forte, but you may have to prove yourself all over again, for Ganesh says you will be tested today. This apart, you are likely to find answers to questions lingering in your subconscious mind for long. The outburst of creativity in the second half of the day will draw the attention of your peers, and this will also be the best time to seek their support, advises Ganesh.

**AQUARIUS**  
For a moment, it seems that you're swamped with problems. But you are brave enough to deal with any ugly issue that crops up suddenly. Ganesh hints at a romantic evening, which may just be time together in a jacuzzi, or simply preparing a meal together. Pure ecstasy!

**PISCES**  
All the dieting that you have been undergoing will finally begin to show results, with compliments galore coming your way from your friends. Your energy and enthusiasm levels are likely to be high. A bright and beautiful day waits, says Ganesh.

# SHRUTI'S TAKE ON TODAY'S WOMEN

**Hyderabad:** On International Women's Day, conversations around empowerment often centred on rights, representation and opportunity. For Shruti Haasan, however, the starting point is more personal: recognising that your voice matters. The actress and musician speaks about discovering that confidence early in life, the evolving space for women in creative industries, and why feminism is often misunderstood.

She believes the ability to trust one's voice often begins with overcoming self-doubt. She says, "We live in a time where there is so much overload of information that everyone doubts their abilities and true potential. But society does have a way of making women feel doubly unsure. At the same time, we are hearing more voices rising, with women becoming certain of who they are and how they look and finding the courage to stand against the system. I think I was around 17 or 18 when I realised that my voice matters, that I could use it and stand up for myself." Looking at how the

space for women has shifted in cinema and music over the years, Shruti acknowledges that the industry has made visible strides, even as the larger goal of empowerment continues to evolve. She shares, "Representation has definitely been changing, and opportunities have been evolving. At the same time, I think the industry can work further towards empowering women."



## Radhika struggles to detach from characters

**Mumbai:** Actor Radhika Madan has revealed that emotionally intense scenes can be difficult for her to leave behind once filming wraps, admitting that she still finds it challenging to completely detach from her characters.

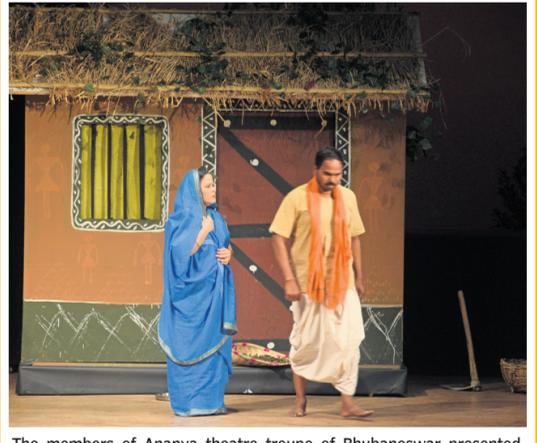
Talking to an entertainment portal, Madan said, "I am yet to learn how to switch on and switch off. It's sad and it's not something to be proud of because it really puts you in a different mind space and it's not healthy mentally." According to the actor, preparing for emotionally heavy sequences requires her to deeply immerse herself in the character's psychological state. For *Subedar*, she spent considerable time understanding the emotional journey of her character and discussing it with director Suresh Triveni. "We had a lot of discussions about the backstory, how she sees her father, how she processes her mother's death and why she reacts the way she does," Madan explained. She added that understanding these emotional layers helped shape the character's behaviour and body language on screen. In the film, Madan plays a character dealing with grief, anger and unresolved family tensions.



### THEATRE ROUNDUP



Bhubaneswar-based drama group Panchamaveda staged Odia play *Abasara* at Bhanjakala Mandap, Tuesday. Written by Hara Barik, the play was directed by Haren Sahoo. The troupe will present two more plays over the next two days during its four-day long state level festival.



The members of Ananya theatre troupe of Bhubaneswar presented Odia play *Sebati Ra Shaba* at Rabindra Mandap, Tuesday, on the second evening of its three-day drama festival.

## Midlife is not a crisis: Lisa

**Mumbai:** Actress and model Lisa Ray Tuesday opened up about the realities of midlife for women through a reflective post on social media that spoke about ageing, self-worth, and finding inner peace. The actress shared a post featuring a picture of herself dressed elegantly in a sari. She reflected on how growing older has helped her become more grounded and comfortable with her authentic self. Sharing the post, Lisa wrote, "What no one tells you about Midlife...When estrogen drops, so does people-pleasing. Self-

doubt gets quieter. Peace gets louder. Standards rise. Boundaries hold." She added, "Midlife: when the hormones exit and the nonsense goes with them. Less apologising. Less auditioning. More self-worth. More no. More peace. Midlife isn't a crisis. It's the main character energy. Act Two — and finally, it's ours. Call it what it is — the most important act of a woman's life." The actress has always spoken her heart out over sensitive issues and also on health, ageing, self-acceptance, without mincing words. On the professional front, Lisa has had a diverse acting career across Indian and international cinema. She gained prominence with films such as *Kasoor* and also in critically acclaimed projects including *Water*, directed by Deepa Mehta.

### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

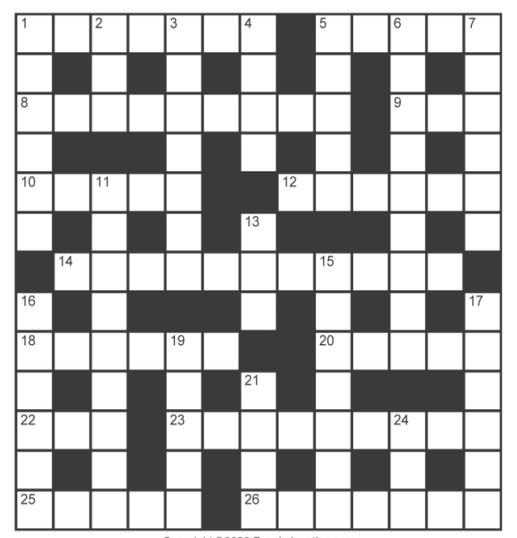


### BREVITY



### FUN POST

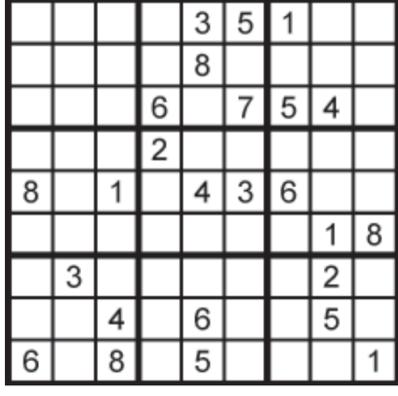
### CROSSWORD



- Across**  
1 Blunder (4,3)  
5 \_\_\_ New Guinea  
8 Dual personalities? (5,4)  
9 Silent assent  
10 Doctrine  
12 Shade of red  
14 Twilled fabric  
18 Right-leaning?  
20 Sophia of "Two Women"
- Down**  
22 Sellout sign  
23 Copy  
25 Cheapskate  
26 Trigonometric function  
7 Mystifies  
11 Lifts  
13 Wildebeest  
15 Gold or silver in bars  
16 Chinese dish (3,3)  
17 Mortgaged to the hilt (2,4)  
19 Surmise  
21 Aberdeen native  
24 Swelling reducer

### SUDOKU

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



### SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

## INDIGO CEO RESIGNS

**New Delhi:** IndiGo CEO Pieter Elbers put in his papers Tuesday, three months after the country's largest airline faced massive operational disruptions. The airline's Managing Director Rahul Bhatia would in the interim assume management until such time that the company announces the arrival of a new leader, which is expected in short order, a release said. "Rahul returns to assume management of the affairs of the airline to strengthen the company's culture, reinforce operational excellence and deepen its commitment to delivering exceptional service of care, reliability and professionalism to its customers," InterGlobe Aviation's Chairman Vikram Singh Mehta said. **P11**

## 3 killed in bike crash

**Bissamcuttack:** Three people were killed and another sustained critical injuries after two motorcycles collided head-on near Durgi Jagannath Temple under this police limits in Rayagada Tuesday morning. One person died on the spot, while two others succumbed to their injuries later during treatment. The deceased were Akash Mandangi of Damapali village under Ramanagada block and Birsingh Hikka of Burujuguda in Therubali. The identity of the third deceased has not yet been established. Another injured Bharat Sikka is undergoing treatment at the DHH and is reported to be in a critical condition.



**SUMMER WOES:** A woman carries water in pots that she collected from a well, in Kurenga panchayat of Bastar district, Tuesday. With the advancing summer months, water becomes a scarce resource across many arid parts of the country. **PTI PHOTO**

## Safe drinking water to every household by March 2027: Min

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, March 10:** The state government has set a target to ensure safe drinking water to every household by March 2027, Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water (PR&DW) Minister Rabi Narayan Naik told the Assembly Tuesday.

Replying to a question of Chikiti MLA Manoranjan Dyan Samantara during the Question Hour, Naik said the government is currently implementing 207 mega drinking water projects across the state. "Of these, 26 projects have already been completed, while another 28 are expected to be finished by the end of this month (March)," he said. According to the minister, drinking water has already been supplied to 68,47,752 families, covering about 77 per cent of households in the state as of March 5. Out of the total 44,531 villages in Odisha, drinking water projects have become functional in 11,777. "Our government has set a target to provide safe drinking water to every household by March 2027," he said.

The Assembly witnessed uproar when BJD members reacted strongly to the minister's claim that the BJP government has installed 26,000 tube wells within one year, compared to the number installed by the previous government over 24 years. The minister further alleged that progress in several drinking water projects had slowed due to faulty detailed project reports (DPRs) prepared during the previous government's tenure.

He also informed the House that a mega piped water supply project has been planned for 200 villages under 23 gram panchayats. Once completed, the project is expected to benefit around 1.5 lakh people.

Opposition Chief Whip Pramila Mallik raised concerns about increasing cases of cancer and kidney diseases in Palatapur panchayat of Jajpur district allegedly due to the consumption of contaminated tube well water. Responding to the allegation, the minister assured the Assembly that a team would visit the affected area, test the water quality, and submit a detailed report in that connection.

## LPG crisis hits eateries

PNN & AGENCIES

**New Delhi/Bhubaneswar, March 10:** Restaurants and hotels across India, including in Odisha, warned of disruptions and possible shutdowns Tuesday, as the West Asia conflict constricts supplies of cooking gas, prompting authorities to set up a panel to review industry requests.

The fuel shortage comes as the US-Israel war on Iran has halted ship traffic in the Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz, driving up energy prices and transport costs, hitting exports and output from Gulf producers, such as Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

"We have LPG stock for two days. We are working on contingencies," said Bert Mueller, founder of Mexican food chain California Burrito, with more than 100 stores spanning Bangalore and Chennai in south to Delhi and Noida in the north.

"We are conserving gas and installing induction stoves at certain stores," Mueller said. The oil ministry said it had set up a panel to review requests for LPG supply to restaurants and other industries, following appeals from industry bodies.

"The restaurant industry is predominantly dependent on commercial LPG for its operations," the National Restaurant Association of India (NRAI), which represents more than half a million restaurants, told



the food processing ministry. "Any disruption therein will lead to a catastrophic closure," the NRAI said in a letter, while another body, the Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India, also sought government help.

The Hotel & Restaurant Association of Odisha (HRAO) sought Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri's intervention for smooth provisions of LPG to hotels and restaurants.

The association in its memorandum to Puri said, "The sudden disruption in supply has severely affected food preparation and service in many establishments."

If the situation continues, it may lead to closure of hotel operations, cancellation of bookings, and severe inconvenience to tourists and visitors, said HRAO chairman JK Mohanty.

"About 50,000 persons are working in the hotels and restaurants in Odisha. So, they will also lose their jobs," he said.

"We were aware of the prevailing conflict in West Asia.

But, we never thought that we would face such a sudden crisis," Mohanty said while requesting the government to look into the issue.

In Bangalore, several restaurateurs said deliveries had dropped sharply, fanning that kitchens will come to a halt if the situation does not improve.

"One of our restaurants did not receive gas cylinders today," Manish V Shetty, who runs the Udipi Food Hub chain of restaurants in Bangalore said.

In Bhubaneswar, many eateries have reported a crunch in the supply of LPG cylinders, affecting their operations.

"The sudden disruption in the supply of cylinders has hit us hard. We are now buying LPG cylinders from open market for ₹1,830, up from ₹1,450. It will certainly increase our expenditure," said Bulu Samantray of Trupti Hotel in the Rasulgarh area of Bhubaneswar.

Earlier in the day, long queues were witnessed in front of LPG depots in Bhubaneswar. Ramesh Maharana, who was waiting for his turn at Lingaraj gas station in Khandagiri, said, "We are yet to get the cylinder that we had booked 20 days ago."

Meanwhile, amid reports of a shortage in LPG supply, Odisha Chief Secretary Anu Garg said people should not worry, stating that an adequate quantity of LPG is available in the state.

## Fresh attacks as Trump blows hot & cold

AGENCIES

**Dubai, March 10:** Hours after US President Donald Trump said that the war against Iran could end soon, while simultaneously leaving open the possibility of an escalation in fighting if global oil supplies are disrupted, Iran launched a fresh wave of attacks on Israel and Gulf countries Tuesday, saying that it cares a fig for Trump's 'empty threats'.

Oil prices briefly shot to their highest level since 2022 a day after Iran selected Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei to succeed his late father as Iran's supreme leader. However, following Trump's statement, prices fell and US stocks rose on hopes that the war with Iran may not last



Smoke rises after an Israeli strike on Beirut's southern suburbs. **REUTERS**

much longer. But hours later, Trump posted on social media: "If Iran does anything that stops the flow of Oil within the Strait of Hormuz, they will be hit by the United States of America TWENTY TIMES HARDER than they have been hit thus far."

Iran launched fresh attacks at Israel and Gulf Arab countries

as it kept up pressure on the Middle East in a war that has rattled world markets and shows no signs of a letup. Iranian security official Ali Larjani said, "Iran doesn't fear your empty threats. Even those bigger than you couldn't eliminate Iran. Be careful not to get eliminated yourself."

## CBSE exam paper QR code leads to Rick Astley's song

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 10:** A QR code printed on the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) Class XII mathematics question paper led to the music video of "Never Gonna Give You Up" by British singer Rick Astley. It became a classic internet prank known as "rickrolling" even as the board maintained that the security of the question paper remains uncompromised.

The mathematics board examination was held March 9. Soon after the exam got over, images of the question paper began circulating on social media

with students alleging that the QR code printed on it redirected them to the 1987 hit song's video on YouTube. QR codes are typically included on board exam papers for authentication and security verification.

"Many security features are provided on question papers. These include QR codes to verify the genuineness of the question paper in case of a suspected security breach. On March 9, an examination in Mathematics was conducted for Class XII. In a few question paper sets, it appears that when one of the given QR codes is scanned, it links to a YouTube video," CBSE Examination Controller



Sanyam Bhardwaj said.

"It appears that this has raised concerns about the veracity of the question papers amongst concerned students and parents. It is confirmed that question papers are genuine and the security of the question paper remains uncompromised," he added.

The board noted that while the concerns about the veracity of the question papers have been put to rest, the matter has been viewed seriously, and necessary steps are being taken by the board to ensure such issues are not repeated in future. The issue was also raised by Congress's Kerala unit, which shared a student's video on X, sharing the story.

"The QR code on the CBSE 12th Standard Mathematics question paper to a Rickroll video on YouTube. All institutions are under the control of Modi slaves, who are not qualified to run these institutions. This is purposeful destruction of India by OG CIA agent and his gang," the post said.

## Punch captures hearts while kin face culls

REUTERS

**Azumino (Japan), March 10:** Punch the baby snow monkey and his stuffed orangutan have captured hearts around the world, spawned memes and even won over the White House with their charm.

But in the wild, his fellow Japanese macaques often have a starkly different image: pests to be shooed away or even eliminated to prevent economic damage to farmers.

The agriculture ministry estimated that monkeys caused 770 million yen (\$4.86 million) worth of damage in 2024 - enough for Japan to sanction the capture and killing of thousands of primates every year. The treatment of the mon-



keys is an issue that divides those who suffer the consequence of stolen crops and others who advocate for a more humane solution. "It's important to put countermeasures in place to prevent damage," said Takayo Soma, a primatologist at Kyoto University. "But it

isn't very scientific to cull a certain number of monkeys without proper justification."

Killing a troop of monkeys only invites another to take its place, rendering the practice ineffective and "never-ending", said Shigeyuki Izumiyama, a professor at Shinshu University.

■ The agriculture ministry estimated that monkeys caused \$4.86 million worth of damage in 2024 - enough for Japan to sanction the capture and killing of thousands of primates every year

■ The treatment of the monkeys is an issue that divides those who suffer the consequence of stolen crops and others who advocate for a more humane solution

Instead, some advocate for non-lethal measures such as electric fences and "monkey dogs", or pet dogs that can be trained to chase the intruders away across an entire mountain.

Apple farmer Takumi Matsuda, one of few agriculturalists enamoured with snow monkeys, said humans need to recognise the role they play in causing the problem in the first place, such as by encroaching on the critters' natural habitat.

Matsuda has amassed a following on Instagram by sharing photos and videos he takes of the primates in the mountains of Nagano prefecture, in central Japan, but said he also understands farmers' concerns.

"It's not that farmers hate the monkeys; they are worried about the impact on their livelihood," he said. "I really hope Punch will be a starting point for a lot more people to go and see real Japanese macaques living in the wild."

## MAN KILLS WIFE, SHOTS YOUTH OVER 'AFFAIR'

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Phulbani, March 10:** A man allegedly killed his wife and shot at a youth over suspicion of an extramarital affair in Kandhamal district Tuesday, police said.

The incident occurred at Katapanga village under Gochhapada police station.

The deceased woman was identified as Nilima, 30, and the injured youth Narottam Behera of nearby Bagaramunda village. Police said there had been frequent quarrels between Biranchi and Nilima as the former was suspecting that his wife was into a relationship with Narottam.

Biranchi had gone to Bagaramunda at around 9am Tuesday. He saw Narottam there

and chased him and opened fire. The bullet struck Narottam near his thigh, leaving him injured. Biranchi then returned home and in a fit of rage, allegedly grabbed his wife by her head, forced her face to the ground and strangled her, killing her on the spot.

Informed, police reached the spot, detained the accused and seized the firearm used in the crime. Police said Biranchi has claimed he did not shoot his wife but assaulted her by holding her head and pressing her face down.

Narottam was initially treated locally and later shifted to MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur for further treatment.

A case (40/26), has been registered and probe is underway.

# 87.6% rise in conviction rate under new laws: CM HC stays ban on gutkha, pan masala

CM Majhi visits BNS exhibition; extends it by two days till March 12

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 10:** Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Tuesday highlighted significant progress following the implementation of the new criminal laws, stating that Odisha's conviction rate in cases where the accused were found guilty rose by 87.6 per cent by the end of 2025. He attributed the improvement to better coordination in investigation, prosecution, and judicial processes.

The Chief Minister said this while visiting the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) exhibition organised at the IDCO Exhibition Ground in Unit III here. During the visit, he also announced that the exhibition would be extended by two days and will now continue till March 12.

The exhibition, organised by Odisha Police, was inaugurated by Union Home Minister Amit Shah March 6. It showcases the implementation of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam (BSA), which came into effect July 1, 2024, replacing the colonial-era laws.

The reforms aim to modernise the criminal justice system with a focus on victim rights, time-bound investigations and greater use of scientific evidence.

During a tour of the exhibition, the Chief Minister praised the efforts to educate the public about India's revamped criminal justice system. He also commended a street play



**CM highlights 166% rise in Zero FIR registrations in 2025, improving access to justice**  
**He stresses NFSU, Central Forensic Science Lab to strengthen policing in Odisha**  
**Majhi cites MoUs with Indian Institute of Technology Bhubaneswar and Rashtriya Raksha University for advanced police training**

based on fictional incidents that illustrated how the new system functions. "The new laws have ended the colonial-era framework in India's crime control structure and ushered in reforms aligned with the vision of independent India," he said.

Majhi also appreciated the street play for spreading awareness and lauded the stalls set up by the Home Department, describing them as being of very high quality.

Speaking to the media, the Chief Minister said there was a 166 per cent increase in the registration of Zero FIRs in 2025, which has made access to justice easier for citizens. He noted that the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita reflects the commitment of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to ensuring safety and justice for people.

He added that the exhibition is an important initiative to raise public awareness about the effectiveness and impact of the new criminal laws.

He further emphasised efforts to strengthen policing in the state through the establishment of the National Forensic Science University and a Central Forensic Science Laboratory, for which foundation stones were laid recently.

He also highlighted MoUs signed with IIT-Bhubaneswar to train police personnel in the integration of modern technologies and with Rashtriya Raksha University to provide advanced skill training.

Senior police officers were present at the exhibition, while students from various schools and law colleges also took part in the event.

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, March 10:** The Orissa High Court has stayed the state government's notification banning the manufacture, sale, and preparation of tobacco, gutkha, pan masala, zarda, or any nicotine-containing food products.

Hearing a petition challenging the move, Justice Sanjeeb Kumar Panigrahi issued notice to the state government and directed that no financial or punitive action be taken against the petitioner until the next hearing. The matter is listed for further hearing April 10.

The Health and Family Welfare department, through Notification No. 2065 dated January 21, had banned the manufacture, preparation, packaging,

storage, transport, trade, and sale of gutkha, pan masala, zarda, khaini, and all food products containing tobacco or nicotine in the state. The prohibition was issued under Section 2.3.4 of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, and the Food Safety and Standards (Prohibition and Restrictions on Sales) Regulations, 2011.

The department stated that the move was taken following Supreme Court directions and guidelines issued by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).

Challenging the notification, Gopal Aromatic Private Limited approached the High Court, arguing that the state government's order violated Articles 14 and 19(1) of the



Constitution. The petitioner contended that the notification was issued illegally, ignoring the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act, 2003, the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, and the Food Safety and Standards Regulations, 2011.

The petitioner further submitted that chewing tobacco

cannot be classified as a food product. While the law prohibits adding nicotine to food items, tobacco itself naturally contains nicotine and is not a food ingredient. Therefore, there must be a clear distinction between tobacco products and food products, the petitioner argued.

It also contended that classifying chewing tobacco as a food item under the FSSAI framework while prohibiting nicotine in food is contradictory, as the two provisions are mutually inconsistent.

Senior advocates CS Vaidyanathan and Vivek Kohli, along with advocates Manoj Gupta and Yeshi Richeh, appeared for the petitioner, while ASC Gayatri Patra represented the state government.

## OUAT holds 41st Convocation

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 10:** Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT) organised its 41st Convocation here at Krushi Shiksha Sadan Tuesday under the chairmanship of Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati.

Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE) Secretary and Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) DG Mangi Lal Jat attended the ceremony as chief guest and delivered the convocation address.

Addressing the gathering, Jat highlighted the crucial role of agriculture in supporting multiple sectors such as livestock, fisheries, horticulture and forest resources, while also helping maintain climate balance. Describing



climate change as a major global challenge, he stressed the need to strengthen support for farmers to tackle emerging environmental issues. He also emphasised the importance of ensuring availability of healthy and nutritious food to build a healthier society. Jat noted that Artificial Intelligence can play a significant role in agriculture by providing valuable data and insights, but universities must ensure that new knowledge and technologies are effectively transferred to farmers.

Highlighting gender participation in agricultural educa-

tion, he said 53 per cent of the graduates receiving degrees this year are women, reflecting the growing interest and participation of women in the agricultural sector.

Department of Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment Commissioner-cum-Secretary Sachin Ramchandra Jadhav attended the programme as guest of honour and called for strengthening relationship between agricultural scientists and farmers, by which initiatives such as Viksit Krishi-Viksit Bharat can deepen the connection. He also underlined the importance of promoting sustainable agriculture and increasing the use of renewable energy in farming. Earlier, OUAT VC Pravat Kumar Roul advised the graduating students to remain committed to development of agricultural sector.

## Odisha pitches 'University Townships' at nat'l webinar



**Bhubaneswar:** Odisha participated in a national Post-Budget Webinar organised by the Ministry of Education, Government of India, where the state strongly advocated the development of "University Townships" aligned with emerging economic and industrial zones. Representing the state, Housing and Urban Development department Additional Chief Secretary Usha Padhee highlighted Odisha's vision of creating integrated university townships that combine higher education, research, innovation and urban development. The webinar followed the Union Budget 2026-27 announcement proposing the establishment of five specialised university townships along major industrial and logistics corridors across the country.

## LoP demands immediate rescue of Odias in Middle East amid war

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, March 10:** Leader of Opposition (LoP) and Biju Janata Dal (BJD) president Naveen Patnaik Tuesday targeted the state government, accusing it of showing no urgency in rescuing Odia people stranded in West Asian countries amid the ongoing US-Israel-Iran war.

Expressing concern over the stranded Odia people, Naveen Patnaik wrote on his X handle that he could feel the fear and anxiety of Odias - from labourers to students, professionals, tourists, and travellers - trapped in the horrific war in the Middle East, as well as of their families and loved ones in Odisha anxiously awaiting their return. Air routes are closed, flights are being cancelled, and borders are shut as well. In such untimely circumstances, it is the duty of Odisha government to bring back all Odias safely," he said.

"However, the government's failure to show any such urgency, to take swift steps, is only making their plight even more difficult. Why is the government remaining indifferent?" questioned Patnaik.

Targeting the state government, the BJD president further questioned, "Where is that pompous rhetoric about 'Odia Asmita' now, when it cannot stand firmly with the people of Odisha in this difficult time?"



The Odisha government, instead of engaging in tall talk, should immediately take firm steps to bring back all Odias from the war zone safely. Swift and timely action will provide reassurance to every Odia and save many lives."

The ex-CM once again requested state and Central government to take immediate steps to see that the stranded Odias return to their homes. Patnaik had earlier also sought the intervention of External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, requesting him to make urgent arrangements for the rescue of the stranded Odias from the conflict zone. The state government has constituted a working group in coordination with Odisha Parishad Directorate, Home department, the State Labour Directorate, and the office of Protector of Emigrants (POE), Ministry of External Affairs, to keep a close watch on the safety and the condition of Odia migrant workers, professionals, tourists present in the Gulf countries.

## CM THANKS CENTRE FOR AMRIT BHARAT TRAINS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, March 10:** Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Tuesday thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw after the Centre approved Amrit Bharat trains passing through Odisha. He said the newly approved train between Podanur in Tamil Nadu and Dhanbad in Jharkhand will improve connectivity for passengers in the state.

The East Coast Railway (ECoR) also stated that another Amrit Bharat Express between Kamakhya in Assam and Charlapalli in Andhra Pradesh will benefit residents of Odisha.

"The newly approved Amrit Bharat train service between Podanur (Coimbatore) and Dhanbad will boost connectivity in Odisha," Majhi said in an X post.

The chief minister said the train's stoppages at Rayagada, Muniguda, Kesinga, Titlagarh, Bolangir, Bargarh Road, Sambalpur, Jharsuguda and Rourkela in Odisha will benefit seven districts across southern and western parts, including the impoverished KBK (Kalahandi-Bolangir-Koraput) region.

The new train will also provide a direct rail link from



**TRAIN SERVICE BETWEEN PODANUR AND DHANBAD VIA NINE ODISHA STATIONS TO BOOST CONNECTIVITY**  
**KAMAKHYA-CHARLAPALLI EXPRESS TO ALSO BENEFIT PASSENGERS FROM ODISHA**

Odisha to key cities in Tamil Nadu, such as Coimbatore, Tiruppur and Salem, and important industrial centres in Jharkhand, including Ranchi, Bokaro and Dhanbad, strengthening economic and social linkages, he said.

Majhi said this initiative reflects the central government's continued commitment to strengthening railway infrastructure and accelerating development in Odisha, bringing greater convenience

and new opportunities for the people.

Earlier, in a letter to Majhi, Vaishnaw said, "Kindly refer to our discussion regarding the introduction of a new train service connecting various parts of Odisha with Tamil Nadu and Jharkhand for public convenience. You would be pleased to know that the introduction of a new Amrit Bharat train service between Podanur (Coimbatore) and Dhanbad via Rayagada, Muniguda, Kesinga, Titlagarh, Bolangir, Sambalpur, Jharsuguda and Rourkela has been approved."

Meanwhile, ECoR, in a statement, said the Kamakhya-Charlapalli Amrit Bharat Express will pass through several districts in Odisha and Andhra Pradesh, with stoppages in Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Cuttack, Khurda, Ganjam, all in Odisha, and Srikakulam and Visakhapatnam, both in the southern state.

The train will benefit passengers from Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and adjoining regions by offering improved connectivity to both Northeast and South India.

The train will leave from Kamakhya every Sunday and from Charlapalli every Wednesday.

## OHRC orders compensation for villagers over police excesses

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 10:** The Odisha Human Rights Commission (OHRC) has directed the state government to pay compensation to villagers who were allegedly subjected to police excesses and wrongful arrest in Puri in 2020.

The incident took place in Redhua village under Gop police station in Puri, where a minor dispute reportedly led to police action. The then Inspector-in-Charge (IIC) Sudhir Sahu and Nimapada SDPO P K Dalai allegedly conducted mass arrests and detained several villagers, including women, elderly persons and newly married women. In the operation, 32 villagers were arrested and sent to jail.

The matter was later taken up by OHRC following a petition and sustained efforts by human rights activist Pradip-

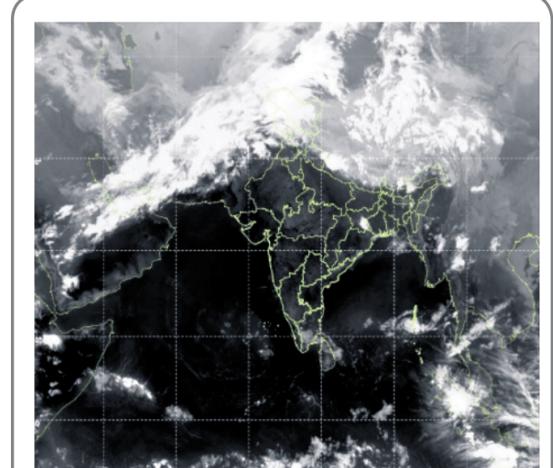
ta Nayak. After nearly five years of hearings and examination of witnesses, evidence and inquiry reports, the commission delivered its verdict January 30, 2026.

In its order, the commission observed that the human rights of innocent villagers had been violated. It directed Home department and Puri SP to compensate those who were wrongfully implicated.

As per the directive, 23 innocent persons whose names were not mentioned in the FIR but who were arrested and jailed will receive ₹50,000 each as compensation, amounting to a total of ₹11,50,000.

The commission has instructed the authorities to disburse the compensation to the affected Dalit villagers, women and elderly persons within two months of receiving the order.

| MARKET WATCH |               |         |                   |             |                    |
|--------------|---------------|---------|-------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| CURRENCY     |               | BOURSES |                   | COMMODITIES |                    |
| INDEX        | VARIATION     | INDEX   | VARIATION         | INDEX       | VARIATION          |
| DOLLAR       | 91.99 ↓ 0.46  | SENSEX  | 78205.98 ▲ 639.98 | GOLD        | ₹163,372 ▲ ₹3007   |
| EURO         | 107.20 ▲ 0.17 | NIFTY   | 24261.60 ▲ 233.55 | SILVER      | ₹278,270 ▲ ₹11,110 |



| WEATHER  |       |       |  |
|----------|-------|-------|--|
|          | BBSR  | CTC   | FORECAST                               |
| Max Temp | 33.3° | 32.0° | Light to Moderate rain or thunderstorm |
| Min Temp | 23.6° | 21.8° |  |
| Humidity | 84%   | 89%   |  |
| Rainfall | Nil   | Nil   |  |

## CLASSIFIED LOST

We are Adhikari Behera, Akshay Behera, C/o- Bauribandhu Behera, Village-Bilakankuda, PS-Purisadar. Our recent RoR Khata No-692/538's previous RoR Khata No-219, Plot-1212, Mouza-Kankuda, Tahsil-Brahmagiri, which was in the name of Kanta Bewa, W/o- Nila Behera is lost. If any person get this RoR please contact below No.

Biswajit Pattnaik-9438080023

## Young Odisha innovators shine in Tokyo

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 10:** In a significant milestone for Odisha's higher education sector, a group of students from the state recently showcased an innovative fintech project at the Global Financial Forum in Tokyo, Japan.

The project was developed under Certification Programme in Fintech and Insurtech (CFI), launched by Odisha government, in collaboration with National University of Singapore - Asian Institute of Digital Finance (NUS-AIDF) and Global Finance and Technology Network (GFTN) to build innovative, resilient and inclusive financial ecosystems.

The certification programme aims to equip students with ad-



vanced knowledge and practical skills in financial technology and insurance technology, aligned with global digital finance trends.

As part of the programme, around 195 students participated in the capstone project, where they worked on innovative solutions addressing real-world financial challenges. Based on their performance, a group of seven students were selected to participate in the

Global Financial Forum in Tokyo, where they presented their project and engaged with global experts from the fintech and financial services sectors.

The participating students were B Simran - Geology student from Ravenshaw University (RU), Rajeshwari Behera, Puspajanli Behera, Soumya Ranjan Baithalu and Manisha Lenka - Commerce students from RU, Sibansay Nayak - Eco-

nomics student from Utkal University, and Anirbarna Kar - Physics student from Salepur Autonomous College.

Accompanied by Lipsa Mishra and Sharat Kumar Majhi from Higher Education department, the team successfully presented their project titled 'TranchiFy - A Trust-Based Working Capital Platform for Next-Generation SMEs'.

The project proposes a technology-driven platform aimed at simplifying access to working capital and streamlining the loan process for Small and Medium Enterprises (S&ME) through a trust-based digital financial framework. The solution seeks to address one of the key challenges faced by S&MEs by enabling faster and more transparent access to credit.

# Encroached canal hits Gajapati farmers hard

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Paralakhemundi, March 10:** Encroachment on a minor irrigation canal connecting Ramsagar and Sitasagar in Gajapati district has disrupted water supply to thousands of acres of farmland, leaving farmers struggling and forcing them to migrate for work.

Farmers allege that the canal, built during the rule of the Gajapati royal family, is now under the control of encroachers, preventing water from reaching agricultural fields. As a result, crops are not yielding as expected, causing heavy losses to cultivators.

Historically, the Paralakhemundi royal family had constructed seven reservoirs (sagars) in the region to promote agriculture and irrigation. A network of 66 canals was also built to connect these reservoirs. After delimitation and land settlement, five such reservoirs remain in the district.

Among them, the canal linking Ramsagar and Sitasagar once played a crucial role in regulating water levels and supplying irrigation water. Stretching about 4.5 km, it used to support hundreds of farmers. However, rapid urban



expansion in Paralakhemundi has led to its encroachment in several areas, with houses constructed over parts of the channel.

In 2018, the administration demolished 14 structures to remove encroachments. However, several illegal constructions, particularly in areas under Kerandi panchayat near the upper end of the canal, were reportedly left untouched, leaving the canal still blocked. Farmers say they have repeatedly raised the issue with officials and political leaders over the years but have received little response. Though the irrigation department undertakes repair of several canals every year before the Rabi season, the Ramsagar-Sitasagar canal has not been restored.

At present, the canal is filled with weeds and garbage, and sewage from the town is being discharged into it. Local farmer leader Surya Narayan Pattnaik said the matter had been raised several times with authorities but no effective action had been taken. When contacted, Assistant Engineer of the minor irrigation department Ashish Mallik said restoration work was not possible as houses had been constructed over the canal. "The matter has been brought to the notice of the administration," he said.

Meanwhile, farmers, hit by repeated crop losses due to lack of irrigation, are reportedly selling their land and migrating outside the district for work. Local residents have demanded urgent steps from the administration to clear encroachments and restore the canal in the interest of farmers.

## TWO SIBLINGS DROWN IN POND

**Keonjhar:** Two minor siblings were drowned in a pond during bath near Raisuan Bazaar under Sadar police limits in Keonjhar district Monday. The deceased were identified as Khushhal Ansari (12), and Aman Ansari (9), both sons of Chandini Begum and Nuruddin Ansari in Raisuan. According to reports, Nuruddin of Jamtara in Jharkhand had married Chandini of the Raisuan Muslim settlement and was living in a rented house there for livelihood. The couple had two sons Khushhal Ansari (12), and Aman Ansari (9). The incident occurred after Nuruddin left home for work Monday morning. The two brothers went to the nearby Tera pond around 11 a.m. to take bath. During the bath, both boys reportedly drowned in the water. Following a frantic search for the siblings, some youths bathing there noticed a child floating in the water and rescued him. Soon after, they spotted another child floating some distance away and pulled him out as well. On being informed, Sadar police reached the spot and took the bodies to the district headquarters hospital, where doctors pronounced them dead. Sub-Inspector Prabhodh Chandra Mohanty seized the bodies and sent them for post-mortem. Police registered two unnatural death cases (Nos. 15/26 and 16/26) in this connection. Locals alleged that the pond had been dug very deep to extract soil during the expansion of National Highway 215, causing water to accumulate and making it dangerous for public use, leading to such accidents.

## Elephant dies after explosive bait injury

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kamakshyanagar, March 10:** A female elephant that had been under treatment for critical injuries after consuming an explosive bait, died in a forest under the Kamakshyanagar West forest range in Dhenkanal district, officials said Tuesday.

The carcass was found in the Sunajhari reserve forest near Basuataila under the Jiral forest section, close to Pipala village. The elephant, estimated to be eight to nine years old, had reportedly eaten an explosive disguised as a bait, set by poachers about 10 days ago in the Analabereni forest section, leaving it with severe injuries to its mouth.

Forest officials monitored the elephant and tranquilized it two days after the incident to provide treatment. But the locals alleged the animal did not receive adequate medical care and was later driven toward the Bhuban forest range despite its critical condition. Neither the officials of Kamakshyanagar nor Bhuban forest ranges provided it with any proper treatment,



they alleged. As a result, the health condition of the animal deteriorated as it wandered in the Jiral forest under Bhuban forest range area for several days before succumbing to its injuries Tuesday. The forest department conducted a post-mortem and buried the carcass in the nearby forest.

Residents alleged that while the government is spending crores for the protection of the elephants, the animal died due to negligence of forest officials. They have demanded action against officials of the Kamakshyanagar West and Bhuban forest ranges, alleging negligence in the treatment of the injured elephant.

The ailing elephant was tranquilized by a team of experts from Nandankanan Zoological Park and undergoing treatment after they were informed about its illness, Kamakshyanagar West Range Officer Kailash Chandra Sahu said.

Bhuban Range Officer Rakesh Kumar Dalei said the elephant was suffering from Herpes virus infection and was undergoing treatment.

He added that several rumors were circulating regarding the elephant's death. Samples have been collected and sent for laboratory examination to determine the exact cause of death. The actual facts will be known after the report is received, he added.

## Biker killed in road accident

**Dhenkikote:** A 45-year-old man died after his motorcycle skidded off the road and fell into a ditch near Muktapur Mundaasahi under the Dhenkikote police beat house area in Keonjhar district. The deceased was identified as Rajkishore Patra of Mandamala village in Jajpur district. He had come to his in-laws' house at Kashibeda village three days ago. Rajkishore went to Muktapur Mundaasahi Monday evening, to attend the 'Maga Parab' festival. While returning alone at night, he reportedly lost control of his motorcycle on a curved stretch of road near the village and fell into a roadside ditch. He reportedly lied there throughout the night and died at the spot. Villagers spotted him Tuesday morning and informed the police. Sub-Inspector Prashant Behera seized the body and sent it for post-mortem examination. A case (167/26) has been registered, police said.

## Man, sister-in-law run over by train; suicide suspected



bodies were sent to Balasore for post-mortem examination. Police suspect the incident may be linked to a relationship issue or a family dispute. However, the exact reason behind the suspected suicide is yet to be established. Family members are being questioned and further investigation is underway.

**Jaleswar:** A man and his sister-in-law were killed after being run over by a passenger train in a suspected suicide near Jaleswar railway station in Balasore district Monday evening, police said Tuesday. The deceased were identified as Vijay Sahu (35), of Rajpur village under Jaleswar police limits, and Bandita Sahu (18), his sister-in-law from the Baliapal police station area. According to sources, Vijay had brought Bandita from Baliapal to his native village earlier in the day. Later in the evening, the duo reportedly left the house following a dispute or mental distress. At around 7pm, they were run over by a passenger train heading towards Balasore near the southern cabin of the railway station. Both died on the spot. On being informed, railway police rushed to the spot and recovered the bodies. The

## Crackdown on drug trade: Police raze den in Bargarh



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bargarh, March 10:** Police in Bargarh have launched a crackdown on illegal drug trade following a spate of violent crimes in the town. Acting on repeated complaints that the rampant narcotics trade was fuelling incidents of stabbing, robbery and murder, the police administration Tuesday identified several suspected drug dens and began demolishing them with bulldozers.

As part of the drive, an alleged drug den located along the Dora Bandh road near Uma Talkies in the town was razed.

Residents said criminal activities have been on the rise in recent days, with knives and other sharp weapons frequently being used in assaults. The brutal killing of two persons in a sword attack at Hatapada, in front of the Bargarh Town

police station, a few days ago is still fresh in public memory.

In another incident Monday night around 8pm, a man was stabbed to death near the government bus stand, a short distance from the cyber police station.

Earlier, a truck driver was critically injured after being stabbed at Ghulipali Chhak on the outskirts of the town Saturday. Locals have also alleged that drug-addicted youths are intimidating people and carrying out robberies on roads and in vegetable markets, leading to growing fear among residents. The surge in crime has eroded public confidence in the police.

With the police now initiating action against suspected drug hubs, residents are keenly watching whether the crackdown will continue and help bring the crime situation in the town under control.

# Chaitra Jatra begins at Maa Tara Tarini Shrine

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Purushottampur, March 10:** The annual Chaitra Mangalabara Jatra of Maa Tara Tarini, the presiding deity of Ganjam district, began Tuesday with religious fervour at the hilltop shrine.

The temple premises witnessed a huge gathering of devotees from midnight, with the air resonating with chants, women's ululation and Vedic hymns recited by priests. The entire Ratnagiri hill reverberated with spiritual fervour as rituals began early in the morning. The temple doors were



opened at about 1.30am, following which traditional rituals such as Mangala Alati, Singara, Abakash and Panchasutra Abhishek were performed as per temple customs.

The twin goddesses, Maa Tara and Maa Tarini, were adorned

in Mahakali attire and offered darshan to devotees. The 'Sahana Mela' for public darshan began at about 4.30am.

Ganjam Collector V. Keerthi Vasana, along with his wife, visited the shrine at around 4am and offered prayers. The collector also carried the sacred Panchamruta pot and circumambulated the temple, praying for the well-being of the district's residents.

The first Tuesday of the Chaitra month witnessed a large influx of devotees. Many pilgrims from distant places visited the shrine, while several parents performed the traditional head

tonsure ceremony of their children to seek the goddess' blessings.

Devotees reached the hilltop temple through special buses, ropeway facilities and the flight of steps.

The administration made elaborate arrangements for devotees, including the opening of the 'Ananda Bazaar' for distribution of prasad and setting up four centres for head tonsuring.

Sub-collector Shubhashish Baral, temple executive officer and tehsildar Binod Kumar Behera, BDO Sarat Kumar Patra and other officials supervised the arrangements.

## MAHANADI WATER DISPUTE

### Tribunal members inspect barrages in Chhattisgarh



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Lakhanpur, March 10:** Members of the Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal Tuesday inspected the Kelo dam and Kalma barrage in Chhattisgarh's Raigarh district as part of field visits ahead of the final decision in the long-running water-sharing dispute between Odisha and Chhattisgarh.

Tribunal chairperson Justice Bela M Trivedi, along with members Justice Ravi Ranjan and Justice Indermeet Kaur Kochhar, visited the sites and reviewed their current status. Officials from the governments of Odisha and Chhattisgarh accompanied the team.

After arriving at the Jindal airstrip, the tribunal members began inspections of several dams and barrages in Raigarh and Sakti districts.

The dispute centres on the construction of barrages and dams across the Mahanadi river and its distributaries in Chhattisgarh. The Odisha government has alleged that these projects are reducing water flow into the Hirakud reservoir, particularly during the non-monsoon season, affecting agriculture, drinking water supply and industrial needs in the state.

**OFFICE OF THE DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICER SAMBALPUR FOREST DIVISION**  
Near Jail Chowk, Sambalpur-768001  
E-mail- dfo.sambalpur@odisha.gov.in

**SHORT TENDER NOTICE**  
Tender No.90, Dated: 09.03.2026

No.8001/136/2526: Divisional Forest Officer, Sambalpur Forest Division on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites sealed tenders from interested event management agencies having adequate eligibility with valid GSTN and PAN Registration No. to organise the "Regional Kalinga Herbal Fair 2025-26" for Sambalpur Forest Division. The tender papers with detailed terms and conditions documents can be downloaded from website <https://www.odishaforest.in/https://sambalpur.odisha.gov.in/smpbodisha.in> from 10.00 Hours of 10.03.2026 to 16.00 Hours of 24.03.2026. The non-refundable cost of tender paper of Rs.2,000/- (Two thousand) only to be deposited through Demand Draft in favour of Divisional Forest Officer, Sambalpur Forest Division payable at Sambalpur. The Tender Paper can be submitted at the below mentioned address on or before 24.03.2026 till 04.00 pm by Speed Post/ Registered Post/ by hand only. The tender will be opened in the office of the undersigned on 25.03.2026 at 04.00 PM. The undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason thereof.

Sd./- Divisional Forest Officer  
Sambalpur Forest Division  
OIPR-8001/8104/1/25-26/0003

**ODISHA HYDRO POWER CORPORATION LTD.**  
(A Gold Rated State PSU)  
O/O SR. GENERAL MANAGER, RENGALI HYDRO ELECTRIC PROJECT, RENGALI,  
P.O.: RENGALI DAM SITE, DIST: ANGUL (ODISHA) INDIA, PIN: 759105, TEL: 06760-266031,  
Email: sgme500@gmail.com, CIN: U40101OR1995SG003963  
No. OHP: RHEP/C&P/PUR-III/304/1682/Date: 07.03.2026

**NOTICE INVITING TENDER No. RHEP-61/2025-26**

No.4001/60/2526: Sealed Tenders are invited in two part i.e. (i) Techno Commercial bid & (ii) Price bid in separate sealed envelopes from the reputed manufacturers/ authorized dealers / channel partners for the work as mentioned below.

| Description of Materials / Services  | Cost of tender paper (Non-refundable) in Rs. | EMD           | Period of Availability of tender at OHP website (Sale) | Last date & time of receipt of tender | Date & Time of opening of Techno Commercial Bid |
|--|--|---------------|--|---------------------------------------|---|
| Overhauling, Testing of 63 MVA, 11/235 KV Generator Transformer Bearing Sl.No. 130026(1) & Replacement of Existing Generator Transformer of #1 with Overhauled Generator Transformer of Rengali Power House, Rengali | Rs.7,080/- (Inclusive of GST @18%)           | Rs. 39,000.00 | From dt.11.03.2026 to Dt.25.03.2026 (Upto 01.00 PM)    | Upto 01.30 PM dt.25.03.2026           | At 04.30 PM Dt.25.03.2026                       |

For details of the tender documents, terms and conditions please visit our website [www.ohpcltd.com](http://www.ohpcltd.com)  
OIPR-4001/4022/1/25-26/0008 Sd./- C&P Head, RHEP, Rengali

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA** Mail ID: sepwdsbp@rediffmail.com  
**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER**  
**NORTHERN (R&B) CIRCLE, SAMBALPUR**  
**EOI IDENTIFICATION No. CCENG (R AND B)/ 02/2025-26**  
No.1175, Dtd.07.03.2026

No.34001/176/2526: 1. The Chief Construction Engineer, Northern (R&B) Circle, Sambalpur on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites Expression of Interest (EOI) for Empanelment of agencies/ vendors for Venue Set-up and other related allied facilities for VVIP/MIP programs under the jurisdiction of Chief Construction Engineer, i.e. revenue districts of Sambalpur/Jharsuguda/Bargarh/Deogarh as detailed in the table below.

| Sl. No. | Name of the Work   | Non-Refundable Processing Fee (Online Submission) | Eligibility Criteria | Duration of EOI  |
|---------|--|---|----------------------|------------------|
| 1       | 2  | 3   | 4                    | 5                |
| 01      | Empanelment of agency/ vendor for Venue Set-up and other related allied facilities for VVIP/MIP programs under the jurisdiction of Chief Construction Engineer, Northern (R&B) Circle, Sambalpur | Rs.10,000/-                                       | As per EOI           | 03 (Three) Years |

2. No. of Works= (01 No.) (EOI Work), 3. Processing Fee: Rs.10,000/-, 4. Date & Time of available in website & receipt of application from 20.03.2026 to 17.00 Hours of 06.04.2026, 5. Date of Opening of EOI Proposal 07.04.2026 at 11.30 Hours, 6. The Agency/Vendor has to participate in ONLINE mode only. Further details can be seen from the website [www.tendersodisha.gov.in](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in). 7. Any corrigendum/Addendum will be displayed in the website [www.tendersodisha.gov.in](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in).  
OIPR-34001/34035/1/25-26/0027 Sd./- Chief Construction Engineer, Northern (R&B) Circle, Sambalpur

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, RWS&S DIVISION, MALKANGIRI**  
E-mail : eevvss\_mail@nic.in, eevvssmkg@gmail.com

**INVITATION FOR BIDS**  
**NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING**  
Bid Identification No. : RWSS\_MKG\_ONLINE\_09/2025-26 Dated : 07.03.2026

No.25001/318/2526 : The Superintending Engineer, RWS&S Division, Malkangiri on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites bids from bidders having valid HT Electrical Contractor license issued by Electrical Licensing Board of Odisha (ELBO) for the works detailed in the table below to be eventually drawn up in P-1 contract.

1. Name of the Work : Construction of External Electrification (As detailed in TCN), 2. No. of Works : 06 Nos., 3. Estimated Cost : ₹ 5.32 Lakhs to ₹ 10.15 Lakhs, 4. Tender Paper Cost: Rs. 4000/- to Rs. 6000/- each, 5. Class of Contractor : HT Electrical Contractor, 6. Period of Completion : 02 (Two) calendar months, 7. Critical dates :

| Procurement Officer                                 | Bid Identification No.        | Availability of Tender Online for Bidding                      | Last Date of Seeking tender Clarification | Date of opening the Bid   |
|---|-------------------------------|--|---|---------------------------|
| Superintending Engineer, RWS&S Division, Malkangiri | RWSS_MKG_ONLINE_09 of 2025-26 | From 13.03.2026 at 09.00 Hours to 23.03.2026 up to 17.00 Hours | 20.03.2026                                | 24.03.2026 At 11.00 Hours |

Further details can be seen in the bidding documents, which is available in the e-procurement portal <https://www.tendersodisha.gov.in>  
Subsequent corrigendum if required shall be appeared in the website.  
Authority reserves the right to reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason thereof.  
OIPR-25001/25044/1/25-26/0028 Sd./- Superintending Engineer RWS&S Division, Malkangiri

**EAST COAST RAILWAY**  
Tender No. 64-KUR-TRD-02-2025-26  
EMD : ₹ 1,55,900/-, Period of Completion : 180 Days.  
Bidding Start Date : 11.03.2026  
Tender Closing Date and Time : At 1300 Hrs. of 25.03.2026.

Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Complete information including e-tender documents and corrigendum is available in website [www.irps.gov.in](http://www.irps.gov.in)  
Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (TRD), PR-1209/Q/25-26 Khurda Road

**EAST COAST RAILWAY**  
Auction Catalogue No. SDCM-KUR-NFR-SA  
(1) Lot No./Category: ADVT-KUR-MLT-OH-228-26-1 (Advertising-Out of Home) DESCRIPTION : SOLE ADVERTISEMENT RIGHTS CONTRACT OVER MALATIPATPUR-BALUGAON SECTION. (STATION WISE DETAILS-ASSET LOCATION, AREA, NUMBER OF MEDIA, ETC. ATTACHED)  
(2) Lot No./Category: ADVT-KUR-ANGL-OH-229-26-1 (Advertising-Out of Home) DESCRIPTION : SOLE ADVERTISEMENT RIGHTS CONTRACT AT ANGUL, DHENKANAL, TALCHER, MERAMANDALI, TALCHER ROAD, PARADEEP STATIONS. (STATION WISE DETAILS-ASSET LOCATION, AREA, NUMBER OF MEDIA, ETC. ATTACHED)  
(3) Lot No./Category: ADVT-KUR-CLKA-OH-231-26-1 (Advertising-Out of Home) DESCRIPTION : SOLE ADVERTISEMENT RIGHTS CONTRACT OVER CHILIKA-PALASA SECTION. (STATION WISE DETAILS-ASSET LOCATION, AREA, NUMBER OF MEDIA, ETC. ATTACHED)  
(4) Lot No./Category: ADVT-KUR-LGTR-OH-230-26-1 (Advertising-Out of Home) DESCRIPTION : SOLE ADVERTISEMENT RIGHTS CONTRACT OVER LINGARAJ TEMPLE ROAD-JENAPUR SECTION. (STATION WISE DETAILS-ASSET LOCATION, AREA, NUMBER OF MEDIA, ETC. ATTACHED)  
Lot Start Date & Time : 20.03.2026 at 1100hrs. (for all SL Nos.).  
Lot End Date & Time : 20.03.2026 at 1130 hrs (for SL No. 1), 1140 hrs (for SL No. 2), 1150 hrs (for SL No. 3), 1200 hrs (for SL No. 4).  
Complete details available at website: [www.irps.gov.in](http://www.irps.gov.in)  
Sr. Divl. Commercial Manager / PR-1208/Q/25-26 Khurda Road

FOCUS **GEOPOLITICS**

# A DEAL WITH IRAN



**The US may succeed in weakening Iran militarily while destroying the one thing needed to end the conflict: an Iranian state capable of making – and enforcing – a deal**

A senior US State Department official recently summarized the Trump administration's approach to regime change in three words: "decapitate and delegate." Remove an intransigent leader, weaken the regime through airstrikes, sanctions, and proxies, then compel a successor to strike a transactional bargain – eliminating a geopolitical irritant while opening the door to diplomatic normalization, oil access, and, in the case of Iran, nuclear concessions.

The strategy appears straightforward. But it contains a fatal contradiction: the same military pressure meant to force a country into a deal risks destroying the political authority required to sign one.

President Donald Trump has repeatedly suggested that what happened in Venezuela earlier this year would be the "perfect scenario" for Iran. But the Venezuela model has an essential precondition. It requires a successor government capable of acting on the state's behalf. Someone must possess the institutional authority and domestic legitimacy to bear the political cost of accommodation with Washington – and, harder still, to compel compliance from those who regard any accommodation as betrayal.

Ten days into Operation Epic Fury, that precondition is rapidly eroding. It is being undermined not only by the military campaign itself but also by the strategic incentives facing the other actors in the conflict.

America's closest regional ally, Israel, and its principal adversary, Iran, are pursuing different objectives. Yet both are converging on the same outcome: the fragmentation of Iranian state authority. That convergence is not incidental. It is structural, producing an Iran that is simultaneously more dangerous and less capable of striking a deal. The reason is simple: negotiating peace requires far more political organization than causing disruption. To sign an agreement, reopen oil markets, and normalize relations, Iran must act as a unified sovereign. But to disrupt global energy flows, it needs only dispersed operational capacity.

Military pressure pushes Iran toward dispersal of au-

thority. That may reduce its capacity to conduct large, coordinated operations that inflict concentrated harm. But fragmented authority may produce something more insidious: a chronic threat with no return address. The same fragmentation that eliminates the need for approval to strike, say, Gulf infrastructure permits no authority to halt such strikes.

Israel's strategic incentives reinforce this dynamic. For the Israelis, an Iran stripped of unified command – unable to coordinate major offensive operations across its military and proxy networks – already satisfies its primary security requirement. A fragmented adversary is easier to contain than a cohesive one. Preserving the institutional coherence necessary for diplomacy is therefore not Israel's priority. The Islamic Republic's own survival strategy pushes in the same direction. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps has long prepared for leadership decapitation through what it calls "mosaic defense," dispersing command authority to provincial units capable of operating autonomously if central leadership is destroyed. But the structure that makes the regime hard to eliminate militarily also makes it incapable of negotiating or surrendering politically.

Iran's regime anticipated that the US' appetite for regional war would be limited. A pre-planned escalation concept – sometimes described as "Operation Madman" – envisioned widening the conflict by targeting not on-

ly US bases but also Gulf states' economic assets, calculating that the political and economic costs of regional instability would eventually outpace American resolve. "We know America is extremely worried about a regional war," a senior Iranian parliamentary adviser explained. "Our plan is to expand the war's reach."

Iran does not need to win the war militarily. It needs only to survive long enough for the political and economic costs of regional instability to pile up. The results are already visible. Within a week, tanker traffic through the Strait of Hormuz – which accounts for roughly one-fifth of the world's oil – fell by 90%. Dubai's international airport, the world's busiest, effectively shut down. European jet-fuel prices jumped 72%, nearing their 2022 peak after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Qatar halted liquefied natural gas production. Each additional week of instability increases the pressure on America's allies – and on a Republican Party facing congressional elections with gasoline prices rising at the pump.

Meanwhile, Iran's internal political structure is becoming less capable of producing a negotiating partner. When President Masoud Pezeshkian reportedly extended a genuine overture to Gulf neighbours, Iranian hardliners quickly undercut him – and Trump obligingly finished the job, taking to Truth Social to celebrate Iran's "humiliating surrender." The man who most needed a prag-

matist to survive in Tehran destroyed whatever domestic cover the pragmatist had left.

The opening phase of the war also eliminated many of the figures Washington quietly regarded as potential interlocutors – senior Iranian officials believed to be pragmatic deal-makers. Trump himself acknowledged this with unusual candour: "Most of the people we had in mind are dead." The decapitation was so successful that it eliminated the strategy's own precondition.

A successor has now been named: Mojtaba Khamenei, son of the slain supreme leader. That the Islamic Republic – founded explicitly on rejection of dynastic rule – has resorted to hereditary succession speaks volumes. The institutional machinery of succession has been bent to produce a result under emergency conditions. Israel has already declared him an immediate target for elimination. Choosing supreme leaders now amounts to assembling a targeting queue.

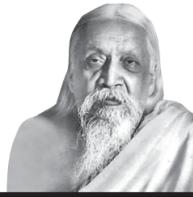
"Decapitate and delegate" works only if the decapitation is precise enough to leave behind someone capable of receiving the terms. The policy requires an Iran weak enough to accede to American demands yet coherent enough to implement them. But Israel's existential interest in permanently fragmenting Iranian state power, Iran's decentralized defense structure, and the consolidation of authority around institutions whose entire raison d'être is holding the world's energy markets hostage are producing an Iran that is neither.

Iran needs far less organizational coherence to continue disrupting the world than it needs to halt the decentralized offensive operations it has already set in motion. The US may succeed in weakening Iran militarily while destroying the one thing needed to end the conflict: an Iranian state capable of making – and enforcing – a deal.

*The writer is Professor of Law at New York University School of Law. ©PROJECT SYNDICATE*

Detachment is the beginning of mastery.

SRI AUROBINDO



## War Travails

The energy crisis engulfing the whole world is deepening with no sign of the war between Israel-USA and Iran ending immediately. The common man in India has already started to pay through his nose with the rise in gas prices and the cascading effects on items of daily consumption. Fuel prices are bound to follow soon. At this stage US President Donald Trump delivered on 9 March a vague and contradictory forecast for how long the US will continue to fight in Iran and what the ultimate goal of the US military campaign there will be. Oil is hovering around \$100 a barrel while Middle Eastern allies of the US are scared they are being sucked into the conflict directly even though they are not on a warpath with Iran from the beginning.

Trump appeared in Doral, Florida to assuage the fear, calm global markets and reassure his allies that he has a clear vision for how to end the largest US intervention in the Middle East since the Iraq war. But he refrained from even giving a broad hint about his plan. In a 35-minute appearance, the US President fought shy of going into the specifics and merely boasted, seemingly as part of usual war propaganda, of how thoroughly the US has destroyed Iran's military. But his claims are suspect in the absence of any planning for what comes next. He only made the vague remark that the war was "very complete, pretty much" to a CBS News reporter in a phone call. He then parried a reporter's question about whether that meant the war could wrap up this week. "No, but soon. I think very soon." Reporters were relentless in their barrage of questions and told him contrary to his claim that the war is "very complete," his defense secretary says "this is just the beginning." When asked which of the two claims was correct, Trump said nonchalantly, "I think you could say both. It's the beginning of building a new country."

But that has never been the stated objective of the war. On the contrary, Trump exhorted pro-democracy Iranians to do their bit for regime change after he had got Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and the top leadership eliminated in missile attacks. Certainly, this is not the way a confident war strategist and commander-in-chief talks about the war he is supposedly winning. Trump continues to equivocate on the progress of the war claiming one moment it is "a tremendous success right now" and the next moment contradicting himself stating they have "not won enough." Such lack of confidence has led to the Democrats to say that Trump's goals for the Iran conflict were incoherent or simply absent.

It seems the way Iran has fought back, Trump has been surprised and left clueless. He appears not to have a plan and vision, while he is risking the world economy and the lives of millions. The traditional thought that taking out the leadership will make the system collapse into itself has been proven wrong in Iran. Seems that country does not have a top to bottom approach in military and governmental decision making, unlike the traditional feudal societies.

Only a couple of weeks back Trump was issuing diktats to other countries not to buy oil from Russia. Now he has allowed India to do so and announced on 9 March he would relax sanctions on certain countries' sales of oil to help calm markets, reversing his own policy of increasing economic pressure on Russian oil sales to help end the conflict in Ukraine. He then added that the US may not ultimately return those sanctions once global markets return to normal. The market now decides who will live and who shall die.

Iran, on the other hand, seems to have had its plan ready long back. It had decided that should it be forced to wage war with the USA, it will persist on its own conditions. Knowing well it can never match the US' prowess, it has adopted the age-old policy of hurting the allies of a big power. With that end in view it has apparently piled up a never-ending stock of missiles and drones with which it is now wreaking havoc on all selected targets of Middle East allies of the US with the intent to indirectly harm the US where it hurts most.

That strategy is at the moment proving effective as is evident from the confusion and contradictory claims of the US President. The rest of the world is unfortunately being made to suffer for Trump's misadventure and a needless war.



Stephen Holmes

**'DECAPITATE AND DELEGATE' WORKS ONLY IF THE DECAPITATION IS PRECISE ENOUGH TO LEAVE BEHIND SOMEONE CAPABLE OF RECEIVING THE TERMS**

### IN JEST THIS

## How to identify bad guys in the world

After the United States and Israel launched their military offensive against Iran, dropping hundreds of bombs and killing the Supreme Leader of Iran, Ali Khamenei, I watched intently as political commentators on American TV shared their opinions on whether the attack was necessary. Republicans insisted that regime change in Iran was critical, not just for America's security but the entire world's. Democrats were concerned that history was repeating itself and America was once again embroiling itself in a costly, fruitless war, similar to those in Iraq and Afghanistan.

But both sides were certain about one thing: the Iranian leaders were the "bad guys" and nobody should regret their demise. You may be wondering how the "bad guys" around the world are identified. Well, it is a very difficult process and involves countless hours of discussion and debate among

members of the UNCIBG (United Nations Commission for the Identification of Bad Guys).

The 24-member UNCIBG meets biannually in New York City to consider nominations for bad guy status. One country can nominate another. A few years ago, for example, Pakistan nominated India, and India in turn nominated Pakistan. (The bad guy designation technically belongs to a country's ruling government, but switching governments does not automatically revoke bad guy status.) You may be relieved to know that India did not get enough votes to qualify for bad guy status. This means that America and Israel will not be dropping bombs on India anytime soon. Dozens of countries are ahead of India in the potential bomb target list.

Pakistan also fell short in the vote count. Many Indians were stunned that Pakistan somehow escaped bad guy status. Some accused Pakistan of vote-rigging. Others vowed to keep a

close eye on their neighbour for any BGAs (bad guy acts).

However, Suresh Mehta admitted that it was an uphill battle, getting bad guy status for Pakistan. "To achieve bad guy status, you have to be a really bad guy," said Mehta, president of the Indian Society of Good Guys. "You can't just perform BGAs on weekends. You have to perform BGAs on weekdays too. You have to be like North Korea: committed and dedicated to bad guy status."

UNCIBG has conferred bad guy status on only 24 countries around the world. That may seem like a lot, but it's only 12%. Notable countries that have not earned bad guy status despite many BGAs include Russia, China and the US.

"It's a good thing the US is not a bad guy," Mehta said. "Otherwise it would have to bomb itself."

He noted that the US had committed a number of BGAs under the Trump administration, including dropping

bombs on suspected drug smugglers without granting them due process and shooting citizens protesting immigration policies. "It helps that the US is a democracy," Mehta said. "Being a democracy and having freedom of speech protects it from bad guy status, despite Trump's best efforts."

He added that China had a long list of BGAs, but not quite as long as Russia's. Russia has a Guinness World Record. So why haven't these countries attained bad guy status? "The bottom line is that they are very powerful," Mehta said. "They exert immense influence on the members of the UNCIBG. China can say, 'If you vote for us as bad guys, you'd better start buying your computers from Bangladesh.' And Russia can say, 'If you vote for us as bad guys, you'd better protect your borders from invasion and annexation.'"

It's possible, apparently, to threaten your way out of bad guy status.



Melvin Durai

**THE 24-MEMBER UNCIBG MEETS BIANNUALLY IN NEW YORK CITY TO CONSIDER NOMINATIONS FOR BAD GUY STATUS**

## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

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

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

### West Asia repercussions

Sir, The rapidly intensifying conflict in West Asia has emerged as one of the gravest geopolitical crises in recent decades, carrying profound implications for global stability. Addressing the Parliament, External Affairs Minister, S Jaishankar outlined India's diplomatic engagement, evacuation preparedness and contingency measures as hostilities continue to escalate across the region. His statement reflected the government's efforts to safeguard Indian nationals while maintaining active diplomatic outreach with key regional and global stakeholders. However, the seriousness of the situation was overshadowed by disruptions in the Parliament, depriving the nation of a meaningful and informed debate on a crisis of immense consequence. West Asia remains vital to India's energy security, maritime trade routes and the livelihood of millions of Indians working across the region. Any prolonged instability threatens global oil markets, critical shipping corridors and the safety of the Indian diaspora. Such circumstances demand political maturity and national coherence rather than partisan theatrics. The government must ensure that regular consultations with the Opposition parties, while the Opposition too should adopt a constructive and responsible approach. Industry leaders and the state governments must also be kept informed to strengthen preparedness. Ultimately, India's success in navigating this volatile phase will depend not only on diplomatic dexterity abroad but also on unity, clarity of purpose and collective national resolve at home.

*N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE*

### Spaces of reason

Sir, The reported incident of some students skipping the Vande Mataram at the Nagaland University convocation deserves calm reflection rather than instant condemnation. Reports say that some students remained seated when the national song was being played, citing religious and cultural sensitivities linked to local beliefs and constitutional protections. Patriotism cannot be imposed by compulsion; it grows from understanding and mutual respect. At the same time, national symbols deserve dignity from every citizen. The wiser course lies in dialogue, not denunciation. Universities must remain spaces of reason where diverse sentiments are heard while nurturing a shared national spirit that binds the country together.

*Sidhartha Kar Mohapatra, BARIPADA*

### WISDOM CORNER

**Do the difficult things while they are easy and do the great things while they are small. A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step.**

LAO TZU

**Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster. And if you gaze long enough into an abyss, the abyss will gaze back into you.**

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

**The only difference between the saint and the sinner is that every saint has a past, and every sinner has a future.**

OSCAR WILDE

### THIS DAY IN HISTORY

**1811:** In Arnold, Nottingham, textile workers staged the first major Luddite riot in England, breaking the machinery that was causing their displacement; the protest launched a movement that spread throughout the country.

**1851:** Giuseppe Verdi's opera, Rigoletto, receives its premiere. Rigoletto is one of the most popular operas of all time. The piece was premiered at the Teatro La Fenice in Venice, Italy.

**1888:** A winter storm began on the Atlantic coast of the United States, ultimately blanketing New York City with 22 inches (557 mm) of snow and other areas with up to 50 inches (1,250 mm); the Great Blizzard of 1888, as it became known, killed more than 400 people and caused widespread property damage.

**1942:** During World War II, Allied forces in the Southwest Pacific Theatre came under the command of U.S. General Douglas MacArthur following his tour on the Bataan Peninsula in the Philippines.

**1985:** Mikhail Gorbachev succeeded Konstantin Chernenko as leader of the Soviet Union.

**1990:** Following a vote in the parliament, Lithuania became the first Soviet republic to declare its independence from the U.S.S.R.

**1990:** Patricio Aylwin becomes Chile's first democratically elected president since the end of Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship. Pinochet had been in power since a CIA-backed coup d'état in 1973. Under his command, thousands of political opponents were interned, tortured, and killed.

# Gujarat cuts industrial gas use by 50%

The government's immediate focus is to ensure that domestic kitchens continue to function normally and that there is no disruption to household cooking



WEST ASIA CONFLICT

issued by the central government to prevent panic and ensure the steady availability of LPG for households, he said.

"The state government is constantly working to make sure that no household is left without a cylinder. We are in continuous contact with the central government regarding this," the minister stated.

He said restrictions have been placed on certain industrial uses of gas to prioritise domestic consumption.

"We have imposed a 50 per cent cut in the gas supply to industries. For fertiliser and milk (processing), there is a cut of about 40 per cent in gas supply," Patel informed.

The decision was aimed at ensuring that domestic users get cooking gas without any disruption, he said.

"This is to ensure that there is no disruption for domestic gas users. The state government is committed to maintaining a regular and steady supply

for households," he added.

Responding to a query about reports from Rajkot claiming that hotels and restaurants are getting messages about restrictions on commercial gas cylinders, Patel denied any such directive.

"There is nothing like that," the minister asserted. "As far as commercial gas cylinders are concerned, there is currently no cut or restriction on them," he said.

The government's immediate focus is to ensure that domestic kitchens continue to function normally and that there is no disruption to household cooking, the minister said.

"To ensure that no individual faces difficulty in getting cooking gas, especially the gas used for domestic purposes, the state and central governments

are working together," he added.

The oil ministry has constituted a committee to examine supply issues after a sudden shortage of commercial LPG cylinders alarmed the hospitality sector, with restaurant associations warning that eateries could shut down within days if supplies are not restored.

"For LPG supply to other non-domestic sectors, a committee of three Executive Directors (EDs) of Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) have been constituted to review the representations for LPG supply to restaurants/hotels/other industries," the ministry said in a post on X.

India consumes about 31.3 million tonnes of LPG annually. As much as 87 per cent of this is in the domestic sector i.e. household kitchens, and the rest in commercial establishments such as hotels and restaurants. Of this total requirement, as much as 62 per cent is met through imports. The US and Israel's attack on Iran and Tehran's retaliation have shut the Strait of Hormuz - the conduit through which India got 85-90 per cent of its LPG imports from countries like Saudi Arabia. As alternate sources are being scouted, the limited supplies available meant the government prioritising supplies to the domestic sector, and in the process, the commercial establishments have suffered.

# Gujarat ATS seizes 22 kg of drug concealed as aloe vera powder

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ahmedabad, March 10:** The Gujarat Anti-Terrorist (ATS) Squad has seized 22 kg of analgesic drug etomidate disguised as aloe vera powder at Mumbai airport while it was being exported illegally to Malaysia through air cargo, officials said Tuesday.

The seizure comes days after the ATS arrested three persons in this connection.

Etomidate, a short-acting anaesthetic, is increasingly being misused for recreational purposes. Its rapid dissociative effects and minimal cardiorespiratory suppression appeal to adolescents, especially when repackaged into e-liquids that enable inconspicuous vaping, according to The Lancet journal website.

The drug was sold in foreign markets at an estimated \$4,000 to 5,000 per kilogram, the ATS said.

Three persons - Nikunj Gadhiya, Chetan Vavadiya and Bhautik Padmani, all residents of Surat - were arrested Sunday following an input that some individuals were exporting the analgesic drug to countries in Southeast Asia, where the substance is treated as a narcotic or psychotropic substance under local laws, it said.

"During search and inspection at the offices of companies of the three accused, purchase bills of etomidate and stock registers were examined,

which confirmed that they were mislabelling and misdeclaring etomidate and exporting it to foreign countries," the ATS said in a statement.

Further, on questioning Gadhiya, it came to light that February 28, he had arranged to send six parcels with a total weight of 25.5 kilograms, out of which 22 kg was etomidate, to Malaysia through air cargo, it said.

These parcels were examined in Mumbai by police using a spectrograph drug detector kit, which confirmed the presence of etomidate and the drug was seized. The said parcels had been misdeclared and mislabelled as aloe vera powder samples before being sent, it added.

The ATS had earlier said the three accused exported the drug through air cargo from Mumbai airport by preparing fake bills, mislabelling the product and submitting forged customs clearance documents.

Gadhiya had exported around 50 kg of etomidate by disguising it as aloe vera powder. Vavadiya sent nearly 50 kg of the drug by labelling it as "Ginopol-24 powder", a personal care ingredient, to Malaysia and Thailand, while Padmani is accused of exporting 25 kg of etomidate by mislabelling it as aloe vera powder, it said.

The etomidate powder sent to Thailand was seized by the police there, an ATS release said.

## GAS SHORTAGE HITS INDUSTRIES, HOTELS IN CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR

**Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar:** Associations of small-scale industries and hotels in Marathwada Tuesday flagged concerns about the shortage of gas, as global fuel supply chains remain choked by the ongoing US-Israel-Iran conflict. Four small-scale units in the industrial area of Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar have been shut, while several others are on the brink of closure, as they are left with stock that can only sustain them for the next few days. Arjun Gaikwad, president of Marathwada Association of Small Scale Industries and Agriculture (MASSIA), said. Talking to PTI, Gaikwad said the disruption in the gas supply has started affecting the auto parts, engineering, hospitality and other industries here in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar. "We held a meeting of stakeholders facing shortages. Four units in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar were shut today. At least 17 units will have to close in the next three to four days," he said. Gaikwad warned that if the supply is not regulated properly, the entire chain will be disrupted, as the auto parts manufactured in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar are sent to different parts of the country. "We have discussed alternatives in this crisis situation. The industry is also contemplating running its inventory on diesel. However, this is a time-consuming process. We are not sure if we will get the necessary diesel supply," he said. Chamber of Marathwada Industries & Agriculture (CMA) president Utsav Machar stated that industrial units in the district need 150 to 240 metric tonnes of gas daily.

# Maha to allow flexible reporting time for women employees in Mumbai

Pawar said that under the "Come Early, Go Early" initiative, women employees will be allowed flexible reporting time between 9.15 am and 9.45 am, and can leave early in the evening by the same number of minutes after putting in the required number of hours of work

were functional in all districts, while 51 Bharosa cells had been activated to address women's issues, she said.

Technology was being increasingly used for women's safety, and systems to prevent cybercrime had been set up at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus, Churchgate and Borivali railway stations, the deputy chief minister said.

Highlighting economic empowerment initiatives for women, the deputy chief minister cited schemes such as Ladki Bahin, Namu Mahila Sakshamikaran, Lek Ladki, Annapurna and Lakhpati Didi.

She said platforms such as Umed Mall, Umed Mart and Mahalakshmi Saras had been launched to provide markets for products made by self-help groups, which are now also available on online platforms.

Pawar stated that the government was positive about improving honorarium and infrastructure for anganwadi workers and helpers, noting that drinking water facilities had been provided to 17,254 anganwadi centres.

She also noted that the state had sanctioned 180 days of maternity leave for government employees and allowed up to one year of half-pay leave after maternity leave without the need for a medical certificate.

The Maharashtra government's 4th Women's Policy had been implemented and a high-level committee set up for its effective execution, she said.

The 'Adishakti Abhiyan' was also being implemented to ensure a safer and more dignified life for rural women, prevent child marriage, create atrocity-free villages and reduce school dropout rates among girls, Pawar said.

The state government has emphasised health, education, skill development, strengthening self-help groups, special measures for women farmers and labourers and strict enforcement of laws for women's safety, she said.



Smoke from smouldering garbage rises above a mound, at the Pirana Landfill in Ahmedabad, Tuesday

## 'MISSION FIT KHAKI'

### Ahmedabad cops to undergo fitness training

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ahmedabad, March 10:** Around 100 Ahmedabad Police personnel will undergo fitness training to improve their health under a newly-launched initiative, officials said Tuesday.

Under the initiative, 'Mission Fit Khaki', these personnel underwent medical tests and full health assessments Tuesday.

"Around 100 police personnel with a BMI (body mass index) exceeding 30 have been enrolled in Mission Fit Khaki. Medical assessments, including height and weight measurements, were conducted and this will be followed by a 12-week training programme to enhance their health and physical fitness," said Ahmedabad Police Commissioner G S Malik.

It may be noted that a BMI of 30 or higher is considered obesity. The senior official was speaking at the launch of the mission at city police headquarters in Sahibaug.

During the programme, the participants' fitness levels as well as their mental and physical health will be closely monitored and improved wherever necessary, benefiting both the personnel and the police department, he stated. The course may be extended by an additional four weeks if deemed necessary, Malik added. The IPS officer emphasized that regular duties of the enrolled personnel will continue as usual. Only a physical training parade will be conducted every Monday at police headquarters. Throughout the course, personnel will receive guidance on dietary requirements and fitness directly from the commissioner.

# Congress gears up for Gujarat local body polls

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ahmedabad, March 10:** The Gujarat Congress Tuesday announced that it will start a 10-day candidate selection process from March 11 for the upcoming local body elections in the BJP-ruled state.

Meetings will be held across all municipal corporations, cities, talukas, and districts of Gujarat, where prospective candidates will have the opportunity to present their views and interact with party representatives, the Opposition outfit stated.

"The candidate selection process for the upcoming local body elections will take place across various districts and talukas between March 11 and March 20," said Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee (GPCC) president Amit Chavda in Ahmedabad.

During meetings, ticket aspirants will be heard directly, and the process of forming the selection panel for elections will also be undertaken, he stated.

Seats have been reserved for women as well as members of SC/ST communities in the candidature process, the Congress leader maintained.

The party has also launched an online application system to make the process more accessible. A QR code has been released, allowing interested individuals to scan and fill out a candidacy form for contesting



**Schedule for local body elections has not been announced yet, but they are likely to be held in the first half of 2026**

elections in 15 municipal corporations across the state.

Chavda alleged that many local self-government institutions currently ruled by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have become "centres of corruption". The GPCC president claimed that poor infrastructure has resulted in issues such as roads being washed away during the first rains and water tanks collapsing even during testing, leading to what he described as misuse of taxpayers' money.

He said the Congress has invited members of the public, leaders, and social activists across Gujarat to join the party

and participate in the political process, stating that it aims to provide a platform to "fight corruption and ensure justice for ordinary citizens".

Chavda confirmed that, as previously decided, 50 per cent of the tickets in local body elections will be given to candidates below the age of 50 to encourage youth participation. Educated and honest individuals who are actively engaged with people will be encouraged and given opportunities to contest, he added. Schedule for local body elections has not been announced yet, but they are likely to be held in the first half of 2026. Elections are to be held for 1,044 seats in 15 municipal corporations, around 1,084 in 34 district panchayats, 5,214 in 262 taluka panchayats and 2,596 seats in 83 municipalities.

These elections will cover about 10,000 seats spread across 15 municipal corporations, 34 district panchayats,

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No.32001/194/2526: The Executive Engineer, Lift Irrigation Division, Karanja, At/Po-Karanja, Pin-757037, Dist-Mayurbhanj on behalf of Odisha Lift Irrigation Corporation Ltd., Bhubaneswar invites tender through e-procurement in shape of PERCENTAGE rate bids in online mode for 3 Nos. Installation & Energisation of New L.I. Projects on turnkey basis from reputed contractors/ firms having valid Civil license of required class issued by PWD/PHED/RWSS/Irrigation/Rural Works in the State of Odisha & valid HT Electrical license issued by E.L.B.O. Odisha.

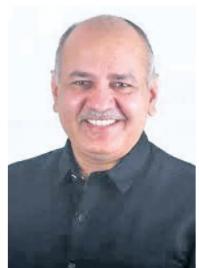
|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Number of Package   | 3 Nos (Karanja & Sukruli, in Mayurbhanj District) |
| 2 | Estimated Cost  | From Rs.2992771 to Rs.3383795 (As per DTCN)       |
| 3 | Cost of Tender Paper  | Rs.7080 including 18% GST (in online mode)        |
| 4 | Date & Time of publication  | Di.10.03.2026 at 11.00 A.M.                       |
| 5 | Last Date & Time to Seek Clarification  | Di.16.03.2026 upto 5.00 P.M.                      |
| 6 | Date & Time of Closing  | Di.20.03.2026 upto 5.00 P.M.                      |
| 7 | Date & Time of Opening of Technical Bid   | Di.23.03.2026 at 11.00 A.M.                       |
| 8 | Date of Opening of Financial Bid will be informed after evaluation of Technical Bid |   |
| 9 | The bidders have to participate in online bidding only.                             |   |

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in. Addendum/corrigendum/cancellation of tender if any, can be seen in the said website.

(Er. Bikramaditya Panigrahy)  
Executive Engineer, L.I. Division, Karanja

OIPR-32001/32233/1/25-26/0001



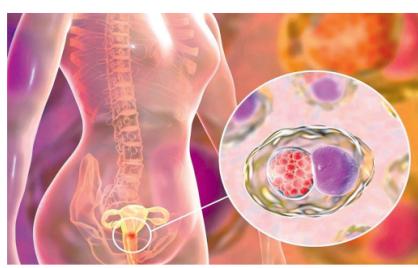


**I am saddened that under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a situation has been created in the country where whenever any voice is raised, that person is simply put in jail**

MANISH SISODIA | AAP LEADER

## MORE THAN 8 CRORE WOMEN SCREENED FOR CERVICAL CANCER

The nationwide Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination campaign targeting eligible girls aged 14 is underway at designated government facilities, Minister of State for Health Prataprao Jadhav told the Rajya Sabha Tuesday



### of the day quote

Held a review meeting today to assess the possible impact of the ongoing US-Iran conflict on Tamil Nadu and to chart the necessary response measures. I have written to the Prime Minister (Narendra Modi), urging the Union Government to ensure the safety of Tamils living across the affected Gulf countries and to safeguard the welfare of Tamil Nadu fishermen who are currently stranded in the region

M K STALIN | TN CM

Rs 3,600cr straight into the bank accounts of 40 lakh women- and NO this is not an election freebie

HIMANTA BISWA SARMA | ASSAM CM

The Cabinet approved the Ministry of Jal Shakti's proposal to restructure and reorient the implementation of the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) from infrastructure creation to service delivery, supported by drinking water governance and institutional ecosystem for sustainable rural piped potable water supply

ASHWINI VAISHNAV | UNION MINISTER

## BENGAL POLLS

# No genuine voter to be axed: CEC



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, March 10:** Asserting that no eligible voter's name would be removed from the electoral rolls in West Bengal, Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar Tuesday said the EC's priority was to ensure free, fair and peaceful polls in the state as it stepped up preparations for the upcoming Assembly polls, amid a charged political atmosphere.

Addressing a press conference here after the commission's full bench held a series of meetings with political parties and senior administrative officials to review Bengal's poll preparedness, Kumar said the EC will finalise the state's election schedule, including the number of phases it would vote in, after the panel returns to Delhi.

Kumar said the commission has instructed officers in the state to enforce rule of law strictly without fear or favour. "We have reviewed the law and order condition in the state and the entire government, led by its chief secretary, the DGP, the CPs and SPs, has assured the commission that the election will remain free of violence and intimidation," the CEC said.

Kumar was unambiguous on the operational boundaries within which the commission

### Mamata lifts dharna against 'flaws' in SIR

**KOLKATA:** West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Tuesday lifted her dharna against the "flawed SIR" on its fifth day, saying the protest was being suspended temporarily after the Supreme Court ordered the setting up of an appellate mechanism regarding the voter list revision. The dharna was lifted on a day when the full bench of the EC concluded its two-day visit to the state to review poll preparedness. Welcoming the apex court's move to set up the appellate authority, Banerjee said the "door totally closed by the EC" has now been opened, bringing a new ray of hope for the people whose names were deleted or under adjudication due to 'logical discrepancy' under the SIR. The CM said she is calling off the dharna "temporarily", saying the TMC will keep tabs on future developments. Banerjee said her decision to "temporarily withdraw" the sit-in was also prompted by the request of Abhishek Banerjee, considered number two in the TMC hierarchy.

expected the state officials to work during the poll process.

Speaking about the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR), a politically sensitive exercise that has triggered sharp exchanges between the TMC and the BJP, Kumar said the process was being carried out across the country in accordance with constitutional norms.

"Logical Discrepancy (LD) cases were flagged off in all 12 states where the SIR exercise was held. The cases where voters remained unmapped with the 2002 rolls, whether deliberate or by mistake, were scanned by BLOs with the help of documents provided," the CEC stated, rejecting claims that LD cases were introduced only for Bengal.

Explaining the data patterns

### According to EC data released February 28, around 63.66 lakh names, about 8.3 per cent of the electorate, were deleted since the revision began in November last year, bringing down the voter base from about 7.66 crore to a little over 7.04 crore

that emerged during the SIR in the state, Kumar revealed that around 4-5 per cent of electors failed to map themselves with the 2002 rolls post submission of enumeration forms, while an

additional 7-8 per cent of voters were found to have mapped themselves incorrectly, either deliberately or by inadvertent errors.

According to EC data released February 28, around 63.66 lakh names, about 8.3 per cent of the electorate, were deleted since the revision began in November last year, bringing down the voter base from about 7.66 crore to a little over 7.04 crore.

To a question on the engagement of micro-observers to dispose of LD cases, Kumar said, "In Bengal, a lot of cases remained undecided at the level of EROs and AEROs before the publication of final rolls because of which micro-observers had to be appointed for document verification, which had to be carried out stringently."

The CEC avoided a direct answer on the fate of the voters who continue to remain in the 'under adjudication' list and whether polls would be announced before the publication of supplementary rolls.

Kumar's remarks came amid allegations by the ruling TMC that the poll panel had unfairly deleted nearly 64 lakh voters from the state's electoral rolls following the SIR and kept some 60 lakh more names under scrutiny.

Following the February 28 publication of the post-SIR electoral rolls, the EC will also upload supplementary voter lists on its website in due course and keep updating them, he added.

Calling pure electoral rolls "a bedrock of democracy", Kumar said the EC aimed to ensure all genuine voters retain their right to vote while making certain that no ineligible voters got included in the list.

The EC chief said the number of phases for the assembly polls would depend on the final assessment of the law-and-order preparedness of the state machinery.

# Gurugram construction site collapse kills seven



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Gurugram, March 10:** Seven workers were killed and four others, including three from Nepal, were injured when a mound of soil collapsed on them at a construction site here, officials said Tuesday.

The incident occurred Monday evening at the Signature Global Society in Gurugram's Sidhrawali area, they added. DSP Bhiwadi, Rajasthan, Yogesh, told reporters in Bhiwadi that construction work of a Sewerage Treatment Plant (STP) was ongoing when a mound of soil suddenly collapsed, and some labourers got trapped under the debris.

Around 12 to 15 labourers got trapped under the debris. Upon receiving information, a police team from the Bilaspur Police Station, Gurugram, along with State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) and the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) personnel reached the site and rescued the labourers.

They rushed them to a nearby hospital at Bhiwadi in Rajasthan, where seven of them were declared dead, the officials said. Postmortem examination of the deceased will be conducted in Gurugram, the DSP said.

It appears that they died due to asphyxiation, officials said. Talking to the media in Rajasthan's Bhiwadi, a kin of one of the deceased workers said the labourers were working several feet below when the mound of soil collapsed on them.

A kin of the deceased has also demanded ₹50 lakh as compensation. An injured worker said

AN INQUIRY COMMITTEE HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED BY THE GURUGRAM DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION TO INVESTIGATE THE CAUSES AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THE SOIL COLLAPSE

POLICE HAVE REGISTERED AN FIR UNDER BNS SECTIONS RELATED TO CULPABLE HOMICIDE AND ENDANGERING LIFE, INVESTIGATING POTENTIAL NEGLIGENCE

COMPENSATION OF ₹50 LAKH HAS BEEN DEMANDED BY THE FAMILY OF ONE OF THE DECEASED WORKERS, HIGHLIGHTING THE SEVERITY OF THE INCIDENT AND ITS IMPACT

that the mound of soil suddenly collapsed on them, and they got buried under the debris.

Police said the deceased have been identified as Shivshankar, Parmeshwar Mahto, Mangal Mahto, Bhagirath Gope, Satish, Sanjeev Gope, and Dhananjay Mahto.

The injured were identified as Indrajit, Chhotelal, Shivkam Chaudhary, residents of Nepal and Deendyal Sharma.

The police team has established contact with the families of the victims and has apprised them of the incident. Necessary legal formalities are currently being undertaken, police said.

Upon the arrival of the family members, their formal complaints will be recorded, a case will be registered, and appropriate legal action will be initiated in connection with the incident, police said.

## SHORT TAKES

### Veteran Cong leader Biren Singh Engti dies

**Guwahati:** Veteran Congress leader and former Union minister Biren Singh Engti died at a private hospital here Tuesday. He was 81. A party spokesman said that Engti was brought to Guwahati for treatment from his Diphu residence and breathed his last this morning. "The mortal remains have been taken to Diphu, where last respects will be paid," the spokesperson added. A five-time Lok Sabha MP from Diphu constituency, Engti had also served as a minister of state in the Rajiv Gandhi government in the Centre.

### Army foils infiltration bid

**Rajouri/Jammu:** Army troops foiled an infiltration bid along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district Tuesday, killing one terrorist during an encounter, officials said. Acting on intelligence inputs, security forces detected the movement of two terrorists in the general area of Jhangar in Nowshera sector along the LoC at around 3 pm, the White Knight Corps said on X.

### Ranchi, Jamtara courts receive bomb threats

**Jamshedpur:** The Ranchi and Jamtara civil courts, as well as Jamshedpur's renowned institute XLRI, Tuesday received emails threatening to explode bombs on the premises. However, those turned out to be hoaxes as nothing suspicious was found during thorough searches, police said. With the latest threat, Ranchi civil court received third such email in recent months.

### WB: Teachers, job aspirants protest

**Kolkata:** Hundreds of teachers and teaching job aspirants Tuesday held separate rallies near the state Education Department's headquarters in Salt Lake near Kolkata, pressing demands related to recruitment and pay. In one protest, around 300 teaching job aspirants under the banner of the 'SLST Waiting Candidate Association' marched from Karunamoyee and attempted to enter Bikash Bhavan, the Education Department headquarters.

## WEST GARO HILLS VIOLENCE

### Army deployed after 2 killed in police firing

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Shillong, March 10:** Two persons were killed in police firing Tuesday during clashes between tribal and non-tribal groups over the nomination process for local council polls in Meghalaya's West Garo Hills district, prompting the government to impose curfew and call in the Army, officials said.

Superintendent of Police Abraham T Sangma said the incident took place in the Chibinang area during the nomination process for the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (GHADC) elections.

"The two persons who died were residents of Chibinang. There was a clash between tribals and non-tribals regarding the GHADC elections, and the firing occurred while we were

dispersing an unlawful Assembly," he said. Sangma said the situation in the area is currently under control, and the district administration has imposed curfew across the district to prevent further escalation.

The Army was later deployed to restore peace in the area. "Army columns deployed in West Garo Hills on the request of civil administration and conducting a flag march," defence spokesperson Lt Col Mahender Rawat told PTI.

A column of the Army usually consists of 60-80 personnel. In a communication to the Commanding Officer of 101 Area of the Eastern Command, West Garo Hills Deputy Commissioner Vibhor Aggarwal had requested the Army to conduct a flag march in the plain areas of the district in view of the situation.



Foreign yoga practitioners take part in a session during the International Yoga Festival at Parmarth Niketan Ashram, in Rishikesh. The week-long festival from March 9 to 15 features yoga sessions, meditation workshops, spiritual discourses and cultural programmes

## SC directs Centre to frame Covid vaccine compensation policy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 10:** The Supreme Court Tuesday directed the Centre to frame a no-fault compensation policy for serious adverse events following Covid-19 vaccination.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta said the existing mechanism for monitoring adverse events following immunisation shall continue.

"No separate court-appointed expert body is considered necessary in view of the existing mechanism for scientific assessment of adverse events following immunisation," Justice Nath said while pronouncing the verdict. The bench clarified that its judgement shall not preclude any person from pursuing such other remedies as may be available in law.

"Equally, the formulation of the no-fault framework shall not be construed as an admission of liability or fault on the part of the Union of India or any other authority," it said.

The top court delivered its verdict on pleas, including the one which alleged that two women lost their lives in 2021 after taking the first dose of the Covishield vaccine. The plea alleged that both of them suffered from severe adverse effects following immunisation. When the bench was hearing the matter in November last year, the counsel appearing for the Centre had referred to data about Covid-19 vaccination in India up to December 2024.

"The total doses administered in India is 220 crores. Total AE-FI (adverse effects following immunisation) cases reported is 92,697, in percentage it is 0.0042," the Centre's counsel had said, adding the total deaths reported was 1,171 which was 0.0005 per cent.

# SC junks AI-drafted PIL of Ludhiana cloth trader

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 10:** The Supreme Court Tuesday junked a PIL filed by a Ludhiana-based cloth trader after he admitted to using artificial intelligence tools to draft the petition and could not explain the complex legal terms used in it.

"Jao, Ludhiana mein 2-3 aur sweater becho Jin logo ka kaam hai aisi petition file karna, woh nuksaan kardengay apka costs lagwa ke' (Go and sell 2-3 more sweaters in Ludhiana... If you continue filing such petitions through others, they will end up having costs imposed upon you)," Chief Justice Surya Kant said while dismissing the PIL.

The bench, also comprising Justices Joymalya Bagchi and R Mahadevan, became suspicious when Rajnish Sidhu, a hosiery trader with a Class XII education, stood up to argue his plea regarding the PM CARES Fund.

The moment Sidhu started his arguments by reading from the written text, the CJI began questioning his educational and other backgrounds.

When the petitioner said that he did not file any petition in the past and directly came to the top court to file his first



plea, the CJI sarcastically said, "Bada baha-duri ka kaam kiya, seedha Ludhiana se chalke aagaye' (Very brave of you to come straight from Ludhiana to the Supreme Court)."

"I will take your English exam right here," the CJI said,

adding, "If you manage to score even 30 per cent, I will believe you drafted this PIL."

The moment of truth came when the CJI asked Sidhu to explain "Fiduciary Risk of Corporate Donors", a term used in the PIL.

A stumped Sidhu was unable to define the term and tried to read from his notes.

"Mr Sidhu, this has been written and given to you by some advocate. You are just reading the script," the CJI interjected and warned that he would order an investigation by the Punjab Vigilance Bureau.

The petitioner then took the name of a typist working on

the apex court premises as the person who initially helped him draft the PIL.

"The typist was very helpful I gifted him four jackets. He was asking for ₹1,000 per hour," Sidhu said, adding, "But I have not used his petition and drafted my own."

Eventually, he admitted to using three to four artificial intelligence (AI) tools to draft the petition because he could not afford a lawyer.

The bench trashed the PIL with the warning that any such attempt in future will invite penal and financial consequences.

On Monday, the CJI-led bench trashed five "frivolous" PILs filed by a single lawyer, including one seeking a scientific study on whether onion and garlic contained "tamasic" (negative) energy, and asked if he drafted them in the middle of the night.

THE BENCH, ALSO COMPRISING JUSTICES JOYMALYA BAGCHI AND R MAHADEVAN, BECAME SUSPICIOUS WHEN RAJNISH SIDHU, A HOSEYER TRADER WITH A CLASS XII EDUCATION, STOOD UP TO ARGUE HIS PLEA REGARDING THE PM CARES FUND

THE MOMENT SIDHU STARTED HIS ARGUMENTS BY READING FROM THE WRITTEN TEXT, THE CJI BEGAN QUESTIONING HIS EDUCATIONAL AND OTHER BACK GROUNDS



There is no need for anyone to worry or panic about food, gas or oil supplies. Officials have been asked to ensure the best possible management in the state

MOHAN YADAV | MP CM

PM TO INAUGURATE NEW TRAINS TODAY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will virtually flag off two Amrit Bharat trains, two express trains and one passenger train from Tiruchirappalli in Tamil Nadu along with another passenger train from Ernakulam in Kerala Wednesday, the Railway Ministry said Tuesday



of the day quote

We have an adequate number on our side, and that is why we are confident of a victory

TEJASHWI YADAV | RID LEADER

At Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, every day is Women's Day. We have a plethora of talented women occupying the highest positions across departments

REKHA GUPTA | DELHI CM

Priyanka Gandhi is sitting there and is laughing. If they had made her the LoP, the performance would have been better. At least she sits in the House, listens, and also smiles

KIREN RIJJU | UNION MINISTER

POST OF THE DAY

If LPG shortage goes for longer Godi media prime time shows will be like: -Food will now be cooked in

traditional clay stoves -It will be tastier -Cheaper than LPG -India going back to its roots -No more dependency on import -CAD is down Masterstroke by Modi @Nher\_who

SHORT TAKES

PM Modi hails cabinet decisions

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Tuesday hailed the Union Cabinet's decisions on boosting rail and road connectivity, saying the move will improve logistics while supporting economic growth particularly in tribal regions. Modi also complimented the cabinet's approval of the extension of Jal Jeevan Mission up to December 2028 with an enhanced outlay of ₹8.7 lakh crore for the rural drinking water supply project.

Youtuber found dead in east Delhi

New Delhi: A 31-year-old YouTuber and garment trader from east Delhi's Mandawali area was found dead in vacant DDA plot, police said Tuesday. The victim's family alleged foul play and staged a protest outside a police station. The deceased, identified as Pushpendra alias Akash, a resident of School Block in Mandawali, had been missing since Saturday after leaving his house. Family members claimed that he was carrying around ₹1.5 lakh in cash, a gold ring, a gold chain and an iPhone.

9,460 mobile phones snatched in 776 days

New Delhi: As many as 9,460 mobile phones were snatched in the national capital between January 1, 2024 and February 15 this year, Lok Sabha was informed Tuesday. Statistically, the data shows one snatching has been reported every two hours in 776 days. In a written response to a question, Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai said, "As reported by Delhi Police, during the period from January 2024 to 15.02.2026, the total number of reported cases of phone snatching and FIRs registered are 9,460 and 9,436, respectively." He said the total number of mobile phones recovered out of snatched mobiles are 3,950 and out of stolen mobiles are 13,222.

FDI norms: India eases rules for China & others

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 10: The government Tuesday eased foreign direct investment (FDI) norms for China and other countries sharing land borders with India by allowing overseas firms having up to 10 per cent shareholder from these nations to invest in the country without mandatory approval.

Earlier, overseas firms with shareholders from these nations owning even a single share had to seek mandatory approval to invest in India in any sector.

However, other conditions of FDI norms, including sectoral caps and entry routes, will be applicable to these investments.

Also, these investments will be subjected to prior reporting of information/details to the DPIIT (department for promotion of industry and internal trade). The government has amended the press note 3 of 2020 in this regard. The decision was taken in a meeting of the Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The amendment in the press note provides for a definition and criteria for the determination of 'Beneficial Ownership' that is widely used by the investing community, under the Prevention of Money Laundering Rules, 2003. The beneficial ownership test will be applied at the level of the investor entity. "Investors with non-controlling land border countries (LBC), beneficial ownership of up to 10 per cent shall be permitted under the automatic route as per the applicable sectoral caps, entry routes, attendant conditions," the government said in a statement.

The government has also decided on expeditious clearance of investment proposals from LBCs in specific sectors.

Under this, proposals for LBC investments in specified sectors/activities of manufacturing in capital goods, elec-



COUNTRIES THAT SHARE LAND BORDERS WITH INDIA ARE CHINA, BANGLADESH, PAKISTAN, BHUTAN, NEPAL, MYANMAR, AND AFGHANISTAN. CHINA STANDS AT THE 23RD POSITION WITH ONLY 0.32 PER CENT SHARE (USD 2.51 BILLION) IN THE TOTAL FDI EQUITY INFLOW REPORTED IN INDIA FROM APRIL 2000 TO DECEMBER 2025

tronic capital goods, electronic components, polysilicon and ingot-wafer or any other sector/activity added by the committee of secretaries headed by the Cabinet Secretary will be processed and decided within 60 days.

In these cases, the majority shareholding and control of the investee entity will be with resident Indian citizen(s) and/or resident Indian entity(ies) owned and controlled by resident Indian citizen(s), at all times. In order to curb opportunistic takeovers/acquisitions of Indian companies due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the government had amended the FDI policy through Press Note 3 (2020) April 17, 2020.

Following that, an entity of a country which shares a land border with India or where the beneficial owner of an investment into India is situated in or is a citizen of any such country, can invest only after getting permission from the

government. Additionally, any transfer of ownership of any existing or future FDI in an entity in India resulting in the beneficial ownership falling within these jurisdictions also requires government approval.

This rule was seen as adversely affecting investment flows from investors, including global funds such as PE (private equity) / VC (venture capital) funds. It is expected that the new guidelines will provide clarity and ease of doing business in India, and facilitate investments which can contribute towards greater FDI inflows, access to new technologies, domestic value addition, expansion of domestic firms and integration with the global supply chain. This would help in leveraging and enhancing India's competitiveness as a preferred investment and manufacturing destination.

Countries that share land borders with India are China, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Bhutan, Nepal, Myanmar, and Afghanistan. China stands at the 23rd position with only 0.32 per cent share (USD 2.51 billion) in the total FDI equity inflow reported in India from April 2000 to December 2025.

The development comes at a time when the industry has been demanding for easing of these norms.

SC to review Centre's plea against HC order on fake content rules

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 10: The Supreme Court Tuesday agreed to examine the Centre's plea against the Bombay High Court verdict that struck down the 2023 amendments to the Information Technology Rules aimed at regulating fake and false content on social media against the government.

The top court, however, refused to stay the 2024 Bombay High Court verdict, which not only struck down the amended Information Technology Rules but termed them "unconstitutional". A three-judge bench comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justices R Mahadevan and Joymalya Bagchi issued notices to the original petitioners, including stand-up comedian Kunal Kamra, the Editors Guild of India, and the Association of Indian Magazines.

The Bombay High Court, September 26, 2024, formally struck down the amended Information Technology Rules aimed at identifying and regulating fake and false content on social media against the government. During the hearing, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the Centre, sought a stay on the High Court's order, arguing that the government did not intend to "block content completely" but rather to regulate misinformation.

The CJJ expressed concern over the current state of social media platforms. "The way some of these platforms are behaving nowadays... look at the illustrations placed on record, how dangerously (they operate)," the CJJ said, specifically pointing to fake messages concerning the Indian Army and national policies.

He questioned whether the current system shifts the entire burden onto the machinery without imposing obligations on intermediaries.

Senior advocate Arvind Datar, appearing for one of the respondents, said existing rules already allow for the removal of content within 24 hours. The 2023 amendments were flawed because "misleading information" remained undefined, he said.

Oppn accuses Birla of partisanship; NDA defends Speaker in LS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 10: The ruling NDA Tuesday strongly defended Speaker Om Birla in the Lok Sabha, asserting that the resolution for his removal was brought only "to create spectacular headlines", while the Opposition accused him of partisanship, claiming he made "baseless" allegations about certain women MPs and did not permit Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi to express his views on "critical issues".

Participating in the debate on the resolution, several Opposition MPs said Birla is a "gentleman" and has good relations with members but stressed that they want him to conduct the House proceedings "fairly" without succumbing to "pressure" from the government, as they questioned his decisions on the suspension of their colleagues.

Treasury bench members, however, insisted that Birla was impartial and that the opposition MPs faced action due to their improper conduct.

Though the Constitution allows the Speaker to be present in the House to defend himself or herself and to vote, Birla preferred to stay away from Tuesday's proceedings. The debate is likely to conclude on Wednesday with Union Home Minister Amit Shah's response to the resolution.

Initiating the debate, Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi said the opposition was compelled to bring a resolution for Birla's removal as Lok Sabha Speaker to "save the Constitution" and the "dignity of the House".

"There was an expectation that the chair would be neutral. But research of uncorrected versions would show the number of times the Leader of Opposition (LoP) was interrupted. While the LoP was on his feet, another member was called up



on (to speak)," Gogoi said and accused Birla of being partisan.

Gogoi cited the remarks by the first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, that the Speaker represents the dignity of the House and becomes the symbol of the nation's freedom and liberty. "Where is the freedom of speech now?" he said.

He said all members have good relations with Birla on a personal level, and that is why the opposition members are saddened that they had to bring the resolution. "But it is our responsibility to protect the dignity of the House and save the Constitution. It is to protect the faith of the people in democracy," he added.

Intervening in the debate, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju lashed out at the Congress for bringing the no-confidence motion, saying Birla always remained impartial and gave more opportunities to opposition members to express their views in the House.

Rijiju accused the Congress of attacking constitutional institutions since 2014, when it was ousted from power, and said this time the target is the post of Speaker which is "akin to an attack on democracy itself".

SNIPPETS

Air India, Air India Express to levy fuel surcharge on tickets

NEW DELHI: Air India and Air India Express will start levying a fuel surcharge of ₹399 on each domestic flight ticket from March 12 and also hike the charge for international bookings due to a steep rise in jet fuel prices amid the Middle East conflict. The new fuel surcharges will be implemented in a phased manner. In the first phase, a fuel surcharge of ₹399 per domestic flight ticket would be imposed from March 12, and the same will also be applicable for SAARC flights, a statement said Tuesday. For West Asia flights, the fuel surcharge will be USD 10 and hiked by USD 30 to USD 90 for Africa flights, and by USD 20 to USD 60 for Southeast Asia services. All these changes will be effective from March 12, including for flights to and from Singapore. Currently, there is no fuel surcharge for the Singapore services.

EAM discusses West Asia crisis with German, South Korean counterparts

NEW DELHI: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar Tuesday spoke to his German and South Korean counterparts as New Delhi ramps up diplomatic efforts to navigate the fallout of the West Asia crisis, especially on the energy supplies. Global oil and gas prices have surged after Iran virtually blocked the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow shipping lane between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, that handles roughly 20 per cent of global oil and LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas). Following his conversation with German Foreign Minister Johann Wadepuhl, Jaishankar said the ongoing conflict in West Asia was discussed.



A child with Tibetan flag painted on his face takes part in a rally to mark the '67th National Uprising Day', in Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh

Rahul attends wedding of farmer's daughter in Sonipat

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, March 10: Nearly three years after Rahul Gandhi stepped into the muddy fields of Madina village in Haryana's Sonipat to join a local farmer, Sanjay Malik, in sowing paddy, the Congress leader Tuesday returned to the village to attend his daughter's wedding, much to the delight of the local community.

Gandhi had promised to stand by Malik and his family through every joy and sorrow, and today, the "Jannayak" became a part of their family's happiness, the Congress said on X.

According to the Congress, Gandhi first met Malik during an impromptu stop at Madina

village in July 2023 while on a trip to Shimla, and listened to the struggles faced by the farming families while working in the fields alongside him.

On Tuesday, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha reached the village in the morning, where he was received by the party's Rohtak MP, Deepender Singh Hooda, and other leaders, before proceeding to attend the wedding of Tanu, Malik's daughter. The family had earlier invited Gandhi for the ceremony, party sources said.

Dressed in a white T-shirt and green trousers, Gandhi savoured traditional Haryana dishes, including 'churma', a glass of milk and Gohana's famous 'jalebis'.

He also interacted with



Malik's family members and villagers, who tied a turban on him as a mark of respect. "Leader of the Opposition, Ra-

hul Gandhi, attended the wedding ceremony of the daughter of farmer Sanjay Malik in Sonipat," the Congress said in

a post on X in Hindi. "Jannayak (people's leader) Rahul Gandhi first met Sanjay ji in 2023. He worked alongside him in the fields and listened to the stories of the struggles faced by the farming families," it said, sharing images of the Congress leader's visit Tuesday.

Malik's family and the villagers told Gandhi that they were very happy that he made time to attend the wedding in a farmer's family, the Congress said.

In a short video shared by the party on X, Gandhi can be seen mingling with the family and the villagers, telling them that his mother Sonia Gandhi and sister Priyanka Gandhi sent their congratulations to Malik's family. Priyanka also

spoke to the family over the phone, after her brother dialled her number.

After the Congress leader left, an elderly woman from the family told reporters, "We are very happy that Rahul Gandhi came to attend the wedding ceremony of an ordinary farmer." "He also had milk and churma," quipped an excited young family member.

Deepender Hooda later said on X, "In an era where prominent leaders vie with one another to attend the weddings of wealthy industrialists, Rahul Gandhi today fulfilled his promise of 'Kanyadaan' by attending the wedding of the daughter of Sanjay, the farmer in whose field he had helped plant paddy nearly three years ago."

# international



India emerged as a junior partner in that (post-World War II order), but it now has to contend with the reality that it is sitting in a position that obliges it to act as a senior partner in the remaking of that order, when you see it dithering on the brink of collapse

ZUKO GODLIMPI | DEPUTY MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY, SOUTH AFRICA

## TRILATERAL PEACE TALKS

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said Turkey was ready to host the next round of trilateral peace talks between Kyiv, Moscow and Washington, after speaking to President Tayyip Erdogan Tuesday



## 1,000 Indian nationals evacuated from Qatar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Doha, March 10: Nearly 1,000 Indian nationals stranded in Qatar were flown to New Delhi, Mumbai and Kochi Tuesday amid the ongoing conflict in West Asia, the Indian mission here said.

The Indian Embassy in Doha coordinated with Qatar Airways to facilitate the travel of stranded Indian nationals and emergency cases, it said in an update on X.

"About 1,000 Indian passengers travelled to New Delhi, Mumbai and Kochi on Qatar Airways flights March 10," the mission said, thanking the airline for "giving priority to cases on humanitarian grounds".

It added that one flight of Qatar Airways is scheduled for New Delhi Wednesday. The embassy said that it continued the facilitation of travel of Indian nationals through the Salwa border to Saudi Arabia on temporary transit visas of 96 hours' validity.

"India's basketball team which had got stranded in Qatar reached India after travelling on flights from Saudi Arabia," it added.

The embassy said that its "24/7 Control Room remains functional, along with helplines and helpdesks of Indian community organisations, Indian Cultural Centre and Indian Community Benevolent Forum (ICBF)."

In a separate post, the embassy urged Indian nationals stranded in Qatar as tourists/short-term visitors due to flight cancellations from February 28 to fill out a form to ascertain the number and details of stranded Indian nationals who are not residents of the West Asian nation. Tensions in West Asia continue to escalate following US-Israeli strikes on Iran since February 28.

## Shots fired at US consulate in Toronto



REUTERS

Toronto/Washington, March 10: Shots were fired at the US consulate in Toronto early Tuesday but no one was injured, police said, in what Canada's public safety minister described as an unacceptable incident.

Toronto police said on X they responded to reports of shots at 5:29 am (0929 GMT) and found evidence of a discharged firearm. In another post, police said they had no information on a potential suspect.

"The shooting ... is absolutely unacceptable. Canada will never tolerate intimidation and violence of any kind, including towards our American friends in Canada," Public Safety Minister Gary Anandasangaree said in a post on X.

In a statement, the State Department said it was aware of the incident and was closely monitoring the situation in coordination with local law enforcement.

horses, their ribs showing through weather-beaten hides, are almost as common as cars on the streets, where vendors sell locally grown potatoes, onions and cucumbers.

At the town square where many Cubans gathered in front of the church that day, university student Robert Perez said the government has retaliated against July 11 protesters and their families, effectively causing self-censorship.

Rights groups, the European Union and the United States estimate Cuba has jailed between 1,000 and 1,500 people since those widespread protests, many of whom continue to serve extended sentences.

# Iran bets on energy chaos

### Iran bets on endurance, energy disruption to outlast US, Israel

REUTERS

Dubai, March 10: Iran is wagering it can outlast the United States and Israel—not militarily, but by grinding the war into a brutal contest of endurance. Its strategy is stark: Unleash drones and missiles, cut vital energy routes and jolt global markets hard enough to force Washington to blink first.

Despite the shock of the US-Israeli strikes and the loss of key figures, the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC)—long the ultimate guardian of the Islamic Republic—is firmly in control, directing the battlefield, executing pre-planned contingencies and dictating strategy and targets in the war.

The IRGC also played the decisive role in elevating Mojtaba Khamenei as supreme leader after Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was killed in the opening US-Israeli strikes.

"For them, they are waging an existential fight. This is an all-out war," said Fawaz Gerges of the London School of Economics. "They believe their very survival is at stake. They're willing to bring the temple down on everyone's heads." Alex Vatanka, a senior fellow at the Middle East Institute and expert on Iranian politics, added, "They're like a bleeding animal—wounded, but therefore more dangerous than ever."

That all-out war mindset is behind Iran's escalating strikes across the Gulf, targeting energy hubs from Qatar to Saudi Arabia to maximise economic disruption in a calculated attempt to drive up costs for its neighbours, Europe and the United States and test Washington's political will.

US President Donald Trump told Republican lawmakers Monday the war would continue until Iran is "totally and decisively defeated" but predicted it would be over soon.

He added that once the Unit-



IRGC holds firm control, direct strikes, strategy, targets

Guards anoint Mojtaba Khamenei, cement role as kingmakers

Missiles and market shock are Iran weapons, test US resolve

ed States is done with the military operation against Iran, Tehran will not have any weapons against the United States, Israel and US allies for a long time. Iranian insiders say this escalation was anticipated long before the war began 11 days ago. Iranian planners assumed confrontation with Washington and Israel was inevitable, and prepared a layered strategy coordinated across the Guards' sprawling military networks and proxy forces.

Now, with little left to lose, Iran is executing that plan and turning the conflict into a grinding war of attrition aimed at exhausting its adversaries politically and economically.

The consequences are already visible at home.

Mojtaba's selection as su-

preme leader, insiders say, proves the Guards' dominance as kingmakers. They say the balance of power has shifted. The supreme leader holds the title, but the future of the Islamic Republic, and the authority of the clerical establishment itself, now depends on whether the Guards can weather the storm unleashed by the US-Israeli campaign.

**WHO WILL BLINK FIRST?**

For strategists on both sides, the war is increasingly defined by two parallel tests of endurance: whether Iran can keep firing missiles and whether the United States and Israel can sustain the economic, military and political costs of stopping them.

"The big question is who blinks first in this all-out

war—Donald Trump or Iran's leaders?" Gerges said.

By driving up energy prices and spreading financial pain across Western economies, Tehran hopes the pressure will force a US retreat.

Early signs are that the effects are already biting. Oil prices are spiking, gas costs are rising and political unease is growing in Washington as the economic fallout collides with November midterm elections.

Under that pressure, Trump, Gerges said, could eventually seek an exit by declaring victory, citing the killing of Iran's supreme leader, the destruction of Iran's nuclear and missile capabilities and key military infrastructure.

For Tehran, however, survival alone would be enough.

## Hezbollah returns to guerrilla roots, awaits Israeli invasion

Beirut: Lebanon's Hezbollah is applying lessons from its last war with Israel as it braces for a possible full-scale Israeli invasion and protracted conflict, returning to its roots in guerrilla warfare in south Lebanon, four Lebanese sources said. Operating in small units, fighters from the Iran-backed group are avoiding the use of communication devices that could be at risk of Israeli tapping, and are rationing the use of key anti-tank rockets as they engage Israeli troops, said the sources, who are familiar with Hezbollah military activities. Some 15 months since Israel pounded Hezbollah in their last war, the group sparked a new Israeli offensive last week by opening fire to avenge the killing of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei at the start of the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran. Heavily criticised in Lebanon for dragging the country into a war that has displaced 700,000 people, Hezbollah has described its actions as "existential defence", framing it as a response to Israeli attacks that have continued since a 2024 ceasefire.

## Australia to send missiles to UAE

Sydney: Australia will deploy a military surveillance aircraft to the Middle East and send missiles to the United Arab Emirates but will not put troops on the ground in Iran, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said Tuesday. Australia's military support would help the Gulf countries defend themselves against unprovoked attacks from Iran, Albanese said, stressing Australia was "not a protagonist". "Our involvement is purely defensive," Albanese told reporters. "And it's in defence of Australians who are in the region as well as in defence of our friends in the United Arab Emirates." Albanese said Australia would deploy one of its Boeing-manufactured E-7A Wedgetail airborne early warning and control system aircraft for an initial four weeks to protect the airspace above the Gulf countries. Advanced medium-range air-to-air missiles would be provided to the United Arab Emirates, following a phone call with President Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, he added.

# Trump, Putin talk of war, peace

### US weighs easing Russian oil sanctions

REUTERS

Moscow, March 10: US President Donald Trump and Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin discussed the war in Iran and prospects for peace in Ukraine Monday, hours after the Kremlin chief warned that a global energy crisis threatened the world economy.

The conflict caused the biggest spike in oil prices since Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine although the bulk of a surge in crude oil prices Monday was reversed Tuesday and Asian and European share prices staged a recovery.

The Kremlin said Trump had called Putin and, in their first telephone call this year, they discussed Russian ideas for a speedy end to the conflict in Iran, the military situation in Ukraine and the impact of events in Venezuela on the global oil market. "I had a very good call with President Putin," Trump told a press conference at his Florida golf club, adding that Putin wanted to be helpful on Iran.

"I said, 'You could be more helpful by getting the Ukraine-Russia war over with. That will be more helpful.'"

Putin had said earlier that the US-Israeli war on Iran had triggered a global energy crisis, while cautioning that oil production dependent on transport through the Strait of Hormuz near Iran's coast could soon come to a halt. Putin said Russia, the world's second-largest oil exporter and holder of its biggest natural gas reserves, was



- Trump and Putin speak for first time this year
- US weighs easing Russian oil sanctions
- Putin says energy crisis has arrived
- Putin discusses ideas for Iran settlement with Trump

ready to work again with European customers if they wanted to return to long-term cooperation.

### US SANCTIONS

Trump's administration is considering reducing oil sanctions on Russia, three sources familiar with the planning said.

Talks could cover broad sanctions relief as well as more targeted options for certain countries, such as India, to buy Russian oil without fear of US penalties, including tariffs, the sources told Reuters. The move would be intended to boost world supplies of oil following disruptions to Middle East shipments but could also complicate US efforts to deprive Russia of revenue for its war in Ukraine.

"We're also waiving certain oil-related sanctions to reduce prices. So we have sanctions on some countries. We're going to take those sanctions off until this straightens out," Trump told reporters, without identifying the countries.

# NK, China to resume passenger train service after six-year gap

REUTERS

Seoul/Beijing, March 10: Tickets for the first passenger train in six years from Beijing to North Korea's capital, Pyongyang, were sold out ahead of its March 12 departure, an official ticketing office in Beijing said Tuesday.

The resumption of the rail service, suspended since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, revives a critical transport link between the largely isolated North Korea and its primary economic ally.

Tickets for the journey - restricted to travellers holding business visas - were purchased by entrepreneurs, government officials and reporters, according to the Beijing ticketing office. Tickets were still available



for the next service, scheduled for March 18.

### NORTH KOREA STILL LARGELY CLOSED TO TOURISTS

China's railway authority said in a notice that Beijing-Pyongyang trains will operate four times a week in both directions Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday while Dandong-Pyongyang trains will run daily.

The resumption from March 12 will "further promote Chi-

# Cubans take to the streets, but fear crossing line

REUTERS

San Antonio De Los Baños, Cuba, March 10: Without warning, the sleepy Cuban farm town of San Antonio de los Baños burst into protest one morning nearly five years ago, triggering a series of copycat demonstrations across the country that shook the Communist government unlike any event in decades.

Frustrated by chronic shortages of food and medicine and lengthy power outages as the coronavirus pandemic lingered, protesters marched in the streets chanting "Patria y Vida," or "Homeland and Life," the title of a popular song that



inverts the Communist slogan "Patria o Muerte," or "Homeland or Death."

The phrase became a rallying cry for a movement that was quickly crushed by state security forces.

Cubans expressed a range of opinions, from sympathy toward the Cuban government to openly criticizing the Com-

na-North Korea travel, trade and economic cooperation, and people-to-people exchanges to enhance mutual well-being and friendship," the notice said.

North Korea remains closed to most foreign tourism, with limited exceptions largely for Russian tour groups under restricted arrangements, according to travel agencies organising trips to the country.

Before the pandemic, Chinese visitors made up the largest share of foreign tourists to North Korea, the agencies said.

Tour organisers said Monday that North Korea had cancelled next month's Pyongyang Marathon for unspecified reasons. The race is one of the few events that has been open to international participants in the isolated state.

munist government for failing to produce prosperity. Others called for dialogue and understanding.

But all agreed there was little prospect of another massive popular uprising any time soon, citing the government's violent repression of 2021, resulting in long prison terms for many protesters, while also observing that demonstrations failed to produce any meaningful change.

Though only 40 km (25 miles) outside Havana, San Antonio de los Baños, population 50,000, is a world apart, typical of many towns across the eye-brow-shaped island. Tractors and carts drawn by scraggly





**Looking ahead, hiring decisions will be increasingly influenced by AI adoption and broader digital transformation. The strong intent to hire, alongside the measured deployment of AI, signals a maturing labour market - one that is balancing ambition with accountability**

**SANDEEP GULATI** | MD, MANPOWERGROUP INDIA & MIDDLE EAST

**ALUMINIUM MAKERS RIDE ON RISING PRICES**

International aluminium prices have surged past 3,400 dollars per tonne amid fears of supply disruptions from the West Asia crisis, offering short-term gains to Indian primary producers but posing long-term challenges through rising input costs, the Federation of Indian Mineral Industries (FIMI) said Tuesday.



**of the day quote**

**We are now finalising an agreement with Canada. We have just launched discussions with the six nations, GCC group of countries, in the Middle East. All of this provides huge opportunities for friends from the processed food and agri sector**

**PYUSH GOVAL** | MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY



**With Indian households increasingly allocating savings to financial assets and the inclusion of Indian government bonds in global indices expected to bring strong foreign inflows, the opportunity in fixed income is becoming more compelling**

**AJAY MENON** | MD & CEO OF WEALTH MANAGEMENT, MOTILAL OSWAL FINANCIAL SERVICES



**The enhanced pipeline and strong business momentum we are experiencing validates our AI First strategy and reinforces our confidence in delivering superior outcomes for clients and stakeholders. Our solid FY27 forecast is a clear reflection of this trajectory**

**JOSEPH ANANTHARAJU** | CO-CHAIRMAN & CEO, HAPPIEST MINDS TECHNOLOGIES



**Sensex rebounds on retreating crude**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, March 10:** Stock market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended nearly 1 per cent higher Tuesday after two days of massive decline, following a drop in crude oil prices and recovery in global peers amid indications that the West Asia crisis could end soon.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 639.82 points or 0.82 per cent to settle at 78,205.98. During the day, it surged 960.09 points or 1.23 per cent to 78,526.25.

The 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 233.55 points or 0.97 per cent to end at 24,261.60.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, tumbled 9.03 per cent to USD 90.26 per barrel.

From the 30-Sensex firms, Mahindra & Mahindra, InterGlobe Aviation, Maruti, ICICI Bank, Asian Paints and UltraT-each Cement were among the major gainers.

Eternal, Infosys, Reliance Industries and Bharti Airtel were among the laggards.

"Dalal Street mirrored the improvement in global sentiment after the sharp decline in crude oil prices, following comments from Trump hinting at a possible end to the war. Broader markets outperformed the benchmark indices, with most



sectors trading in positive territory," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

The BSE smallcap select index jumped 1.91 per cent, and the midcap select index climbed 1.71 per cent.

"The rebound came after signs of potential de-escalation in the Middle East conflict, as US President Donald Trump hinted at a possible early end to the Iran war. This development eased geopolitical concerns and triggered a sharp correction in global crude oil prices, helping risk sentiment stabilise," Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

Among BSE sectoral indices, auto surged 2.93 per cent, consumer durables rose 2.60 per cent, services 2.35 per cent, BSE PSU Bank 2.29 per cent, consumer discretionary 2.07 per cent, financial services 2.01 per cent, commodities 1.74 per cent, and Private Banks index 1.72 per cent. IT, energy, oil & gas and BSE Focused IT were the laggards. "Markets witnessed a strong rebound on Tuesday, recovering a part of the previous session's sharp losses amid improved global cues and easing concerns over crude oil prices. Investor sentiment improved slightly as global markets stabilised and crude oil prices cooled from

**IndiGo CEO Pieter Elbers resigns**



PTI & REUTERS

**New Delhi, March 10:** IndiGo CEO Pieter Elbers put in his papers Tuesday, three months after the country's largest airline faced massive operational disruptions.

The airline's Managing Director Rahul Bhatia would in the interim assume management until such time that the company announces the arrival of a new leader, which

is expected in short order, a release said Tuesday.

"Rahul returns to assume management of the affairs of the airline to strengthen the company's Culture, reinforce operational excellence and deepen its commitment to delivering exceptional service of care, reliability and professionalism to its customers," InterGlobe Aviation's Chairman Vikram Singh Mehta said.

InterGlobe Aviation operates the airline under the brand name IndiGo.

India's largest airline scrapped about 4,500 flights in the first weeks of December, highlighting concerns over limited competition in the world's fastest-growing aviation market.

The airline apologised to customers after it failed to make roster changes in time to comply with stricter pilot fatigue rules set by the government.

Elbers last year shared the stage with Prime Minister Narendra Modi at a global airlines meeting in New Delhi, basking in IndiGo's role as the host airline of the annual gathering.

**India stable, trustworthy AI partner: Tata Communications Chairman**



**Thanjavur:** "India is a geopolitically stable and trustworthy partner in the global AI ecosystem and its strength to use the right set of digital tools around AI will be a game-changer," said NG Subramanian (NGS), Chairman of Tata Communications and Tata Elxsi. Addressing the SASTRA PACT for IMPACT event at SASTRA University in Thanjavur, he lauded SASTRA for collaborating with different organisations in multiple domains to leverage AI's growing opportunity and build capacity and resilience indigenously. NGS also stressed on the need to teach AI models and not train AI models with anecdotal references stressing on the need

for Dharmic AI. SASTRA signed MoUs with Zoho Corporation, City Union Bank, Centific Inc., IIT Ropar, Greaves Cotton, PRODAPT & Store for collaborative work in AI, Physical AI, Agriculture Sustainability, Software Engineering, Advanced Manufacturing and Mathematical modelling. CEO of Zoho Shailesh Kumar Davey, CEO & MD of City Union Bank Dr. N Kamakodi, Prof Rajeev Ahuja, Director of IIT Ropar, RL Narasimhan, Centific India Head, Dhanshree Bhat, CDO of PRODAPT were present in the MoU signing function. The Vice-Chancellor of SASTRA, Dr. S Vaidhyasubramanian welcomed the gathering.

**Equity MF inflow rises 8% to ₹25,978cr**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 10:** Equity mutual funds attracted net inflows of ₹25,978 crore in February, marking an 8 per cent rise from the previous month, suggesting that investor participation remained resilient despite intermittent market volatility and global uncertainties.

The increase came following two consecutive months of moderation in equity inflows, the inflow lifted the industry's Assets Under Management (AUM) to ₹82 lakh crore in February from ₹81 lakh crore in January, according to data released by industry body Amfi Tuesday.

In a conference call, Venkat N Chalasani, CEO of Amfi said that positive inflow in equities could be driven by the India-US trade deal. "There could be some volatility this month due to the escalating Middle East conflict involving the US, Israel, and Iran but India's growth story will continue in the long-term," he added.

However, SIP (Systematic Investment Plans) inflows dipped slightly to around ₹29,845 crore in February from ₹31,000 crore in the preceding month. According to Chalasani, February's SIP collections were impacted by the shorter month because installments scheduled for the 29th, 30th and 31st typically process in early March, slightly deferring a portion of contributions to the



following month. Going by the data, equity inflows rose to ₹25,978 crore in February, higher than the ₹24,028 crore seen in the preceding month. Equity inflows were at ₹28,054 crore in December and ₹29,911 crore in November. "February 2026 was another volatile month for markets, yet the Indian mutual fund industry demonstrated remarkable resilience. This is a clear signal that investors are increasingly looking at long-term and past short-term volatility," Varun Gupta, CEO, Groww Mutual Fund said.

Within equity schemes, flexi cap funds attracted the highest net inflow of ₹6,924.65 crore. Also, there has been a sharp pick-up in flows into the mid-cap and small-cap categories. Mid-cap funds attracted net inflows of about ₹4,003 crore, higher than ₹3,185 crore in

January, while small-cap funds garnered around ₹3,881 crore, up from ₹2,942 crore in the previous month.

"This indicates that investors continued to selectively allocate towards higher-growth segments despite valuation concerns, possibly taking advantage of recent market corrections," said Himanshu Srivastava, Principal Research, Morningstar Investment Research India.

Sectoral and thematic funds also saw inflows of ₹2,987 crore, while large-cap funds saw net additions of ₹2,112 crore. However, ELSS funds recorded a net outflow of ₹650 crore, suggesting some profit booking or reduced tax-saving investments during the period. Overall, the industry recorded net inflows of ₹94,530 crore during the month, lower than the ₹1.56 lakh crore registered in January.

**Silver surges ₹11k to ₹2.79 lakh/kg**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 10:** Silver prices surged by ₹10,975 to ₹2.79 lakh per kilogram in the national capital Tuesday, while gold rose ₹400, tracking strong global trends as a weak US dollar boosted demand for the safe-haven asset.

Ending its three-day losing streak, the white metal soared by ₹10,975, or 4.09 per cent, to ₹2,79,275 per kg (inclusive of all taxes) from Monday's closing level of ₹2,68,300 per kg, as per the All India Sarafa Association.

Gold prices also moved higher, with the metal having 99.9 per cent purity rising by ₹400, or 0.24 per cent, to ₹1,64,700 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes).

The yellow metal settled at ₹1,64,300 per 10 grams in the previous session.



Gold and silver prices saw a notable uptick Tuesday, driven primarily by geopolitical developments as US President Donald Trump hinted at a potential resolution to the ongoing conflict in West Asia, which has kept investors on edge, Gaurav Garg, Research Analyst at Lemonn Markets Desk, said.

The turmoil has created a volatile market environment, with inflation fears prompted by skyrocketing crude oil prices impacting investor sentiment, he added.

In the international markets, spot silver gained USD 1.38, or 1.6 per cent, to USD 88.33 per ounce, while gold was trading nearly 1 per cent higher at USD 5,172.86 per ounce.

"Gold and silver rebounded on Tuesday as a pullback in the US dollar and Treasury yields provided relief to precious metals," Saamil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

The dollar index retreated after touching a 15-week high in the previous session, while US Treasury bond yields also edged lower, creating room for bullion prices to recover, Gandhi added.

**Mideast crisis: India to boost coal use for summer power**

REUTERS

**New Delhi, March 10:** India will likely lean more on its coal capacity to meet peak power demand this summer as liquefied natural gas supplies tighten after shipping disruptions linked to the US-Israeli war on Iran hit exports from major producers, two industry officials said.

New Delhi typically pushes power plants to ramp up generation during the April-June summer months, including costly gas-fired generation, to meet surging electricity demand and subsidises the cost for companies to shield customers from higher prices.

But so far the government has received no bids from power companies to supply 12,000 megawatt-hour of gas-based power for the summer months, an official with knowledge of the matter said. The tender will close in the next two days.

A second official said the power ministry is looking to bring coal plants out of planned outages and advising generators to avoid shutdowns during the peak summer months.



Top utility NTPC has already told India's grid regulator it will not be able to supply gas-fired power during the April-June summer months, two company

sources said. NTPC and the federal power ministry did not respond to Reuters emails seeking comment. India has invoked emergency

provisions and declared force majeure, reprioritising natural gas supplies to key sectors such as households and fertiliser plants.

India's Petronet LNG Ltd, the country's top gas importer, has also issued a force majeure notice to customers including top power suppliers GAIL (India) Ltd, Indian Oil Corp and Bharat Petroleum Corp after supplies from Qatar and Abu Dhabi National Oil Company were halted.

The country has about 20 gigawatts (GW) of gas-based generation capacity, which typically operates at 6-10% utilisation due to costly LNG, but rises to about 30% during the summer months.

Even if peak demand reaches 250-260 GW this summer, India is unlikely to face material power cuts given ample coal, lignite, nuclear, hydro and wind capacity, said Gautam Shahi, senior director at Crisis Ratings.

India relies on coal power for nearly 75% of its power generation.

"India's thermal coal market is seeing steady import demand, particularly for coal grades used by power producers," said Vasudev Pammani, director at Gujarat-based coal trader i-Energy Resources.

# Australia issues humanitarian visas to Iranian footballers

REUTERS

**Sydney/Washington, March 10:** Australia Tuesday granted humanitarian visas to five Iranian women soccer players after they sought asylum, fearing persecution on their return home for their refusal to sing the national anthem at an Asia Cup match.

"Australians have been moved by the plight of these brave women," Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese told a news conference in Canberra Tuesday, a day after police had helped extract the women from their Iranian government handlers.

"They're safe here, and they should feel at home here." US President Donald Trump praised Albanese for allowing the women to stay, saying on social media the US was ready to take the players if Australia did not.

Australian officials identified the players as Zahra Sarbali Alishah, Mona Hamoudi, Zahra Ghanbari, Fatemeh Pasandideh and Atefeh Ramezanizadeh.

They were staying at an undisclosed location under police protection, officials said.

Some of the Iranian players left their hotel in the northeastern city of Gold Coast Tuesday afternoon on a bus that was surrounded by members of the diaspora protesting against the Iranian government. They flew to Sydney airport Tuesday evening before being transferred to the international terminal.

It was not clear how many players arrived at the airport, or where they were going.

The office of Iran's general prosecutor said Tuesday the remaining members of the team were invited back to the country "with peace and confidence," Iranian media reported.

Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke posted pictures on his X account showing him posing with the five players after granting their visas. He said the government had been in secret talks with the players for days but acknowledged fleeing was a difficult decision for them.

"Even though the offer con-

## MIDDLE EAST CRISIS



Trump says Albanese doing very good job in 'delicate situation'

Police helped extract players from official Iranian touring group

members of the team, it is quite possible and indeed likely that not every woman in the team will make a decision to take up the opportunity that Australia would offer to them," he said.

Donald Trump initially criti-

nian women footballers home, warning they could be killed and offering US help.

After speaking with Anthony Albanese around 2 a.m., Trump praised his handling of the delicate situation, as five players had already received assistance and were safely relocated.

Concerns grew over the safety of Iran's women's football team after players were labelled "wartime traitors" on state television for refusing to sing the national an-

## Indian men's basketball team heads home after 10-day stranding in Doha

**New Delhi:** After being stranded in Doha for 10 days, the Indian men's Basketball team is on their way back home, Basketball Federation of India said Tuesday. The Indian contingent travelled to Doha for the FIBA Basketball World Cup 2027 Asian Qualifiers, but found themselves stranded in the Qatari Capital, due to ongoing geopolitical tensions in the region that have disrupted international airspace and flight operation. The Qatar Basketball Federation has arranged hotel and other logistical support for the Indian contingent made all the arrangements for the safety and security of players and staff until Embassy of India to ensure the safe return of the team. The BFI said its president and secretary general remained in constant touch with the FIBA Asia office, the Government of India, and the Embassy of India in Doha.



them before a match against South Korea. The team later sang the anthem before facing Australia, raising fears among rights groups they had been pressured by officials.

Iranian Football Federation vice president Farideh Shojaei said the team left their hotel with police and authorities

were contacting relevant bodies and families. Global players' union FIFPRO warned about the safety of remaining players and relatives in Iran.

Australia previously granted emergency humanitarian visas to Afghanistan's women's cricket team after the Taliban banned women's sport in 2021.

# India seek crucial draw

**Unbeaten Women in Blue need a draw or win against Wales to book semis berth in the FIH Women's Hockey WC Qualifiers**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Hyderabad, March 10:** India will look for at least a draw against Wales in their final pool match to advance to the semifinal of the FIH Women's Hockey World Cup Qualifiers here Wednesday.

India are currently leading Pool B with four points from two games, same as second place Scotland but enjoy a superior goal difference.

The top two teams from each pool will qualify for the semifinals and India will need a draw or a win to enter the last four round.

But If India lose, they will stay on four points and their qualification will depend on the match between Scotland and Uruguay.

The Indian women have had a strong campaign so far. They opened the tournament with a massive 4-0 win over Uruguay March 8 and then fought hard for a 2-2 draw against Scotland Monday.

Young forward Sunelita Topo has been in top form, scoring in both matches. Attackers Lalremsiami, Navneet Kaur, and



Rutuja Dadaso Pisal have also been excellent, finding the net and creating multiple scoring opportunities.

The Indian defence has also held firm, with goalkeeper Bichu Devi making crucial saves consistently.

Playing in front of a cheering home crowd in Hyderabad has also given the hosts a wonderful boost of energy.

India captain Salima Tete is satisfied with the team's performance so far.

"After the opening two games, there is positivity in the team. The young players are taking their opportunity and have been doing very well. The team is relishing playing freely, and that is a very good thing for us," she said.

"We want to qualify for the World Cup and become champions. That's what we talk about when the team is together and that's our goal," Tete added.

India enjoy a promising record against Wales, leading the

head-to-head battles 5-1.

But Wales will come hard in their bid to register their first win of the campaign, and so India need to stay focused and avoid complacency. The top three teams from this tournament will qualify for the World Cup to be held in Belgium and the Netherlands later this year.

In other matches of the day, England will play Austria, Italy will take on Korea and Scotland will be up against Uruguay.

# Wasteful India crash out after Taipei loss

**Blue Tigresses end their AFC Women's Asian Cup campaign winless**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Sydney, March 10:** A profligate India bowed out of the AFC Women's Asian Cup with a 1-3 defeat to Chinese Taipei in their must-win last group stage fixture here Tuesday, paying a heavy price for the lack of finishing touches.

Despite dominating large portions of the game and creating numerous opportunities, the India's inability to convert chances in the final third proved costly, leading to an early exit after they qualified for the prestigious tournament on merit for the first time.

Manisha Kalyan scored India's lone goal in the 39th minute, the winger unleashing a powerful shot from about 30 yards to find the target.

Chinese Taipei took the lead

in the 12th minute when Y H Su slotted the ball inside an empty goal post after a horrible back pass mistake. India struck back after that, but just before half time (45+9), YY Hsu's shot hit the upright corner of the post and deflected off Panthoi to enter the India goal.

This was after Pyari Xaxa handled the ball inside the box and referee pointed to the spot.

The contest was as good as over when Yu-Chin Chen struck Chinese Taipei's third goal in the 77th minute, getting the better of Panthoi after a run down the right side.

India had earlier lost to Vietnam and Japan, and to make the next stage of the tournament, the Blue Tigress needed to beat Chinese Taipei by minimum two goals Tuesday and Japan to prevail over Vietnam.



## NATIONAL RUGBY 15s CHAMPIONSHIP

# Odisha RC, Harlequins set up women's summit clash

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 10:** Defending champions Odisha RC and Future Hope Harlequins booked their places in the women's final of the National Rugby 15s Championship 2026 - Division 1 after two hard-fought semi-finals at the Kalinga Stadium, here Tuesday.

In the first semi-final, Odisha RC held their nerve to defeat Calcutta Cricket and Football Club (CC&FC) 24-22 in a thrilling encounter. The home side dominated the opening half and went into the break with a 19-3 lead, with Arati Murmu, Sanjukta Munda, and Poonam Singh among the scorers. Sumitra Nayak added further points with the boot.

However, CC&FC mounted a spirited comeback in the second half. Debasi Ghosh, Sumandeep Kaur, and Teena crossed the line, while Latisha Madhu Khedekar added crucial points to bring the Kolkata side within touching distance. Despite the late surge, Odisha RC managed to hold on to secure a narrow 24-22 victory and advance to the final.

The second semi-final saw Future Hope Harlequins produce a strong comeback to defeat Delhi Hurricanes Women



17-10. Delhi Hurricanes started well with tries from Isha and Anjali, taking control of the early exchanges.

Future Hope Harlequins responded with determination, as Namista Oraon, Tanuja Oraon, and Lachmi Oraon led the comeback effort. Lachmi Oraon also added a conversion as the Harlequins overturned the deficit to seal a 17-10 victory and book their place in the final.

In the Plate Final, Chandigarh United defeated Future Warriors Kerala 10-0 to secure

a fifth-place finish in the tournament.

The Women's Final will now see defending champions Odisha RC take on Future Hope Harlequins March 12, while CC&FC and Delhi Hurricanes will compete in the third-place playoff earlier in the day.

The focus now shifts to the Men's semi-finals Wednesday, where Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS) will take on Delhi Hurricanes at 6:30 pm, followed by Bombay Gymkhana facing Future Hope Harlequins at 8:00 pm.

## FIFA WORLD CUP

# COO: Too big to be postponed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dallas, March 10:** FIFA's World Cup chief operating officer says the tournament is "too big" to be postponed because of global turmoil caused by the US and Israeli war against Iran.

Speaking Monday at the International Broadcast Center for the 48-nation tournament, which starts June 11, Heimo Schirgi said FIFA continues to closely monitor the Iran war and its fallout.

"If had a crystal ball I could tell you now what is going to happen, but obviously the situation is developing," Schirgi said.

"It's changing day by day and we are monitoring closely. We're working together with all our federal partners and also our international partners in evaluating the situation, and we basically take it day by day and at some stage we will have a resolution. And the World Cup will go on obviously, right? The World Cup is too big and we hope that everyone can participate that has qualified."

The tournament, expanded from 32 nations to 48, is scheduled for 11 US venues plus three in Mexico and two in Canada. While the Trump administration has imposed a travel ban on four of the nations that have qualified - Iran, Ivory Coast, Haiti and Senegal - it says it will make an exception for players,



**"It's changing day by day and we are monitoring closely. We're working together with all our federal partners and also our international partners in evaluating the situation, and we basically take it day by day and at some stage we will have a resolution. And the World Cup will go on obviously, right? The World Cup is too big and we hope that everyone can participate that has qualified."**

**Heimo Schirgi | COO, FIFA World Cup**

team officials and immediate relatives. Schirgi said FIFA is in constant contact with Iran's soccer federation for updates, but he wouldn't share any details about those conversations.

FIFA officials were in Dallas for the announcement of plans for the city's fan festival that will operate for 34 days during the World Cup and to view construction of the broadcast hub

at the downtown convention centre - about 20 miles (32 kilometers) from AT&T Stadium, the home of the NFL's Dallas Cowboys where nine matches will be played.

"Given the state of the world today, this will be a great opportunity to bring everyone together," Schirgi said.

"For you who have not experienced the World Cup, the

## SHORT TAKES

### BCCI Announces ₹131 Crore prize for Champions

**New Delhi:** The BCCI Tuesday announced a cash reward of Rs 131 crore for the entire Indian squad following its third T20 World Cup victory. The amount covers 15 players, coaching staff, other support staff. As per sources, the players are certain to get lion's share of the reward money while support staff amount will be decided as per hierarchy. The amount is an increment of Rs 6 crore from the Rs 125 crore that Rohit Sharma's team was awarded back in 2024. India lifted the prestigious trophy after defeating New Zealand by 96 runs in the final at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad Sunday, successfully defending the title and becoming the first team in the history of the tournament to retain the ICC Men's T20 World Cup. With this victory, India also became the first team to win the ICC Men's T20 World Cup three times, further cementing its place among the most successful teams in the history of the format.

### CL Round of 16: Catalans travel to Newcastle

**Barcelona:** Barcelona faces Newcastle as the Champions League round of 16 gets underway Tuesday. The Spanish champions travel to St James' Park for the first leg, with coach Hansi Flick leaving his players in no doubt about what's at stake. "It's one of the most important moments of the season and we are all ready for it," he said. Five-time European champion Barcelona hasn't won the Champions League since 2015 and has had to watch on as its fiercest rival Real Madrid has dominated the competition. Liverpool travels to Galatasaray Tuesday and Bayern Munich is away to Atalanta. Atletico Madrid hosts a Tottenham team that is fighting to avoid relegation from the Premier League.

### Krishna wins double gold at Senior Nat'l Para Badminton C'ship

**Hyderabad:** Paralympic champion Krishna Nagar continued his good form and produced a magnificent performance to claim two gold medals at the 7th Senior National Para Badminton Championship 2026 held here Tuesday. The Tokyo Paralympics gold medalist began his campaign on a strong note by clinching the Men's Singles SH6 title. In the final, Nagar defeated Sudarsan M S in straight games, registering a 21-10, 21-19 victory. The 25-year-old continued his impressive run in the Mixed Doubles SH6 event, where he partnered Nithya Sre Sumathy Sivan to win the final, defeating the pair of Sudarsan M S and Shreya Kumari with a convincing 21-7, 21-11 scoreline.