



**Fuming Rashmika**  
Rashmika Mandanna calls her leaked old audio an invasion of privacy and warns that sharing it may invite legal action  
LEISURE | P2



**China's new law**  
China passes a law on a 'shared' national identity among the country's 55 ethnic minority groups  
INTERNATIONAL | P10



**₹23.44L-cr wiped out**  
Investors' wealth erodes by ₹23.44 lakh crore since the beginning of conflict involving the US, Israel and Iran  
BUSINESS | P11



**Valverde's magic**  
Federico Valverde scores his first career Champions League hat-trick in just 22 minutes, leading Real Madrid to a 3-0 win over Manchester City  
SPORTS | P12



**DESPERATE TIMES:** People queue up to get LPG cylinders in Bihar's Patna, Thursday. Long queues were seen at several gas agencies amid an ongoing LPG supply shortage in the country (MORE P3&9) PTI PHOTO

## US probes India, China for 'unfair trade practices'

MOVE OPENS DOOR TO PENALTIES SUCH AS ADDITIONAL TARIFFS

**New York, March 12:** The United States announced new investigations into what it considers unfair trade practices by its trading partners, including India and China, opening the door to penalties such as further tariffs as President Donald Trump seeks to replace duties struck down by the Supreme Court.

The Trump administration is launching separate probes centered on overproduction and importing goods made with forced labour, US Trade Representative (USTR) Jamieson Greer told reporters Wednesday.

"The excess industrial capacity probe targets the European Union, China, Japan, India and others, and could inflame tensions with those trading partners," officials said. Many of those targeted have struck tariff pacts with Washington, which Greer said are "independent" of the investigations.

He said Trump's trade policy remains the same as it has been



"for decades", even if his tools may change. "We need to protect American jobs, and we need to make sure we have fair trade with our trading partners," he added. "If we need to impose tariffs to help solve this, we will."

Others subject to the excess capacity probe initiated Wednesday include Singapore, Switzerland, South Korea, Vietnam, Taiwan and Mexico. "The investigation will focus on economies that we have evidence appear to exhibit structural excess capacity and production in various manufacturing sectors," Greer said.

He did not specify if the eventual penalties would differ based on the country. "The second probe linked to forced labour will impact roughly 60 part-

ners," he said.

"This is not about domestic conditions of particular countries," Greer added. "It is really about whether countries have implemented external-facing laws to prohibit the import of goods made with forced labour."

The efforts come weeks after the Supreme Court struck down Trump's global tariffs, saying he had exceeded his authority in tapping emergency economic powers to impose them on virtually all countries.

Trump swiftly slapped a new 10 per cent duty on imports, to last until July 24 while officials work on more durable measures as they resurrect his trade agenda. Greer expects other similar investigations "on a country-specific basis" to come.

He seeks to conclude the latest probes "as quickly as possible", ideally before the temporary duties expire.

Both investigations unveiled Wednesday are handled by the USTR, falling under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974.

**IRREGULAR by MANJUL**

Now that he is proven guilty, please sentence him to 20-year parole with occasional visit to the prison, Milord

## Triple murder rocks Deogarh

**Deogarh, March 12:** In what has sent shockwaves across Deogarh, a 55-year-old man allegedly bludgeoned his wife, daughter-in-law, and young granddaughter to death with a hammer over a family dispute at Gariapali under Kundheigola police limits here late Wednesday night.

Ramesh Garia, the accused, reportedly got into a heated argument with his wife, Gula Garia, at their home in the village at around



11:30pm. Soon, Ramesh lost his cool and attacked Gula with a hammer. To escape his wrath, Gula rushed to her daughter-in-law Lipi's room. Ramesh followed her to the room, where he attacked the three – his wife, daughter-in-law, and granddaughter Ishani – with the hammer,

killing them on the spot. Ramesh fled the scene after the incident. Ramesh's son Dhiren Garia was away from home at the time. Upon returning home, he found the bodies and alerted the police.

SP Anil Kumar Mishra and senior officers visited the spot and launched a probe. "We've registered a case (88/2026) and efforts are on to nab the accused soon," Mishra said. Police suspect a domestic dispute may have triggered the killings, though the exact motive is yet to be established.

No. 1001/56/2526

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ପ୍ରଧାନମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ

ଶ୍ରୀ ମୋହନ ଚରଣ ମାଝୀ  
ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା

## ପିଏମ୍ କିଶାନ ଉତ୍ସବ ଦିବସ

**ମୁଖ୍ୟ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମ**

ଆଭାଷୀ ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ  
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ଶ୍ରୀ ନରେନ୍ଦ୍ର ମୋଦୀଙ୍କ  
କରକମଳରେ

**ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ୩୪ ଲକ୍ଷରୁ ଉର୍ଦ୍ଧ୍ୱ ଚାଷୀ ଭାଇଭଉଣୀଙ୍କୁ  
୨୨<sup>ତମ</sup> କିସ୍ତରେ ୨୮୪ କୋଟି ଟଙ୍କା ହସ୍ତାନ୍ତର**

ଗୁଆହାଟି, ଆସାମ

**ରାଜ୍ୟସ୍ତରୀୟ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମ**

ମୁଖ୍ୟ ଅତିଥି

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ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ**

ଗରିମାମୟ ଉପସ୍ଥିତି

**ଶ୍ରୀ ଜନକ ବର୍ଦ୍ଧନ ସିଂହ ଦେଓ  
ଉପମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା**

କୃଷି ଶିକ୍ଷା ସଦନ, ଓପୁଏଟି, ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱର

**୧୩ ମାର୍ଚ୍ଚ ୨୦୨୬ | ଅପରାହ୍ନ ୪ ଘଟିକା**

**କୃଷି ଓ କୃଷକ ସଶକ୍ତିକରଣ ବିଭାଗ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସରକାର**

OIPR-1001/1102/25-26/0001

# leisure



## KYLIE'S WISH TO HAVE MORE KIDS

Reality star Kylie Jenner has shared that she would like to welcome more children. The 28-year-old media personality is focusing on herself before she hits the big 3-0 August 10, 2027, amid having thoughts about giving her daughter Stormi, eight and son Aire, four, another sibling

## CONAN O'BRIEN SET TO RETURN AS OSCARS' HOST

Conan O'Brien is set to return as the host of the 98th Academy Awards March 15, 2026, marking his second consecutive year. Following a widely praised, high-viewership performance in 2025, producers have brought him back for an "even more ambitious" show, featuring special comedy pieces and notable cameos



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
Today, you will turn an attentive ear to your inner voice. As a result, you will be able to execute all your plans with precision. Besides being cheerful, you will even take disappointments with a pinch of salt. Why just today, says Ganesha, you can have this rare quality for keeps.

**TAURUS**  
As a manager, you may be able to outclass your colleagues by a great margin, predicts Ganesha. You will soften your approach with time and move towards a more democratic style of decision-making rather than the arbitrary protocol that you are used to. With this, you will taste success and prove your mettle in adverse situations, feels Ganesha.

**GEMINI**  
You will receive unprecedented love and affection from all your friends and family members today. It is a good day to conduct important personal or professional meetings. A lot of joy and happiness awaits, says Ganesha.

**CANCER**  
You may donate to a charity organisation, for your mental happiness. On the job front, stick to your routine, rather than taking a new bold step, says Ganesha. A good day on the financial front.

**LEO**  
A fun-filled day awaits you. You will enjoy all the activities that you take up today. At the work-place too a progressive day awaits you. You will be worried about the fruits of your labour, but they are likely to be sweeter than you thought they will be, says Ganesha.

**VIRGO**  
You will pen down the things to be done today. However, Ganesha suggests that just making a note of them is not enough; you need to set practical goals according to priority. Moreover, Ganesha warns that items you mark on the top of the list will demand immediate action.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesha says that today you shall make your competitors and enemies envious of your success in business. Beware, as they shall try to hurt or put down your reputation in varied ways. Instead of having a fight with them you should try to be politically correct and take care of matters using your intelligence.

**SCORPIO**  
Negative thoughts are likely to surround you today, try to avoid it. You may feel lonely and left-out when the day begins. However, a long list of activities and responsibilities will keep you occupied throughout the day. There are possibilities that you may land up in tricky situations, but you have the knack of handling things gracefully.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Today is a curiously interesting day for you. While you are always well-groomed, today, you may take that extra bit of care to look best and attract a lot of praise for that too, especially from those glam hounds around you. That immaculate charm you are carrying today will enhance your business fortunes.

**CAPRICORN**  
A penny saved is a penny earned. Your strong belief in this will make you scrutinise your requirements and rearrange the priority list, so that you know where and how to utilise the resources. Your choice of friends will represent your approach and outlook towards life.

**AQUARIUS**  
There is nothing like having a good time with your brothers and sisters. Generally, you plan out your routine and activities by yourself, but it is a different day today. Your siblings will make plans for you and you will just go along with the flow, predicts Ganesha.

**PISCES**  
Some unknown fear could haunt you today. You will direct your energies to discovering the source of your worries and eliminate them. Lovers will find some precious time to cozy up with their partners. You will find yourself going out to the movies or to a concert. On the whole it will be a productive day for you, says Ganesha.

## Kritika, Gaurav get hitched

**Mumbai:** Actress Kritika Kamra and Gaurav Kapur have tied the nuptial knot. The couple hosted intimate wedding celebrations with their families and a close circle of friends.

The wedding was set against a theme inspired by sunset tones and golden-hour hues, the ceremony was elegant, intimate and deeply meaningful. The couple chose to mark the occasion with a registrar wedding at home, stepping away from a traditional large-scale affair and instead celebrating the moment in a setting that felt personal and close to their hearts.

Kritika and Gaurav together shared in a joint statement, "We've always believed that the most meaningful moments in life are the ones shared with the people you love. As we begin this new chapter together, we're so grateful to celebrate our wedding surrounded by our families and closest friends at home, in Mumbai".

For the ceremony, Kritika opted for a red Chanderi saree specially woven for her and gifted by her mother, created by her own brand, an initiative that works to conserve the traditional form of Chanderi silk while supporting women artisans in the region. Gaurav wore an elegant ensemble by Raghavendra Rathore.

**Mumbai:** As a clip of actress Rashmika Mandanna's mother allegedly making allegations against her former fiancé, Rakshit Shetty has gone viral, the *Dear Comrade* actress has decided to break her silence on the matter, calling it a serious invasion of privacy. Urging the netizens to stop spreading the content, Rashmika dropped a detailed note on her Instagram Stories explaining that the audio being circulated on social media appears to be from a private conversation that took place nearly eight years ago.

The *Animal* actress stated that in the last eight years, she has endured a lot of misinformation, harassment, and targeted attacks from a section of the media and users. She further alleged that her

words had been taken out of context, creating false narratives just for some views and engagement. Rashmika added that although she chose to be patient all this time, the events of the last 24 hours crossed a line, leaving her with no choice but to address the matter.

She further expressed disappointment that the controversy has caused unnecessary discomfort not just to her but also to her family and those close to her. Rashmika requested that media platforms, influencers and individuals sharing the content remove it immediately. She even gave a 24-hour window to those circulating the content, failing which she intends to initiate legal action against them.

**Mumbai:** The first part of the Ranveer Singh-starrer *Dhurandhar* franchise is set to make its way to the theatres once again, a week ahead of the release of the 2nd part. The blockbuster is set for a rare international re-release. The rare and exciting theatrical re-release will span approximately 500 screens worldwide, including 250 screens across India and 250 overseas.

While re-releases of major films have occasionally been seen in India, international re-releases of Hindi films remain extremely rare, making this move a significant moment for the franchise and a testament to the immense global demand for *Dhurandhar*. In North America alone, the film will return

to theatres across nearly 185 screens, signalling the extraordinary anticipation for the next chapter. Adding to the excitement, *Dhurandhar: The Revenge* will host special Wednesday premiere shows across the USA and Canada March 18, a day ahead of its global release. These premieres will take place largely on Premium Large Format (PLF) screens, which feature expansive wall-to-wall screens, immersive sound systems such as Dolby Atmos, enhanced projection, and luxury seating, formats typically reserved for major Hollywood event films. The mid-week premieres are already witnessing sold-out shows, underscoring the massive demand and the scale at which the sequel is poised to arrive.

# Rashmika draws line



## Dhurandhar to re-release worldwide

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## Panchamveda's 22nd state drama fest concludes

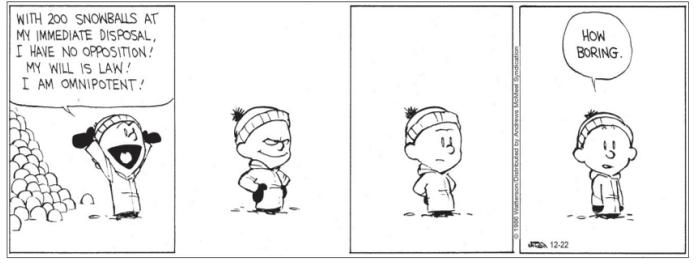
Artistes of Dynamic Platform staged Odia play *Shuna Sujana* on the fourth and final evening of the event at Bhanja Kala Mandap, Bhubaneswar, Thursday. Written by Biswajit Das, the play was directed by Debabrata Pattnaik. Six theatre persons were felicitated on the occasion.

PIC: BIKASH NAYAK

## PEANUTS



## CALVIN AND HOBBS

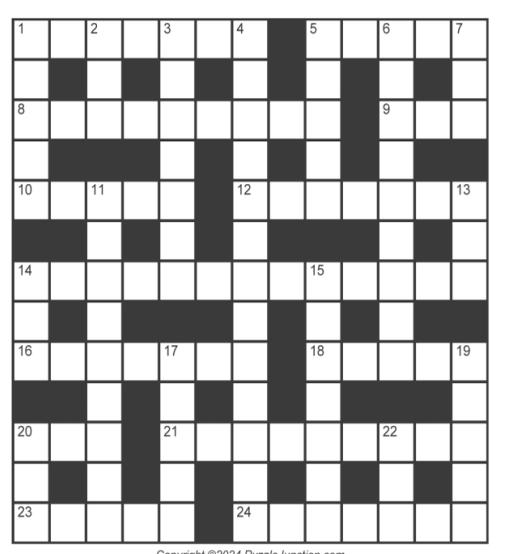


## BREVITY



## FUN POST

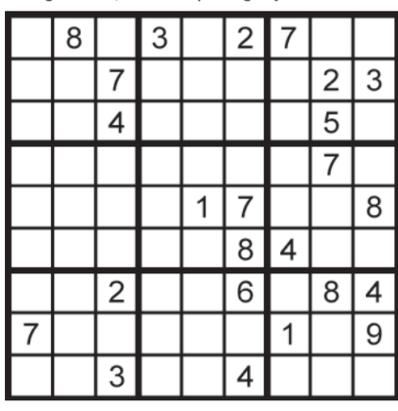
## CROSSWORD



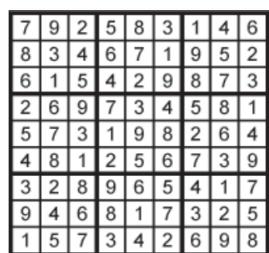
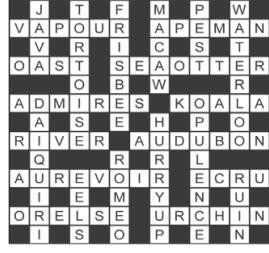
- Across**
- 1 Floral arrangement
  - 5 Receded
  - 8 Forever
  - 9 Make lace
  - 10 Fling
  - 12 Breakfast staple
  - 14 Perk (6,7)
  - 16 Unfair treatment (3,4)
  - 18 Vast chasm
  - 20 Humour
  - 21 Repeat yourself
  - 23 Boldness
  - 24 Easement between nations
  - Down**
  - 1 Requires
  - 2 Perceive
  - 3 Aromatic root
  - 4 Cowardly (6-7)
  - 5 Pharaoh's land
  - 6 Swimming stroke
  - 7 Morse E
  - 11 Cloud droppings
  - 13 Authorize
  - 14 Distant
  - 15 Most tidy
  - 17 Spooky
  - 19 Assail
  - 20 Cyst
  - 22 Barley bristle

## 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

## Oil goes past \$100

**Dubai, March 12:** Unrelenting Iranian attacks on shipping traffic and energy infrastructure pushed oil above USD 100 a barrel Thursday, as American and Israeli strikes pounded the Islamic Republic with no sign of an end to the war in sight. Iran hit a container ship off the coast of Dubai, caused a blaze near Bahrain's international airport, targeted a major Saudi oil field with a drone and forced Iraq to halt operations at all of its oil terminals after attacking its port of Basra on the Persian Gulf.

Iran flouted a UN Security Council resolution from the previous day demanding that it halt strikes on its Gulf neighbours with new attacks also reported in Kuwait and the UAE. Sirens wailed before dawn in Jerusalem as Israel intercepted incoming Iranian missiles, and loud booms were heard later in the day in another attack on the city. Israel launched a "wide-scale wave of strikes" on Tehran and in Lebanon, where Israel says it is targeting Iran-linked Hezbollah

**Since the US and Israel started the war with a February 28 attack on Iran, Tehran has focused on inflicting enough global economic pain to pressure them to halt their attacks**

Since the US and Israel started the war with a February 28 attack on Iran, Tehran has focused on inflicting enough global economic pain to pressure them to halt their attacks. US President Donald Trump suggested that was not imminent, however, promising to "finish the job" even though he claimed Iran is "virtually destroyed."

"We don't want to leave early do we? We've got to finish the job," he said at an event Wednesday in Kentucky. In addition to attacking energy infrastructure around the region, Iran has a stranglehold on the Strait of Hormuz, the waterway leading from the Persian Gulf toward the Indian Ocean through which a fifth of the world's oil is transported. With traffic in the strait effectively stopped, the price of Brent crude oil, the international standard, rose another 9 per cent to more than USD 100 a barrel, up some 38 per cent over what it cost when the war started.



**TAKING STOCK:** People inspect homes damaged by a projectile launched from Lebanon, in Haniel central Israel, Thursday

AP / PTI PHOTO

## Rupee at 92.25 against US dollar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, March 12:** The rupee touched a fresh intra-day low Thursday and closed the session 24 paise down at its lowest level of 92.25 against the US dollar, dragged down by elevated crude oil prices and massive withdrawal of foreign capital.

The Indian currency, caught in the crossfire amid the raging West Asia war, was weighed down by heavy selling in domestic equity markets and a strengthening greenback, forex traders said.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the local unit opened at 92.25 and hit its lowest intra-day level of 92.36 against the greenback. The unit ended the session at its lowest level of 92.25 against the dollar, registering a loss of 24 paise from the previous closing level.

The rupee's previous lowest intra-day level of 92.35 against the greenback was recorded March 9, when it also logged the record closing low of 92.21 versus the dollar.

"The rupee declined, hitting a record low of 92.36 on weak domestic markets and rising crude oil prices. A positive US dollar index and FII outflows, too, weighed on the rupee. However, the rupee recovered on supposed intervention by the RBI," Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Mirae Asset ShareKhan, said.

According to Choudhary, the USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in the range of Rs 91.70 to Rs 92.40.

## Retail inflation rises to 3.21% in February

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 12:** Retail inflation moved up to 3.21 per cent in February compared to 2.74 per cent in the preceding month, driven mainly by higher food prices, showed government data released Thursday.

However, the consumer price index (CPI) based retail inflation stayed within the Reserve Bank's target of 2-4 per cent. The government has mandated the central bank to ensure inflation remains at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on either side.

The February inflation data is based on the new CPI series with base year 2024 released last month. Food inflation in February rose sequentially to 3.47 per cent from 2.13 per cent in January, showed the data released by the National Statistics Office (NSO).

The major items that witnessed a high pace of price hike were 'silver, gold, diamond, platinum jewellery, coconut-copra, tomato, and cauliflower.

On the other hand, there was disinflation in garlic, onion, potato, arhar, and litchi.

Inflation rates for rural and urban areas were at 3.37 per cent and 3.02 per cent, respectively.

ICRA chief economist Aditi Nayar said the uptick in infla-



tion was almost entirely led by the food and beverages (F&B) segment, which accounted for as much as 44 bps of the 47 bps rise in the headline print between these months.

Core inflation (CPI excluding F&B and electricity, gas and other fuels) remained unchanged at 3.4 per cent between January and February.

Nayar further said the ongoing geopolitical tensions in West Asia pose upside risks to the CPI inflation trajectory, if sustained for an extended period.

As per ICRA's analysis, every 10 per cent increase in average crude oil prices increases the CPI inflation by 40-60 bps, assuming that a full transmission into retail selling prices (RSPs) of auto fuels takes place.

etary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting," Nayar said. The next meeting of the MPC is scheduled for April 6-8.

Vivek Rathi, National Director - Research, Knight Frank India, said that CPI inflation reflects a mix of statistical adjustments and underlying price pressures.

"The revision of the CPI base year and the reduced weight of the food basket have altered the composition of the headline print. Meanwhile, firm price pressures in non-food and fuel categories, alongside rising precious metal prices, have contributed to inflation," Rathi said.

The NSO data further showed that highest inflation was in Telangana at 5.02 per cent and lowest in Mizoram at 0.1 per cent. NSO said that the real-time price data were collected from selected 1,407 urban markets (including online platforms) and 1,465 villages.

## LPG HEAT SETS HOUSE ON BOIL

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 12:** The Assembly Thursday witnessed repeated disruptions and was adjourned till 4pm amid protests by BJD and Congress members over alleged scarcity of cooking gas and black marketing of LPG cylinders.

The issue was raised soon after the House assembled for Question Hour at 10:30am.

Congress members trooped into the well of the House, shouting slogans and holding placards demanding the rollback of the recent hike in the price of LPG cylinders. They raised slogans near the Speaker's podium, disrupting proceedings.

BJD members also supported the issue raised by Congress and protested the alleged black-marketing of cooking gas.

Leader of Opposition Naveen Patnaik was present in the House when his party members raised anti-government slogans.

Speaker Surama Padhy urged the members to return to their seats and cooperate in conducting the Question Hour. As the Opposition members ignored her appeal, she first adjourned the proceedings till 11:30am.

When the House reassembled, similar scenes were witnessed, forcing Padhy to adjourn the proceedings till 12:10pm and later till 4pm.



The Opposition members accused the BJP government of failing to streamline gas supply and check black marketing of LPG cylinders.

Opposition chief whip Pramila Mallik claimed that a 14kg LPG cylinder was being sold at over ₹1,500 in the market as the government failed to ensure proper distribution of the cooking gas.

BJP legislator Irasis Acharya criticised the Opposition, alleging that instructions to disrupt the Assembly had come from Delhi.

He condemned the disruption of proceedings and questioned the motives of Congress legislators, accusing the BJD of backing them.

Another BJP MLA, Ashok Mohanty, also attacked the Opposition, stating that there was no shortage of LPG in Odisha.

The Opposition members also raised slogans demanding the safety of Odia people trapped in the Gulf nations because of the conflict.

## 1,025 road fatalities in 65 days of 2026

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, March 12:** At least 1,025 people were killed and 1,594 injured in 1,616 road accidents that occurred in Odisha between January 1 and March 6 of 2026 - 65 days, Commerce and Transport Minister Bibhuti Bhusan Jena told the Assembly Thursday.

Analysis of the data provided by the minister, in a written reply to a question of BJD MLA Ananta Narayan Jena, shows that on average, road accidents have claimed 15 lives every day during the period.

At least 24 people, on average, were injured in road accidents every day in the state.

During the period of 65 days, 447 road accidents were reported on national highways (NHs) in the state, in which 270 people lost their lives, and 469 were injured, the minister said.

He informed the House that 150 people were killed and 259 injured in 246 accidents that occurred on state highways, while 11 people died and 10 injured in 13 accidents on expressways in Odisha.

During the period, 910 accidents have occurred on other roads of the state, leaving 594 people dead and 856 injured, he added.

He also informed the House that the maximum deaths of 276 were reported in road accidents that occurred Sundays, followed by Thursday (264), Saturday (255), Monday (242), Friday (236), Wednesday (232), and Tuesday (209).

## Record heat risk grows as super El Niño takes shape

The planet may experience a strong — possibly even a super — El Niño later this year, potentially rivalling the most powerful events on record, according to new climate data from the European Center for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF).

A typical El Niño reshapes weather patterns worldwide as a patch of unusually warm water forms in the equatorial Pacific Ocean. This shift can trigger droughts, floods and extreme heat in different regions. During rare super El Niño events — which occur roughly every 10 to 15 years — those effects can become stronger, longer-lasting and more widespread, "The Washington Post" reported.

That's because sea temperatures in that key region of the Pacific Ocean warm more than 2 degrees Celsius above average, leading to a profound atmospheric response.

Those changes can influence where heatwaves occur, where flooding rains or droughts concentrate, how hurricanes develop and even sea ice levels. The western US, for example, could experience a hotter-than-average summer. Some tropical regions may face severe drought and extreme heat. Meanwhile, the Pacific could see more tropical cyclones while the Atlantic experiences fewer.

"There's also a growing chance that this year's El Niño, especially if it's a strong one, would push global temperatures to record levels, particularly in 2027," it reported.

"Whew," climate scientist Daniel Swain wrote on X. "All signs are increasingly pointing to a significant, if not strong to very strong, El Niño event."

This year's El Niño is looking increasingly likely to have wide-reaching impacts across the planet.

Although the developing El



Niño is still in its early stages, early signals resemble those seen before major events in the past. Record-breaking westerly wind bursts in the Pacific have already helped push warm water eastward.

No two El Niño events are exactly alike, but here are some of the possibilities.

**Atlantic hurricane season**

**impacts** Harsh winds in the middle and upper atmosphere during formidable El Niño events can create conditions that are less conducive to hurricane formation. Meteorologist Andy Hazelton said, "Overall, this would be about as unfavourable an Atlantic look as you could get for the peak of hurricane

### HOW CERTAIN IS THIS FORECAST

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) currently favours El Niño development, though its strength remains uncertain. NOAA's forecaster Michelle L'Heureux said models range from weak La Niña conditions to a strong El Niño. NOAA's key seasonal climate forecasting system, North American Multi-Model Ensemble, trended towards a stronger El Niño forming this year — in line with ECMWF — in an update Saturday. Spring forecasts are also less reliable due to the "spring prediction barrier", meaning projections could still change significantly. For now, scientists are watching closely — knowing that if a super El Niño does emerge, its impacts could be felt around the world.

season." Still, even a quiet season can produce destructive storms — as seen with Hurricane Andrew.

**Global temperature records** The strongest El Niño events almost always cause a record warm year. Warm ocean waters

release stored heat into the atmosphere, which then spreads around the globe.

Climate scientist Zeke Hausfather said a strong event could push temperatures higher in 2026 and make 2027 likely the warmest year on record.

**Worldwide weather extremes** El Niño can have wide-reaching influences on global weather patterns.

A marine heatwave near US West Coast may contribute to hotter conditions and greater wildfire risk. More tropical storms could threaten Hawaii, while typhoon activity may increase in western Pacific, affecting the Philippines, China and Japan.

India's monsoon could weaken, potentially bringing below-average rainfall. Drought conditions may expand across Australia, Indonesia, parts of eastern Africa and the Caribbean, while heavy rains could soak parts of South America.

## Crorepati tehsildar with 80% DA held

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, March 12:** Vigilance sleuths Thursday arrested Kantapara tehsildar Prasanna Samantaray for allegedly amassing wealth disproportionate to his known sources of income.

The OAS officer was forwarded to the Court of Special Judge, Vigilance, Cuttack for possessing disproportionate assets (DA) to the tune of 80 per cent of his known sources of income, which he could not account for satisfactorily, an official of the anti-corruption wing said. During house searches, movable and immovable assets worth crores of rupees were unearthed in the name of Samantaray and his family members. The assets detected include among other things a three-storey building with an area of approximately 4,200 sqft located in Bhubaneswar.

Adequate LPG, fuel stock; no need to panic: Minister

Bhubaneswar: Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Krushna Chandra Patra Thursday assured that there is adequate stock of cooking gas and fuel in the state and urged people not to panic over supply concerns.

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

Chandra Bati Bariha, Mother of Akrura Bariha, R/o. Kalapani, Bargarh, Odisha - 768040 changed my name from Chandra Bati Bariha to Chandra Bariha affidavit Dt. 15.01.26 No. U 765050 at Bargarh.

Before the Notary Public, Berhampur, Ganjam, I, Mantu Mallick, aged 29 years, S/o.- Ajit Kumar Mallick, Brahmapalli, Lanjipalli, Berhampur, P.S.- B.N.Pur, Dist.- Ganjam, Odisha, (Aadhaar No. xxxx xxxx 6278), affirm: 1. My name is Mantu Mallick (per horoscope) and Kamala Kanta Mallick (per Aadhaar & educational certificates). 2. Both names refer to me. 3. I want to change my name to Mantu Mallick for all purposes. Sd./- Deponent

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Executive Magistrate, Koraput, vide No. 33 dated 06.02.2026, I, Sri Ashwini Kumar Bhoi, S/o.- Bhimasen Bhoi, resident of Qtr. No. B-247, Sector- III, Nalco Township, P.O./P.S.- Damanjodi, Dist.- Koraput do hereby solemnly affirm and declare that my widowed sister's name was changed from Anita Bhoi to Anita Biswal after her marriage. However, both names refer to one and the same person. Henceforth, she shall be known as Anita Biswal for all purposes.

LOST

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Executive Magistrate, Mahakalapara, I, Rabindra Behera, age 56, S/o - Naran Behera, Vill.- Gadaromita, P.O.- Gatanai, P.S.- Marshghai, Dist.- Kendrapada declare that I have lost my original land RSD No. 1756 executed on dated- 23.06.1997 at Mouza- Gadaromita, Sub-Registrar Office, Marshghai while I was going from home to Tahasil Mahakalapara on 02.01.2026. The affidavit will produce before concerned authorities for necessary information & favourable action.

RAJYA SABHA RACE

BJD & Cong issue whip amid cross-voting fear

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 12: With cross-voting fear looming large for the March 16 Rajya Sabha elections in which five candidates are contesting for four seats, Opposition BJD and Congress late Wednesday night issued whips directing their MLAs to remain in Bhubaneswar and ensure their presence in the Assembly on the said date.



Two official candidates of BJP are the party's state unit president Manmohan Samal and sitting Rajya Sabha MP Sujeet Kumar. Former Union minister Dilip Ray is also contesting as an Independent and has the support of the saffron party.

The BJD nominees are party leader Santrupt Misra and eminent urologist Dattaswar Hota, whom the Congress and the CPI(M) are supporting.

There is a possibility of cross-voting as neither the ruling BJP nor the Opposition BJD has the required numbers to win the fourth seat.

A senior Assembly official said, "Parties cannot issue a whip on voting (on party lines during Rajya Sabha polls). But there is no restriction on a whip to remain present."

BJD supremo Naveen Patnaik and state Congress president Bhakta Charan Das had accused the ruling BJP of attempting to indulge in horse-trading for the biennial polls.

"All the BJD MLAs are hereby informed that the voting for Rajya Sabha elections 2026 will be held Monday, March 16, from 9 am to 4 pm on the premises of the Odisha Legislative Assembly. The MLAs are directed not to leave HQ and be present in Bhubaneswar from March 13-16 unflinchingly. This may be treated as a three-line whip, and strict compliance is solicited," a note issued by party chief whip Pramila Mallick late Wednesday said.

A day after BJD's whip, a notice issued by Congress

whip CS Raazen Ekka read, "All the Congress Legislature Party MLAs are directed not to leave HQ and be present in Bhubaneswar from March 13-16 unflinchingly."

BJP and BJD are expected to win comfortably in two and one seats, respectively. The contest is likely for the fourth seat between Ray and Hota.

The BJP has 79 MLAs and the support of three Independents, totalling 82, which is eight short of the number required for electing three MPs. The BJD has 48 MLAs, after two of its members were suspended last month. After electing one MP, it will have 18 first-preference votes but will require another 12 to bag the second seat. The Congress has 14 MLAs, and the CPI(M) has one.

Govt effects reshuffle among IAS officers

Bhubaneswar: In a reshuffle of several IAS officers, the Odisha government Thursday appointed Prathamesh Arvind Rajeshirke as the Collector of Malkangiri district. As per a notification, Malkangiri Collector Somesh Kumar Upadhyay has been transferred as director, textiles & handlooms, Odisha. Smruti Ranjan Pradhan has been appointed as managing director of Odisha Small Industries Corporation with additional charge of chief executive officer, Startup Odisha. Manish Agarwal has been appointed as registrar, cooperative societies, while Akavaram Sasya Reddy has been posted as commissioner of Berhampur Municipal Corporation and Akshay Pillay as additional district magistrate (ADM), Paradeep. Among others, IAS officers Arugula Sneha, Samir Kumar Jena and Soumyaranjan Pradhan have been appointed as executive officers, Zilla Parishad of Mayurbhanj, Ganjam and Kalahandi districts, respectively.

34L FARMERS IN STATE TO GET ₹684 CRORE UNDER PM-KISAN

POST NEW NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 12: The Union government will release over ₹18,640 crore into the accounts of farmers across the country under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme Friday. Over 34 lakh farmers in the state will receive ₹684 crore under the scheme.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will release the 22nd instalment during his visit to Guwahati. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, accompanied by Deputy Chief Minister Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo, will attend

the event from Krushi Siksha Bhawan here.

It may be noted that Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan made the announcement March 11 and said special emphasis has been placed on ensuring that PM-KISAN benefits reach only genuine and eligible farmers. To facilitate this, the government has introduced a "Voluntary Surrender" facility for affluent farmers.

Additionally, a system has been put in place to reactivate accounts of those who surrendered their benefits by mistake, ensuring that no eligible farmer is left out.

303 families get affordable houses

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 12: As many as 303 families from over 10 slums, including two persons with disabilities, were allotted houses under an affordable housing scheme through a lottery conducted by the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Thursday.

The beneficiaries will be relocated to the Buddha Vihar, Nilamadhab and Subuddhipur housing projects in the Chandrasekharpur area of the City.

The houses were allotted through a lottery during a special programme attended by Housing and Urban Development Minister Krushna Chandra Mahapatra as the chief guest.

Among others present on



the occasion were Ekamra-Bhubaneswar MLA Babu Singh, Bhubaneswar North MLA Sushant Kumar Rout, Bhubaneswar Central MLA Ananta Narayan Jena, Mayor Sulochana Das, BMC Commissioner Chanchal Rana and other officials.

BMC Commissioner Chanchal Rana said that no eligible beneficiary would be deprived

of housing benefits and no ineligible person would be allowed to avail the scheme. He also warned beneficiaries not to rent out the houses allotted under the scheme.

Mayor Das said that the lottery system ensures transparency in the allotment process. She congratulated the beneficiaries and said the initiative would continue in the future with support from the State government.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Mahapatra said the government has initiated steps to make not only Bhubaneswar but the entire state slum-free. He added that houses are being constructed for different sections of society in the city and plans are underway to provide affordable housing to people.

Awareness prog on kidney health at Apollo Hospitals



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 12: On World Kidney Day, Apollo Hospitals, Bhubaneswar organised an awareness programme to emphasise the importance of kidney health and early detection of kidney diseases.

COO & DMS Alok Srivastava said, "Kidney diseases are rising rapidly due to lifestyle disorders such as diabetes, high blood pressure and unhealthy diets. On World Kidney Day, we reaffirm our commitment to raising awareness about prevention, early diagnosis and timely treatment. Our hospital continues to provide advanced nephrology care, dialysis services and kidney transplant facilities to ensure the best outcomes for patients."

Senior Consultant and Director of Nephrology Nisith

Kumar Mohanty stressed the importance of early screening. "Chronic kidney disease often develops silently without obvious symptoms in the early stages. Regular health check-ups, especially for those with diabetes or high blood pressure, are essential for early detection and effective management," he said.

Consultant Nephrologist Purna Chandra Kar highlighted preventive lifestyle measures. "Staying well-hydrated, reducing salt intake, controlling blood sugar and blood pressure, and avoiding unnecessary painkillers can significantly lower the risk of kidney damage," he added.

Consultant Nephrologist Kumar Avijeet Dash emphasised the need for awareness. "Many patients reach hospitals only at an advanced stage of kidney disease," he said.

'Govt-industry collaboration key for inclusive growth'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 12: Sustainable economic growth depends on strong government-industry partnerships. Collaboration between large enterprises and MSMEs is crucial to boost industrial development, strengthen innovation, and promote inclusive growth, said Industries, Skill Development and Technical Education Minister Sampad Chandra Swain Thursday.

He was speaking at the session 'Odisha Leading: Partnerships for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth' hosted by CII Odisha here.

The minister highlighted that the state government is engaging with stakeholders in sectors like textiles and apparel and pharmaceuticals to develop specialised industrial ecosystems and attract investment.

He added that Odisha is promoting greater participation of women in the industrial workforce and prioritising skill development to build a future-ready talent pool.

CII Odisha State Council Chairman Anil Kumar Singh, in his opening remarks, highlighted Odisha's industrial



growth, its diversification into sectors like electronics, IT, renewable energy, and advanced manufacturing, and the importance of collaboration between government, industry, and institutions.

Chief Secretary Anu Garg stressed the need to strengthen infrastructure and skilling to drive the state's economic transformation, highlighting expansion of ports, airports, and road networks, and referencing the proposed Bhubaneswar-Cuttack-Paradip-Puri Economic Corridor.

Additional Chief Secretary Hemant Sharma, overseeing Home, Industries, and I&PR, outlined Odisha's industrial roadmap aligned with Vision 2036 and Vision 2047. He noted that manufacturing contributes

Railways regularises two special trains

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 12: Indian Railways has approved the regularisation of the Bhubaneswar-Dhanbad and Puri-Patna special trains.

Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw has informed CMMohan Charan Majhi about the development. "Kindly refer to our discussion regarding regularisation of special trains for public convenience. You would be pleased to know that regularisation of the two special trains have been approved," Vaishnaw said in a letter. Bhubaneswar-Dhanbad Special (08439/08440) will now run as Bhubaneswar-Dhanbad Express (18403/18404) and Puri-Patna Special (08439/08440) will now run as Puri-Patna Express (18405/18406). The daily Bhubaneswar-Dhanbad Express will depart Bhubaneswar at 8:25pm and reach Dhanbad at 11am the next day. Its return journey will commence at 4pm and the train would arrive here at 7:45am the next day. The weekly Puri-Patna Express will leave the coastal pilgrim town at 2:55pm Saturdays and reach the Bihar capital at 10:45am the next day. In its return journey, the train would leave Patna at 1:30pm Sundays and reach Puri at 9:45am the next day.

CARE Hospitals promotes health, organ donation



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 12: CARE Hospitals, Bhubaneswar observed World Kidney Day by organising an awareness programme to educate the public on kidney health, prevention of kidney diseases and the importance of organ donation. The event was attended by leading nephrologists, urologists, kidney transplant patients and members of the media.

A key highlight was patient testimonials, where individuals who had successfully undergone kidney transplantation at the hospital shared their journeys, describing the challenges before the transplant and how the procedure helped them return to healthier, more fulfilling lives.

Managing trustee of MOTHER Trailokya Nath Panda, the chief guest, highlighted the importance of organ donation and urged citizens to pledge for it,

noting that one donor can save multiple lives and offer hope to patients awaiting transplants.

Medical Superintendent Sarjeeet Nayak appreciated the efforts of the nephrology and urology teams and reiterated hospital's commitment to providing advanced renal care and promoting awareness about kidney health.

Clinical Director and Head of Nephrology and Kidney Transplant department, Bibekanda Panda, said kidney diseases are often detected late due to lack of awareness and urged people to undergo regular health check-ups and maintain a healthy lifestyle to prevent complications.

Associate Clinical Director (Nephrology and Renal Transplant) Ashok Panda highlighted the importance of organ donation, stating that kidney transplantation remains the most effective treatment for patients with end-stage kidney disease.

Consultant (Nephrology & Renal Transplant) Sucharita Chakraborty advised people with diabetes and hypertension to regularly monitor their kidney health, as these conditions significantly increase the risk of kidney damage.

Senior Consultant (Renal Transplant & Urology) Sumantha Kumar Mishra said advancements in transplant care and a multidisciplinary medical approach have greatly improved transplant outcomes and patient survival.

Consultant (Renal Transplant & Urology) Jyoti Mohan Tosh highlighted advancements in surgical techniques that have made kidney transplantation safer and more effective for patients.

The programme concluded with an interactive media session, during which doctors answered questions on kidney disease prevention, transplantation, and organ donation.

Bomb scare at City dist court

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 12: Panic gripped the Bhubaneswar district court Thursday after an anonymous email threatened that explosives had been planted on the premises.

According to sources, local police and a dog squad were alerted soon after the threat mail was received and rushed to the spot.

The squad conducted a thorough search of all floors, including the basement, but no explosives were found.

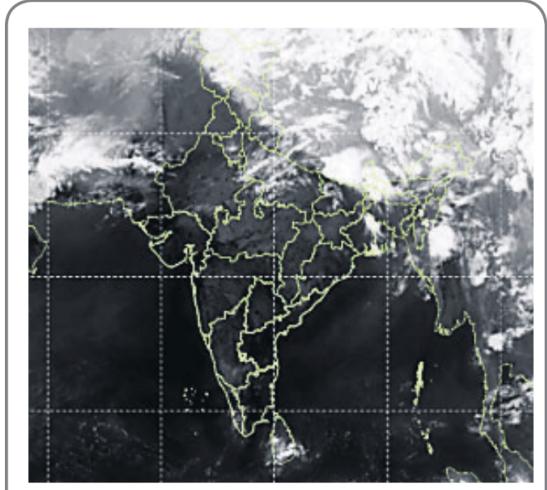
Due to the alert, court proceedings were briefly disrupted but resumed after the search operation concluded.

However, no official statement from the police or the court had been issued regarding the incident.

Notably, January 8, the Orissa High Court and Cuttack District Court had also received anonymous bomb threat emails, prompting evacuation of the premises.

After a search by the bomb squad, police later confirmed it to be a hoax. The recurring hoax threats have become a concern for courts across the state as the culprits remain unidentified.

MARKET WATCH table with columns for CURRENCY, BOURSES, and COMMODITIES, showing index and variation for Dollar, Euro, Sensex, Nifty, Gold, and Silver.



WEATHER table with columns for Max Temp, Min Temp, Humidity, Rainfall, BBSR, CTC, and FORECAST, providing local weather details for Bhubaneswar.

# LPG shortage forces closure of eateries 10 shops gutted as cylinders explode

### NON-AVAILABILITY OF COMMERCIAL LPG CYLINDERS IN GAJAPATI HAS FORCED EATERIES SHUT FOR THE LAST COUPLE OF DAYS

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Paralakhemundi, March 12:** The ongoing conflict in the Middle East has begun affecting multiple sectors, including daily life in parts of Odisha. After impacting the stock market, the ripple effects are now being felt by the common man with a shortage in the supply of cooking gas.

LPG shortage has been reported across areas of Gajapati district, severely affecting small businesses that rely on cooking gas. Due to the shortage, many breakfast stalls, roadside eateries and small hotels have remained closed for the past two days.

At present, commercial LPG cylinders are not available in the district. Paralakhemundi has two gas depots operated by Bharat Gas and Hindustan Petroleum, but both have reportedly halted the supply of commercial LPG cylinders.

Domestic LPG cylinders are being supplied only once every 25 days, and they are primarily meant for household use. Small food vendors and fast-food stalls that depend on commercial LPG cylinders say running their businesses without gas has become nearly impossible.

Earlier, kerosene was available at affordable rates, but it is no longer easily accessible. In the past, many small vendors used firewood chullah, saw dust chullah or traditional stoves, but they discontinued the practice following periodic raids by pollution control authorities.

Unable to run their businesses for the past two days, several small traders across the district have temporarily shut their shops while searching for alternative fuel sources.

Local vendors, including Seemadri, Sai Ranjal Patra and Nihar Sahu, said that if



## Pickup carrying LPG cylinders overturns, exposes illegal trade



**SAMBALPUR:** An illegal cooking gas trade operating in Burla area of Sambalpur district came to light after a pickup van carrying LPG cylinders overturned Thursday morning. Police arrested a youth Manthan Prasad Mahato, 27, of the Burla Market area in connection with the case. Police seized about 161 domestic LPG cylinders of various companies, each with a capacity of 14.2 kg, allegedly stored illegally. The seizure included 62 filled cylinders, 60 empty Bharat Gas cylinders and 39 empty Indane cylinders. The pickup van (OD-15-Q-0159) used to transport the cylinders was also seized. According to police, the vehicle met with an accident and overturned near Metakani Dhaba on the Sambalpur University road in Burla at around 8am. On being informed, Burla police reached the spot, rescued the driver and inspected the vehicle. During the check, six sealed Bharat Gas cylinders were found inside. When asked to produce valid documents, the owner claimed he was a private gas distributor with a godown in the Burla Market area but failed to show any legal papers. Police then inspected the godown and found a large number of domestic LPG cylinders stored without valid authorisation. All cylinders and the vehicle were seized. A case (126/26) has been registered at Burla police station, and Mahato was produced in court Thursday, police said.

commercial LPG supplies are not restored soon, they may be forced to either close their businesses or return to using traditional wood-based chullah.

Meanwhile, due to the shortage of LPG in the town, many residents are turning to induction cooktops. Electronics

stores in Paralakhemundi have reported a surge in customers looking to purchase induction stoves for household use.

Residents have urged the government to make alternative arrangements to protect the livelihoods of small traders affected by the fuel shortage.

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bantala, March 12:** A major fire broke out at Bantala Bazaar near Madanmohan Chhak in Shankhapur area of Angul district Thursday after a cooking gas cylinder exploded, gutting around 10 shops.

Three shops were completely reduced to ashes, while the remaining shops suffered substantial damage.

The incident occurred around 3pm at a snack shop where food was being prepared. The cook allegedly poured water into a pan of hot oil on the stove to check whether the oil had heated up. This suddenly triggered flames that spread to the nearby LPG cylinder, leading to an explosion.

The fire quickly spread to ad-



jacent shops, taking a serious turn within minutes. Four LPG cylinders inside the snack shop also caught fire, further intensifying the blaze. The flames soon reached nearby establishments, including a shop selling puja materials where stored oil, ghee and other inflammable items fuelled the fire.

Personnel from the Bantala fire station rushed to the spot after receiving information. Initially, firefighting efforts faced difficulty due to lack of immediate water supply. Later, water was brought from a nearby Fisheries department pond to control the flames.

Firefighters battled the mas-

sive blaze for three hours at the busy intersection in Angul before bringing it under control. After initial efforts failed, additional units arrived from Angul, Banarpal, and the Jindal plant. According to Bantala Fire Station OIC Bhabagrahi Bishal, 25 personnel and five fire engines were deployed.

The fire destroyed a snack shop, a puja material store, and a cloth store. Seven other businesses, including two mobile phone shops and a betel shop sustained heavy damage. While a total loss estimate is pending, local officials, including the Angul SDPO and various revenue officers, are at the site. The incident caused significant traffic gridlock at the junction of the Angul-Tikarpada and old Cuttack-Sambalpur roads.

## Body of Ganjam worker brought back from Qatar

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar/ Khallikote, March 12:** The mortal remains of an Odia worker who died in Qatar were brought back Thursday through the coordinated efforts of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the state government, officials said.

Kuna Khuntia, a resident of Khallikote block in Ganjam district, had gone to the Gulf nation about four months ago to work as a labourer in a private company.

His family members received the news of his death March 6, an officer of the state government said.

According to the information received by the family, Khuntia reportedly died suddenly while resting in his room.

Following the incident, the family had appealed to the government to facilitate the return of his body to his native place.

His mortal remains arrived Thursday morning at Biju Patnaik International Airport here.

Khallikote MLA Purna Chandra Sethy and officer on special duty of the directorate of Odisha Paribar, Pritish Panda, received the body and made the necessary arrangements to send it to Khuntia's native village.

## Row over nepotism in PACS recruitment

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sonepur, March 12:** Allegations of illegal recruitment involving nepotism have surfaced at the Maradugochha Primary Agricultural Cooperative Society (PACS) under Tarbha block in Subarnapur district.

Sources said no official advertisement was issued for the recruitment and no appointment committee was formed as required under rules. However, Ambareesh Das, son of PACS secretary and CEO Nabin Das, was appointed as acting CEO and secretary of the society. Anil Kumar Das of Remed village under Barpali block in Bargarh district, who is reportedly Nabin Das' son-in-law, was appointed as assistant secretary.

Notably, Anil's residence falls outside the operational jurisdiction of the Maradugochha PACS. It is alleged that Anil secured the job through the influence of his father-in-law.

Similarly, Amit, son of watchman Makunda Naik, was appointed as watchman, while Azad, son of peon Manoj Das, was appointed as peon.

The Deputy Registrar of Cooperative Societies (DRCS), Subarnapur division, approved the recruitment proposal. Following media reports, farmers



and local intelligentsia have raised objections.

After being informed, Subarnapur Collector Nruparaj Sahu asked the DRCS to submit relevant files. However, all documents have not yet been provided. Preliminary scrutiny of available records has reportedly indicated major irregularities in the recruitment process.

Government rules prohibit close relatives of a PACS secretary from being appointed in the same society, but the rule appears to have been ignored in this case.

After fact-based media reports on illegal recruitment were published Thursday, the office of the DRCS has initiated steps to cancel the appointments.

Subarnapur DRCS Sanjay Kumar Tripathy said PACS secretary Nabin Das was unable to perform his duties properly due to health issues and had applied for voluntary retirement (VR).

The proposal was approved by the PACS management committee, and the DRCS endorsed its recommendation.

However, although only three employees had applied for voluntary retirement, four persons were appointed without forming a recruitment committee. The DRCS did not respond when he was asked how a person from Bargarh district was appointed to the post of assistant secretary.

Meanwhile, the media report has triggered a review within the Cooperative department from the district to the state level Thursday.

According to sources, the PACS has frequently been in the spotlight over irregularities in paddy procurement. Earlier, Maradugochha PACS secretary Nabin Das had been suspended three times for various irregularities, but the management committee later reinstated him.

## Ganjam Collector for timely completion of IISER project

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Chhatrapur, March 12:** Construction of the Berhampur campus of the prestigious Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), one of seven such premier institutes in India, is nearing completion, officials said Thursday.

A detailed review of the project's progress was held at a meeting chaired by Ganjam Collector V Keerthi Vasan in Chhatrapur.

Spread across about 200 acres near Bay of Bengal and located roughly 10 km from the Golabandha military cantonment, the campus will include academic blocks, a library, a guesthouse, a sports complex

and hostels for about 1,000 students and faculty members.

The Collector stressed the need to complete the remaining construction within the stipulated timeline.

Officials also discussed the need for additional land, the impact of Coastal Zone Regulation (CZR) norms, removal of encroachments, development of approach roads to the campus, operation and maintenance of water pipelines, and the establishment of a permanent police outpost.

Those attending the meeting included IISER Berhampur Director Prof. Ashok Ganguly, Registrar PK Ray, Deputy Registrar Sakti Ranjan Patra, Superintendent Engineer Jagannath Patra and other district officials.

## Minor girl found murdered with throat slit

**SUNDARGARH:** A minor girl was allegedly murdered by a youth who slit her throat under Sundargarh Sadar police station area Thursday evening. Police detained the youth suspected to be involved in the incident and are questioning him at the police station. The knife believed to have been used in the crime has been seized. No case had been registered at the police station when this report came in. According to sources, the youth from Gundadihi area reached the girl's home Thursday evening. An argument reportedly broke out between the two over an unspecified reason. In a fit of rage, the youth allegedly slit her throat with a knife, leading to her death on the spot. On being informed, police reached the scene, recovered the body and sent it for post-mortem. An investigation has been launched. Notably, the incident occurred just three days after a Class II girl was strangled to death in the Rajgangpur police station area of the district.

## Barbil bank heist: One mora held from Bihar

**BARBIL:** Police arrested another accused from Bihar in connection with the high-profile robbery at the Bank of Maharashtra branch in Barbil of Keonjhar district, which had triggered statewide attention. Earlier, police had arrested five accused, including those directly involved in the crime and their associates, and produced them in court. Police, with assistance from local authorities in Jamui district of Bihar, conducted a raid and arrested Jitendra Kumar, one of the accused in the case and a native of Sindri area in Jharkhand's Dhanbad. After being produced in the Lachhaur court in Jamui district of Bihar, he was brought to Barbil and presented before the JMFC Court Wednesday night. He was remanded to the custody in Barbil Sub-Jail after the court rejected his bail plea. According to police, six armed miscreants decamped with 7.53 kg of gold ornaments packed in 155 packets and cash worth ₹4,36,700 from the strong room of the Bank of Maharashtra's Barbil branch January 19.

**Chola CHOLAMANDALAM INVESTMENT AND FINANCE COMPANY LIMITED**  
CORRIGENDUM  
Please refer Demand Notice under heading "Demand Notice" published in Nitidin & Orissa Post, on 01.03.2026 on the reference of 1. Mr/Mrs. Jitendra Kumar Pati, 2. Mr/Mrs. Jharana Pati, 3. Mr/Mrs. Padmini Pati, 4. Mr/Mrs. Ghanashyam Pati, (LAN: LAP3CUT00060826) Kindly read the Demand Notice Date as 27.02.2026 instead of 25.02.2026 respectively. The other terms & Conditions shall remain unchanged.  
Date: 13.03.2026  
Place: Jajpur, Odisha  
Sd/-  
Authorised Officer  
For Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company Ltd.

## Chhatrapur stadium to be upgraded to national stadium

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Chhatrapur, March 12:** Chhatrapur stadium is set to get upgraded to a national stadium accommodating sports complex with modern amenities and state-of-the-art facilities. A two-member team from Bhubaneswar conducted a feasibility survey Wednesday to go ahead with the project following finalisation of detailed project report (DPR).

Chhatrapur MLA Krushna Chandra Nayak proposed before the state government to develop and upgrade the existing stadium which can have modern facilities and amenities for several sports and games enabling youths to compete at the state and national competitions. The upgraded facility will have a turf outfield for cricket and football, volleyball courts, athletic circuits and other sports.

The proposed stadium will be built on a land spreading across the existing stadium and acquiring the nearby land, the District Sports Officer Tapas Kumar Samal said.

## Lecturer held for alleged sexual exploitation, forced abortions

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Berhampur, March 12:** Baidyanathpur police here arrested a 30-year-old lecturer of a government college Wednesday for allegedly cheating a woman over false promises of marriage and forcing her to abort pregnancy.

The accused was identified as Sujit Kandha, a native of Brahmanigaon area in Kandhamal district and a chemistry lecturer at a government junior college in the city. According to the police, the victim claimed Kandha forced her to undergo four abortions during their time together.

Police visited the college Wednesday and arrested Kandha on charges related to sexual exploitation and criminal intimidation. Later, he was produced in the court and remanded to judicial custody.

The victim, originally from Kandhamal district and working at a private hospital in Berhampur, had been in a relationship with Kandha for around four years. He allegedly took the woman to various locations and engaged in physical relationship with her by promising marriage. Furthermore, he reportedly took ₹2 lakh, a gold chain, and a ring from her.

As per the complainant, the accused would make excuses and buy time whenever she raised the issue of marriage. Investigators said the relationship soured 10 days ago when Kandha reportedly rescinded his promise to marry her. The victim told police that when she confronted him, Kandha threatened her with life, following which the woman filed a complaint at the Baidyanathpur police station.

**पावरग्रिड POWERGRID**  
NOTICE  
1. Approval for Petition for determination of Transmission tariff for 2024-29 tariff block for Transmission Asset (01 nos) Under "Eastern Region Expansion Scheme - XXXII (ERES-XXXII)" in Eastern Region under Section 62 read with Section 79 (1) (d) of Electricity Act, 2003 and under the Regulation 15 (1) (a) and Regulation 23 of Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (Conduct of Business) Regulations, 2023 read with Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (Terms and Condition of Tariff Regulations) 2024.  
2. The beneficiaries of the above mentioned Transmission system are: (i) Bihar State Power (Holding) Company Ltd., (ii) West Bengal State Electricity Distribution Company Ltd., (iii) Grid Corporation of Orissa Ltd., (iv) Damodar Valley Corporation, (v) Power Department, Govt. Of Sikkim, Gangtok, (vi) Jharkhand Biji Vitran Nigam Ltd.  
3. Number of Bays, Optic fibre line length, Appointed Approved capital cost (₹ In Lacs), Date of Commercial Operation and Capital cost up to date of Commercial Operation (₹ In Lacs):  
Asset/Bays (nos in 400kV) | Apportioned approved Capital cost (₹ in Lakhs) | DOCO | Capital cost on DOCO (₹ in Lakhs)  
Asset-I | 1 | 2224.00 | 07.12.2025 | 1527.68  
4. The annual transmission tariff for the tariff period 2019-24 is summarized as below:  
Asset/Tariff | 2024-25 | 2025-26 | 2026-27 | 2027-28 | 2028-29  
Asset-I | - | 96.72 | 358.29 | 407.15 | 418.95  
5. A copy of the application made for determination of tariff is posted on the website of the applicant at www.powergridindia.com.  
6. The suggestions and objections, if any, on the proposals for determination of tariff contained in the application to be filed by any person, including the beneficiary before the Secretary, Central Electricity Regulatory Commission, 8th, 7th & 8th Floors, Tower B, World Trade Centre, Nauroji Nagar, New Delhi-110029 (or other address where the office of the Commission is situated), with a copy to the applicant at the address of its corporate office within 30 days of publication of this notice.  
Place: Gurugram | Sd/-  
Date: 13.03.2026 | General Manager (Commercial)  
**POWER GRID CORPORATION OF INDIA LIMITED**  
(A Government of India Enterprise)  
Registered Office: B-9, Qutab Institutional Area, Katwaria Sarai, New Delhi-110 016  
Corporate Office: "Saudamini", Plot No.2, Sector-29, Gurugram, Haryana-122 001  
www.powergrid.in, CIN: L40101DL1989038121GOI038121  
A MAHARATNA PSU

**EAST COAST RAILWAY**  
E-AUCTION OF PARKING STAND  
Auction Catalogue No.: SDCM-KUR-PKNG  
Station & Location: (1) Khurda Road-2 Wheeler (east entry side), (2) Khallikot-2 Wheeler (out side of railway station), (3) Baitarani Road-2 Wheeler (out side of railway station).  
Auction Start Date & Time: 20.03.2026 at 15:00 hrs. (for all SI. Nos.), Auction End Date & Time: 20.03.2026 at 15:30 hrs. (for SI. No. 1), at 15:40 hrs. (for SI. No. 2) and at 15:50 hrs. (for SI. No. 3).  
Note: Prospective bidders are advised to visit the www.ireps.gov.in and check the upcoming e-auctions leasing tab to get all required information regarding this e-auction.  
Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager/ PR-1214/Q/25-26 | Khurda Road

**EAST COAST RAILWAY**  
Tender No.: eT-M-CD-BBS-PFR-26-01  
NAME OF WORK: CLEANING AND WATERING OF PLATFORM RETURN TRAINS AND ENROUTE CLEANING AND WATERING OF CERTAIN TRAINS AT BHUBANESWAR AND BHUBANESWAR NEW PLATFORM FOR A PERIOD OF TWO YEARS.  
Advertised Value: ₹ 3,53,14,116.40, EMD: ₹ 3,26,600/-, Tender Document Cost: ₹ 11,800/-, Period of Completion: 24 Months.  
Bidding Start Date: 13.03.2026  
Tender Closing Date and Time: At 15:30 Hrs. of 27.03.2026.  
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.ireps.gov.in  
Coaching Depot Officer/ PR-1212/Q/25-26 | Bhubaneswar

**GRIDCO LIMITED**  
(A Govt. of Odisha Undertaking)  
Regd. Office: Janpath, Bhubaneswar-751022, ODISHA  
NOTICE INVITING TENDER FOR PURCHASE OF POWER  
Tender No - GRIDCO/TENDER/DEEP/2025-26/01  
No. 4001/63/2526: GRIDCO Ltd. has issued a tender for procurement of Peak Power from Inter-state sources on short term open access basis through DEEP e-bidding portal for the period from 01.04.2026 to 30.06.2026.  
Interested bidders may please refer to www.mstcecommerce.com/ www.gridco.co.in for detailed terms and conditions and visit the site from time to time for further details/ information/ corrigendum etc.  
OIPR-4001/4056/1/25-26/0001 | General Manager (T&B)

**E-Auction Notice for Miscellaneous Static Services and Pay & Use toilet contracts over Kharagpur Division**  
E-Auction Notice No: KGP/PnU-MSS/2026/4 | Dtd. 12.03.2026  
Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Kharagpur Division, South Eastern Railway for and on behalf of the President, Union of India invites e-Auction for:  
• Operation and maintenance contract of normal Pay and Use toilet unit located on Platform No. 1 & 2 of Kharagpur, new station building at Baripada, near north side old Booking Office and near north side parking at Santragachi, Ground floor of new station building (towards Howrah end) in between Foot Over Bridge landing and subway at Santragachi, Pay & Use Toilet Block-I (near OHE Mast No. 7/38A) and Block-II (near OHE Mast No. 7/34B) on Platform 6/7 at Santragachi, near south side Booking Office at Kharagpur and Platform No. 01 towards the Ganga end of Shalimar Railway Station for the period of 3 (three) years. Auction Catalogue No.: PNUTOI-KGP26-2, Auction date: 26.03.2026, Auction start/close time: 11.00 hrs. & 12.30 hrs. respectively. • Contract for setting up and operation of Mobiles and Accessories Kiosk at Platform-1/2 of Mecheda, Platform-2/3 of Jaleswar, adjacent to Digha Railway Station building, Ground floor of New Station Building at Santragachi, Platform-5/6 of Panskura and Ground floor of Shalimar Station building for the period of 3 (three) years. Auction Catalogue No.: MSS-KGP-MOBL-4, Auction date: 27.03.2026, Auction start/close time: 11.00 hrs. & 12.20 hrs. respectively. • Contract for Packing of Two-wheelers and other parcels/packages at Kharagpur for a period of 3 (three) years. Auction Catalogue No.: MSS-KGP-TWNP-3, Auction date: 30.03.2026, Auction start/close time: 11.00 hrs. & 11.30 hrs. respectively. • Contract for setting up and operation of Promotional Kiosk at Ground floor of Santragachi new station building, Platform-3/4 of Panskura Railway station and Ground floor of Shalimar station building for the period of 3 (three) years. Auction Catalogue No.: MSS-KGP-PROM-4, Auction date: 01.04.2026, Auction start/close time: 11.00 hrs. & 11.50 hrs. respectively. • Contract for setting up and operation of Pooja samagri Kiosk at Platform-5/6 of Panskura and Platform-3/4 of Mecheda Railway Station for the period of 3 (three) years. Auction Catalogue No.: MSS-KGP-POOJA-4, Auction date: 02.04.2026, Auction start/close time: 11.00 hrs. & 11.40 hrs. respectively. • Contract for installation, operation and maintenance of Relaxation Chair/s at Platform-3/4 of Panskura and Platform-3/4 of Mecheda Railway station for the period of 3 (three) years. Auction Catalogue No.: MSS-KGP-RXCHA-4, Auction date: 06.04.2026, Auction start/close time: 11.00 hrs. & 11.40 hrs. respectively. • Contract for installation, operation and maintenance of Salon services at Ground floor of Shalimar Station Building, Platform no. 3/4 of Kharagpur and 1st floor of Santragachi New Station Building for the period of 3 (Three) years. Auction Catalogue No.: MSS-KGP-SALON-5, Auction date: 07.04.2026, Auction start/close time: 11.00 hrs. & 11.50 hrs. respectively, which are notified in the https://www.ireps.gov.in/ website. Interested parties and contractors to take note of this and go through the website as mentioned above for details and related information about the e-Auction notice. For enquiries/clarifications if any, please contact office of the undersigned. (PR-1293) | Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager, Kharagpur  
South Eastern Railway | We serve with a smile

FOCUS BIHAR

# THE QUIET COUP



The manner in which he has been nudged towards Rajya Sabha and away from Patna's power corridors marks the quietest of exits for a man who dominated Bihar politics for nearly twenty years

“I allied with the BJP of Vajpayeeji which believed in constitutional values. As a secular leader, I cannot be part of a BJP led by Narendra Modi which wants to win votes by creating a Hindu-Muslim divide.” Nitish Kumar in June 2013 after breaking alliance with BJP.

“When I started my political career, I had a desire to become a member of both Houses of the state legislature as well as both Houses of Parliament.” Nitish Kumar in March 2026 after announcing his decision to enter Rajya Sabha.

Thirteen years is a long time in Indian politics. In this period, the descent of Nitish Kumar from being seen as a potential challenger to Modi a decade ago to now being pushed into a Marg Darshak Mandal-like ‘retirement home’ in a Modi-centric political universe exemplifies the dramatic power and ideological shift in which the secular-communal vocabulary no longer carries any moral weight.

In the winter of 2005, a soft-spoken engineer-turned-politician from Bakhtiarpur took charge of a state widely dismissed as India’s symbol of political decay. Over the next two decades, Nitish Kumar would reinvent Bihar’s politics and, even more impressively, reinvent himself multiple times to stay in power. Few leaders in contemporary India have switched alliances as often and survived. Yet the latest twist in the Nitish Kumar saga may finally signal the end of that remarkable exercise in political gymnastics.

The manner in which he has been nudged towards Rajya Sabha and away from Patna’s power corridors marks the quietest of exits for a man who dominated Bihar politics for nearly twenty years.

For the BJP, Bihar has long been unfinished business. Despite its national dominance, the party never quite managed to control the state on its own terms, largely because the BJP could never shake off its upper caste image in a ‘Mandalised’

political milieu. As a symbol of backward caste assertion, Nitish Kumar was both an asset and a limitation: a credible governance-focused ally who expanded the coalition’s social base, but also a regional leader whose stature prevented the BJP from fully claiming the political space.

Over time, however, the numbers began to change. Election after election, BJP’s vote share in Bihar crept upward. The party that once played junior partner to JD(U) gradually emerged as the bigger force within the alliance.

For the BJP leadership, the long-term objective was clear—turn Bihar into a state where the party could eventually stand on its own feet. But removing Nitish Kumar abruptly was politically risky. His support amongst Extremely Backward Castes (EBCs) and women were crucial to guaranteeing a sweeping election victory in November 2025. When Nitish teamed up with his original Mandal co-traveller Lalu Prasad in 2015, the BJP was pushed to the margins.

Now, by gently easing Nitish Kumar into Rajya Sabha—a dignified but largely peripheral role in state politics—the BJP achieves two goals simultaneously. It paves the way for the BJP to dominate Bihar’s power structure while avoiding the spectacle of a messy exit. In effect, it re-

sembles a soft political coup.

Such manoeuvres are hardly new in Indian politics. Leaders who outlive their strategic usefulness are often offered graceful exits—governorships, parliamentary positions or advisory roles. But the Bihar episode carries a wider significance because it reflects the operating style of the BJP under Modi and Amit Shah. The party today functions as a highly centralised electoral machine anchored in a powerful national leadership. Regional allies are welcome, even necessary at times. But they are rarely treated as permanent stakeholders in power.

Instead, alliances tend to follow a predictable arc. First comes partnership. Then comes organisational expansion by the larger party. Eventually, when the balance of power shifts, the partner is quietly edged aside. From the Assam Gano Parishad in Assam to Shiv Sena in Maharashtra and the Maharashtra Gomantak Party in Goa, the BJP has exploited and then diminished regional parties for its own growth.

Nitish Kumar’s JD(U) illustrates this pattern. The larger question now is what message this sends to other allies within the ruling coalition. Today’s NDA includes powerful regional players—from Chandrababu Naidu in Andhra Pradesh to AIADMK in poll-bound Tamil Nadu and other smaller but

strategically important partners across the country. Many of them are vital for parliamentary arithmetic. Yet they also understand that the BJP’s long-term ambition is to grow at the expense of its allies wherever possible. That creates an uneasy equilibrium.

For regional leaders, aligning with the BJP offers immediate advantages: access to the political authority of the central government and the formidable electoral machinery that accompanies it. And more contentiously, protection from enforcement action by central agencies. But it also carries an inherent risk—that the alliance may gradually shrink their own political space. Nitish Kumar is simply the latest illustration of this “use and expand” strategy.

But beyond the electoral arithmetic lies a larger political moment. For two decades, Nitish Kumar represented a model of regional leadership that could negotiate with national parties from a position of strength. His exit from Bihar’s political stage via the Rajya Sabha, symbolises the fading of that era.

In today’s politics, the centre of gravity has clearly shifted toward the national party with the bigger machine, the deeper resources and the stronger central leadership. Which is why, Nitish Kumar’s quiet relocation to Delhi will not just be the retirement of a veteran CM. It is only another reminder that in the BJP’s power calculus, alliances are useful—but rarely permanent. And in the end, even the most seasoned survivors can find themselves gently shown the door.

Post-script: No one has summed up Nitish Kumar’s amoral politics of serial betrayals and compromise better than the late Sankarshan Thakur, a celebrated chronicler of contemporary Bihar. “Where once his politics evoked a call to conscience, in the end his conscience was on call,” wrote Thakur. Tragic but true.

The writer is a senior journalist and author.



Rajdeep Sardesai

## NITISH KUMAR IS SIMPLY THE LATEST ILLUSTRATION OF THIS “USE AND EXPAND” STRATEGY



Helen Clark & Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

Weak governance of natural resources has long undermined development. Too often, extraction has enriched a few individuals while leaving entire communities displaced, ecosystems degraded, and governments saddled with debt

## New Age Resource Race

With the global order under strain, the scramble for control of energy and minerals is increasingly framed as a matter of national security. From Venezuela and Greenland to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Ukraine, the competition for strategic resources is shaping global power dynamics, alliances, and conflicts.

We have lived through such eras before. Across the Global South, the pursuit of oil, diamonds, timber, minerals, and other resources has distorted domestic governance and perpetuated asymmetric power relationships, too often leaving producer countries poorer, more divided, and more indebted than before. Today, as the world races to secure the minerals needed for clean energy, digital technologies, AI, and defense industries, we are entering another such era – one that implies both great promise and grave peril.

But the speed and scale of change are different this time. No longer a distant goal, the transition away from fossil fuels is well underway and gaining speed. In 2025, global investment in clean energy was double that in oil, gas, and coal. Although oil and gas are still part of the energy mix and support public revenues in many economies, the energy transition is accelerating.

That transition depends on critical minerals, and demand is surging. By 2040, on current projections and patterns of annual usage, lithium demand could increase fivefold, graphite and nickel demand may double, cobalt and rare-earth demand could climb by more than 50 per cent, and copper demand could grow by nearly one-third. These projections are shaping current investment decisions, trade policies, and diplomatic strategies.

Still, more attention needs to be devoted to improving energy efficiency and supporting innovation in energy generation, recycling, and conservation. The global mineral supply chain remains highly concentrated. The DRC produces about 70 per cent of the world’s cobalt, and Indonesia produces nearly 60 per cent of global nickel.

Processing is even more concentrated. China has an average market share of 70 per cent for 19 of the 20 minerals considered by the International Energy Agency to be strategic, and its role continues to grow. In recent years, China accounted for much of the growth in refined cobalt, graphite, and rare earths, among other minerals. This concentration has heightened geopolitical competition and concerns about supply-chain vulnerability, which in turn are reshaping how governments think about energy security and industrial policy.

In response, countries are seeking to lock in access through bilateral deals and strategic partnerships – often negotiated hastily and in secret. When contracts are signed behind closed doors, citizens cannot see the terms under which their resources are pledged, and environmental and social costs often are treated as secondary concerns. We know from experience what can follow: corruption, conflict, environmental damage, and the accumulation of unaccountable wealth.

Weak governance of natural resources has long undermined development. Too often, extraction has enriched a few individuals while leaving entire communities displaced, ecosystems degraded, and governments saddled with debt. The rhetoric may have changed with the shift from oil to lithium, and from pipelines to batteries, but the risks are depressingly familiar. The current race for critical minerals could easily reproduce the same injustices under a green banner.

But that outcome is not inevitable. If managed well, mineral wealth can be transformative, generating public revenues, supporting economic diversification, and funding investments in infrastructure, education, and health. But this requires a decisive break from past practices, and that starts with ensuring transparency.

Transparency is not an optional add-on or bureaucratic excess. It is the cornerstone of good governance. Citizens have a right to know how their resources are developed, who profits, what taxes are paid, and how revenues are managed. Public scrutiny of contracts, company ownership, and fiscal terms is one of the most effective safeguards against abuses and mismanagement.

Participation matters, too. Women, youth, Indigenous peoples, and affected communities must have a meaningful voice in decisions that shape their land, livelihoods, and futures. Protections must be maintained for the journalists, activists, and civil-society organizations who can hold governments and companies to account, thereby ensuring that resource wealth translates into shared prosperity.

There are proven models for doing this well. For more than two decades, the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative has shown that openness and accountability are possible, even in politically complex environments. Today, 55 countries adhere to the global standards it has created for the extractive sector, working alongside companies and civil-society groups. This approach now needs to be scaled up and adapted specifically for critical minerals.

These resources are not just inputs for the energy transition. They are strategic assets shaping geopolitics, investment flows, and the future of development. Global cooperation in this domain is urgently needed. Government leaders must demand and apply the highest standards of ethical governance and transparency to ensure that this new era of resource competition delivers fairness, accountability, and lasting public benefit.

We have a choice. We can repeat the mistakes of the past, or we can ensure that economies where mining contributes to growth also support peace, prosperity, and justice.

Helen Clark is a former prime minister of New Zealand and former administrator of the UNDP. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is a Nobel Peace Prize laureate and former president of Liberia.

## WISDOM CORNER

Generosity is giving more than you can, and pride is taking less than you need. KAHLIL GIBRAN

If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, infinite. WILLIAM BLAKE

It is through gratitude for the present moment that the spiritual dimension of life opens up. ECKHART TOLLE

## SPECTRUM SOCIETY

# Unpacking India’s youth mental health crisis



Bhaskar Nath Biswal

## WE MUST TREAT MENTAL HEALTH AS A COLLECTIVE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY RATHER THAN AN INDIVIDUAL BURDEN

A recent global study has cast a sobering light on the psychological state of India’s next generation, revealing a crisis that is as quiet as it is pervasive. According to the ‘Global Mind Health in 2025’ report by US-based Sapien Labs, Indian young adults have ranked a dismal 60th out of 84 nations in Mind Health Quotient (MHQ) scores. This data is not merely a collection of statistics; it is a mirror reflecting a deep-seated vulnerability within the most productive segment of the country’s population. The survey, which leveraged data from over one million internet-enabled respondents, serves as a vital diagnostic tool for a world grappling with the aftereffects of rapid modernization and the lingering trauma of a global pandemic. By comparing mental well-being across generations and geographies, the study highlights a startling generational divide: while older Indians aged 55 and above continue to score near the ‘managing or succeeding’ threshold, the 18-34 age group is sliding into the ‘distressed or struggling’ category.

The reality of the situation is stark. Young adults in India recorded an average MHQ score of approximately 33, a figure that pales in comparison to the near-100 average maintained by their elders. This discrepancy suggests that the mental resilience which once defined the Indian social fabric is fraying at the edges. Perhaps most concerning is the revelation that this decline is not a post-pandemic anomaly but a continuation of a downward trend that began well before 2019. While the COVID-19 pandemic acted as a catalyst for a ‘sharp nose-dive,’ the underlying fragility was already present. This suggests that the issues facing Indian youth are structural and cultural rather than merely episodic. Geographically, this trend is mirrored globally, with younger generations in wealthier, more developed nations often faring worse than those in developing regions like Sub-Saharan Africa. However, for India, a nation banking on its ‘demographic dividend’ to drive economic growth, these

findings are a loud alarm bell. The Sapien Labs report points toward the fundamental erosion of the ‘modern life’ infrastructure. One of the most significant factors identified is the diminishing strength of family bonds. In India, closeness to family remains a primary buffer against mental distress. The data shows that people with poor family relationships are nearly four times more likely to fall into the distressed category. Yet, only 64% of Indian youth report being close to their families, compared to 78% of those over 55. This generational gap in social connectivity is exacerbated by the early and pervasive adoption of smart phones and the high consumption of ultra-processed foods. These modern ‘conveniences’ have replaced traditional social interactions and physical health foundations with digital isolation and physiological inflammation. The reality we must face is that the pursuit of economic prosperity and digital connectivity has come at a steep psychological cost. The pressure

to succeed in a hyper-competitive environment, coupled with a lack of spiritual or community grounding, has left the youth in a state of perpetual ‘flight or fight.’ We are witnessing a generation that is more connected to the world via screens than to the person sitting across the dinner table.

To address this, we must move beyond simply treating the symptoms with therapy and medication, though these remain important. The conclusion to be drawn from this study is that we must reconstruct the social and lifestyle pillars that support mental well-being. This involves a conscious effort to delay the age of smart phone entry, promote nutritional literacy to combat the rise of ultra-processed diets and most importantly, foster environments where familial and community ties can be repaired. We must treat mental health as a collective social responsibility rather than an individual burden.

The writer is a former college principal and founder of Supporting Shoulders.

## 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



## Economic shock

Sir, Having watched geopolitics and geoeconomics evolve for more than two decades, one develops a sense for moments when uncertainty, not merely conflict, becomes the real driver of global markets. The escalating military strikes by the United States and Israel on Iran represent precisely such a moment. What makes the situation particularly unsettling is the absence of a clearly defined endgame. Without a stated strategic objective, it becomes difficult to gauge how long the confrontation might last or how far it could spread. For energy-importing economies like India, this ambiguity carries real consequences. India imports more than 85% of the crude oil it consumes, much of it from West Asia, leaving it highly exposed to supply disruptions and price shocks. Brent crude briefly touched close to \$120 a barrel on Monday, a reminder of how quickly geopolitical tremors can ripple through energy markets. The timing is also awkward, coming when India’s external environment is already unsettled by the after-effects of the US tariffs and lingering uncertainty around the final contours of the India-US trade arrangement following a US Supreme Court ruling. Recent balance of payments figures suggest that these external pressures are no longer purely theoretical. Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH

## Junior citizens

Sir, It was a pleasant shock to read that the CM of Karnataka has sanctioned a whopping Rs 490 crore for an irrigation project, after children from a village in Karnataka wrote to him about the water shortage in their district. Politicians ought to listen to kids as their demands are genuinely need based and free from religious or political considerations. In Kerala, Children’s Panchayats (Bal Panchayat) have been set up where kids raise issues like clean drinking water, playgrounds, and school facilities. Local leaders have acted on these demands, allocating funds for better sanitation and play areas. As Nelson Mandela has rightly said: “There can be no keener revelation of a society’s soul, than the way it treats its children.” Avinash Godbole, DEWAS

TOTAL POPULATION  
NOW 53

## Tigress ST-17 gives birth to 3 cubs in Sariska reserve

The cubs were captured in camera trap photographs and videos in the Akbarpur range of the 1,200 sq km reserve, along with their mother

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jaipur, March 12:** A tigress has given birth to three cubs in the Sariska Tiger Reserve in Rajasthan, taking the total number of the big cats in the protected area to 53, officials said Thursday.

The movement and condition of the tigress and the cubs appear normal at first glance. Tigress ST-17 had earlier also given birth to cubs, and this is her second successful breeding, they said.

The cubs were captured in camera trap photographs and videos in the Akbarpur range of the 1,200 sq km reserve, along with their mother.

Monitoring teams have been directed to keep a close watch on the activities of the tigress and her cubs, they added.

Forest Minister Sanjay Sharma described the development as good news for wildlife conservation in the state.

"Good news from Sariska Tiger Reserve. Tigress ST-17



is blessed with three newborn cubs in the Akbarpur range of Sariska. The growing tiger family tells the success story of Rajasthan's wildlife conserva-

tion. The government is always committed to forest and wildlife conservation," Sharma said.

Wildlife experts said the birth of three cubs reflects the

success of tiger conservation and rehabilitation efforts in the reserve.

Tigers had become completely extinct from Sariska around 2004-05 due to poaching. In 2008, a tiger relocation programme was launched by shifting the animal from Ranthambore National Park to Sariska, an effort considered the first of its kind in the world, the experts said.

The officials said sustained management, intensive patrolling, camera trap monitoring, augmentation of prey species, and relocation of villages since then have helped steadily increase the tiger population in the reserve.

## R'sthan veterans demand I-T relief on disability pension



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jaipur, March 12:** The disabled defence forces in Rajasthan have urged the Centre to reconsider the decision to withdraw income tax exemption on pensions they received for injuries suffered during wars, saying the move is "deeply painful" for soldiers.

Colonel AK Mathur (Retd), President of the Disabled War Veterans of Rajasthan, said that the issue concerns the dignity and honour of soldiers injured in military operations. He said that the Centre has proposed to bring disability pension for soldiers within the ambit of income tax from April 1, 2026.

Veterans' organisations have urged the central government for amendment in Finance Bill 2026, exempting War Injury Pension (including service element and war injury element) from income tax for "all cases irrespective of invalidated out/superannuated".

"This is not about opposing the government. We are apolitical. But this decision has caused deep pain among Disabled War Veterans," Col Mathur said Thursday.

"A soldier never thinks about his life when defending the country. If someone loses a limb or suffers permanent disability, it is for the nation. The government must stand by such soldiers and respect their

sacrifice," he said.

He said imposing income tax on pension would effectively mean taxing the sacrifice of soldiers.

Col Mathur said that the tax exemption has been since 1922 (over 104 years) and continued under Income Tax Act 1961.

"For many disabled veterans, pension is the primary source of income. Imposing tax will make an already challenging life full of pains and sufferings even more difficult," he said, urging the government to immediately withdraw the decision.

Disabled war veterans form a very small section of the armed forces, but their sacrifices are immeasurable, he added. According to veterans' groups, Rajasthan alone has around 700 such disabled war veterans.

Retired Havildar Suresh Singh Solanki, a Shaurya Chakra awardee who was seriously injured in a militant attack in July 2006, said the proposed withdrawal of the exemption has come as a shock.

"I was hit by six bullets in my ear, chest, stomach and thigh while serving the country. I received the Shaurya Chakra January 26, 2007," Solanki said.

"We never worried about our lives when we were fighting for the country. But this decision is extremely painful. The tax exemption on pension was a way for the government to acknowledge the sacrifices we made," he said.

## Fresh snowfall in higher reaches of Himachal

The rain and snow in March have brought smiles to residents, particularly tourism stakeholders in Manali and Lahaul and Spiti, as they expect an influx of tourists to the hills following a heat wave in the plains



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Shimla, March 12:** Isolated areas in the higher reaches of the Lahaul and Spiti district in Himachal Pradesh experienced a fresh spell of snow, while the lower hills saw intermittent rain Thursday morning.

Snowfall was reported in Jispa, Darcha, and Shinkula, with Hansa recording 2.5 cm of snow. Videos of the snowfall have also gone viral on the internet.

Meanwhile, Bharmaur received 12 mm of rain, followed by Gondla (6.2 mm), Keylong (4 mm), Kukumseri (1.3 mm), Jot (1 mm), and Kangra (0.3 mm), according to the Shimla MeT station. The rain and snow in March have brought smiles to residents, particularly tourism stakeholders in Manali and Lahaul and Spiti, as they expect an influx of tourists to the hills following a heat wave in the plains.

The valley has experienced a drop in temperatures due to the snowfall in higher areas, marking a significant change in weather in Manali and its surroundings, as well as in Lahaul and Spiti. "The chill is back in the mountains, while the plains are suffering under a scorching sun. This weather will attract tourists," locals Ajay, Sanjay, and Ludhar Thakur noted.

In contrast, dry weather

prevailed in the plains, with a severe heat wave reported in Sundernagar and Solan, and thunderstorms accompanied by lightning affecting Kangra and Jot. The Shimla Meteorological Station has issued a yellow alert for heat wave to severe heat wave conditions in Mandi and Solan districts for Friday and Saturday.

A fresh western disturbance is expected to impact northwest India starting March 14 (Saturday), prompting the Met to issue another yellow warning for thunderstorms with lightning and gusty winds, with speeds of 40-50 km/h, across four districts: Chamba, Kullu, Kangra, and Mandi Sunday and Monday.

Light rain and snow are anticipated in isolated areas of the state March 13, 14, and 17, with light to moderate precipitation in some places March 16 and 18, and widespread precipitation March 15. Although the wet spell resulted in a decrease in minimum temperatures, the change was not significant. Keylong recorded the lowest temperature at night, reaching 1.6 degrees Celsius.

From March 1 to March 12, during the pre-monsoon season, Himachal Pradesh received only 0.8 mm of rain, compared to the normal rainfall of 45.2 mm, resulting in a deficit of 98 per cent.

## BJP blames min Jagat Negi for Nautor issue deadlock

Jagat Singh Negi Wednesday accused former governor Shiv Pratap Shukla of treating the tribal community living in the state's border areas 'unfairly' by denying them approval in cases related to Nautor land

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Shimla, March 12:** BJP leader Surat Negi Thursday slammed Himachal minister Jagat Singh Negi for criticising a governor over Nautor land related cases when he was the minister of tribal affairs in the state.

Jagat Singh Negi Wednesday accused former governor Shiv Pratap Shukla of treating the tribal community living in the state's border areas "unfairly" by denying them approval in cases related to Nautor land. He also said the tribal community have suffered due to the BJP's "narrow-mindedness".

Addressing the media here, Surat Negi, a BJP spokesperson, said the minister's state-



ment against the ex-governor was "unfortunate and an insult to constitutional institution".

Such attitude not only hurts the dignity of a constitutional position but also exposes political arrogance and administrative failure, the BJP leader said.

Nautor cases refer to legal disputes concerning the allocation and ownership of Nautor land - barren government land given to landless individuals for cultivation under specific rules.

The BJP leader said the Nautor cases are not new and have been around for 20-25 years. He said it was a Congress government in 2006, when Jagat Negi was an MLA, that passed a reso-

lution in a meeting of the Tribal Advisory Committee that Nautor land would only be given to "landless" people. The 1975 law on Nautor land clearly defines "landlessness" and this landlessness condition determines approvals in Nautor land cases, he said. Surat Negi said the Congress government in 2014 "misled" the public but "partially suspending" the Forest Conservation Act, 1980, but never removed the "landless" condition imposed in 2006. Thus, no one could actually benefit from Nautor, he added.

When the BJP came to power in 2017, the government found a way to remove the 2006 condition but an immediate decision was not possible as the Forest Conservation Act case was pending before the Supreme Court, Surat Negi said.

The BJP leader said that while the governor has been granted certain special powers under the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution, suspending a central law is not as simple as Jagat Negi is trying to portray. Land cannot be given to anyone without following legal procedures and rules, he added.



A woman performs rituals on the occasion of 'Sheetala Ashtami', in Ajmer, Rajasthan

PTI PHOTO

RAJASTHAN DIWAS

## CELEBRATIONS TO BEGIN MARCH 14

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jaipur, March 12:** The Rajasthan government will celebrate on Chaitra Shukla Pratipada with a series of programmes beginning March 14, officials said Wednesday.

The main function will be held in Jalore March 19. Following an initiative by Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma, the state government shifted the celebrations to Chaitra Shukla Pratipada. This year, the government will continue the practice with various events across the state from March 14 to March 19.

According to an official statement, the celebrations will begin March 14 with a seven-day cleanliness drive. While state-level programmes are planned in Jaipur, district-level events will be held across all districts.

The chief minister will flag off a state-level 'Viksit Rajasthan Run' in Jaipur March 15. A digital quiz titled 'Rajasthan Ko Jaanein' will also be held the same day. Besides, universities and colleges will organise essay, speech and painting competitions. A five-day Rajasthan Diwas event will begin at Bikaner House in New Delhi that evening.

Rajasthan Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas will be organised at Beshwar Dham in Dungarpur March 16. The programme will include foundation-laying ceremonies for development works, exhibitions of tribal art and handicrafts, and interaction sessions.

Rajasthan Yuva Shakti Diwas will be celebrated March 17 with a state-level youth conference in Jaipur. March 18 will be observed as Farmers and Livestock Rearing Prosperity Day. On this occasion, evening aarti will be performed at state-run temples and the chief minister will participate in a maha aarti.

## IAF Surya Kiran team to hold air show in Himachal

Established in 1996, Surya Kiran is the only nine-aircraft aerobatic team in Asia and is considered one of the world's finest aerobatic teams



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Hamirpur (HP), March 12:** Indian Air Force's Surya Kiran Aerobatic Team will hold an air show at Sujampur Tira in Hamirpur district March 25 and 26, officials said Thursday.

Chaugan Ground and Sainik School in Sujampur Tira were selected venues for the show, they said.

Group Captain Rachna Joshi, principal of Sujampur Tira Sainik School, confirmed the report.

He said the Surya Kiran team, also known as "Ambassadors of the Indian Air

Force," is renowned worldwide for its unparalleled precision, outstanding skill and excellent teamwork.

"This elite team will perform a series of thrilling aerobatic feats, flying in striking red and white Hawk Mk-132 jets. Their performances will include breathtaking loops, thrilling barrel rolls, gravity-defying inverted flying, and the highly popular DNA manoeuvre. Each performance will showcase the pilots' exceptional skill, discipline, and excellent coordination," he said.

Joshi further said, "The team will thrill spectators

with its spectacular nine-aircraft aerial display in Sujampur Tira. It will also present a spectacular nine-aircraft aerial display over the iconic Sukhna Lake in Chandigarh March 27 and 28."

The Surya Kiran Aerobatic Team was established in 1996. It is Asia's only nine-aircraft aerobatic team and is considered one of the world's finest aerobatic teams.

This prestigious team has so far performed over 800 aerobatic displays in various cities across India and has showcased the professional excellence of the Indian Air Force at international air shows held

in several countries, including China, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Singapore, and the United Arab Emirates.

The Surya Kiran team consists of nine Hawk Mk-132 aircraft, manufactured under license in India by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), flying in extremely precise and close formation, less than five meters apart during flight. The team comprises a total of 14 pilots, exemplifying the highest levels of training and discipline.

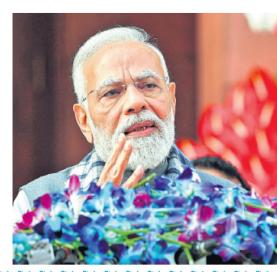
All team members work in the spirit of their motto, "Sadaiva Sarvottam", meaning "Always the Best."



**The Dandi March was not just a movement against the salt law, but the world's largest non-violent resistance against injustice and oppressive policies**  
**ASHOK GEHLOT | SENIOR CONG LEADER**

## PM TO VISIT ASSAM, BENGAL MARCH 13-14

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Thursday said he will visit Assam and West Bengal in the next two days and attend various programmes and inaugurate development initiatives which will present a wonderful opportunity to interact with the people of the two states



### of the day quote

I have not renewed my membership and I am no longer a party member. Based on the experiences I faced, I decided to contest in this constituency as an independent



**G SUDHAKARAN** | FORMER MEMBER OF THE KERALA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

There are 3-4 cases already registered against Pawan Khera for trying to contact some militant organisations in Assam to influence election results



**HIMANTA BISWA SARMA** | ASSAM CM

Bihar is a unique state where the NDA's double-engine government has been in power for decades, yet the state still performs poorly across several socio-economic indicators



**TEJASHWI YADAV** | RJD'S NATIONAL WORKING PRESIDENT

# CEC removal: 193 MPs sign notice

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 12:** A total of 130 Lok Sabha MPs and 63 Rajya Sabha MPs have signed notices seeking the removal of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, a source has said.

According to the source, the notice is likely to be submitted in at least one House Friday, though it was not clear it would be brought first in which House. An Opposition leader, meanwhile, said MPs have shown great enthusiasm in signing the notice, and several lawmakers came forward to sign the notice Thursday as well, even as the requisite numbers had already been achieved.

According to rules, at least 100 MPs must sign a notice seeking the removal of the CEC in the Lok Sabha, and the required strength in the Rajya Sabha is 50.

The notice has been signed by members from all INDIA bloc parties, the source said. MPs from the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which is no longer officially part of the bloc, have



« According to the source, the notice is likely to be submitted in at least one House Friday, though it was not clear it would be brought first in which House

« An Opposition leader, meanwhile, said MPs have shown great enthusiasm in signing the notice, and several lawmakers came forward to sign the notice Thursday as well, even as the requisite numbers had already been achieved

also signed the notice, another source said. This is the first time a notice has been given seeking the removal of the CEC.

According to a highly placed source, seven charges are listed against the CEC in the notice, ranging from "partisan and discriminatory conduct in office" to "deliberate obstruction of inves-

tigation of electoral fraud" and "mass disenfranchisement."

Opposition parties have accused the CEC of aiding the ruling BJP on several occasions, especially with the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR), which they have alleged is aimed at helping the party at the Centre. Concerns

# Farooq reacts to assassination bid

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jammu, March 12:** Veteran politician and National Conference (NC) president Farooq Abdullah Thursday described his narrow escape from an assassination attempt as an act of divine intervention, while raising serious questions over the "total absence" of police deployment at a high-profile wedding where the incident took place.

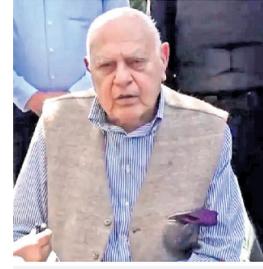
The National Security Guard (NSG) will undertake a comprehensive security audit of all its Z-plus category high-risk VIPs following the assassination attempt, officials said Thursday. The 88-year-old former chief minister was targeted at point-blank range Wednesday night while leaving a marriage pavilion in the Greater Kailash area on the outskirts of Jammu.

"I am fine and God has saved me," Abdullah told PTI Thursday morning. The assailant, identified as 63-year-old Kamal Singh Jamwal, reportedly told investigators he had been waiting two decades for an opportunity to kill Abdullah as he had a "personal motive".

"I do not know that man, nor had anyone ever told me anything about him. As for what his motive was... how would I know what it could have been?" he told reporters at his residence. Recounting the moments of the attack, Abdullah said he was about to step out of the wedding pavilion after the bride arrived when he heard what he initially thought was the sound of firecrackers.

"When the bride arrived, after that we took permission from them and we started leaving for home. I had just stepped out of the wedding pavilion (mandap) and was walking when I heard a sound like a firecracker. I thought someone must have burst a firecracker, because people often burst them at weddings," he said.

Abdullah, however, said he had later felt a burning sensation but did not realise at the



## NBW against Farooq in JKCA scam case

**Srinagar:** A local court Thursday recalled a non-bailable warrant (NBW) hours after issuing it against former chief minister Farooq Abdullah in the Jammu and Kashmir Cricket Association (JKCA) scam case, considering his condition following a murderous attack a day before. Earlier in the day, Chief Judicial Magistrate Srinagar Tabassum had issued a non-bailable warrant as Abdullah failed to appear in court either in person or online. However, Abdullah's counsel, Ishtiyaq Khan, moved an application seeking the recall of the warrant as medical consultants of the former chief minister had advised him against any travel after the life-threatening attack on him at Jammu last night.

time that it was a gunshot. CCTV camera footage showed that the gunman had positioned himself directly behind Abdullah, but an alert police officer and an NSG commando held and overpowered the attacker, causing the weapon to misfire and hit the ground. Asked about a possible security lapse, Abdullah said that it would be premature to make such claims, but said that many prominent people were present at the function, and adequate police arrangements should have been in place. Despite being a Z+ category protectee, Abdullah highlighted a glaring lack of basic security protocols at the venue.

## Patanjali inaugurates advanced Zebrafish and Drosophila research lab

AGENCIES

**Haridwar, March 12:** Patanjali Research Institute has inaugurated a state-of-the-art Zebrafish and Drosophila research laboratory, marking a key milestone in integrating India's traditional knowledge with modern science. The lab was inaugurated by the institute's mentor, Acharya Balkrishna, in the presence of senior scientists, researchers, and representatives from various departments.

Zebrafish and Drosophila are powerful model organisms in biomedical research. Their rapid life cycles, transparent structures, and robust research potential make them ideal for studying disease mechanisms, toxicology, and drug discovery.

The new laboratory will enable scientific evaluation of medicinal plants and Ayurvedic medicines, providing microscopic insights into their effects.



Acharya Balkrishna emphasised that India's Ayurvedic tradition holds immense knowledge, which must be validated using modern research methods.

Senior scientist Dr Anurag Varshney noted that the lab is equipped with controlled aquariums for Zebrafish, culture bottles for Drosophila, and high-resolution microscopy and imaging systems, enabling detailed studies of embryonic development, cellular activity, and biological processes.



Students participate in the inter-college Sahyadri Festival organised by Kuvempu University, in Shivamogga, Karnataka

## Mumbai bomb threat: Email targets Vidhan Bhavan, BSE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, March 12:** An email threatening "missile and bomb attacks" on Maharashtra Vidhan Bhavan and other key locations in Mumbai triggered a security alert Thursday, prompting authorities to conduct extensive searches in the legislature complex during the ongoing Budget session, officials said.

The email, received on an official email account of the legislature at 6.57 am, mentioned possible attacks on the Vidhan Bhavan complex, Bombay Stock Exchange, Bombay High Court, Mumbai Metro and a bank, legislative council chairman Ram Shinde said. The threatening email may be linked to the pro-Khalistani movement, but

it is too early to say anything concrete on it, Shinde told reporters in the Vidhan Bhavan premises.

Following the hoax email, the premises was locked down for about 40 minutes and a fresh BDDS team was deployed to scan and sanitise the entire complex again, Vidhan Sabha sources said.

The premises is usually checked and sanitised between 6 am and 8 am as part of a standard security procedure, while the bomb detection squad as well as the dog squad conduct daily scans of the entire premises as a precautionary measure, they added.

However, the email was noticed later in the morning and therefore the complex was locked down briefly to recheck the entire area.

## SNIPPETS

### Court denies bail to Shahrukh Pathan

**New Delhi:** A court here Thursday dismissed a bail application filed by Shahrukh Pathan, an accused in a case linked to the 2020 riots in north-east Delhi, saying there had been no change in circumstances since the Delhi High Court denied him relief last year. Additional Sessions Judge Sameer Bajpai, who was hearing the regular bail application moved by Pathan, said he cannot be granted bail because of his incarceration for the last six years. "This court is of the view that when the high court declined bail to the applicant/accused October 22, 2024, and the circumstances have not changed, except the fact that almost one-and-a-half years have passed, this court should not grant bail to him even now," the order said.

### Ethanol plant GM, junior shot dead

**Budaun (UP):** Two officials of an ethanol plant were shot dead Thursday, allegedly by a blacklisted vendor, officials said. The killings took place at a plant of Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) in Sejni village under the Musajhag Police Station area, they said. Plant's general manager, Sudhir Kumar Gupta, 58, and assistant general manager, Harshit Mishra, 34, were shot dead in the attack. District Magistrate Avnish Rai said the alleged shooter, Ajay Pratap Singh alias Ramu, a local, was once a vendor at the plant. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Brijesh Kumar Singh said he has been arrested.

### Curfew relaxed in Meghalaya's Garo Hills

**Tura:** The total curfew imposed in Meghalaya's East and West Garo Hills districts was relaxed Thursday to allow people to procure essential items, officials said. The curfew in East Garo Hills was relaxed for five hours from 8 am to 1 pm, while in West Garo Hills, it was relaxed for two hours from 2 pm to 4 pm. The district administrations said the relaxation was allowed to enable residents to procure essential commodities. The curfew was imposed in the two districts under Section 163 of the BNSS after violence erupted in West Garo Hills during protests linked to the elections to the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (GHADC), with demonstrators opposing the participation of non-Garo communities in the filing of nominations for the polls.

## SHORT TAKES

### Moosewala murder: SC grants bail to two

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court Thursday granted bail to two persons accused in the killing of Punjabi singer Sidhu Moosewala in 2022. A bench of Justice Vikram Nath and Justice Sandeep Mehta granted relief to Pawan Bishnoi, an alleged associate of gangster Lawrence Bishnoi and Jagtar Singh, Moosewala's neighbour suspected of having passed on information about the singer to the Bishnoi gang. Moosewala, 28, was shot dead by assailants in May 2022 while travelling in his SUV in Punjab's Mansa.

### Three killed as car collides with bus

**Malappuram (Kerala):** Three persons were killed after a car collided with a private bus at Morayur here Thursday, police said. The deceased were identified as Sakkeena and Shiyas, both natives of Olavakkode, Palakkad and Basila of Pandikkad in Malappuram district. Two others, Afrida and Ibrahim, sustained injuries and were shifted to a hospital. According to police, the accident occurred around 8 am when the deceased and injured persons were travelling in a car driven by Shiyas after returning from the Kozhikode airport. When the car reached Morayur, it reportedly lost control and collided with a private bus plying between Palakkad and Kozhikode.

### 2 elephants found dead in river

**Raigarh:** Two elephants were found dead in a river in Chhattisgarh's Raigarh district, a forest official said Thursday. The carcasses of the two jumbos were spotted in Kurkut river in Garghoda forest range Wednesday and later retrieved by a team under the divisional forest officer, he added.

### 2 missing men found dead in Kamjong

**Imphal:** Two men who went missing in Manipur's Kamjong district were found dead Thursday, officials said. The deceased have been identified as Thangboimang Khongsai (35) from Shangkai in Ukhrul district and Thengin Baite (40) from nearby Thawai Kuki village. A tribal group based in Manipur's Kangpokpi district has issued a 48-hour ultimatum to the state government to arrest those responsible for the killing.

# IIT Guwahati develops nuclear radiation-proof cement mortar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 12:** Researchers at Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Guwahati, have developed a method to make cement mortar stronger, more durable and better at blocking harmful radiation with an aim to make nuclear facilities radiation-safe, according to officials.

The approach focuses on improving the material properties of the mortar so that it can perform both as a structural component and as a radiation-shielding barrier. By modifying the composition of the mortar, the researchers aimed to enhance its density and durability, which are important factors in limiting the penetration of radiation, they said.

The findings of the research have been published in the prestigious journal "Materials and Structures".

According to Hrishikesh Sharma, Associate Professor, Department of Civil Engineering, IIT Guwahati, the researchers found that concrete made using this enhanced mortar is capable of reducing the risk of radiation leakage, thus improving the overall safety in locations such as nuclear reactors and other radiation-sensitive facilities.

"This could help create more reliable protective walls and structures in areas where radiation exposure needs to be strictly controlled. The development may also support long-term safety in such facilities by providing materials that



The IIT researchers have demonstrated that carefully engineered microparticle-modified cement mortar can significantly enhance both structural integrity and radiation-shielding capacity

can maintain their shielding performance over extended periods of use. Safety of nu-

clear infrastructure critically depends on the performance of containment materials

under extreme mechanical and radiation environments. Through this research, we have demonstrated that carefully engineered microparticle-modified cement mortar can significantly enhance both structural integrity and radiation-shielding capacity," he said.

Nuclear disasters such as Chernobyl disaster in 1986 and Fukushima nuclear accident in 2011 have shown that safety from radiation remains the utmost priority in nuclear energy systems. This depends on the strength of the materials used to build a power plant.

Nuclear containment structures act as the protective barrier, designed to prevent radiation leaks during extreme events such as earthquakes, explosions, or sharp tempera-

ture changes. The team is now planning to scale up the developed cement mortar to a full concrete mix design and conduct structural-level testing of reinforced concrete elements incorporating the developed mortar.

"We are also working on optimising the microparticle dosage to achieve an ideal balance between mechanical strength, workability, durability and radiation shielding performance of the developed cement mortar. To explore the real-world testing and validation of the developed technology, we are looking for collaborations with nuclear energy agencies, construction material manufacturers, and infrastructure companies involved in nuclear facility development," he said.



**Larger participation of women at all levels in the sector will promote gender-inclusive agricultural growth**

DROUPADI MURMU | PRESIDENT

## ISRO CONDUCTS SEA LEVEL TEST OF CRYOGENIC ENGINE

ISRO Thursday said it has successfully conducted a sea level hot test of its cryogenic engine (CE20) at 22 tonne thrust using nozzle protection system and multi-element igniter at its Propulsion Complex at Mahendragiri in Tamil Nadu



### of the day quote

The Punjab government is on alert amid rumours about a possible shortage of LPG cylinders due to the ongoing war in Gulf countries

BHAGWANT SINGH MANN | PB CM

Steps must be taken to ensure investments coming into the state are grounded quickly. If investments come, employment opportunities for local youth will increase

N CHANDRABABU NAIDU | AP CM

No one knows where Rahul Gandhi's mind is and where his body is; not even he seems to know. People might have to send his photo to a psychologist. Perhaps a psychologist will be able to find it

GIRIRAJ SINGH | UNION MINISTER

## X POST OF THE DAY

Economy is so messed up. You buy some groceries and it feels like you're irresponsible with money.

@\_Poisonivvy

## SHORT TAKES

### Woman kills four minor daughters

**Sagar (MP):** A 28-year-old woman abandoned by her husband allegedly killed her four minor daughters by throwing them into a well and then committed suicide in a village in Sagar district of Madhya Pradesh, police said Thursday. The four sisters, aged between five months and seven years, were found dead in the well Thursday. Later, their mother Savita Lodhi was found hanging at her home in Khamaria village, about 50km from the district headquarters in the impoverished Bundelkhand region, area City Superintendent of Police (CSP) Lalit Kashyap told reporters. A year ago, the woman's husband, Chandrabhan Lodhi, abandoned her and snapped all contacts with his wife, leaving her to fend for self and their daughters, Kesli police station house officer (SHO) Lokesh Patel told PTI over the phone.

### Assam govt appoints over 5,500 teachers

**Guwahati:** Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma Thursday distributed appointment letters to over 5,500 people under the Education Department, and claimed that the administration eliminated corruption in government recruitments. The CM also alleged that government recruitments in the state were marred by corruption during the Congress regime. Ahead of the Assembly elections, Sarma promised 2 lakh corruption-free government job opportunities in the next five years.

### CBI raids 15 places in online fraud

**New Delhi:** The CBI has conducted searches at 15 locations across multiple states in connection with a large-scale online financial fraud involving overseas fintech platform 'Pyypl', officials said Thursday. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is now seeking custody of the alleged kingpin of the gang, Ashok Kumar Sharma, a chartered accountant, who was recently arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED).

# Fuel queues grow, govt rejects shortage claims

The government said there was no shortage of petrol, diesel, kerosene or aviation turbine fuel in India after the Opposition criticised it over the handling of the fallout of the West Asia crisis by citing instances of scarcity and panic buying across the country

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 12:** People queued up at petrol stations and domestic LPG outlets amid panic buying across the country over a perceived paucity of fuel, even as the government told Parliament Thursday that there was no shortage of petrol, diesel and kerosene due to the West Asia crisis and it was not the time for rumour-mongering. The Uttarakhand government decided to provide commercial gas cylinders to hospitals and educational institutions on priority and began preparations to provide wood for commercial use if needed. Eateries and quick-service restaurant chains, which rely heavily on commercial LPG cylinders to run kitchen operations, fear that restrictions on fuel supply to them could disrupt operations and drive input cost inflation. Several eateries across the country have been forced to trim their operations. The Tamil Nadu Hotels Association said small and medium-sized restaurants in the southern state were badly hit, with many iconic establishments in Chennai forced to stop serving fuel-intensive dishes such as dosas and fried rice to conserve their dwindling gas stocks. In West Bengal, officials said the "shortage" of cooking gas cylinders had begun to affect midday meals in schools across the state, forcing authorities to adopt alternative fuels such as firewood or serving limited food items to students. The Assam police warned people of strict action against those spreading rumours about a shortage of LPG and other fuels, a day after the chief secretary asserted that local refineries can meet only about 30 per cent of the state's demand for the cooking fuel. The government has formed a media monitoring committee to track rumours, misinformation and misleading reports that may create panic among consumers. The fear of fuel shortage has triggered panic buying and allegations of black marketing of gas cylinders. In the national capital, police officials have been directed to prepare a list of gas agencies in their jurisdictions and deploy personnel to maintain law and order in view of the ongoing problem of LPG supply in the city. In Kolkata, police launched a crackdown on alleged black



Lop in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, Opposition MPs Hibi Eden, Manickam Tagore, and others, stage a protest over 'LPG shortage' during the second part of Budget session of Parliament, in New Delhi

## NO FUEL SHORTAGE IN COUNTRY: PURI

**NEW DELHI:** The government Thursday said there is no shortage of petrol, diesel, kerosene or aviation turbine fuel in the country despite the ongoing West Asia crisis, and urged the Opposition not to spread rumours and fake narratives. Responding to concerns raised by Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi in the Lok Sabha, Petroleum Minister Hardeep Puri said it is the foremost priority of the government that the kitchens of over 33 crore families, especially the poor and the underprivileged, do not face any shortage of gas. Domestic supply is fully protected, and the delivery cycle is unchanged, he said. "There is no shortage of petrol, diesel, kerosene, aviation turbine fuel or fuel oil. The availability of petrol, diesel, aviation turbine fuel, kerosene, and fuel oil is fully assured," Puri said. He noted that retail outlets across the country are stocked, supply chains for these products are functioning normally, and additional allocation of PDS (public distribution system) kerosene has been issued to all the states.

marketing of LPG cylinders, a day after Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee directed the authorities to ensure strict monitoring to prevent such pilferage. The rush has also overwhelmed the booking systems of oil marketing companies, with distributors reporting repeated server crashes due to the surge in refill requests. In West Bengal, the average daily bookings for Indane LPG cylinders have nearly doubled to around two lakh from about one lakh earlier, distributors said. Catering and marriage service units have also been hit hard. A spokesperson of a leading catering service provider in Pudukcherry told PTI that he

was not taking orders for small functions as he had to fulfil the orders booked by big parties like marriages. He expressed fear about not being able to meet the orders in the future as the available stock of commercial cylinders was shrinking. In Delhi, a city known for its wedding feasts, characterised by giant cauldrons of biryani and endless live cooking stations, planners and caterers warn that ongoing supply disruptions and rising prices of commercial LPG cylinders might lead to an increase in wedding catering costs by approximately 10 to 20 per cent if the situation persists.

## ED attaches ₹581-cr assets in Anil Ambani's Reliance Group case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 12:** The Enforcement Directorate Thursday said it has attached fresh assets worth more than ₹581 crore as part of its investigation against RHFL and RCFL, companies of Reliance Group Chairman Anil Ambani. A provisional order was issued under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) on March 11 to attach land parcels in Goa, Kerala, Karnataka, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Delhi, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) said in a statement. The properties are worth ₹581.65 crore, and they have been attached as part of a probe related to the Reliance Home Finance Limited (RHFL) and Reliance Commercial Finance Limited (RCFL), the agency said. "The attachment follows search operations conducted on March 6 in the case against Reliance Power Limited under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA)," it said. The ED had attached assets of Anil Ambani's Reliance Group earlier as well. "The cumulative Reliance Anil Ambani Group attachment has reached ₹16,310 crore," the ED said. The probe stems from a CBI FIR filed against RCFL and RHFL based on complaints lodged by Yes Bank, Union Bank of India and Bank of Maharashtra. It is alleged that the two companies raised public funds from multiple banks and financial institutions, and more than ₹11,000 crore of these funds turned into non-performing assets, the ED said.

## WEST ASIA CRISIS

# 3 Indian seafarers killed, 1 missing



OUT OF 78 INDIAN SEAFARERS ON FOREIGN VESSELS ATTACKED, 70 ESCAPED UNHURT, AND FOUR SUSTAINED INJURIES BUT ARE STABLE

THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT IS MONITORING THE MARITIME SITUATION IN THE PERSIAN GULF AND HAS STRENGTHENED PREPAREDNESS MEASURES

THERE ARE NEARLY 9,000 INDIAN NATIONALS INCLUDING STUDENTS, BUSINESS PERSONS, FACTORY WORKERS, PILGRIMS, SEAFARERS, AND FISHERMEN IN IRAN AT PRESENT

MAJOR PORTS HAVE BEEN ADVISED TO CONSIDER RELIEF IN PORT CHARGES TO SUPPORT AFFECTED PARTIES

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, March 12:** The government Thursday said that so far three Indian seafarers have been killed and one is missing amid the ongoing crisis in West Asia. Rajesh Kumar Sinha, Special Secretary in the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, said out of 78 Indian seafarers onboard foreign vessels that came under attack in the last few days, four sustained injuries but are stable. "There have been maritime incidents involving Indian crew on foreign-flag vessels," he said, briefing the media on the West Asia crisis. The official said there were 78 Indian seafarers. Of these, 70 are escaped unhurt, and four sustained injuries in the last few days but are stable. There have been three casualties, and one seafarer is missing. The ministry continues to monitor the prevailing maritime situation in the Persian Gulf and has strengthened monitoring and

preparedness measures in view of the evolving situation in that region. Regular interactions with the industry and stakeholders are being maintained to provide all assistance, and the government remains fully committed to ensuring the safety and welfare of Indian seafarers. Sinha also said that all major ports have been advised to coordinate with agencies like Customs and DGFT to consider relief in port charges. Meanwhile, India is in touch with Iran to secure safe passage to around 28 Indian-flagged merchant vessels through the strategic shipping route of Strait of Hormuz that has been partially blocked by Tehran following its escalating conflict with the US and Israel, people familiar with the matter said Thursday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi Thursday night spoke to Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian over the phone and discussed the "serious situation" in West Asia.

## MANIPUR HOSTAGE CRISIS ENDS

# CENTRE INTERVENES, 21 TANGKHUL NAGAS FREED

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Imphal, March 12:** Manipur Home Minister Govindas Konthoujam Thursday said the Union home ministry stepped in to help rescue 21 Tangkhul Naga civilians who had been detained by armed men in Ukhrul district. Speaking in the Assembly, Konthoujam said the hostages were freed early Thursday following negotiations and intervention by central forces. Narrating the sequence of events, the minister said the incident took place Wednesday when some armed Naga youths allegedly entered Thawai Kuki village and burnt farmers' huts before reportedly abducting two Kuki men. "As the news of the abduction of the two Kukis spread, armed Kuki men stopped three vehicles carrying 21 Tangkhul Nagas at Shangkai on the Imphal Ukhrul Road and took them hostage," he said. Konthoujam said central forces led by the Border Security Force were initially sent to rescue the civilians but were blocked on the road by local women.

The minister also informed the House that there were reports of firing in the Mapithel area between 6.30 pm and 9 pm on Wednesday. "One Kuki man, identified as Lanminthang Kipgen, sustained a bullet injury in his leg and was evacuated to a hospital in Kangpokpi district," he said. Konthoujam said Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh immediately informed Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla about the situation. "The MHA then stepped in to help rescue the hostages. Following prolonged negotiations, the 21 Tangkhul Naga villagers were released around 3 am," he said. The minister also appealed for peace and unity in the state. "Guns cannot bring a solution or peace. Any solution has to come through the negotiating table," he said, urging civil society organisations to work towards restoring harmony. He added that people in the state should rise above community identities. Singh also thanked Deputy Chief Minister Nemcha Kipgen and all the Naga MLAs for their help in securing the release of 21 Tangkhul Naga villagers.

# Review of unparliamentary words likely

WORDS LIKE 'JUMLAJEEVI', 'BAAL BUDDHI', AND EVEN COMMONLY USED WORDS LIKE 'ASHAMED', 'ABUSED', 'BETRAYED', 'DRAMA', 'HYPOCRISY' AND 'INCOMPETENT' WERE CONSIDERED UNPARLIAMENTARY IN BOTH LOK SABHA AND RAJYA SABHA IN THE PAST

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 12:** The Lok Sabha Secretariat is likely to review the list of unparliamentary words and expressions used by MPs and come up with a fresh directory as the usage of many of the words banned earlier has expanded and they needed closer examination, sources said. Words like 'jumlajeevi', 'baal buddhi', and even commonly used words like 'ashamed', 'abused', 'betrayed', 'drama', 'hypocrisy' and 'incompetent' were considered unparliamentary in both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha in the past. Use of words like 'anarchist', 'Shakuni', 'dictatorial', 'taanashah', 'taanashahi', 'Jai-chand', 'vinash purush', and 'khood se kheti' were also considered unparliamentary. A senior functionary said there is a need to review the list of unparliamentary words as usages of many words and expressions have been expanded over the years. "We may go for a closer scrutiny of the unparliamentary words and come up with a fresh



list," the functionary said. The Lok Sabha Secretariat had listed words like 'dohra charitra', 'nikamma', 'nautanki', 'dhindora peetna' and 'behri sarkar' as unparliamentary expressions, according to an earlier booklet. Some words and expressions were declared unparliamentary from time to time by the Chair in different legislative bodies in the country as well as in Commonwealth parliaments, have been compiled by the Lok Sabha Secretariat for ready reference in the future. The compilation contains references to words and expressions declared unparliamentary

in Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha and state legislatures in India. The list states that some of the keywords may not appear unparliamentary unless read in conjunction with the other expressions spoken during the parliamentary proceedings. The list of expressions also includes any aspersions made against the Chair in both the houses in either English or Hindi, which shall be considered as unparliamentary and are expunged from the records of Parliament. Rajya Sabha Chairman or Lok Sabha Speaker vets the words spoken in the house during the session and unpar-

liamentary words are expunged by the Chair. Such words do not form part of the Parliament records of both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. Among some of the English words listed by the Secretariat as unparliamentary include 'bloodshed', 'bloody', 'betrayed', 'ashamed', 'abused', 'cheated', 'chamcha', 'chamchagiri', 'chelas', 'childishness', 'corrupt', 'coward', 'criminal' and 'crocodile tears'. Besides words like 'disgrace', 'donkey', 'drama', 'eyewash', 'fudge', 'hooliganism', 'hypocrisy', 'incompetent', 'mislead', 'lie' were also prohibited for use in Parliament. Among some of the Hindi words listed as unparliamentary include 'anarchist', 'gaddar', 'gahga', 'goons', 'ghadiya ansu', 'ahankaar', 'corrupt', 'kala din', 'kala bazaar' and 'khareed farokht'. Besides, words like 'danga', 'dalal', 'daadagiri', 'dohra charitra', 'bechara', 'bobcut', 'lollypop', 'vishwasghat', 'samvedhaneeen', 'foolish', 'pitthu', 'behri sarkar' and 'sexual harassment' were also considered as unparliamentary.

# international



If Czechia fails to fulfil its commitments, it impacts the entire alliance. And I don't need to remind you, and the Czech people, how essential it is that allies honour commitments

NICHOLAS MERRICK | US AMBASSADOR

## FIRST TRAIN TO PYONGYANG IN 6 YEARS LEAVES BEIJING

The first passenger train service between the Chinese and North Korean capitals left Beijing Railway Station Thursday, ending a six-year gap, as China moves to shore up cross-border infrastructure and rebuild ties with its neighbour. Train K27 will arrive in the North Korean capital at 6:07 pm Friday



### of the day quote

The attack may not have been on a huge scale, but there was an attempt to break through the security that was stopped. Appropriate services are already working



We talked about our military cooperation and one of the documents we signed also includes cooperating on drone production



It was me that made a mistake, and it's me that makes the apology to the victims of Epstein, and I do that



# Iran vows to keep Strait of Hormuz closed

IRAN WILL AVENGE THE BLOOD OF ITS MARTYRS, SAYS NEW LEADER'S MESSAGE

REUTERS

Dubai, March 12: Iran will fight on and keep the Strait of Hormuz shut, new Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei said Thursday in a statement read out on state television, the first remarks attributed to him since he succeeded his slain father.

In a defiant address, Khamenei said Iran's neighbours should close all US bases on their territory, which Iran would continue to attack.

"I assure everyone that we will not neglect avenging the blood of your martyrs," he told the Iranian people.

"The popular demand is to continue our effective defence and make the enemy regret! The lever of blocking the Strait of Hormuz must continue to be used," he said of the shipping route, where a fifth of global oil normally runs past Iran's coast.

State television offered no explanation for why Khamenei's first remarks were read out by a presenter rather than delivered in a video address. No images have yet been released of him since the strike that killed his father, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Iranian officials have said the younger Khamenei was lightly wounded. He said in his address that his wife, sister and other family members were also killed.

**TANKERS ABLAZE IN IRAQI PORT** Shortly after his address, the Revolutionary Guards announced that, in keeping with his orders, they would keep the strait shut.

Two tankers were ablaze in an Iraqi port Thursday after a hit by suspected Iranian explosive-laden boats, a step-up in attacks that have cut off oil from the Middle East. The attacks were a clear sign of defiance of US President Donald Trump, who said Wednesday the United States had already won the war.

Images verified by Reuters as having been filmed from the shore of the port of Basra showed ships engulfed in massive orange fireballs that lit up the night sky. At least one crew member was killed in the attacks. Hours earlier, three other ships had been struck in the Gulf. Iran's Revolutionary Guards claimed responsibility for at least one of those attacks, on a Thai bulk carrier that was set ablaze, which the Guards said had disobeyed their orders. Another container vessel reported being struck by an unknown projectile near the United Arab Emirates Thursday.

**GLOBAL ENERGY SUPPLIES DISRUPTED** The war that began with a



No reason given for lack of video message from supreme leader

'SECURITY FORCES ARE EVERYWHERE', SAYS IRAN RESIDENT

## Trump admin estimates Iran war cost at over \$11bn in 6 days

Washington: Officials from President Donald Trump's administration estimated during a congressional briefing this week that the first six days of the war on Iran had cost the United States at least \$11.3 billion, a source familiar with the matter said Wednesday. That figure, from a closed-door briefing for senators Tuesday, did not include the entire cost of the war, but was provided to lawmakers as they have clamored for more information about the conflict. Several congressional aides have said they expect the White House to soon submit a request to Congress for additional funding for the war. Some officials have said the request could be for \$50 billion, while others have said that estimate seems low. The administration has not provided a public assessment of the cost of the conflict or a clear idea of its expected duration. Trump said during a trip to Kentucky Wednesday that "we won" the war but that the United States will stay in the fight to finish the job. The \$11.3 billion figure was first reported on Wednesday by the New York Times.

demonstrating their continued control.

"Security forces are everywhere, more than before. People are afraid to come out, but supermarkets are open," teacher Majan, 35, said by phone from Tehran.

Three sources told Reuters that Iran's leadership was still largely intact and not at risk of collapse any time soon.

Israel and the United States have called on Iranians to rise up and topple their clerical rulers. Many Iranians want change and some openly celebrated the death on the war's

## Oil

PRICES EXTEND GAINS AFTER TANKERS STRUCK IN IRAQI WATERS

## War

is causing largest oil supply disruption in history, says IEA

## Israel pounds Beirut suburbs after Hezbollah fires volley of rockets



health ministry said at least eight people were killed in an Israeli strike on Beirut's Ramlet al-Baida seafont.

Beirut/Nazareth: Israeli strikes battered Beirut's southern suburbs late Wednesday, lighting up the skyline with flashes of red and setting buildings on fire, after the Lebanese-armed group Hezbollah launched a volley of rockets into northern Israel. Israeli strikes have killed more than 600 people in Lebanon, and uprooted 800,000 more, Lebanese authorities say. Hezbollah said it had launched dozens of rockets into northern Israel Wednesday night, as part of a "series of operations," indicating there could be more to come. Lebanese security sources told Reuters more than 100 rockets were launched. A senior Israeli defence official said Iran and Hezbollah had launched a joint missile attack, describing it as the first coordinated action against Israel since the war began. In the early hours of Thursday, Lebanon's

US-Israeli bombing campaign at the end of February has so far killed around 2,000 people and caused what the International Energy Agency describes as the biggest disruption to global energy supplies in history.

Undermining US and Israeli claims to have knocked out much of Iran's stock of long-range weapons, more drones were reported Thursday flying into Kuwait, Iraq, the UAE, Bahrain and Oman.

Lebanon's Iran-backed militia Hezbollah fired its biggest volley of rockets into Israel of the war, prompting fresh Israeli strikes on Beirut.

Oil prices soared back above \$100 a barrel, having come down earlier in the week when Trump said the war would be over soon. Iran has said it will not let oil through the Strait of Hormuz, the world's most important energy trade route, until US and Israeli attacks cease.

**TRUMP SAYS 'WE WON'** Trump has repeatedly tried to calm energy markets this week by saying the surge in oil prices will be short-lived.

But he has not explained how

the war will end, or presented a plan to reopen the blockaded strait. US and Israeli officials say the aim is to destroy Iran's missile and nuclear programmes, but Trump has also demanded Iran's "unconditional surrender" and the power to determine its leaders.

"You never like to say too early you won. We won," Trump told a campaign-style rally in Hebron, Kentucky, Wednesday. "In the first hour it was over."

But he added, "We don't want to leave early, do we? We got to finish the job."

Trump said the United States profited from higher oil prices Thursday, but that his priority was stopping Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. The US is a net oil exporter but is also the world's biggest oil consumer, burning around twice as much as its peer, the European Union. Economists say sustained high prices would cause broad inflation.

**'SECURITY FORCES ARE EVERYWHERE'**

Inside Iran, residents said security forces were increasing their presence on the streets,



TEHRAN SEEKS PROLONGED ECONOMIC SHOCK

Khamenei's remarks reinforce the message from Iran that its strategy now is to impose a prolonged economic shock to force Trump to back off. A spokesperson for Iran's military command said Wednesday that the world should prepare for oil prices of \$200 a barrel.

Thursday's surge in oil prices came despite the announcement the previous day that developed countries would release 400 million barrels of oil from their strategic reserves, nearly half from the United States.

That is by far the biggest-ever coordinated intervention into the oil markets. But releasing the reserves will take months, and account for just three weeks of supply from the blockaded strait.

## Balendra to become new PM

Having received a clear majority of more than 138 seats in the 275-member HoR, the RSP is now in a position to form the new government under Article 76(1) of the Constitution



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kathmandu, March 12:** The Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) bagged a total of 182 seats in Nepal's parliamentary elections, according to the Election Commission, which allocated seats under the proportional representation system Thursday.

The RSP received the highest number of 57 seats under the proportional representation (PR), according to a notice by the top election body. The party bagged 125 seats under direct voting. The House of Representatives (HoR) in Nepal has a total of 275 seats. While 165 members are elected through the First Past The Post (FPTP) or direct voting system, 110 members are elected through PR.

Having received a clear majority of more than 138 seats in the 275-member HoR, the RSP is now in a position to form the new government under Article

76(1) of the Constitution. The party has already declared former Kathmandu Mayor Balendra Shah "Balen" as its prime ministerial candidate. The 35-year-old rapper-turned-politician will be the first prime minister from the Madhesi community, as well as the youngest ever elected prime minister of Nepal.

According to the EC notice, under the PR, the Nepal Congress (NC) received 20 seats, Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist) (CPN-UML) 16, Nepali Communist Party (NCP) nine, and Shram Sanskriti Party (SSP) and Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) got four each.

Under direct voting, the NC secured 38 seats, CPN-UML 25, NCP 17, SSP seven, and RPP received five seats.

Now the EC will submit the full report to the president, following which the process of government formation will start.

## China passes new ethnic minority law

REUTERS

Beijing, March 12: China passed a law on a "shared" national identity among the country's 55 ethnic minority groups Thursday, a move critics say will further erode the identity of people who are not majority Han Chinese and risk making anyone challenging that "unity" a separatist punishable by law.

Called "Promoting Ethnic Unity and Progress", the ethnic minority law aims to forge national unity and advance the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) at its core, a draft copy of the law showed.

It was passed at the closing session of the annual meeting of the National People's Congress, China's legislature, by 2,756 votes, with three opposing votes and three abstentions, according to a Reuters witness.

The law will come into force July 1 this year, state media reported.

Officially, China has 56 officially recognised ethnic groups, dominated by the Han Chinese, who account for more than 91% of the country's 1.4 billion people.

China's ethnic minority populations - including Tibetans, Mongols, Hui, Manchus, and Uyghurs - are concentrated



- Law promotes Mandarin as primary language of education and government
- China has 56 officially recognised ethnic groups, including Han Chinese
- Han, who speak Mandarin, make up 91% of the population
- Critics argue law erodes ethnic minority identities, risks labelling dissent as separatism

in regions that together cover roughly half of the country's land area, much of it rich in natural resources.

The law aims to promote integration across ethnic groups through education, housing, migration, community life, culture,

## Iran to allow India-flagged tankers through Hormuz: Indian source



The Liberia-flagged tanker Shenlong Suezmax, loaded with Saudi Arabian crude, arrives at a port after transiting the Strait of Hormuz amid supply disruptions linked to the U.S-Israeli conflict with Iran, in Mumbai, India, March 12

REUTERS

New Delhi, March 12: Iran will allow Indian-flagged tankers to transit the Strait of Hormuz, a conduit for 40% of the South Asian nation's crude imports, an Indian government source said Thursday, but an Iranian source outside the country denied any such deal was reached.

India, the world's No 3 oil consumer, said Thursday the foreign ministers of the two countries have had three conversations in recent days and the latest one this week focused on "issues pertaining to the safety of shipping and India's energy security".

"Beyond that, it would be premature for me to say anything," foreign ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal told a weekly media briefing.

The Indian source, who was briefed on the matter, declined to be identified, citing a lack of authorisation to speak to media, while the Iranian source said the matter was a sensitive one.

The Suezmax tanker Shenlong, carrying Saudi crude, arrived at a port in Mumbai Thursday, after transiting the strait. The Liberia-flagged vessel was the first crude carrier to reach India from the Middle East since the war between Iran and the United States and Israel broke out in late February, according to LSEG data. The customer is state-run Bharat Petroleum Corp said a source with direct knowledge of the matter.

The company did not

- Iranian source denies any such agreement
- Indian source says assurance came after foreign ministers spoke
- India says 28 Indian-flagged vessels around Strait
- They have 778 Indian sailors aboard
- Suezmax tanker Shenlong, carrying Saudi crude, reaches Mumbai

immediately respond to a request seeking comment.

The Indian source said two other foreign-flagged tankers believed to be bound for India had recently transited the Strait and that Iran had given assurances of safe passage for Indian-flagged vessels after the foreign ministers of both countries spoke by telephone late Tuesday.

The source said the situation remained fluid, with limited clarity on how instructions were being relayed across different layers of Iran's administration.

In a statement after the talks between India's S Jaishankar and his counterpart, Seyed Abbas Araghchi, Iran's foreign ministry said the United States should be held accountable for the "insecure situation and problems arising for shipping in the Persian Gulf".

Neither side mentioned any agreement on allowing safe passage for Indian vessels. India said 28 Indian-flagged vessels were operating west and east of the Strait with 778 Indian sailors aboard Wednesday.

## Indian Consulate to host 1st North England investment summit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, March 12: The Consulate General of India (CGI) in Manchester is celebrating its first anniversary since its launch by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar last March with a major summit to showcase the investment opportunities on offer for Indian businesses in northern England.

The first-of-its-kind 'India-Northern England Opportunity Summit' March 20 will bring together policymakers, entrepreneurs and industry experts from both countries for a day of high-impact dialogue and partnerships.

It comes at an important stage of the bilateral economic partnership, set to be significantly enhanced as the India-UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA) moves towards implementation by next month.

"This summit positions Manchester as a strategic gateway for Indian businesses expanding into the UK and Europe, creating a powerful corridor for investment, partnerships, and cross-border growth," said Consul General Vishakha Yaduvanshi.



**Manufacturers exporters are facing issues. There is an urgent need for priority allocation of LPG/natural gas as fuel for export-oriented units (EOUs) and export-oriented SMEs**



# Expensive oil strains vulnerable economy

**A prolonged crisis could widen the country's current account deficit, weaken the rupee and stoke inflation**



**Mumbai, March 12:** India's external balance and government finances could be hit if oil prices stay high for an extended period, economists have said, as the Iran war pushes up oil import costs and the subsidies needed to keep key commodities affordable. India is considered to be among the most vulnerable to a global oil shock as it imports nearly 90% of its crude requirements and about 50% of its gas requirements. Over half of its crude is from the Middle East, where export flows have been disrupted by the US-Israeli war on Iran, and India's current oil stocks are only enough to cover 20 to 25 days. Gas supply shortages have already begun hitting industries and consumers, and Iran has threatened a protracted conflict and \$200 per barrel for oil.

**We do not expect an immediate impact on inflation, but a prolonged disruption could have knock-on effects. RBI, while staying on pause, in April, is likely to be watchful of inflationary risks as well as growth slowdown risks in FY2027**

**SUVODEEP RAKSHIT | ECONOMIST, KOTAK INSTITUTIONAL EQUITIES**

Oil companies tend to delay price adjustments in times of economic strain. The government is targeting a fiscal deficit of 4.3% of GDP for the 2026/27 year. If it chooses to maintain that deficit, it may have to cut long-term infrastructure spending being used to boost growth and jobs, Elara Securities said.

If oil prices average \$100 a barrel for close to 12 months, the South Asian nation could also see growth fall sharply and inflation rise.

**CURRENT ACCOUNT DEFICIT**  
 The most immediate impact would be on India's current account deficit. This concern has pushed the rupee to a record low and forced the central bank to sell dollars from its reserves. An average price of \$100 a barrel would widen the current account deficit to 1.9%-2.2% of GDP for the 2026/27 financial year, from a projected 0.7%-0.8% of GDP, rating agency ICRA said in a note. India's current account deficit was last at 2% in 2022. Its financial year runs from April 1 to March 31.

**FISCAL DEFICIT**  
 The federal government's

annual expenditure could also rise by ₹3.6 trillion (\$39 billion) in the next financial year if oil prices hold at an average of \$100 per barrel, according to Mumbai-based Elara Securities. The government's total estimated expenditure for the next financial year is ₹53.5 trillion, according to the annual budget presented in February. A key expense would be higher subsidies for the fertiliser sector to ensure farmers have the key input at affordable costs. At an average price of \$100 a barrel, fertiliser subsidies could rise by ₹200 billion, Elara Securities said, and the government might also need to compensate oil marketing companies if they are asked to keep retail petrol and diesel prices low. While retail fuel costs are technically deregulated in In-

**GROWTH AND INFLATION IMPACT**  
 The Indian economy is expected to grow at more than 7% in the next financial year, on top of growth of 7.6% forecast for the current year. If oil prices hold near \$100 per barrel through the next financial year, GDP growth could fall to 6.6% and inflation could rise to 4.1%, the research department at the State Bank of India said in a report on March 7. If oil prices average \$130 per barrel, GDP growth could plummet to 6%, it said. India's economy has been in a "Goldilocks" phase, Reserve Bank of India Governor Sanjay Malhotra said in December. While growth has been strong, inflation is low - coming in at 2.75% in January, close to the lower end of the central bank's comfort band of 2%-6%.

# LPG SHORTFALL RATTLES INDUSTRIES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 12:** The shortage of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) in the country could disrupt operations of quick-service restaurant chains and drive input cost inflation for consumer-facing companies, as supply constraints ripple across sectors ranging from restaurants to glass and plastics manufacturing.



tor. One of the players, Borosil Ltd, issued a release stating that they are facing a shortage of gas supplies in their manufacturing facilities, leading to a curtailment in production. "If there is a broad-based shortage of glass production, it can lead to an increase in glass prices, which is a key input cost for alcoholic beverages companies like United Spirits, where glass is 40 per cent of the input costs," Goldman Sachs said.

Brokerage Goldman Sachs, in a report, said India faces an LPG shortage, importing 60 per cent of its supply, with 90 per cent of imports transiting the geopolitically impacted Strait of Hormuz. Despite a 25 per cent increase in domestic production, supply remains constrained. The government is prioritising LPG for domestic cooking and essential sectors, like hospitals, while restricting supply to non-essential commercial enterprises, including restaurants.

Media reports indicate that LPG supply to other commercial users, including restaurants and several industries, has been restricted, potentially affecting operations across multiple sectors.

the inventory of LPG cylinders at restaurants is less than one week. Hence, if there is a shortage of commercial LPG cylinders, it would impact the ability of QSR chains to service normal levels of demand, which would lead to a temporary hit to revenues," it said. Reports suggest that the LPG shortage is causing some restaurants to shut down.

**QSR chains face operational risk**  
 Quick-service restaurant (QSR) chains, such as Jubilant FoodWorks, Devyani International, Sapphire Foods India and Westlife Foodworld, rely heavily on commercial LPG cylinders to run kitchen operations. "As per our channel checks,

**Glass supply disruptions may raise costs for liquor companies**  
 Gas shortages are also affecting the glass manufacturing sec-

**Potential plastics price spike could affect FMCG firms**  
 Separately, the government has directed refineries and petrochemical complexes to maximise LPG output by diverting propane, butane and propylene streams to the LPG pool. This move could tighten the supply of petrochemical feedstocks, potentially pushing up the prices of plastics. Higher plastic costs could translate into rising input costs for fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) and paint companies that rely on crude derivatives for packaging and production inputs.

## RIPPLE EFFECTS

### Sunil imports halve

India's crude sunflower oil imports fell 51 per cent to 1,45,000 tonne in February, an industry body said Thursday, as the ongoing conflict in West Asia and disruptions to Black Sea shipping routes pushed prices sharply higher. The Solvent Extractors' Association of India (SEA) said average import price for crude sunflower oil rose 17 per cent to \$1,420 per tonne in February from \$1,216 a year earlier, while the rupee's 4.2 per cent depreciation over the past year compounded costs for importers and refiners. Russia and Ukraine together supply 70-90 per cent of India's sunflower oil imports. Imports in the first four months of the 2025-26 oil year, which began in November 2025, fell to 9.04 lakh tonne from 11.2 lakh tonne a year earlier. The conflict also poses a risk to India's oilmeal exports, with logistical disruptions potentially affecting shipments to Southeast Asia and the Middle East, which account for nearly 20 per cent of total oilmeal exports.

# Kerosene, coal make a comeback

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 12:** India has temporarily reintroduced kerosene for household use and coal for hotels and restaurants, as the escalating West Asia crisis disrupted its energy supply lines from Gulf countries.



States have been allocated 40,000 kilolitre of additional kerosene as an alternative to LPG

Some commercial LPG cylinders will be released; state governments will identify beneficiaries

The government has allocated 48,000 kilolitres of additional kerosene to states on top of the regular quota of 1 lakh kl for use as cooking fuel. Besides, it asked environmental bodies to permit the use of biomass, RDF pellets and coal as alternate fuel in the hospitality and restaurant segment for one month, a senior oil ministry official said. With the conflict shutting Strait of Hormuz - the narrow sea lane between Iran and Oman through which India got more than half of its 5.8 million barrels of crude oil, 55 per cent of cooking gas LPG and 30 per cent liquefied natural gas (LNG) - oil companies prioritised supply of LPG to household kitchens while cutting back on commercial users like hotels and restaurants. With certain measures helping raise domestic LPG production by 28 per cent and some alternative sources be-

ing tapped overseas, the government has decided to allow some sale of commercial LPG to meet a fifth of the demand, Sujata Sharma, Joint Secretary in the Oil Ministry, said. "The state governments will have to identify the beneficiaries," she said. As panic buying escalates, the government has extended the LPG refill ordering window for rural users to 45 days, up from 25 days set last week for all users, which itself had replaced the previous 21-day limit. The move aims to manage demand and ensure equitable distribution amid the ongoing energy supply disruptions caused by the West Asia crisis, she said. The increase in the monthly quota of kerosene released to states is the first in more than a decade and temporarily reverses the government's stated objective of phasing out the fu-

el, which, besides being heavily subsidised, was also used for adulteration in petrol. Delhi was officially declared the first kerosene-free city in India June 17, 2014. The initiative, launched in 2012, replaced kerosene usage with LPG connections for households, aiming to reduce pollution and fire risks. Sharma said that despite constraints, not a single petrol pump out of the over 1 lakh fuel stations in the country has run dry and petrol and diesel sales continue to be normal. Also, not a single LPG dealer has run dry, and they have enough stocks. To manage demand, cooking gas prices were raised for the first time in 11 months, and the minimum interval between subsidised refills was extended from 21 to 25 days for urban areas and 45 days for rural areas.

## SHORT TAKES

### Audi to hike prices

**New Delhi:** German luxury carmaker Audi Thursday said it will hike prices of its products in India by up to 2 per cent from April 1, 2026 to partially offset rise in input costs and adverse impact of currency fluctuations. The price hike will be across the model range and the ex-showroom price of models to increase up to 2 per cent, Audi India said in a statement. "Due to recent rising input costs and currency fluctuations, we are implementing a price adjustment of up to 2 per cent effective from April 1, 2026. We remain committed to minimising the impact of the price hike on our customers," Audi India Brand Director, Balbir Singh Dhillion said. Audi India currently sells a range of luxury cars and SUVs ranging from Q3 SUV to SUV RSQ8 priced between ₹43.23 lakh and ₹2.34 crore.

### TVS unveils Orbiter V1

**Chennai:** Two and three wheeler maker TVS Motor Company has expanded its electric vehicle portfolio with the launch of electric scooter TVS Orbiter V1 equipped with 1.8 kWh battery, a top official said Thursday. The Chennai-headquartered company had launched TVS Orbiter in 2025 and with today's launch, the range would be available in two variants - "Orbiter V1" with 1.8kWh battery and "Orbiter V2" with 3.1 kWh battery. The Orbiter V1 will be available at ₹49,999 (ex-showroom Delhi) which includes Battery-As-A-Service (BaaS) model.

# West Asia conflict: Investors' wealth erodes by ₹23.44L-cr

Since Feb 27, Sensex has tumbled 5,252.77 points or 6.46%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 12:** Investors' wealth eroded by ₹23.44 lakh crore since the beginning of conflict involving the US, Israel and Iran, which has sent shockwaves across equity markets, dragging the BSE Sensex lower by over 6 per cent.

Global oil and gas prices 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). Since February 27, the 30-share BSE Sensex has tumbled 5,252.77 points or 6.46 per cent. The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies eroded by ₹23,44,237.26 crore to ₹4,40,06,434.01 crore (\$4.77 trillion) during this time. On Thursday, the Sensex tanked 829.29 points or 1.08 per cent to settle at 76,034.42. During the day, it plunged 992.53 points or 1.29 per cent to 75,871.18. Mahindra & Mahindra was the biggest loser among the Sensex firms, dropping 4.23 per cent, followed by Maruti, Bajaj



Finance, Larsen & Toubro, UltraTech Cement and Trent. In contrast, NTPC, Power Grid, Tech Mahindra, HCL Tech and Reliance Industries were the winners. Among BSE sectoral indices, auto tanked 2.92 per cent, FMCG (1.62 per cent), consumer discretionary (1.59 per cent), realty (1.53 per cent), private banks index (1.45 per cent) and top 10 banks (1.29 per cent). On the other hand, utilities jumped 3.31 per cent, power (2.51 per cent), energy (1.06 per cent), capital goods (0.55 per cent), oil & gas (0.52 per cent) and metal (0.45 per cent). The BSE smallcap select index declined 0.65 per cent, and the midcap select index dipped 0.55 per cent. A total of 2,516 stocks declined, while 1,713 advanced and 175 remained unchanged on the BSE.

**The lack of de-escalation signs in Middle East geopolitical tensions continued to unsettle global markets and push crude oil prices higher**

**AJIT MISHRA | SVP, RESEARCH, RELIGARE BROKING LTD**

## Silver gains ₹1,500; gold ends 3-day rally

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 12:** Silver prices gained ₹1,500 to ₹2.76 lakh per kilogram in the national capital Thursday amid firm global trends and intensifying West Asia crisis.

According to the All India Sarafa Association, the white metal climbed by ₹1,500, or 0.54 per cent, to ₹2,76,500 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes). It had closed at ₹2,75,000 per kg, down by ₹4,275 on Wednesday. Prices of gold of 99.9 per cent purity retreated ₹400, ending a three-day rally, to ₹1,65,200 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) from the previous close of ₹1,65,600 per 10 grams. Analysts said gold and silver moved in opposite directions as investors weighed geopolitical developments and macroeconomic signals from the United States. Gold prices slid slightly, reflecting a minor decline amid a firmer dollar and persistent inflation concerns, while silver showed resilience as traders reacted to potential buying opportunities amid geopolitical tensions related to the US-Iran situation, Gaurav Garg, Research Analyst at Lemnon Markets Desk, said. Meanwhile, in the international markets, spot silver gained \$1.25 or 1.47 per cent to \$86.99 per ounce, and gold traded marginally higher at \$5,178.45 per ounce.

## Royal Enfield strengthens retail presence in Odisha

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Pipili, March 12:** Royal Enfield has announced the opening of its new showroom - M/s Jaibaba Automobiles in Pipili, marking the second outlet with the same dealership in Odisha Thursday.

The showroom will offer complete sales and service facilities with a team of fully trained personnel, ensuring enhanced customer convenience and further strengthening Royal Enfield's presence in the region. The showroom was commenced in the presence of Nitin Sharma, Zonal Business Manager, Narendra Shaw, Regional Business Manager, and Talib Rasul, Area Sales Manager from Royal Enfield. The event was also attended by Akhil Poddar, Chairperson (Odisha), Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA), along with Madhav Lodha, Dealer Principal, Harshit Lodha, Dealer Principal and Mayank Lodha, Dealer Principal of Jaibaba Automobiles. Prominent riders from the Jaibaba Riders Tribe including Shuvendu Parida, Tarun, Stawik, Rajib and Prasad were present on the occasion. Lead bankers and financiers, Royal Enfield customers, and local residents also attended the inauguration ceremony, making the occasion a grand celebration for the riding community



in the region. A representative from Royal Enfield said, "With the opening of this new showroom in Pipili, Royal Enfield continues to strengthen its retail footprint in Odisha. We are committed to bringing our brand closer to our customers and providing them with an immersive motorcycling experience along with world-class service and support." Madhav Lodha, Dealer Principal, Jaibaba Automobiles said, "We are proud to expand our association with Royal Enfield with the opening of our second outlet in Pipili. Our aim is to deliver a superior brand and service experience to customers in the region and further grow the Royal Enfield riding community."

# Trafficking attempt via fake wrestling team raises alarm

According to the forged letter submitted to the embassy, 11 wrestlers and a manager were recommended for visas to travel to Budapest, citing a training and competition programme at a local venue

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 12:** A suspected human trafficking attempt has come to light after individuals posing as Indian wrestlers sought visas from the Hungarian Embassy in New Delhi for a purported competition in Budapest, prompting the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) to clarify that the documents submitted by them were fake.

The embassy sought verification from WFI Thursday af-

ter receiving visa applications supported by a recommendation letter allegedly issued by the national federation March 4 for participation in an "international wrestling training and competition programme" scheduled in Budapest from March 15 to 22.

The WFI swiftly responded and said that the letter was forged and had not been issued by the federation.

"This has reference to your e-mail dated March 12 seeking clarification regarding the au-

thenticity of the document... the attached letter is fake and has not been issued by the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI)," WFI president Sanjay Kumar Singh said in a reply to the embassy.

The federation also pointed out discrepancies in the document, including the use of the name of a former office-bearer in an incorrect capacity. "It is also clarified that Mr VN Prasood is no longer holding the position of Secretary General of WFI and is currently serving as Vice President, WFI. The matter has been verified with Mr Prasood, who has categorically denied issuing any such letter," Singh said.

According to the forged letter submitted to the embassy, 11



wrestlers and a manager were recommended for visas to travel to Budapest, citing a training and competition programme at a local venue.

The document also carried a reference number and purportedly requested the embassy to grant visas to the athletes.

Officials in the federation said the letterhead used in the

document carried incorrect details, including an outdated address and there were other inconsistencies too.

In its reply, the federation urged the embassy not to process any visa applications based on the forged document and called for action against those involved.

"In view of the above, it is requested that no visa process may be initiated on the basis of the said letter, and appropriate legal action may be taken against the individuals involved," the WFI said.

The federation also clarified that official Indian entries for international competitions are routed only through the national body and that the next major event involving Indian

wrestlers in Budapest -- the Ranking Series 'Polyak Imre, Varga Nanos & Kozma Istvan Memorial' tournament -- is scheduled in July.

"The incident could potentially be linked to a human trafficking attempt, with individuals allegedly trying to travel abroad by posing as sports persons using forged federation documents. Authorities are expected to examine the matter further," WFI President Sanjay Singh told PTI.

"We had first received a call from the embassy. We asked for documents via e-mail. Upon checking we found that it's all fake. We responded to the embassy immediately. There should be an enquiry into it," he said.

## SHORT TAKES

### Sumit throws 69.25m as India dominates Day 2



**New Delhi:** India delivered an exceptional performance on Day 2 of the New Delhi 2026 World Para Athletics Grand Prix, securing multiple podium finishes across track and field events, including several clean sweeps of the podium. The highlight of the day came in the Men's Javelin Throw F43/F44/F64, where Paralympic champion Sumit Antil led an all-Indian podium. Antil clinched gold with a powerful throw of 69.25 metres, while Pushpendra Singh secured silver with 56.91m and Poonam Ram won bronze with 49.48m. After the victory, Sumit Antil said, "This time we have multiple tournaments lined up. I will try to perform well in the upcoming competitions. It is an off-season loading phase for me. I was not expecting such a throw; I expected around 67-68m, but the throw was good today at 69.25m. So I am happy, and my team is happy as well." India also dominated the men's 400m run T13, with Subodh Bhatt winning gold in 51.88 seconds, followed by Priyanshu Kaushik with silver in 53.19 seconds and Avnil Kumar claiming bronze in 56.91 seconds. In the Men's 400m Run T46/T47, Bhavikkumar Din Bharwad secured gold with a time of 49.89 seconds, while fellow Indian Jasbeer finished close behind to take silver in 50.09 seconds.

# Eves shift focus to crown

India face Italy in semifinal after sealing World Cup berth at FIH Women's Qualifiers



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Hyderabad, March 12:** Already assured of a World Cup berth, India would aim for the winners' trophy at the FIH Women's Hockey World Cup Qualifiers and take a step forward in that direction by winning the semifinal against Italy here Friday.

The Indian women's hockey team finished on top of Pool B with seven points from three matches. Scotland also collected same points but finished second in the group because of India's superior goal difference.

The hosts registered two wins and one draw in the pool stage.

Italy finished second in Pool A with four points after registering one win, one draw and one loss, giving the hosts a slight psychological edge ahead of the semifinal.

India will look to build on the impressive form of forward Navneet Kaur, who is currently the joint top-scorer of the tournament with four goals. She produced a standout

**WOMEN'S HOCKEY TEAM FINISHED ON TOP OF POOL B WITH 7 POINTS FROM THREE MATCHES. THE HOSTS REGISTERED TWO WINS AND ONE DRAW IN THE POOL STAGE**

**ITALY FINISHED SECOND IN POOL A WITH FOUR POINTS AFTER REGISTERING ONE WIN, ONE DRAW AND ONE LOSS, GIVING THE HOSTS A SLIGHT PSYCHOLOGICAL EDGE AHEAD OF THE SEMIS**

**IN TERMS OF HEAD-TO-HEAD ENCOUNTERS, INDIA AND ITALY HAVE FACED EACH OTHER SEVEN TIMES SINCE 2012. INDIA HAVE WON FIVE OF THOSE MATCHES, WHILE ITALY HAVE REGISTERED ONE VICTORY AND ONE GAME ENDED IN A DRAW**

**Securing qualification for the FIH Hockey Women's World Cup 2026 is an important milestone for this group, and the players deserve a lot of credit for the way they have performed so far in the tournament**

SJOERD MARIJNE | CHIEF COACH INDIA

performance in the final pool match against Wales, scoring a brilliant hat-trick to cap off the group stage in style.

Italy, meanwhile, will rely on Federica Carta, who has been their key attacking threat and has scored three goals so far in the competition.

On paper and form, India hold a major advantage over Italy.

In terms of head-to-head encounters, India and Italy have faced each other seven times

since 2012. India have won five of those matches, while Italy have registered one victory and one game ended in a draw, giving the hosts a slight psychological edge.

India's chief coach Sjoerd Marijne, who is back at the helm after the Tokyo Olympics, termed the achievement as a significant milestone.

"Securing qualification for the FIH Hockey Women's World Cup 2026 is an important milestone for this group, and the

players deserve a lot of credit for the way they have performed so far in the tournament," he said.

"They have shown good discipline, composure and attacking intent throughout the pool stage. At the same time, our mindset is very clear -- we are not here just to qualify. We want to keep improving with every match and aim to win the tournament. The semifinal is another big challenge and we will approach it with full focus and intensity," he added.

The Dutchman, however, cautioned his wards to take Italy lightly.

"Italy are a competitive side and they have shown in this tournament that they can trouble strong teams. For us, the focus will be on executing our plans well, maintaining our structure, and continuing to play with the same energy and confidence," he said.

The FIH Women's World Cup will be played alongside the men's competition to be jointly hosted by the Netherlands and Belgium from August 15 to 30.

## NATIONAL RUGBY 15s CHAMPIONSHIP

# Defending champions Odisha RC fall short

Future Hope Harlequins crowned women's champions after dramatic final

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 12:** Future Hope Harlequins were crowned champions of the Women's Championship at the National Rugby 15s Championship 2026 - Division 1 after edging defending champions Odisha Rugby Club in a thrilling final at the Kalinga Stadium, Bhubaneswar Thursday.

In a closely contested encounter, both teams traded the lead in a match that kept the crowd on edge until the closing minutes. Odisha RC struck first through Arati Murmu, before Soni Mandangi added another try to keep the defending champions in control early on.

Future Hope Harlequins responded through Sadika Khatoun, while Lachmi Oraon added the conversion to bring the teams closer. Anisha Oraon then crossed the line to swing the momentum in favour of the Harlequins.

Odisha RC reclaimed the lead with less than ten minutes remaining, putting them on course to successfully defend their title. However, the contest produced another twist when Future Hope Harlequins broke through with just over four minutes left on the clock to seal a dramatic victory and claim the championship.

Earlier in the day, Calcutta Cricket and Football Club (CC&FC) secured third place after defeating Delhi Hurricanes Women 10-7 in a tightly fought playoff.



The trophy presentation ceremony was conducted in the presence of distinguished guests including Yeddula Vijay, Director - Sports, Department of Sports & Youth Services; Sudhanshu Sekhar Khora, Chief Executive, Regional Plant Resource Centre; Bijaya Kumar Swain, Additional Secretary, Department of Sports & Youth Services; Sonali Subhadarshinee, Officer on Special Duty; Ashish Kumar Rout, Officer on Special Duty; Sashwat Kumar Raut, Officer on Special Duty; and Upendra Mohanty, Vice-President, Odisha Rugby Football Association.

Attention will now shift to the men's finals Friday, where the tournament will conclude with four key matches at Kalinga Stadium, Bhubaneswar. The day will begin with the seventh place playoff between Rebels Rugby Club and Sergeant Institute Rugby Club at 8:00 AM, followed by the plate final between Bangalore RC and CC&FC at 9:30 AM.

Later in the evening, Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences Rugby Club will take on Future Hope Harlequins in the third place playoff at 4:00 PM, before the cup final between defending champions Delhi Hurricanes and Bombay Gymkhana Rugby Club at 6:00 PM.

Organised by the Indian Rugby Football Union with the support of the Department of Sports and Youth Services, Government of Odisha and the Odisha Rugby Football Association, the National Rugby 15s Championship continues to serve as the premier platform for club rugby in India while strengthening the pathway for players to progress to the national team.

## Bhambri enters maiden ATP Masters 1000 semis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Indian Wells (USA), March 12:** India's Yuki Bhambri entered his maiden ATP Masters 1000 semifinal as he and his Swedish partner Andre Goransson defeated Alexander Erler and Andrea Vavassori in straight sets in Indian Wells here.

The 33-year-old Indian had previously reached the doubles quarter-finals at the Masters 1000 level twice, including at Indian Wells last year.

Bhambri and Goransson defeated the Austrian-Italian pair 6-3 7-6 in the quarterfinals that lasted over one hour 30 minutes. The Indo-Swedish duo dominated on their first serve, winning 83 per cent of the points (29/35), which proved crucial in taking the second-set tie-break and closing out the match.

They will take on France's Arthur Rinderknech and Monaco's Valentin Vacherot in the semifinals Friday. Rinderknech and Vacherot defeated the Russian duo of Andrey Rublev and Karen Khachanov 6-3 6-4 in their quarterfinal.

# Pace, touch, finish: Valverde shows range with hat-trick

AGENCIES

**Madrid, March 12:** Even without a host of Galacticos, Real Madrid was far too strong for Manchester City in the latest Champions League clash of these titans.

A 3-0 win at the Bernabeu on Wednesday put Madrid in control of this round-of-16 tie at the halfway mark after a stunning first-half hat trick by Federico Valverde. The Uruguayan international took on the responsibility of inspiring the record 15-time champion in the absence of injured stars Kylian Mbappe, Jude Bellingham and Rodrigo.

The victory could have been even more commanding, but Vinicius Junior's casually taken second-half penalty was saved by Gianluigi Donnarumma.

Defending champion Paris Saint-Germain beat Chelsea 5-2 and tiny Bodo/Glimt is also in sight of the quarterfinals after a 3-0 win over Sporting Lisbon. Arsenal drew 1-1 with Bayer Leverkusen.

**Madrid masterclass**  
By fulltime at a rocking

Bernabeu, the only comfort City could cling to was the fact that it could have been so much worse.

When Vinicius stood over the ball on the penalty spot shortly before the hour mark, he looked certain add to the lead. But the Brazil forward skipped in his run-up and hit a weak side-footed effort that Donnarumma pushed away.

It will still take a massive turnaround to see City advance after being outclassed by Madrid.

Valverde's hat trick featured three outstanding goals. The pick of the lot was his third when he flicked the ball over the head of City defender Marc Guehi before volleying home.

TV cameras caught Bellingham watching in the stadium with his mouth wide open in awe of the move.

City manager Pep Guardiola will likely be worrying that history is set to repeat itself after his team was eliminated at the hands of Madrid in each of the last two seasons.

**PSG takes control**  
After losing to Chelsea in the final of the Club World Cup last



year, PSG got some revenge. A three-goal advantage after the first leg saw Luis Enrique's team take a big step toward the last eight.

Chelsea had twice leveled the game, but a mistake by goalkeeper Filip Jorgensen, who gave the ball away on the edge of his box in the 74th minute, allowed Vitorinha to lift a shot into the open net.

PSG substitute Khvicha

- Real Madrid leaves Pep Guardiola's side on verge of exit
- Late Kvaratskhelia Brace Helps Holders Thrash Blues in Paris
- Bodo/Glimt dream run continues with 3-0 rout of Sporting Lisbon
- Havertz converts late penalty to draw 1-1 with Bayer Leverkusen

Bodo/Glimt - located north of the Arctic Circle and farther north than any team in Champions League history - took full advantage of playing the first leg at home and led 2-0 at halftime through Sondre Fet's penalty and Ole Blomberg's goal just before the break.

Kasper Høgh scored in the 71st to put his team on the brink of the next round.

Bodo/Glimt was already the first Norwegian team to the advance to the knockout rounds of the Champions League and could now go even further.

**Havertz haunts Leverkusen**  
Kai Havertz returned to haunt Bayer Leverkusen and seal a late draw for Arsenal.

The Germany international struck an 89th-minute penalty against the team where he

started his career and leveled the round-of-16 first leg tie at BayArena.

Premier League leading Arsenal fell behind on Robert Andrich's goal just after half-time. But Malik Tillman fouled Noni Madueke in the box, and Havertz fired low past Janis Blaswich from the spot.

**Premier League dominance halted**

After dominating the league phase of this year's tournament, Premier League teams were brought down to Earth in the round of 16.

Man City, Chelsea and Tottenham all fell to heavy defeats, while Liverpool also lost to Galatasaray.

In all, none of England's six teams in the knockouts won their first leg, with Arsenal and Newcastle both picking up draws.

Arsenal will be favorite to overcome Leverkusen at home and Liverpool only has to overturn a 1-0 deficit in its second leg at Anfield.

But City, Chelsea and Tottenham face big deficits, while Newcastle travels to Camp Nou to play Barcelona.