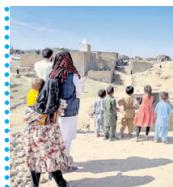




Candid Anya

Actor Anya Panday reflects on the lessons she has learned from her past relationships

LEISURE | P2



Pak-Afghan conflict

Pakistan bombs the fuel depot of private airline Kam Air near Afghanistan's airport of Kandahar

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Costlier air travel

After Air India, IndiGo announces fuel surcharge from March 14 as soaring crude prices hit aviation industry

BUSINESS | P11



Pramod in TOPS

World champion para-shuttler Pramod Bhagat among eight athletes newly added to TOPS Core group after performance review

SPORTS | P12

RS polls: Cong shifts MLAs to K'taka; BJD holds 'priority meet'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar/Bangalore, March 13: Odisha Friday witnessed hectic political activities as Opposition parties made all-out efforts to foil the ruling BJP's alleged horse-trading bid, with the Congress even shifting eight of its MLAs to Karnataka amid apprehensions of cross-voting in the March 16 Rajya Sabha elections.

All parties issued whips, asking their respective lawmakers to remain present in the Assembly Monday and cast their votes in the Rajya Sabha polls. Both the BJD and the Congress have openly accused the saffron party of attempting to do horse trading as it fielded an Independent candidate despite not having required numbers to win an additional seat.

Of its total 14 MLAs, the Congress shifted eight lawmakers to a private resort near Bangalore where Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar met them in the presence of OPCC president Bhakta Charan Das.

Meanwhile, BJD president Naveen Patnaik Friday evening held a 'priority meeting' with his party's lawmakers at Naveen Niwas. Of the 48 MLAs of the regional outfit, 45 attended it. The absentees were Manohar Randhari, Sarada P Nayak and Naba Kishor Mallick.

"These three MLAs are with the party. While Randhari could not attend the Friday evening meeting due to health issues, Nayak was on the way to Bhubaneswar from his constituency. Mallick is out of the city and he will be back tomorrow and will attend another meeting," BJD MLA and former minister Arun Kumar Sahoo told reporters after the meeting.



PERILS OF POLLUTION: Toxic foam floats on the Yamuna near Kalindi Kunj, in New Delhi, Friday, on the eve of the International Day of Action for Rivers

PTI PHOTO

2 Indians killed, 10 hurt in drone attack in Oman

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 13: Two Indian nationals were killed and 10 others injured in a drone strike in Oman's Sohar city Friday that marked the first Indian fatalities on land since the Iran-US conflict erupted February 28.

Joint secretary (Gulf) in the Ministry of External Affairs Aseem Mahajan confirmed the killing of the two Indians in Oman at an inter-ministerial media briefing on the crisis in West Asia. He also said that 150,000 Indian nationals have returned to India from West Asia after the conflict began.

"I wish to share with you an incident that happened in Sohar city today. There was an attack and in this incident two Indian nationals have died," he said.

"We express our deepest condolences to their families. Of the 11 injured (in the attack), 10 are Indians. Out of them, five have been discharged after receiving treatment, and five others are receiving treatment in local hospitals," Mahajan said.

These latest casualties brought the total number of Indian fatalities in the West Asia conflict to five. While the strike in Oman marked the first deaths on land, three Indian sailors have previously been killed in attacks on merchant vessels since the conflict erupted on February 28.

Rupee, stocks in free fall

PTI & REUTERS

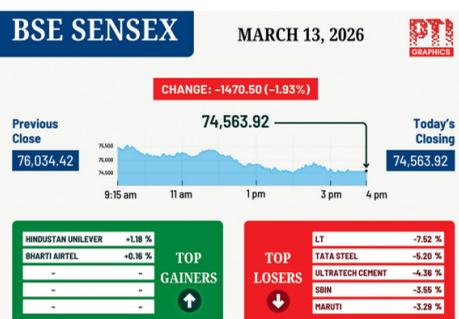
Mumbai, March 13: The rupee slumped 5 paise to close at a fresh record low of 92.30 against the US dollar Friday as crude oil prices crossed USD 101/barrel amid the raging West Asia conflict.

A stronger greenback, heavy foreign fund outflows and sustained selling in the domestic equity markets further weighed on the rupee, according to forex traders.

A prolonged Middle East conflict could significantly worsen the rupee's outlook, analysts said, warning that persistently high energy prices may push the currency beyond 95 per dollar.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the local unit opened at 92.33 and kept losing ground to hit a fresh intra-day low of 92.47 against the US dollar. It eventually settled at its lifetime low of 92.30, down 5 paise from its previous close.

Meanwhile, investors' wealth eroded by ₹33.68 lakh crore



TOP GAINERS	TOP LOSERS
INDUSTAN UNILEVER +1.18%	LT -7.82%
BHARTI AIRTEL +0.16%	TATA STEEL -5.20%
	ULTRATECH CEMENT -4.36%
	SBIN -3.55%
	MARUTI -3.28%

since the beginning of the West Asia conflict, which has now entered its 14th day. The conflict has rattled equity markets and driven oil prices sharply higher. The tense situation in West Asia has dragged the BSE Sensex lower by over 8 per cent so far this month.

It is pertinent to note here that Indian equities have been among the worst performers since the war started. Even the benchmark indices of Israel and the US have relatively performed better than Sensex and Nifty.

Global oil and gas prices have surged after Iran virtually blocked the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow shipping lane between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman that handles roughly 20 per cent of global oil and LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas).

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, surged to the USD 100 per barrel level. Since February 27, the 30-share BSE Sensex has tumbled 6,723.27 points or 8.27 per cent. The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies

eroded by ₹33,68,419 crore to ₹4,29,82,252.27 crore (USD 4.65 trillion) during this time.

On Friday, the Sensex tumbled 1,579.82 points, or 2 per cent, to 74,454.60 during intra-day trade. The benchmark finally settled at 74,563.92, down 1,470.50 points, or 1.93 per cent.

Traders have also flagged growing pressure on the rupee from the non-deliverable forwards market, which was reflected in a persistent arbitrage between offshore and local markets Friday.

LPG crunch sparks protests across state

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 13: The shortage of LPG cylinders triggered protests and road blockades in several parts of the state Friday, with consumers complaining about delays in receiving refilled cooking gas cylinders. Long queues were seen outside LPG distribution centres across the state as people waited for refills, often days after booking.

In Jajpur town, residents blocked a road by placing empty LPG cylinders after a local distributor shut its office, displaying a "No Stock Today" notice. Consumers alleged that the distributor had deliberately stopped supplying cylinders to sell them at higher prices in the black market.

"I booked a cylinder five days ago. The distributor asked me to come today, but the office was closed when I arrived," said a consumer waiting outside the agency.

In Keonjhar district, residents blocked the Keonjhar-Sanaghagara road over

the scarcity of LPG cylinders, disrupting vehicular movement for some time. Personnel from Keonjhar town police station reached the spot and held discussions with the protesters, following which the blockade was withdrawn, an officer said.

"Our distributor is unable to provide adequate cylinders, and we are struggling to cook food for our families," said a protesting woman. After police intervention, the distributor agreed to supply filled cylinders to consumers according to the waiting list, officials said.

Queues were also reported outside LPG agencies in several other places, including Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Kendrapara and Sambalpur. Meanwhile, civil supplies officials conducted raids in Jharsuguda district and seized 92 cylinders, including 29 filled ones, allegedly hoarded, an officer said.

The shortage has forced many households to switch to alternative cooking methods.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Except for the minuscule number of people who cook, there is no shortage of cooking gas in the country

Asteroid that hit North Sea & triggered a 330-ft tsunami

A long-running scientific debate over the origin of a mysterious crater beneath the North Sea seabed has finally been resolved, with new research confirming that the formation was created by a massive asteroid impact millions of years ago that generated a colossal tsunami, Independent reported.

The structure, known as the Silverpit Crater, lies about 700 metres below the southern North Sea seabed, roughly 80 miles off the coast of Yorkshire in the United Kingdom. Scientists now believe the crater was formed between 43 and 46 million years ago when an asteroid or comet slammed into the sea, producing a tsunami estimated to have reached heights of around 330 feet.

Since geologists first identified the three-kilometre-wide crater in 2002, the structure has been the subject of intense sci-

entific debate. The crater is surrounded by a ring of circular faults stretching across nearly 20 kilometres, a feature that initially suggested a high-energy impact event. However, alternative explanations were also proposed over the years.

Some researchers argued that underground salt movement might have distorted rock layers and created the circular structure. Others suggested that volcanic activity or the collapse of the seabed could have produced the formation. The disagreement among scientists was so strong that, in 2009, geologists even held a vote on the crater's origin. According to a report published in the journal Geoscientist, the majority at that time rejected the asteroid-impact explanation.

The latest research, however, appears to have decisively settled the matter. The study, published in the journal Nature



Communications and funded by the Natural Environment Research Council, provides what scientists describe as the strongest evidence yet that Silverpit is indeed an impact crater.

The research team used advanced computer modelling along with newly available seismic imaging data and microscopic geological samples

taken from deep beneath the seabed. These techniques allowed scientists to examine the crater in far greater detail than had previously been possible.

According to Uisdean Nicholson, who led the investigation at Heriot-Watt University, the breakthrough came with the discovery of rare minerals in rock samples extracted from

an oil well near the crater site. The samples contained microscopic crystals of shocked quartz and feldspar—minerals that form only when rocks are subjected to the extreme pressures generated during asteroid impacts. Scientists say these crystals are considered one of the most reliable indicators of a cosmic collision.

Researchers estimate that a roughly 160-metre-wide asteroid struck the seabed at a low angle from the west. The impact would have triggered a violent explosion beneath the sea floor and sent a towering curtain of rock and water nearly 1.5 kilometres into the air. Within minutes, the collapsing debris would have displaced vast volumes of seawater, generating a tsunami more than 100 metres high that spread across the surrounding region.

Gareth Collins of Imperial College London, who had attended the 2009 debate over the

crater's origin and contributed to the new study, described the discovery as the "silver bullet" that finally resolves the long-standing dispute.

Scientists say the finding is particularly significant because well-preserved impact craters are relatively rare on Earth. Geological processes such as erosion, sedimentation and plate tectonics gradually erase most traces of ancient collisions.

Researchers estimate that around 200 confirmed impact craters exist on land worldwide, while only about 33 have been identified beneath the oceans.

The Silverpit discovery therefore offers scientists a valuable opportunity to better understand how asteroid impacts shape planetary surfaces. Researchers hope the new data will also help improve scientific understanding of the potential consequences of future asteroid collisions with Earth.

Snake in slipper kills schoolgirl in Ganjam

POST NEWS NETWORK

Purushottampur, March 13: A Class IV girl student died after being bitten by a venomous snake that was in her slipper at a village in Ganjam district Friday. The deceased was identified as Shubhashree Padhi of Solaghar under Purushottampur block.

According to reports, Shubhashree, a student of the Government New Primary School, had appeared for her English examination on the last day of the annual test. After having her mid-day meal, while wearing her slippers, a venomous snake that had reportedly taken shelter inside one of them bit her. The girl began crying in pain, drawing the attention of teachers. She was first taken to Bhatakumarda CHC. As her condition was critical, doctors referred her to MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Bhubaneswar where she died.

leisure



AARON PIERRE JOINS SUPERMAN SEQUEL

Aaron Pierre became the latest addition to the star cast of DC Studios' *Superman* sequel, *Man of Tomorrow*, directed by James Gunn. Pierre, known for his work in projects such as *Rebel Ridge* and *The Underground Railroad*, will essay the role of John Stewart, the Green Lantern, in the film

ED TALKS ABOUT 'THE WORST DAY' OF LIFE

Ed Sheeran has spoken about the worst day of his life. The singer said that the day his wife was diagnosed with cancer was "the worst" of his life. The singer's spouse Cherry Seaborn was pregnant with the couple's second child, daughter Jupiter, now three, when doctors discovered a tumour back in 2022



FORTUNE FORECAST

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181*

ARIES

Today, you will try to strike a balance between work and family, says Ganesha; your sulking little ones may have prompted this move. After spending a hectic day at work, you may pull out Monopoly and teach your kids a thing or two about money.

TAURUS

In all probability, you will come across as extremely prudent today, feels Ganesha. Your common sense will prevail over your intellect this afternoon. Things will probably change for the better during the course of the day. Loved ones will shower you with care and concern in the evening.

GEMINI

A chance encounter with an old friend will leave you feeling nostalgic. You will reminisce about the good old days for most part of the day. You are likely to meet a marriage prospect and leave a good impression on him/her. The confusions surrounding your future studies will also vanish.

CANCER

There is a strong possibility that you will reach an important milestone in your life today, says Ganesha. Your emotional health is important for your physical well-being. How about spending some good time with like-minded people who can light up your mood?

LEO

You will be in the mood to dig up old happenings and problems. You need to let go of the past and concentrate on your future. Academic pursuits will increase and love is likely to bloom. You need to bring a measure of understanding into your personal relationships, says Ganesha.

VIRGO

Serendipity will pit you against the friendly ghosts of the past. In the afternoon, you'll charm your way through good marriage prospects. But make careful decisions when it comes to furthering your educational qualifications, says Ganesha.

LIBRA

We all like a story with a twist in the tale, don't we? Well, hold on to your horses today, because you may be going down the same twisted road when it comes to your career, foretells Ganesha. Your slogan of hard work seems to be your answer for everything. But allow for credence and your confidence to exert a pull on you. Evening may find you in an introspective mood as you search for the red herring in your tale today.

SCORPIO

Cupid's darts are more potent than ever today, warns Ganesha. Romantic rebirth might lead to a newer you. At the end of the day, you shall find the answer to those intimate problems, predicts Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS

Stress, tension, pressure are miles away from you today. Peace and harmony are likely to join you today. You have a wavering mind today. But, no issues as you have nothing serious to decide. You take up most of the things in good humour, says Ganesha. Keep smiling!

CAPRICORN

For once, you will think straight, planning for the future and saving every bit of your earning for a comfortable, if not luxurious, life, says Ganesha. To your loved ones, you will come across as relenting and forgiving of the mistakes committed in the past. Later, however, you may feel others took advantage of your benignity, but it will only be a fleeting thought.

AQUARIUS

A series of disappointments may drag you down today. But this is a temporary phenomenon, and a cheerful demeanour is the only solution. It is also best to avoid conflicts and differences at work in the larger interest of things. This too shall pass, says Ganesha.

PISCES

Carefully evaluate and analyse any monetary transactions that you undertake today. Running about heedless, like a headless chicken, does you no good. Slow down your pace at work, for later on it may be too late. You are likely to be engaged in shopping for or appreciating the fine arts later in the evening, says Ganesha.

Khushi finding her footing

Mumbai: Actor Khushi Kapoor, who made her acting debut with the OTT film *The Archies*, says the early phase of her career often left her feeling "mid", somewhere between finding her footing and still figuring things out. After her debut, she appeared in *Nadaaniyaan* opposite Ibrahim Ali Khan. Reflecting on her initial days in the industry, Khushi admitted there were moments when she did not feel completely confident yet, but she reminded herself that growth happens during the journey, not only at the destination.

In an industry driven by comparisons and constant public scrutiny, Khushi shared that she protects her inner world by staying close to her support system. Her safe space, she said, is with family and close friends who see her simply as Khushi and not as a public figure. Simple routines like journaling, reading and spending quiet evenings at home help her disconnect from outside noise and remain present.

Speaking about the mixed reactions to *Nadaaniyaan*, she said she views them as part of the process. For her, even criticism means audiences are watching and engaging, which motivates her to keep improving with every role.

Khushi has now begun work on the sequel to her mother Sridevi's film *Mom*. She says staying close to her roots and remembering her love for storytelling helps her stay grounded while navigating the journey.



Ananya's confession

Mumbai: Actor Ananya Panday recently reflected on the lessons she learned from her past relationships, admitting that she often changed herself to make her partners feel more comfortable. The actor shared that she would sometimes tone down parts of her personality so the other person could shine more.

In a recent interview, Ananya spoke about how her understanding of relationships has evolved over time. She revealed that earlier she found it difficult to be alone and preferred constantly being surrounded by someone, whether a partner, family member, or friends. However, her perspective began to shift when she started living on

her own. The experience helped her appreciate the importance of personal space and independence, ultimately reshaping the way she approaches romantic relationships.

Looking back, Ananya admitted that she often put her partners before herself. She said she would change her personality and hold herself back just to make the other person feel more confident. The actor now believes she should have learned earlier that a relationship should not require someone to diminish who they are.

Ananya was previously in a relationship with Ishaan Khatter, and was later linked to Aditya Roy Kapur. She has also been rumored to be dating former model Walker Blanco.

On the work front, she will next be seen in *Chaand Mera Dil* alongside Lakshya Lalwani, produced by Karan Johar's Dharma Productions, set to release May 8, 2026.



3-DAY ASIM UTSAV BEGINS



Artists of Uttar Purush staged the play *No Expiry* on the opening day of the event organised by the Asim Basu Foundation at Bhanja Kala Mandap, Friday. Transcreated by Gautam Basu from Manoj Mitra's Bengali play *Shuk-Sari*, the production was directed by Debadutta Pati. The play poignantly explored the idea that the bond between husband and wife transcends time, suggesting that relationships have no expiry.



Hansika shares cryptic post

Mumbai: Actor Hansika Motwani has shared her first social media message after her divorce from businessman Sohael Khatri was officially finalised. The actor posted a brief yet meaningful note on her Instagram Story soon after the Mumbai Family Court granted the couple a divorce, marking the end of their four-year marriage. Her message appeared to reflect positivity and resilience during a difficult personal phase.

Hansika shared the phrase, "Chardi Kala always," a concept rooted in Punjabi philosophy that signifies optimistic and maintaining high spirits even during challenging times.

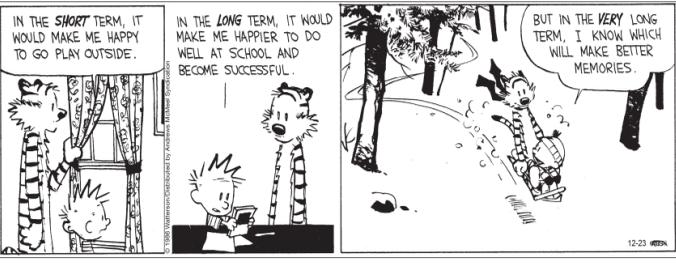
The couple's divorce was finalised March 11 at the Bandra Family Court in Mumbai. According to their petition, both Hansika and Sohael sought separation through mutual consent, stating that their marriage had "irretrievably broken down." Hansika's legal team later confirmed that the actor had initially approached her husband for an amicable separation, which eventually led to the court's decree. The statement also clarified that Hansika chose not to seek any alimony or maintenance, as her intention was to end the marriage with dignity and peace.

Hansika and Sohael married in December 2022 at the historic Mundota Fort and Palace. On the professional front, Hansika was last seen in the thriller film *Guardian*.

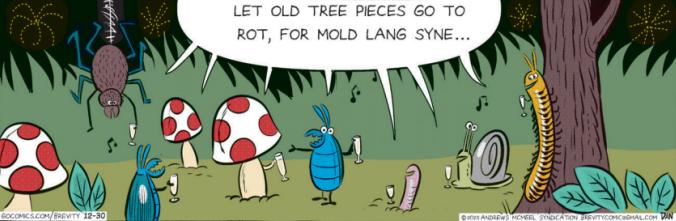
PEANUTS



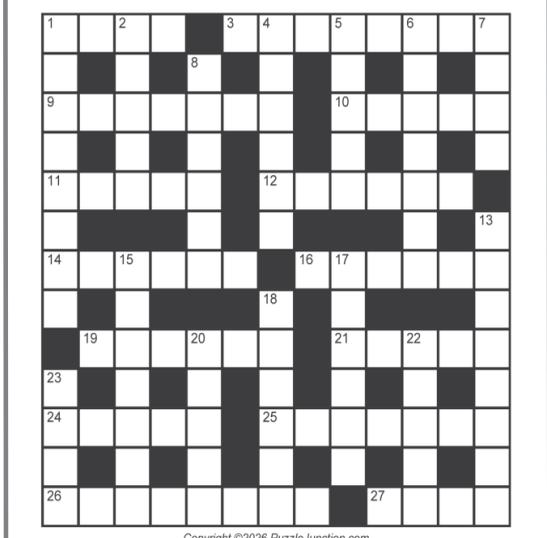
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



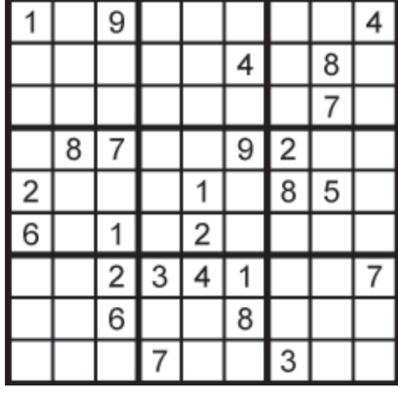
FUN POST CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Pewter component
 - 3 40s movie style (4,4)
 - 9 Christie and Doyle, e.g.
 - 10 Rendezvous
 - 11 Very, in music
 - 12 Shade of red
 - 14 3rd century BC Greek geometer
 - 16 Ravine
 - 19 Metallic element
 - 21 Brief tussle (3-2)
 - 24 Bumbling
 - 25 Battery type
 - 26 Turn into gas
 - 27 Antares, for one
 - Down**
 - 1 Legislator
 - 2 Not quite right
 - 4 Bug
 - 5 Drive
 - 6 Amazing adventure
 - 7 Ceremony
 - 8 Third sign of the Zodiac
 - 13 Stool pigeon
 - 15 Photograph type (5,2)
 - 17 Stocks and such
 - 18 Coral reef islands
 - 20 Modify
 - 22 Corrupt
 - 23 Ukraine's capital

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



DESPERATE TIMES: Auto-rickshaws queue up at a petrol station as consumers brace for fuel shortages in the wake of the ongoing West Asia conflict, in Tiruchirappalli, Friday

PTI PHOTO

US plane crash in Iraq kills six crew members

REUTERS

Washington, March 13: All six crew members aboard a US military KC-135 refuelling aircraft that crashed in western Iraq are confirmed to have been killed, the US military said Friday.

The refuelling aircraft crashed in western Iraq Thursday, in an incident the military said involved another aircraft but was not the result of hostile or friendly fire.

The deaths add to the seven US service members who have already been killed as part of US operations against Iran which began February 28. "The circumstances of the incident are under investigation. However, the loss of the aircraft was not due to hostile fire or friendly fire," a statement from US Central Command said.

Speaking with reporters at the Pentagon Friday, US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said operations against Iran would continue.

"War is hell. War is chaos, and as we saw yesterday with the tragic crash of our KC-135 tanker, bad things can happen," Hegseth said.

A US official told Reuters that the second aircraft involved in the crash which landed safely was also a military refuelling aircraft known as the KC-135.

The US has deployed a large number of aircraft into the Middle East to take part in operations against Iran. The incident highlights the risk of not just operations but also of refuelling aircraft in the air.

The KC-135, built by Boeing in the 1950s and early 1960s, has served as the backbone of the US military's air refuelling fleet and is critical to allowing aircraft to carry out missions without having to land.

The Islamic Resistance in Iraq, an umbrella group of Iran-backed armed factions, claimed responsibility for downing the US military refuelling aircraft.

Centre rebuffs claim that India will hold off trade deal with US

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 13: The government Friday rejected reports suggesting that New Delhi might suspend the proposed trade deal with the US in view of the Trump administration launching a new "unfair practices" probe against India and some other countries.

The claim that India will hold off the trade deal with the US is incorrect and misleading, top government sources said.

The clarification came following reports that India will delay the finalisation of the trade deal following the launch of the probe. India and the US are engaged in talks to firm up an ambitious bilateral trade deal.

The US has initiated investigations against some of its trading partners, including India, China, Japan and the European Union, to look into and address "unfair foreign practices" that adversely impact American manufacturing.

More P8

PROTESTERS' ATTACK LEAVES NINE POLICE PERSONNEL INJURED

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, March 13: More than nine police personnel were injured after irate locals allegedly attacked them during a protest demanding justice for a tribal minor girl who was reportedly misbehaved with by a youth from another community in Binjua area under Tiring police limits in Mayurbhanj district Friday.

According to sources, the tension stemmed from an incident Thursday afternoon when the girl was returning home on a bicycle through Binjua market. The youth reportedly collided with her bicycle and fled the scene.

Later, the girl's family members and locals went to the youth's house and created a ruckus. Despite the youth reportedly apologising, the situation did not calm down, with locals insisting that he return to the spot and apologise publicly. Cops intervened and rescued the youth, taking him to the police station.

However, after midnight, a group of people allegedly went to the youth's house, vandalised property and set it on fire. Fire service personnel were reportedly prevented from dousing the flames, though family members later managed to control the fire.

Meanwhile, locals and members of the tribal community gathered and blocked the Bahalda-Tiring Road on National Highway 220, demanding justice for the girl.

Bahalda tehsildar and police personnel, who arrived to hold discussions with the agitators, faced the mob's anger. Protesters vandalised the tehsildar's vehicle and launched a sudden attack on police personnel, leaving more than nine of them injured. Constable Prashant Mohanty sustained serious injuries and was shifted to Pandit Raghunath Murmu Medical College and Hospital in Baripada for treatment.

Mayurbhanj Collector Hema Kanta Say and Superintendent of Police Varun Guntupalli later reached the spot and initiated efforts to bring the situation under control.

Four platoons of police force were deployed, and more than 40 male and female protesters were detained. The situation was later brought under control.

'Nobody will hire women': SC junks plea on menstrual leave

The Supreme Court Friday declined to entertain a PIL seeking a nationwide policy mandating paid menstrual leave for female workers, warning that such a move could unintentionally harm women's employment prospects. The top court's observation appears to be practical because though the demand is welfare-oriented, compulsory leave might reinforce gender stereotypes and discourage employers from hiring women. A bench led by CJI Surya Kant cautioned that well-intentioned policies could prove "counterproductive."

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 13: The Supreme Court Friday refused to entertain a PIL seeking a nationwide policy providing paid menstrual leave for female workers, observing no one would give them jobs in such a scenario and that such a provision would unintentionally reinforce gender stereotypes.

The SC, however, asked the Centre and competent authorities to consider the representation of the PIL petitioner and examine the possibility of framing a policy on menstrual leave after consulting all relevant stakeholders.

A bench comprising CJI Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi observed that while the intent behind the petition might be welfare-oriented, the practical reality of the job market could lead to "counter-pro-



ductive" outcomes for women.

"These pleas are made to create fear, to call women inferior, that menstruation is something bad happening to them... this is an affirmative right... but think about the employer who needs to give paid leave," the bench observed.

Advocate MR Shamsad, appearing for the petitioner, said Karnataka government has formulated a policy to allow menstrual leave and some private organisations are also providing this facility.

"Voluntarily they are giving, then it is excellent. That is a very good thing. But the moment you introduce it as a compulsory condition in law, nobody will give them responsibilities, even in judicial services, a normal trial will not be assigned to them," the CJI said.

Justice Bagchi echoed these concerns from a business perspective, noting that affirma-

tive action is constitutionally recognised but must be balanced against market realities.

"Look at the practical reality in the job market. The more unattractive the human resource, the less is the possibility of assumption in the market. Will any employer be happy with the competing claims of other genders," Justice Bagchi asked.

The SC was hearing a PIL filed by Shailendra Mani Tripathi. At the outset, the bench raised the issue of locus of the PIL petitioner and pointed out that no woman herself has approached the court.

It was the third petition filed by Tripathi on the same issue. The first petition was dealt with by the bench in 2023 and it allowed the petitioner to give a representation before the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

The petitioner approached the court in 2024 again on the ground that the Centre did not respond to his representation. The PIL was disposed of in July 2024 again with the direction to the government to take a decision.

"These petitions are deeply rooted, designed PILs. You are not a bona fide petitioner. This is basically only to create a type of impression in young women that you still have some natural issues and you are not at par with male persons and you cannot work like them during a particular time," the bench observed initially.

PM-Kisan: 34.24L Odisha farmers get ₹684 crore



PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 13: More than 34.24 lakh farmers in Odisha received Rs 2,000 each, totaling Rs 684 crore, after Prime Minister Narendra Modi released over Rs 19,000 crore for 9.32 crore farmers across the country under the 22nd instalment of the PM-Kisan scheme at an event in Assam's Guwahati Friday.

Addressing farmers at the state-level event at OUAH here, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi said that PM-Kisan scheme helps farmers purchase seeds, fertilizers and other agricultural inputs.

"Although the Rs 2,000 installment (Rs 6,000 per year in three installments) may seem small for some people, for a small farmer it is a great recognition of their hard work. Today is being celebrated across the country and the state as PM-Kisan Utsav Diwas," he said, adding that awareness

is also being created about the eligibility criteria required to be included in the scheme.

"In Odisha, more than 34.24 lakh eligible farmers are receiving Rs 2,000 each under the 22nd installment, totaling Rs 684 crore, released today by the PM," he said.

The CM urged all farmers in the state to complete the mandatory requirements for the scheme such as e-KYC, land record details, Aadhaar-bank account linking, and name correction according to Aadhaar, so that they can receive all benefits of the scheme.

He further said that along with PM-Kisan, the state government is also implementing the CM-Kisan scheme under which eligible farmers are being provided Rs 4,000 in two installments.

"More than six lakh new beneficiaries have been added to the scheme. So far, under the CM-Kisan scheme, over Rs 2,991 crore has been provided to 51.54 lakh beneficiaries, including 3,236 farmers from Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) and 31,695 urban farmers," Majhi said.

The CM also stated that children of CM-Kisan beneficiaries are being provided scholarships to pursue professional and technical courses in government and private institutions within and outside the state.

As a result, students from beneficiary families are benefiting greatly.

'Ticket to Tehran': Iranian Jews in Israel still long for Iran

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Jerusalem, March 13: For Sahar Saidian, past and present collide every day on the airwaves as she hosts a Persian-language show on Israeli public radio for listeners in Israel and in Iran, the country she left behind years ago. "After 26 years in Israel, I look more Israeli than Iranian, but even though I left Iran, the country is still part of me," Saidian told AFP.

The two countries are now at war. The Middle East conflict began February 28 when Israel and the US attacked Iran.

Saidian, who was wearing two pins on her lapel - an Israeli flag and an Iranian one from before the 1979 Islamic revolution - cries openly when talking about her native country, which she said she misses every day.

If there were to be a football

match between Israel and Iran, Saidian said she was not sure which side she would support.

"We're like children with divorced parents: you love your mother and father equally," the 45-year-old said.

Born in southern Iran's Shiraz, the hometown of the renowned Persian poet Hafez, Saidian emigrated to Israel in 1998 at the age of 18, followed by her parents a few years later. Before the Middle East war began, she hosted a one-hour weekly show on Reka radio, part of the public broadcaster KAN, that could be heard between programmes in Spanish and Russian. But since March 1, she has broadcast from KAN's studios in Jerusalem every day.

"Greetings to all those who seek the path of freedom, and to the loyal listeners of Radio KAN Farsi. This is Sahar, and today we're with you for a special pro-



Sahar Saidian wore two pins on her lapel - an Israeli flag and an Iranian one from before the 1979 Islamic revolution

gramme packed with content," she begins, before introducing her guests, Iranians in exile like the singer Shahin Najafi.

On Wednesday, while Najafi

was speaking, Saidian interrupted her when 86-year-old Menashe Amir, a legend among Iranian Jews, visited the studio.

Amir, who created Saidian's

radio show in 1960 and recently retired, declared his hope for an uprising in Iran that he believes would save not only "the Iranian nation" but "the world".

"When I was a child, I remember that my dad would take out his radio at 5:00 pm and tell us all to be quiet because he wanted to listen to Mr Amir," Saidian told him. "My suitcase is packed in my head," she said, explaining that she has yearned to reconnect with everything that she misses about Iran: "the atmosphere, the streets, the neighbours, friends, everything". More than 300,000 Jews of Iranian origin are thought to live in Israel today, the vast majority of whom are those who arrived after 1979 and their descendants. Like Amir, Aaron Yaakobi, who runs the only Iranian restaurant in Jerusalem, has called Israel home for far longer, having arrived in Israel

at the age of 10.

The 76-year-old offers his diners traditional Iranian cuisine like gondi - chicken dumplings with chickpeas - and ghormeh sabzi - a herby meat stew.

In the cosy eatery he has run for more than 20 years, Yaakobi has a framed photograph of his mother as a child posing with her parents and uncles in Tehran.

While Yaakobi says he regrets that he did not teach his children Persian, he is hopeful that he passed on a desire to learn more about Iranian culture, especially its poetry and cuisine.

As he watches dishes cook, he hums along in Persian to the music playing in his restaurant.

After more than 65 years in Israel, he said that since February 28 his dream is now "to buy a ticket to Tehran" so he can show his children and grandchildren the country where he was born.

NHRC seeks report from govt on missing persons

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 13: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has taken suo motu cognizance of reports, highlighting the rising number of missing persons, and poor recovery rates in several states, including Odisha, and has sought a detailed report from the state government within two weeks.

According to reports cited by the commission, data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) indicates that Odisha records one of the highest numbers of human trafficking cases in the country. The state reportedly tops the list for trafficking of minor boys, followed by Bihar. In cases involving trafficking of minor girls, Rajasthan has reported the highest number.

Taking serious note of the issue, the NHRC has issued notices to the chief secretaries and directors general of police of five states—Odisha, Bihar, Telangana, Maharashtra and Rajasthan—seeking detailed information on the situation.

The commission has asked the Odisha government to submit a comprehensive report



outlining the steps taken or proposed to tackle the increasing number of missing persons, particularly children. The report is also expected to explain measures being implemented to prevent trafficking and improve the tracing and rescue of missing individuals.

The NHRC observed that if the reports are accurate, the situation raises serious concerns about human rights violations. Many missing children are suspected to have been forced into begging, child labour, prostitution and other illegal activities by trafficking networks.

The commission has also di-

rected NCRB to provide the latest statistical data on missing persons and trafficking cases in the five states within the same two-week timeframe.

Human rights activists have long expressed concern over trafficking routes operating through eastern India, with Odisha often cited as a vulnerable region due to migration, poverty and cross-state trafficking networks. The latest action by the NHRC is expected to put renewed focus on the issue and prompt stronger coordination between law-enforcement agencies and child protection authorities.

CS: State aims to contribute 5% to country's GDP by '47

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 13: Chief Secretary Anu Garg Friday said the state aims to contribute 5 per cent to the country's GDP by 2047. She said this while inaugurating the two-day 'Global Summit on Blue Economy 2026' held at the Convention Centre in Lok Seva Bhawan here.

"To achieve the ambitious target, key contributions are expected from fisheries, maritime infrastructure, coastal tourism, and marine biotechnology through the Odisha Marine Biotechnology Research & Innovation Corridor (OMBRIC)," she said.

The summit brought together national and international leaders, policymakers, researchers and industry experts to explore innovation, partnerships and sustainable development in ocean-based sectors.

In her address, the Chief Secretary outlined Odisha's long-term development vision under Viksit Odisha @2036 and highlighted the state's strong potential in the Blue Economy due to its economic, demographic and geographical advantages.

Emphasising Odisha's 575-km coastline, Garg said ocean-based sectors such as fisheries, maritime infrastructure, coastal tourism and marine biotech-



nology could play a key role in driving the state's economic growth. She also noted that the government aims for Odisha to contribute nearly five per cent to India's GDP by 2047.

"Think India, Think Odisha," she said, positioning the state as an emerging hub for Blue Economy innovation and investment. Providing a national perspective, Secretary of the Ministry of Earth Sciences M Ravichandran highlighted the immense potential of the world's oceans, noting that more than 95 per cent of the deep ocean remains unexplored. He pointed to opportunities in offshore energy and marine biotechnology while stressing the need to address challenges such as climate change, coastal erosion and marine pollution through advanced research and technological innovation.

Speaking on the occasion, Principal Secretary of Commerce and Transport depart-

Emphasising Odisha's 575-km coastline, Garg said ocean-based sectors such as fisheries, maritime infrastructure, coastal tourism and marine biotechnology could play a key role in driving the state's economic growth

ment NBS Rajput highlighted the strategic importance of the state's coastline and maritime resources. He stressed the need for stronger collaboration, improved infrastructure and sustainable practices to boost fisheries, aquaculture and coastal livelihoods.

The summit is being organised by Bhubaneswar City Knowledge Innovation Cluster

Foundation, an initiative of the Office of the Principal Scientific Advisor to the Government of India, under the guidance of Prime Minister's Science, Technology and Innovation Advisory Council, in association with state Commerce and Transport department.

Delivering the welcome address, BCKIC Foundation chairman Mrutyunjay Suar underscored the importance of collaboration between academia, industry and government to strengthen India's Blue Economy ecosystem.

More than 500 participants, including policymakers, industry leaders, researchers, startups and students, attended the inaugural session. During the programme, Blue Economy Technology Compendium and the Conference Abstract Book were released, while a Startup Showcasing Pavilion featuring innovations from 26 coastal startups of Odisha was also inaugurated.

2 industrial parks in Cuttack to create jobs



AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 13: The proposed industrial parks at Kuspangi and Bali villages under Athagarh tehsil in Cuttack district have strong potential to attract new industries and generate employment opportunities for local youth.

Chairperson of Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation (Idco) Usha Padhee Friday visited the villages to review and finalise plans for the development of the proposed industrial parks in the region.

Padhee, accompanied by Cuttack Collector Dattatraya Bha-

sahab Shinde and senior Idco officials, inspected the identified land parcels earmarked for the projects. During the visit, the team assessed several key aspects, including land availability, connectivity, and the provision of essential infrastructure such as power supply, water resources, and road access required for the development of the industrial parks. Officials emphasised that establishing well-planned industrial parks is central to the state government's strategy to promote investment, strengthen the industrial ecosystem, and ensure balanced regional development.

The Idco chairperson also highlighted the need for close coordination between the corporation and the district administration to expedite planning and ensure the timely development of the projects.



HEATWAVE: Amid scorching heat, a camel waits for its riders at Puri beach Friday

OP PHOTO

BJP issues whip for Rajya Sabha voting

Bhubaneswar: The BJP Friday issued a whip, asking all its MLAs to remain present in the Assembly for voting in the Rajya Sabha elections March 16. Government Chief Whip Saroj Pradhan, in a note, asked the party MLAs to remain present on the Assembly premises from 9am to 4pm Monday. The whip came after BJD and Congress issued orders to their legislators to remain present in the state capital during the elections. In the 147-member Assembly, the BJP has 79 MLAs and the support of three other Independents, while BJD has 48 MLAs after the suspension of two members. The Congress has 14 MLAs. Keeping in view the present party position, the BJP is certain to win two seats while one seat will go in favour of the BJD. As a candidate needs at least 30 first preference votes in the Rajya Sabha polls in Odisha, neither the BJP nor the BJD has the strength to get an additional seat. The Assembly is set to witness voting for Rajya Sabha elections after a gap of 12 years. The last voting for the Upper House of Parliament was held in the state in 2014, officials said.

BGU hosts GFI 2026

Bhubaneswar: Birla Global University (BGU) hosted three-day international conference international conference on 'Grassroots and Frugal Innovation in Emerging Economies (GFI 2026)' at its Bhubaneswar campus which brought together academicians, policymakers, entrepreneurs, innovators, and industry leaders to deliberate on how grassroots ingenuity and frugal innovations can drive inclusive and sustainable development in emerging economies. The conference was organised by Birla Hub for Innovation, Venturing and Entrepreneurship (B-HIVE), the innovation and incubation centre of Birla School of Management, BGU, in collaboration with the Earl V. Snyder Innovation Management Center, Whitman School of Management, Syracuse University (USA), and Mid-West University, Surkhet, Nepal. The inaugural session was attended by eminent speakers including Mid-West University, Nepal VC Dhruba Kumar Gautam who attended as chief guest. At the event, IIM Ahmedabad professor of Marketing Anand Kumar Jaiswal delivered the keynote address. In his address, BGU VC Kulbhushan Balooni emphasised the institution's commitment to fostering an innovation-driven research and entrepreneurship ecosystem. He observed that Indian society has historically demonstrated strong grassroots innovation capabilities, which continue to shape developmental pathways in both local and global contexts. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between BGU and Mid-West University, Nepal, aimed at strengthening collaboration in academic exchange, joint research, innovation, and entrepreneurship development.



Vajirao IAS academy feat: Amrit 2nd best in Odisha

Bhubaneswar: Vajirao IAS academy has once again achieved glorious success in UPSC Civil Services Examination 2025. Amrit Mohapatra, a classroom student of the academy, secured AIR 121 and emerged as second best topper from Odisha. From the institution, Nikita Verma (AIR 30), Garv Garg (AIR 192), Aman Kumar (AIR 603), Satish Kumar (AIR 696) secured positions. Academy CEO Subhranshu Sekhar Ojha congratulated all the successful candidates. Currently, foundation and advanced level courses for IAS and OAS examinations (2026-2027) are offered by the institution. Experienced faculties from New Delhi provide guidance to the students. Library facilities and regular class tests are also being provided. Institute director Dillip Kumar extended his best wishes to the successful candidates, teachers and staff, stating that the institution will continue its mission to provide quality education.



INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ACTION FOR RIVERS

Kuakhai faces pollution, drop in water level

MANOJ KUMAR JENA, OP

Bhubaneswar, March 13: Kuakhai River, the lifeline of Capital City here, is bearing the brunt of massive construction activities coupled with industrial expansion, resulting in pollution and a drop in water level throughout the years, even as the world celebrates 'International Day of Action For Rivers' Saturday.

According to locals, the river health has significantly degraded during the last 20 years.

Prasant Kumar Das, 41, a resident of Mancheswar village located on the banks of Kuakhai, narrated how a healthy aquatic ecosystem in the river was conducive for growth of fish population almost two decades ago.

"Earlier, fishing in Kuakhai River was quite rewarding. Almost 20 years ago, we used to come back with buckets full of fish. But during the last 10 years, there was a sea change. Fish population as well as the catch has dropped significantly," said Prasant.

Several fishermen used to visit Kuakhai bank to camp over there and catch fish, before pollution and other factors



affected the river. Now, drop in fish population has dissuaded them to do so.

"Earlier, we were using unpurified Kuakhai water for our daily requirements, but due to the water pollution, we had to switch to tap water," said Sushant Bhoi, a local.

About the pollution and the factors affecting the aquatic life, eminent environmentalist and working president of Orissa Environmental Society (OES) Jay Krushna Panigrahi said, "A sharp rise in population has affected the river as water sources are constant. As every sector is developing and it requires water, the need of water has increased affecting

its availability. However, climate change has affected the flow of water including water pollution. We need to reduce the excess consumption of water in our day-to-day life and focus on water conservation."

"International Day of Action of Rivers is observed March 14 every year, calling for action to conserve and protect rivers which are at risk due to pollution. With this year's theme "Protect Rivers, Protect People," the theme portrays how both human and climate affected due to pollution and why collective efforts are necessary to avert the crisis.

Professor at Geology department of Utkal University Durga

Shankar Pattnaik said water flow in Kuakhai has been affected due to unauthorised constructions on its banks.

Dams constructed by Chhattisgarh on Mahanadi River have also played a key role in reduction of water level here. Drop in water level and pollution has affected fish population in Kuakhai as domestic and urban wastes have reduced 'dissolved oxygen' which is essential for the aquatic life to sustain, he said.

Meanwhile, according to Water Quality Bulletin report published by State Pollution Control Board (SPCB) in February last year, Kuakhai River was placed in 'Satisfactory' category.

However, the Mahanadi Banchao Andolan has demanded more strong reforms to protest the rivers of Odisha. The outfit's spokesperson Prasanna Bisoi said, "Illegal sand mining, excess pumping of water from rivers and encroachments at river banks have affected the rivers across the state. Apart from government initiatives, awareness at individual level is necessary to preserve our rivers."

Manipal Hospital launches 'K&D Performance Review' campaign

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 13: Manipal Hospital Bhubaneswar has launched an innovative public awareness campaign titled 'K&D Performance Review' here recently, highlighting the importance of kidney health and encouraging early screening. The initiative aims to shift the focus from treatment to prevention by helping people better understand how well their kidneys are functioning and why regular screening matters.

The campaign was officially launched Thursday, where visitors participated in an interactive session that allowed people to learn about kidney health while getting their basic health parameters checked. Adding a creative touch to the campaign, the hospital introduced two mascots—Kid and Ney—who will stroll around high-footfall areas in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack for a week to spread awareness about kidney health. The mascots will carry a QR Code that visitors can scan to answer few questions and learn about why their kidneys might be due for a 'review'.

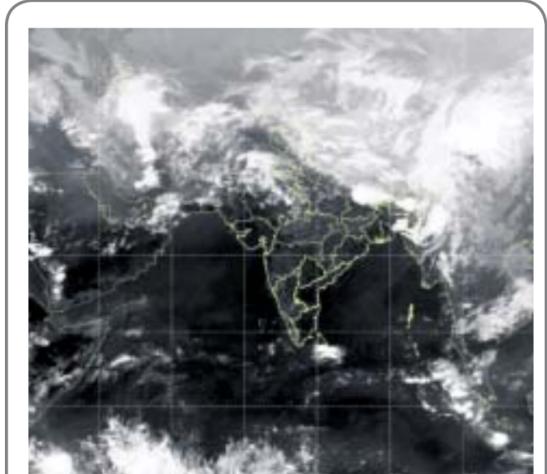
To convert awareness into action, the hospital is also introducing tailor-made kidney screening packages to those who fill the Kidney Risk Assessment, designed to provide a comprehensive report of kidney health.



These packages comprise of basic, intermediate and advanced levels which is valid till March 31. The initiative will be led by a multidisciplinary team of specialists including Urology senior consultants Dr Manas Ranjan Pradhan and Dr Subodh Das, Nephrology senior consultants Dr Saiprasad Sahoo and Dr Sukanto Kishore Das.

Doctors at the hospital highlighted, "Many kidney diseases progress silently and are often detected only at an advanced stage. Therefore, 'K&D Performance Review' campaign is aimed to make kidney health easier for people to understand and track, much like reviewing performance indicators in everyday life. By encouraging individuals to review their Kidney Performance Indicators through regular screening and preventive care, we hope to help the community identify risks early and take proactive steps to protect their kidney health."

MARKET WATCH					
CURRENCY		BOURSES		COMMODITIES	
INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION
DOLLAR	92.07 ▲ 0.09	SENSEX	76863.71 ▼ 1342.27	GOLD	161,799 ▼ 1504
EURO	107.04 ▼ 0.22	NIFTY	23866.85 ▼ 394.75	SILVER	267,342 ▼ 10,508



WEATHER			
	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	38.6°	35.6°	Light to Moderate rain or thunderstorm
Min Temp	24.4°	22.4°	
Humidity	83%	89%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	

Drinking water crisis looms over Dhamnagar

Despite hundreds of tube wells and water supply projects, several areas in Dhamnagar block face a looming drinking water shortage this summer. Poor maintenance, staff shortage and declining groundwater levels have worsened the situation

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhadrak, March 13: With the onset of summer, concerns are mounting over a possible drinking water crisis in Dhamnagar block of Bhadrak district. Although drinking water supply facilities exist in all 31 panchayats of the block, lack of proper maintenance and an acute shortage of staff are gradually worsening the situation in many areas.



The block has around 2,676 tube wells and more than 60 solar-powered water supply projects, but several of them are lying defunct due to poor maintenance. Meanwhile, work is yet to be completed for supplying piped drinking water to all villages under the Basudha Yojana. As a result, many villagers still depend heavily on tube wells for their daily water needs.

The situation has been further aggravated by a severe shortage of staff in the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (RWSS) department. At present, only five fitters are responsible for maintaining water supply systems across the 31 panchayats. Earlier, the block had 16 fitters and helpers, but 11 of them have retired, leaving only five of them to manage the entire area.

As each fitter now has to oversee six to seven panchayats, timely repair of tube wells has become difficult. Due to the shortage of permanent staff, the department is largely dependent on self-employed mechanics.

Another major concern is the rapid decline in groundwater levels, which locals attribute to continuous illegal sand mining from riverbeds, including that of the Baitarani. Although there are 126 tube wells in Dhamnagar, wells in areas such as Dehudi Anandpur Ward No. 7, Manlapur and Uteipur have already dried up.

Another issue is that the tools required for repairing tube wells are kept under the control of sarpanches instead of the department, which often delays access to necessary equipment. Consequently, many defunct tube wells remain un-repaired for long periods. In view of the emerging crisis, residents have demanded that the government formulate a new policy to address the drinking water problem in the block. They have urged authorities to provide permanent appointments to self-employed mechanics and keep all repair equipment under the direct control of the department to ensure timely maintenance of tube wells.

2 minor girls drown in pond

POST NEWS NETWORK

Basudevpur, March 13: Two minor girls drowned while collecting snails in a pond at a village under this block in Bhadrak district Friday morning.

The incident occurred in Ward No. 10 of Arandua panchayat. The deceased were identified as Tapadeepa Barik, 10, daughter of Satyabrata Barik, and Annapurna Barik, 11, daughter of Bijay Barik; both residents of Bariksahi settlement.



According to sources, the girls had gone to play near a newly dug village pond along with three other friends. While searching for snails near the pond's bank, Tapadeepa reportedly slipped and fell into the water. Annapurna subsequently jumped in to rescue her but in vain.

The other three children rushed to the village and alerted locals. Villagers later searched the pond, and firefighters who arrived at the spot carried out a rescue operation. The two girls were eventually pulled out of the pond in an unconscious condition.

They were rushed to the Basudevpur hospital, where doctors declared them dead.

Basudevpur police seized the bodies and sent them to Bhadrak for post-mortem.

Tehsildar Priyabrata Das reached the hospital and consoled the bereaved families. He also assured them of government assistance.

Railway track expansion in Odisha surges over past decade: Vaishnaw

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi/Bhubaneswar, March 13: Railway infrastructure development in Odisha has received a major push over the past decade, with more than 2,150 km of new railway tracks commissioned between 2014 and 2025, Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw informed the Rajya Sabha Friday.

Vaishnaw said the commissioning of new tracks during 2014-25 is more than 3.5 times higher than the 267 km completed during 2009-14. The average track commissioning has increased from 53 km per year to about 195 km annually.

The minister also highlighted a significant rise in budget allocation for railway infrastructure and safety projects in the state. Odisha received an average annual outlay of ₹838 crore between 2009 and 2014, while the allocation has increased to ₹10,599 crore for the 2025-26 financial year — nearly 13 times higher.

As of April 1, 2025, a total of 49 railway projects covering about 4,010 km have been sanctioned in the state at an estimated cost



OVER 2,150 KM OF NEW TRACKS COMMISSIONED SINCE 2014

RAILWAY BUDGET ALLOCATION FOR ODISHA JUMPS NEARLY 13 TIMES

SEVERAL NEW LINES AND MULTI-TRACKING PROJECTS UNDERWAY ACROSS THE STATE

of ₹67,496 crore. These include 19 new line projects and 30 doubling or multi-tracking works. Of these, 1,429 km has already been commissioned and ₹28,043 crore has been spent so far.

Among the major recently completed projects are the Daitari-Banspani new line and the Jakhapura-Haridaspur third line (179 km), the Haridaspur-Paradeep new line (82 km), and the Angul-Sukinda new line (104 km). Doubling works have also been completed on key routes including Sambalpur-Titlagarh and Raipur-Titlagarh.

Several projects are currently under construction,

including new railway lines connecting Junagarh-Nabarangpur, Jeypore-Malkangiri and Puri-Konark.

Vaishnaw said the 301-km Khurda Road-Bolangir new line project is progressing steadily, with 226 km already commissioned. Work is ongoing on the 75-km Daspalla-Purunakatak section, where tunnel excavation and major bridge construction are underway.

He added that project completion depends on factors such as land acquisition, forest clearances, availability of funds, traffic potential and connectivity needs.

Vig arrests ASI for taking bribe from dhaba owner

PNN & AGENCIES

Sundargarh, March 13: The Vigilance department has arrested a police assistant sub-inspector for allegedly demanding and accepting a bribe of ₹25,000 from a dhaba owner, officials said Friday.

The arrested officer, identified as Arupa Nanda Das, posted at Badagaon police station in Sundargarh district, was caught red-handed Thursday while accepting the bribe to help the eatery owner in a case and allow him to operate his business smoothly, the department said in a statement.

Following the trap, Vigilance officials conducted raids at four locations linked to Das and recovered ₹3.31 lakh in cash from his government quarters in Bhubaneswar and Badagaon, which was subsequently seized.

Vigilance sources said the accused ASI was forwarded to court Friday. A case has been registered at Rourkela Vigilance police station against Das under Section 7 of the Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Act, 2018.

Officials said Das had visited Vietnam in May last year and was found in possession of foreign currency from Vietnam and Nepal.

Former Balasore MLA Jiban Pradip quits BJP

POST NEWS NETWORK



Balasore, March 13: Former Balasore MLA Jiban Pradip Das Friday resigned from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), expressing dissatisfaction over recent political developments in the saffron party.

Das announced his decision at a press conference held at Ranipatna in Balasore. He said he was unhappy with the party's decision to induct former MP Rabintra Jena, alleging that it reflected a decline in the BJP's

moral values. He also criticised the state leadership, claiming the party had moved away from its principles and encouraged "horse-trading" ahead of the Rajya Sabha elections despite lacking adequate numbers to field a third candidate.

Das, however, said he has not yet decided his future political course. He had earlier served as the BJP MLA from Balasore between 2000 and 2005. Later, he joined the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and was elected from the constituency for two consecutive terms from 2009 to 2019. He lost the 2019 Assembly election to late BJP leader Madan Mohan Dutta.

After being suspended from the BJD over alleged anti-party activities during the 2020 bypoll, Das rejoined the BJD in 2021.

Youth held for raping Instagram 'friend'

JEYPORE: Police Friday arrested a 21-year-old youth on charge of raping a young woman in Koraput district. The accused, identified as Jaga Majhi of OCC Colony near Mundiguda under Jeypore Sadar police limits, was arrested by Jeypore Mahila police following a complaint lodged by the survivor. According to police, the accused had contacted the woman through Instagram and later expressed his love for her through messages. When she refused his advances, he allegedly began harassing her and later established a physical relationship with her without her consent. Police said the woman became pregnant following the incident. The accused allegedly tried to persuade her to terminate the pregnancy by promising marriage, but she refused. The woman also alleged that the accused assaulted her and later took her to Nabarangpur hospital. She further accused the man's family members of attacking her and issuing death threats. Acting on the complaint, Jeypore Mahila police registered a case (179/26) and launched an investigation. The accused was later produced before a court.

Cong protests against LPG crisis, price hike

POST NEWS NETWORK

Chhatrapur, March 13: Leaders of the Ganjam District Congress Committee (East) Friday staged a protest before the District Collector's office against the ongoing scarcity of LPG cylinders and recent price hike. The party leaders met Collector V Keerthi Vasani and submitted a memorandum addressed to Governor Dr Hari Babu Kambhampati.

The ongoing war in the Middle East has triggered LPG scarcity prompting the government to hike the prices of both commercial and domestic cylinders. The impact has directly affected households and businesses. Many hotels and small roadside eateries in the district have also been forced to shut their businesses due to non-availability of LPG cylinders.

Congress party leader Ram Chandra Behera said poor people are struggling to get even one cylinder due to increased hoarding and black marketing. People are facing a lot of difficulties to book cylinders forcing them to queue up in front of gas dealers, Behera alleged.

DCC (East) general secretary Sugyani Patnaik alleged that women are facing hardships to cook a proper meal for their families because of the price hike. The party leaders have warned massive protests if LPG supply is not normalised immediately. They have also demanded reduction of prices.

DCC vice presidents Ashok Kumar Patnaik and Brundaban Khatei, general secretary Purna Chandra Dash and other party leaders and workers were present during the protest.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that an application has been made to the Central Government under Section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013 for grant of license for incorporation of a Company in the name of

"MOSHIKSHA O ANUSANDHAN FOUNDATION"
(Proposed Name)

The main objects of the Company are to promote education, research, social welfare and other charitable activities on a non-profit basis.

Any person or institution having any objection to the proposed name or to the grant of license may intimate their objection in writing to the Registrar of Companies, [Odisha], within 30 days from the date of publication of this notice.

Date: 13/03/2026
Place: Rourkela
Applicant
Name: Bikram Samantray
Address: Udltinagar, Rourkela, 769012

Bank of India CUTTACK BRANCH

Nayasarak, Cuttack, Odisha-753002

PUBLIC NOTICE

We have taken Physical Possession of All the part and parcel of the immovable property mortgaged in NPA loan account of **M/s. Tirupati Resources Pvt. Ltd., Directors: 1) Mr. Prasanjit Mohanty, 2) Mrs. Sujata Nayak / Guarantor: Mr. Prafulla Kumar Pattnaik (Mortgagor)**, situated over Khata No.: 184/59, Plot No.: 195/669, Sub Plot No.: 12, Area: Ac. 0.045 Dec. & Plot No.: 199/670, Area: Ac. 0.017 Dec., Total Area of two plots are Ac. 0.062 Dec., Thana: New Capital No.: 34, SRO: Bhubaneswar, Mouza: Bhubaneswar Sahar Unit No.: 18 Paikanagar, Town: Bhubaneswar, Dist.: Khurda, Bounded by North: Road, South: Sub Plot-19, East: Road, West: Sub Plot-13 on **07.01.2026** under SARFAESI ACT 2002, after obtaining order from CJM, Khordha and with assistance of Nayapalli Police. We have found some unused Vehicles & Goods are lying in the above mentioned Premises and informed the related parties for taken back of their Vehicles & Goods however the Vehicles & Goods has not been taken back by the related parties or their representative till date. We hereby inform to related parties of the above mentioned property to take their belongings from the Undersigned within **15 days** from the date of publication, failing which Bank will consider no claim and Bank will take appropriate action to dispose the Vehicles & Goods as per extant norms.

Authorised Officer

Bridge approved after Koraput Collector's visit

POST NEWS NETWORK

Koraput, March 13: The long-standing demand of Debasandhaguda villagers under Raising panchayat in Nandapur block is set to be fulfilled as the state government has approved construction of a bridge over the Baski River.



Koraput District Collector Manoj Satyaban Mahajan visited Nandapur block February 27 and crossed the Baski River to meet villagers in Debasandhaguda, assuring them that a bridge would be built across the river.

Acting on his proposal, the Rural Development department approved a 60-metre bridge under the Setu Bandhan Yojana for 2026-27. According to an letter issued March 12 by Special Secretary Sarbeshwar Singh, 56 bridge projects across the state have been approved, with the Debasandhaguda bridge listed at serial No. 38.

Nandapur BDO Durga Prasad Dora and engineer Jayanta Kumar Sahu of the Sunabeda RD Division said a pucca road connecting Kasandi to Bilaput via Debasandhaguda will also be built after the bridge is completed.

Villagers said the Collector's visit raised hopes for long-awaited connectivity. During the last Assembly elections, 95 voters boycotted voting demanding a bridge and road. Residents said women, men and students will no longer need to form a human chain to cross the river once the bridge is built.

Two girls found dead in well; murder suspected

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kuchinda, March 13: Two girls—one aged six years and the other four months—were found dead in a well in Sargidih village under Jaraga panchayat of Mahulpali police station in Sambalpur district Friday. Police suspect it to be a case of murder after preliminary probe.

The deceased were identified as the daughters of James Madki. According to sources, Madki returned home in the afternoon after work but did not find his children or their mother at home. Local residents later informed him that the two children had allegedly been thrown into a nearby well and their mother had gone missing.

Madki rushed to the well and saw the bodies of the children floating in the water. They were immediately rescued and taken to the Gobindpur hospital, where doctors declared them dead.

On receiving information, Mahulpali police and Kuchinda SDPO Pradeep Kumar Das reached the spot and launched an investigation. The bodies have been sent for post-mortem.

Police said they are examining the claims made by villagers, but the exact circumstances surrounding the incident are yet to be established. An investigation is underway, police said.

National Capital Region Planning Board

(A Statutory Body under Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs, Govt. of India)
1st Floor, Core-4B, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110003

Name of Posts	No. of Post / Category	Method of Recruitment	Scale of pay
Assistant Director (Technical)	01 (OBC-NCL)	Direct Recruitment	Pay Level-10 (₹ 56,100 - 1,77,500) as per 7th CPC pay matrix
Planning Assistant	01 (UR)	Direct Recruitment	Pay Level-6 (₹ 35,400 - 1,12,400) as per 7th CPC pay matrix

Application in the prescribed format, duly completed in all respects and signed by the candidate with self-attested copies of testimonials etc., along with IPO/Demand Draft for ₹ 100 (non-refundable) drawn in favour of NCR Planning Board payable at New Delhi towards Application Fee should reach the Member Secretary, NCR Planning Board, 1st Floor, Core-4B, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110003. The Application Fee can also be paid online.

Details such as eligibility criteria, educational qualifications, age, format of application form, online fee payment details and last date of receipt of applications etc. are available on our website <https://ncrpb.nic.in>.

The Board reserves the right not to fill up the above posts without assigning any reason.


AD (Tech.)


Planning Assistant

Cbc 44103/12/0006/2526 **Sd./- (Member Secretary)**

Birthday Blessings



Praneel Dash
(Joy)
Mishrapada, Angul

On this auspicious day we pray before Mahaprabhu Jagannath to bless you with good health and bright future.

Best Wishes From
Jepa, Jema, Aai, Bapa, Mama,
Bhaina Pranshu, Friends and Relatives

S. E. RAILWAY - TENDER

e-Tenders are invited by Divisional Railway Manager (Electrical), Chakradharpur, S.E. Railway for and on behalf of President of India for the under mentioned work. Manual offers are not allowed against the tender and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. **SI. No. & e-Tender Notice No.:** Name of Work; Tender Value; E.M.D.: (1) **RSO-SANDER-REPAIR-JRL-4, dated 12.03.2026;** Sander repair of Electric and Diesel Locomotives at Jaroli (JRL) station for a period of 730 days; ₹ 33,76,717.20; ₹ 67,500/- (2) **RSO-SANDER-REPAIR-TATA-5, dated 12.03.2026;** Sander repair of Electric and Diesel Locomotives at Main Yard (UP/DN), Classification Yard (C/F Yard), Goods Departure Yard (GDY) at Tatanagar station for a period of 730 days; ₹ 18,75,954/-; ₹ 37,500/- **Cost of Tender form:** ₹ 3,000/- for sl. no. 1 and ₹ 2,000/- for sl. no. 2. **Place of opening of e-tender:** Office of the Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (OP) Chakradharpur, S.E. Railway for both. **Date and time of closing of tender:** 15.00 hrs. of 06.04.2026 for both. **Date and Time of Opening of tender:** 15.30 hrs. of 06.04.2026 for both. **Tender** can be viewed at website <http://www.ireps.gov.in> The tenderer/bidder must have Class-III digital signature certificate & must be registered under IREPS portal. Only registered tenderer/bidder can participate on e-tendering. (PR-1297)

EAST COAST RAILWAY

(1) File No. DRM/Engg/KUR/25-26/ E-Tender/116, Dt. 09.03.2026
eTender-EASTKUR-367-2025, Dtd.: 25.02.2026
DESCRIPTION : PROPOSED EARTH WORK FOR FORMATION AND EXTENSION OF BRIDGE NO. 462 DN IN CONNECTION WITH PROVISION OF ONE ADDITIONAL LOOP AT NEW GARHMADHUPUR (NGMP) STATION OF KHURDA ROAD (KUR) DIVISION.
Approx. Cost of the Work: ₹ 105.90 Lakhs, EMD: ₹ 2,03,000/-, **Completion Period:** 06 (Six) Months.
Tender Closing Date and Time: At 1500 Hrs. of 18.03.2026.

(2) File No. DRM/Engg/KUR/25-26/ E-Tender/117, Dt. 09.03.2026
eTender-EASTKUR-357-2025, Dtd.: 02.03.2026
DESCRIPTION : PROVISION OF SAFETY FENCING ALONG THE TRACK FOR RUNNING OF TRAINS WITH SPEED 130 KMPH AND ABOVE IN JENAPUR-BARANG SECTION UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF SENIOR DIVISIONAL ENGINEER / EAST OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.
Approx. Cost of the Work: ₹ 3636.04 Lakhs, EMD: ₹ 19,68,000/-, **Completion Period:** 12 (Twelve) Months.
Tender Closing Date and Time: At 1500 Hrs. of 25.03.2026.

No manual offers sent by Post / Courier/ Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration. Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-Tender is available in website: www.ireps.gov.in

Note : The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website 10 (Ten) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / corrigenda issued for this tender. The tenderers/bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate and must be registered on IREPS Portal. Only registered tenderer/ bidder can participate on e-tendering.

Divisional Railway Manager (Engg) / PR-1218/Q/25-26 Khurda Road

FOCUS 8TH CPC

PAY REVISION REALITY



Persistent inflation over the years has steadily eroded the real value of salaries, and employees therefore expect that the forthcoming revision will restore their purchasing power

penditure currently accounts for roughly four percent of the government's total revenue, which it considers manageable within the broader fiscal framework. Reflecting widespread concerns among employees regarding retirement security, the Staff Side has urged the Commission to examine the possibility of restoring the Old Pension Scheme. Another important issue relates to the calculation of Dearness Allowance (DA). The Staff Side believes that the existing Consumer Price Index used for determining DA does not fully reflect the consumption patterns of employees and pensioners. It has therefore recommended the creation of a separate price index specifically designed for them so that inflation compensation becomes more accurate and transparent.

The Commission has also sought suggestions regarding bonus schemes. At present, many government employees receive productivity-linked or ad hoc bonuses based on collective performance. The Staff Side has opposed attempts to introduce individual performance-based bonus systems, arguing that government work is largely collaborative in nature.

Another concern highlighted by employees' representatives is the growing reliance on contractual employment and outsourcing in government departments. Excessive dependence on such arrangements, they argue, may weaken institutional continuity and accountability.

Taken together, the responses submitted by the Staff Side present a comprehensive perspective on the future of government employment in India. If the Commission responds with fairness and vision, the 8th CPC could become an important milestone in strengthening both the dignity of public servants and the credibility of India's administrative system.

The writer is a Service Union Representative and a columnist.

posts and departments. Employees performing similar duties in different ministries should receive comparable remuneration so that horizontal parity is maintained. At the same time, vertical relativity between hierarchical levels must also be preserved so that higher responsibilities are accompanied by proportionately higher salaries. Such balance is essential for maintaining discipline and motivation within government institutions.

Another major issue concerns the fitment factor, which determines how existing salaries are revised when a new pay commission's recommendations are implemented. The Staff Side believes that the fitment factor must ensure meaningful improvement in employees' incomes, particularly for those at the lower levels of the pay structure. Persistent inflation over the years has steadily eroded the real value of salaries, and employees therefore expect that the forthcoming revision will restore their purchasing power. In this context, the Staff Side has also suggested maintaining a reasonable ratio between the highest and lowest levels of government pay. The Commission has also raised the possibility of linking sala-

ries to performance indicators. On this issue, the Staff Side has expressed reservations. A rigid performance-based pay system, employees' representatives argue, may create distortions and administrative complications rather than improving efficiency.

Allowances form another significant component of government compensation. Employees posted in different regions and working under diverse conditions receive allowances such as house rent allowance, travel allowance, hardship allowance and risk allowance. The Staff Side has strongly argued that these allowances should not be merged with basic pay because they serve specific functional purposes. Instead, they should remain separate and be substantially enhanced. In some cases, it has suggested that allowances may be increased up to three times their existing levels and revised periodically in line with inflation.

Pension policy remains perhaps the most sensitive issue in the entire discussion. For millions of retired employees, pension represents financial security and dignity in old age. The Staff Side has pointed out that pension ex-

For millions of Central government employees and pensioners across India, the constitution of a Pay Commission is never a routine administrative exercise. It represents a rare opportunity when the economic realities of public servants are reassessed after years of rising prices, changing responsibilities and evolving administrative demands. The proposed Eighth Central Pay Commission (8th CPC) has therefore generated renewed hope among crores of serving employees and retired pensioners who look forward to fair wages, dignified pensions and improved service conditions. As part of its consultative exercise, the Commission has circulated an 18-point questionnaire inviting suggestions from stakeholders. The questions cover a wide range of policy issues including pay structure, the fitment factor for salary revision, allowances, pension reforms, inflation compensation, bonus schemes and staffing patterns.

Responding to this questionnaire is therefore a significant responsibility for employees' representatives. The National Council (Staff Side) of the Joint Consultative Machinery (JCM) has taken the initiative to coordinate responses from various federations and associations representing Central government employees. At the heart of the Staff Side's response lies a fundamental principle: government pay structures must be based on equity, transparency and fairness. Public servants constitute the backbone of the administrative system, implementing policies that affect millions of citizens. Their salaries should therefore reflect not only economic realities but also the dignity and responsibilities associated with public service. One of the central concepts emphasised by employees' representatives is the principle of pay relativity. According to this approach, the pay structure should maintain a balanced relationship across different



Bruhaspati Samal

THE EIGHTH CENTRAL PAY COMMISSION HAS RAISED THE POSSIBILITY OF LINKING SALARIES TO PERFORMANCE INDICATORS



When, in your life you meet with a hardship, take it as a Grace from the Lord and indeed, it will become so.

THE MOTHER

Selective Accountability

In Rajasthan, accountability has recently discovered a rather dramatic sense of urgency.

A ten-minute technical glitch at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's rally in Banswara, when the screen briefly went blank, was apparently serious enough to cost senior IAS officer Archana Singh her post as Secretary, Information Technology and Communications. When technology fails in front of the Prime Minister, someone must answer for it.

But the episode does raise an awkward question: if 10 minutes of digital embarrassment can trigger such prompt administrative action, what should we call the years of technological misery endured by taxpayers navigating the government's digital portals?

Consider the Income Tax portal. Since its launch, businesses and professionals have endured a steady parade of login failures, payment glitches, slow processing and those spectacular deadline-day crashes. In several instances, taxpayers were unable to complete filings or make payments because the portal simply would not cooperate. Yet penalties and interest continued to accrue with bureaucratic punctuality.

The GST portal has its own long history of "temporary technical issues". The MCA portal, too, periodically greets users with errors, downtime and mysteriously vanishing forms. Courts have had to intervene more than once. Professional bodies have pleaded for deadline extensions. And countless productive hours have been lost wrestling with systems meant to make compliance easier.

And yet, curiously, such persistent glitches rarely seem to trigger the kind of accountability seen in Banswara. This leads to the obvious conclusion that tech failures matter most when they cause political embarrassment, not when they inconvenience taxpayers. A blank screen at a rally is visible.

A crashed portal on filing day is experienced quietly by millions. The first is a spectacle. The second is merely compliance. In the hierarchy of technological failures, some glitches are apparently more equal than others.

Legal theatre

Turf wars in babudom rarely make for dramatic headlines, but they do occasionally produce excellent legal theatre. Kerala has just provided the latest episode.



BABUDOM BYTES

Dilip Cherian

The Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) has gently but firmly reminded the state government that rules governing civil services are not to be treated as optional reading. The immediate issue was the appointment of an IPS officer as Kerala's Excise Commissioner, a post designated under the IAS cadre.

The state government evidently felt this was a perfectly reasonable administrative choice. The IAS fraternity, however, thought otherwise and marched to the tribunal. CAT, after examining the rulebook, sided with the obvious: an IAS cadre post can be occupied by an IAS officer only.

The tribunal did not stop there. It also pointed out that other positions such as Director General of the Institute of Management in Government (IMG) and Director of the Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA), are likewise IAS cadre posts and cannot be casually handed to non-IAS officers or even retired IAS officers.

To the uninitiated, this may appear like classic babu hair-splitting. If an officer is capable, why obsess over which service they belong to? But in India, those distinctions are not cosmetic. Cadre rules are designed to preserve institutional balance, ensure career progression, and prevent governments from reshuffling senior positions like pieces on a chessboard.

Of course, governments often prefer a bit of flexibility, especially when trusted officers are involved. Civil services, meanwhile, prefer something less flexible: the rulebook. And that is precisely what the CAT has chosen to enforce.

Babus on the spot

When a chief minister asks babus for "honest feedback", it sounds refreshingly democratic. Almost revolutionary. But in our administrative culture, that phrase can also cause a few raised eyebrows in the Secretariat.

That was the moment in Telangana recently when Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy asked senior IAS officers to give candid feedback on the government's performance so far. The idea is to help assess progress and fine-tune governance as the administration moves forward.

In theory, this is exactly how the system is supposed to work. The Westminster model India inherited was built on precisely that principle: babus speak frankly in private, ministers decide in public.

But practice, as always, has its own peculiar logic. Over the years, babus have perfected saying things without quite saying them. File notings are carefully calibrated sentences. Opinions arrive wrapped in layers of caution. Candour, while admirable, can occasionally prove hazardous to career stability.

Which is why Revanth Reddy's call for blunt assessments is both admirable and slightly amusing. To be fair, the exercise appears part of a broader push to improve governance and accelerate key initiatives. Telangana's leadership wants quicker implementation and better administrative coordination as it pursues ambitious investment and development plans.

But the real test here is cultural, not procedural. Will babus truly speak their minds? And perhaps more importantly, will the system welcome uncomfortable truths rather than quietly penalise them?

If that culture takes root, Telangana's experiment could strengthen governance.

Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect

SPECTRUM GEOPOLITICS

Impact of Middle East crisis on India



DK Giri

INDIA IS SEEKING TO DIVERSIFY ITS ENERGY SOURCES AND IS EXPLORING ALTERNATIVE SUPPLIERS

The Iran war is an ongoing conflict with serious consequences for the global security and economy. Unlike the Ukrainian war, which is somewhat confined to Europe, the war in Iran will affect the whole world. It will disrupt the energy supply as Iran has considerable oil reserve and Tehran controls the sea route, the Strait of Hormuz which passes 20 per cent of world's oil. Due to historical links between India and Iran, mainly on trade, and Iran potentially providing the connection for India to Central Asia, the impact of the war on India is going to be substantial.

The expansion of the war into the other states in the Gulf region will heavily affect India. The supply of energy will be interrupted as well as India's exports to the world. India was using countries like UAE to export elsewhere to the world. That will be hit. India imports substantial oil from the Gulf region. If the

war continued for a few weeks, India could use its strategic reserves of oil. But if it lasted longer like it did in Iraq and Afghanistan, India's economy will be badly hit.

So, the rise on energy price will have a cascading effect on all other prices. Reportedly, prices are already rising and shortages are appearing, resulting in black marketing. Agriculture, textiles, tiles, glass, plastics, hotels, restaurants, airlines and energy-intensive products are already impacted.

As the air and sea routes are disrupted, trade and travel through and around the Gulf - a critical geographical space that connects the West with the East - have virtually stopped. Difficulties in travel will impact hotels, tourism and the entertainment industry. According to Government of India, there are about 1 crore Indians working in the Gulf region. Remittances from them into NRI accounts are substan-

tial. These will decline, weakening the capital flows. Many NRIs want to return to India due to the conflict and decline in production in West Asia. This will hurt the employment situation in India.

How is India coping with the impact of the war? First, India is seeking to diversify its energy sources and is exploring alternative suppliers. The government has reportedly held discussions with major oil producers like Russia, Saudi Arabia and UAE to ensure stable energy supplies. The US seems to have reconciled to the disruption of oil supply and therefore has agreed to waive tariffs if India decides to purchase oil from Russia which is already in the sea.

Admittedly, India will experience price rise and some temporary inflation although GOI is assuring its citizens not to panic. To mitigate the price shocks, the Government is considering temporary relief measures such as LPG subsi-

dies and fuel tax adjustments.

Some observers argue that India's economy and security will be negatively impacted as New Delhi chose to stay in the US-Israel camp. But India's economy would have been hit as it is now irrespective of which side it was on. The fallout of the war has to be faced in any case.

As I said in this column last week, New Delhi has made a conscious choice of aligning with the democratic world while maintaining friendly relations with other powers. This is a right choice as so-called neutrality in a war has its costs. India was already paying some of it because of its non-committal approach to the war in Ukraine. Prime Minister Modi made quick corrections in case of Iran which has been a bigger friend than even Ukraine.

The writer is Professor of Practice, NIIS Group of Institutions
INFA

WISDOM CORNER

In general, mankind, since the improvement of cookery, eats twice as much as nature requires.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win.

MAHATMA GANDHI

There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children.

NELSON MANDELA

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

1879: German American physicist Albert Einstein, one of the most creative intellects in human history, known for his groundbreaking theories of relativity, was born in Ulm, Germany.

1883: Historian and revolutionary Karl Marx, who wrote (with Friedrich Engels) The Communist Manifesto (1848), died at age 64.

1950: FBI director J. Edgar Hoover introduced the infamous "Ten Most Wanted" list, which provided the names of the "worst of the worst" U.S. fugitives. The list has changed throughout the years based on crime trends in the country.

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

OrissaPOST
B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Power consolidation

Sir, Apropos "The quiet coup," Mar 13. The recent political developments in Bihar, where Nitish Kumar was nominated to the Rajya Sabha while stepping aside as Chief Minister, underline a broader reality in Indian politics: the growing primacy of strong national party BJP over fragile regional formations. For years, regional parties have often thrived on personality-driven leadership and shifting alliances rather than long-term governance vision. In contrast, the BJP has steadily expanded its organisational depth and national appeal, positioning itself as a stable political force capable of providing continuity in governance. The transition in Bihar reflects how political relevance increasingly depends on broader national credibility rather than regional calculations alone. Regional parties frequently struggle with internal contradictions, limited policy reach and leadership succession challenges. As India's political and economic landscape becomes more interconnected, voters appear to prefer parties that offer a nationwide framework for development and governance. The episode illustrates the shifting balance of power in Indian politics, where strong national party BJP is gradually overshadowing the influence of smaller regional actors.

N Sathasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Action for rivers

Sir, Though rivers are national assets, there is little awareness about ways to preserve their purity and utility. Only about ten per cent of the river basins in the world are protected. Dams, encroachments and deforestation have threatened their existence. Saving and celebrating rivers should catch the attention of stakeholders. It is every citizen's responsibility to keep the nation's rivers clean and pollution-free devoid of dump and industrial wastage. River management, river pollution and river conservation are three critical conservation areas. More than thirty countries come together on the "International Day of Action for Rivers" on March 14 to take stock of the international rivers, and ways to upkeep them. The observance also encourages communities, policymakers and environmental groups to promote sustainable water practices, restore degraded river ecosystems and ensure that future generations inherit rivers that continue to sustain biodiversity, livelihoods and cultural heritage.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

FRAUDULENT RELIGIOUS CONVERSIONS

Maha Freedom of Religion Bill introduced in Assembly

AS PER THE BILL, THOSE INVOLVED IN UNLAWFUL CONVERSIONS ON THE PRETEXT OF MARRIAGE WILL BE PUNISHED WITH IMPRISONMENT OF SEVEN YEARS AND SHALL ALSO BE LIABLE FOR FINE OF ₹1 LAKH

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Mumbai, March 13: The Devendra Fadnavis government Friday introduced in the state Assembly the Maharashtra Freedom of Religion Bill 2026, which has stringent provisions to prohibit religious conversions carried out through coercion, fraud, inducement or marriage.

As per the Bill, those involved in unlawful conversions on the pretext of marriage will be punished with imprisonment of seven years and shall also be liable for fine of Rs 1 lakh.

Violations in respect of a minor, person of unsound mind or woman or person belonging to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe will be punished with imprisonment of seven years and fine of Rs 5 lakh.

Mass conversions will have a jail term of seven years and fine of Rs 5 lakh. Repeat individual offenders can get jail sentence of 10 years and fine of Rs 5 lakh, as per the Bill.

The Bill makes it mandatory for the officer in charge of the police station to register a complaint made by any person.

The Bill seeks to protect the constitutional right to freedom of religion while banning conversions effected through allurement, force, misrepresentation, undue influence or fraudulent means, according to the draft legislation.

Under the proposed law, no individual or institution will be allowed to convert or attempt to convert a person from one religion to another by offering gifts, money, employment, free education, promise of marriage, better lifestyle or divine

healing, which are classified as "allurement".

The bill also prohibits conversions carried out through marriage or promise of marriage if such acts involve inducement, coercion or deceit, according to the draft legislation.

In the Bill's statement of objects and reasons, the government said incidents of forceful and organised religious conversions have been reported in various parts of the country and vulnerable sections are often targeted through inducements.

While the Constitution guarantees freedom of religion, the right is subject to public order, morality and health, and does not include the right to forcibly convert another person, as per the Bill.

If enacted, Maharashtra will join states like Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Uttarakhand that have enacted similar laws to regulate religious conversions.

"The objective is to protect the right to freedom of reli-

gion. It also aims to prohibit unlawful religious conversions carried out through coercion, fraud, inducement or marriage," said Minister of State for Home Pankaj Bhojar, who introduced the bill in the Assembly.

The Bill defines coercion as the act of compelling a person or group to convert against their will, while mass conversion is conversion of two or more persons simultaneously.

Unlawful conversion is one done through force, fraud, misrepresentation, coercion, undue influence, or inducement.

The Bill lays down that no person or institution can convert or attempt to convert another person through allurement, coercion, deceit or misrepresentation, force or threat, fraudulent means and undue influence.

The Bill mandates that any person intending to convert from one religion to another, as well as any individual or institution organising a conversion ceremony, must give a notice in a prescribed form at

least 60 days in advance to the competent authority.

The competent authority, as per the Bill, is the district magistrate or an officer authorised by the state government.

Upon receiving such notice, the competent authority will publicly display details of the proposed conversion on the notice board of its office as well as at the office of the village panchayat or the local authority concerned and invite objections from the public within 30 days of its publication.

The Bill further requires that the converted person and the individual or institution organising the ceremony submit a declaration to the competent authority within 21 days after the conversion.

It also allows the converted person's parents, siblings or relatives related by blood, marriage or adoption to lodge a first information report (FIR) if they suspect unlawful conversion and mandates the police to register such complaints.

Under the proposed law, the burden of proof that a conversion was not carried out in violation of the provisions of the Act will lie on the person who caused, assisted or abetted the conversion.

The Bill states that offences under the proposed law will be cognisable and non-bailable, with investigation being conducted by a police officer not below the rank of sub-inspector.

The government also proposed provisions for rehabilitation support to victims of unlawful conversion and arrangements for maintenance and custody of children affected by such cases.

FEE WAIVER SCHEME

Action against Maha colleges for denying girls admission

A decision was taken two years ago to waive tuition fees for girls pursuing professional courses to boost women's participation in higher education

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Mumbai, Mar 13: The Maharashtra government will take action against colleges that deny admission to girl students under the tuition fee waiver scheme, said minister Chandrakant Patil Friday, warning that affiliation of such institutes could be cancelled.

Speaking during Question Hour in the legislative Assembly, the higher and technical education minister also said a specific category for orphan students will be added to the MahaDBT (direct benefit transfer) portal to ensure they receive reservation benefits and a full fee waiver in higher education.

A decision was taken two years ago to waive tuition fees for girls pursuing professional courses to boost women's participation in higher education, Patil said.

The minister said the scheme has already resulted in a sharp increase in enrollment of girl students in colleges. "The number of girl students has increased from 85,068 in the 2023-24 academic year to 1,15,800, registering a rise of about 41 per cent," he said.

Patil said that some colleges were asking students to first pay the fees and then claim reimbursement after the government releases scholarship funds. He said the government has made it mandatory to appoint a nodal officer in every college to ensure proper implementation of the fee waiver scheme.

"If any college refuses admission to eligible girl students on

the grounds of fees, we will not hesitate to initiate action, including cancellation of affiliation," the minister said.

Patil also said the government is working to simplify the scholarship application process and reduce documentation requirements on the MahaDBT portal.

The number of documents required for scholarship applications has been reduced from 17 to eight, while efforts are underway to further streamline verification procedures, he said. He added that the state government is prioritising the timely disbursement of scholarships and reimbursements to colleges.

"Scholarships will be treated with priority, similar to salary payments, so that students do not face difficulties," Patil said. The minister said that students who do not get hostel accommodation are eligible for a monthly allowance of up to Rs 6,000 to support their stay.

Patil also informed the House that the government is considering expansion of the "earn and learn" initiative under which students can work in college libraries, laboratories

or campus activities and receive a stipend of around Rs 2,000 per month.

He said the government is also setting up around 40 facilitation centres across the state to help students fill scholarship applications and resolve issues related to the process.

The minister urged legislators to inform the government about institutions violating the scheme so that immediate action can be taken.

He also said a specific category for orphan students will be added to the MahaDBT portal to help them receive quota benefits and a full fee waiver in higher education.

Maharashtra provides one per cent reservation for orphan students and the policy, which has been in implementation for the past three years, has helped many such students secure admissions and government positions, he said.

While orphan students admitted under the quota are entitled to a 100 per cent fee waiver, the MahaDBT scholarship portal currently does not have a separate category for them, he said.

41 tiger deaths in Maha in 2025: Min

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, March 13: The Maharashtra government, Friday, told the State Legislative Council that in the year 2025, 166 tiger deaths were recorded in the country, of which 41 occurred in the state.

Independent MLC Satyajit Tambe along with others had raised questions on the death of tigers in Maharashtra in the year 2025 and steps taken by the state government to curb the deaths.

State Forest Minister Ganesh Naik in a written reply said that of the 166 tiger deaths in the country, 41 occurred in Maharashtra in the year 2025.

He added that on January 7, 2026, a tiger cub was found dead and preliminary investigations suggest the death was caused by a fight among tigers.

Similarly, another decomposed carcass of another tiger cub was found. Prima facie, this death appears to be due to natural causes.

"Regular patrolling is conducted in hypersensitive areas by teams of the Special Tiger Protection Force (STPF). Additionally, hunting activities are monitored through dog squad patrols. Field staff have been provided with mobiles equipped with the M-Stripes system to track suspicious movements," Minister Naik added.

Measures that are implemented at the field level for tiger conservation, include strategies for the protection of tigers, leopards, and other wildlife are formulated during District Level Tiger Committee meetings.

"Informers have been appointed at the range level to gather intelligence on illegal poachers, and action is taken based on the information received. Secret service funds are utilised for this purpose. A wireless communication system has been activated in hypersensitive areas," the Minister said.



NAMAMI GANGE: UTTARAKHAND FALLING SHORT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dehradun, March 13: A report by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has said that the Centre's 'Namami Gange' programme has failed to deliver the desired results in Uttarakhand due to the failure of the state's implementing agencies.

It said that under the flagship programme, launched over a decade ago to clean Ganga river, the Centre had provided Rs 1,000 crore between 2018 and 2023 (the auditing period) for the effective implementation of the project in the state.

However, the report, presented during the ongoing state's budget session, notes several irregularities found in this project, including defective designs of sewage treatment plants (STPs), poor maintenance of infrastructure, failure to tap drains discharging into the Ganga, and the dumping of waste near rivers and smaller streams.

The CAG observed that the

detailed project report (DPR) for Forestry Interventions for the Ganga (FIG) included a budgetary provision of Rs 885.91 crore and a plantation target of 54,855.43 hectares.

However, contrary to this, only Rs 144.27 crore amounting to just 16 per cent of the allocated funds - was actually utilised. Consequently, physical progress remained sluggish, and the scheme failed to achieve the specific objectives related to the rejuvenation of the Ganga.

Of the 44 STPs inspected by the CAG in 2023, only three to five were found to be compliant with the norms set by the National Green Tribunal (NGT), while merely six to twelve were found to be in compliance with the standards of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF) and other relevant criteria.

The report states that this reveals widespread non-compliance and a substandard level of sewage treatment.



Of these 44 STPs, the majority demonstrated gross non-compliance with the norms of both the MoEF and the NGT across all three quarters of 2023, with levels of Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD), Total Suspended Solids (TSS), and Faecal Coliform far exceeding the permissible limits.

The report also notes that in Chamoli, Rudrapur, Tehri, and Uttarkashi districts, cremation ghats were constructed at 11 locations without assessing local needs or cultural practices; consequently, these facilities

are neither being utilised nor maintained, while funeral pyres continue to be lit along the riverbanks.

According to the report, in 2011, the then State River Conservation Authority set a target to prevent untreated urban wastewater and industrial effluents from entering the Ganga by 2020; yet, state government officials have failed to formulate a plan even 13 years later.

The report further states that District Ganga Plans were not formulated in any of the districts

within the Ganga basin, resulting in the poor management of sewage-related issues and a failure to achieve the 2020 target.

According to the report, one of the key objectives of the 'Namami Ganga' was to involve local communities in the planning of sustainable infrastructure. However, an audit revealed that state government officials and implementing agencies failed to engage local residents, leading to improper utilisation (or complete non-utilisation) of the sewage infrastructure.

The report observes that, despite bearing the responsibility for sanitation in the towns situated along the banks of the Ganga, the state government did not allocate funds from its own resources toward the sewage infrastructure in these areas.

The state neither constructed STPs nor provided sewer connections to households. Furthermore, initiatives such as those funded by the Ger-

man Development Bank (KfW) remained limited solely to Haridwar and Rishikesh.

According to the report, not a single household was connected to any of the 21 STPs constructed across seven riparian cities along the Ganges (two in Nandprayag, five in Rudrapur, six in Kirtinagar, one in Chamoli, three each in Srinagar and Shrikot, and two in Joshimath).

The report states that during the audit, only partial sewage connectivity was observed in households; specifically, in Haridwar (69 per cent), Rishikesh (29 per cent), Srinagar (12 per cent), Uttarkashi (9 per cent), and Chamoli (6 per cent). The primary reasons cited for this were a shortage of sewer lines and inadequate treatment capacity.

Additionally, the STPs in Haridwar and Rishikesh are grappling with the problem of overloading that is, receiving sewage volumes exceeding their designed capacity.

U'khand HC quashes PSC answer sheet rule

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nainital, March 13: The Uttarakhand High Court Wednesday declared as unconstitutional a provision in the state public service commission's recruitment examination that did not allow candidates to verify their answer sheets before the final results of all stages of the test are announced.

A division bench of Chief Justice Manoj Kumar Gupta and Justice Subhash Upadhyay gave the order while hearing petitions that sought answer sheets of the shorthand examination conducted for recruitment to the post of Additional Private Secretary (APS).

As per existing rules, the answer sheet of the shorthand test, which is part of the first stage of the recruitment process, would be released when the final results are announced after the second stage.

The court Wednesday granted candidates who failed to clear the shorthand test the right to verify their answer sheets after the test results of



this specific test are declared.

The division bench stated in its order that transparency and fairness in the recruitment process are constitutionally mandated and candidates cannot be denied information related to evaluation.

Rajveer Singh, Ranveer Singh Tomar, Ruchi Rana, and other candidates had approached the High Court challenging the results of the shorthand examination declared February 3, 2026.

The petitioners stated that the Commission did not allow them to inspect their shorthand

notebooks and typed answer sheets, making it impossible to verify the accuracy of the evaluation. An advertisement was issued July 18, 2024, for recruitment to 99 posts of Additional Private Secretary at the Dehradun Secretariat and the Uttarakhand Public Service Commission in Haridwar.

The first stage of the selection process included skill tests such as Hindi and English typing, computer knowledge, and shorthand. Only candidates who passed this stage were eligible to appear for the second stage, the

written examination.

The petitioners argued in court that they had successfully passed other examinations in the first stage of the selection process and performed well in the shorthand test, yet they were not selected in the results.

Suspicious of possible errors in evaluation, they requested permission to verify their answer sheets.

As per existing rules, inspection of answer sheets could only be permitted after the final results (both stages) were declared. The court declared this provision unconstitutional with respect to unsuccessful candidates, stating that if there is an inordinate delay in inspection, it will be nearly impossible to correct any errors later, and this could cause irreparable harm to the candidates.

The bench also stated that evaluated answer sheets fall within the category of information under the Right to Information Act, and candidates have the right to inspect and obtain copies of them.

Mini-stadium for every U'khand block: CM Dhami

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dehradun, March 13: After successfully hosting the 38th National Games last year, the Uttarakhand government is expanding sports facilities at the grassroots level by constructing mini-stadiums in every block across the state.

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami informed the Assembly Wednesday during an ongoing budget session in the summer capital, Gairsain. A provision regarding the construction of mini-stadiums in every block has been made in the 2026-27 budget, he said.

Uttarakhand not only successfully hosted the 38th National Games last year, but also achieved its best performance in an event of this scale, winning 103 medals. This event also recognised Uttarakhand as a sports land.

Dhami said the government will utilise the international-level sports infrastructure -- which was developed for the



National Games -- as an academy by formulating a "legacy policy" to provide proper training to sports talent.

He said that action is underway at the government level in this regard. The chief minister provided this information during Question Hour when Sports Minister Rekha Arya was responding to a question regarding sports grounds and mini-stadiums in mountainous areas.

Arya said that 1.18 acres of land is required to construct a mini-stadium in a mountainous area. She added that there is a provision of giving Rs 1.70 crore for its construction.



Punish Congress in the upcoming elections and give a clear message that there is no place for infiltrators in this country

NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

SASIKALA ANNOUNCES HER PARTY'S NAME

Weeks after announcing the launch of her political party, expelled AIADMK leader V K Sasikala Friday announced the name of the organisation -- All India Puratchi Thalivar Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam.



of the day quote

The term "proved misbehaviour" has been interpreted to include deliberate abuse of powers, partisan exercise of constitutional functions favouring one political formation over others, and actions that undermine public confidence in the independence and impartiality of the CEC, amongst other attributes



The shortage of fuel and gas is due to a war that is going on. Let's hope and pray that this war ends soon



The NPP will resolve the ST certificate issue. We will continue to serve the people with dedication and commitment



Don't panic: Centre on gas crunch

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 13: Panic reigned in the streets Friday as a scramble for domestic gas made people queue up across states, eateries shut shop, and reports of hoarding made rounds, even as the Centre insisted there was no shortage of LPG in the country.

The Centre on Friday said uninterrupted LPG supply to households has been ensured, and there is no need for panic booking for cylinders.

Briefing the media, Sujata Sharma, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, said the domestic production of LPG has already increased by 30 per cent since March 5.

"There is no need for panic booking, and there has been no dry out at any LPG dealer," Sharma added. LPG bookings have surged to 75.7 lakh against an average of 55.7 lakh in the pre-war period, "showing panic booking", she said.

All the same, long queues were witnessed outside LPG distribution centres across Bihar despite the district administrations claiming there was no shortage of domestic gas cylinders.

People turned up in large numbers at distribution agencies in Patna, Bhagalpur, Rohtas, Katihar and other districts. The West Asia conflict has impacted the supply of crude oil and petroleum prod-



The government said it is ensuring an uninterrupted supply of cooking gas to households amid a surge in panic bookings, and advised around 60 lakh households located near piped natural gas (PNG) networks to consider switching to piped connections for convenience

It warned hoarders and black marketers of strict action if they try to exploit the crisis created by the war in West Asia.

Sujata Sharma, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, at a media briefing, said fears of a shortage have led to a spike in LPG cylinder bookings in recent days, even though supplies remain adequate across the country

ucts, following the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow passage of water between Iran and Oman. In Delhi, the gas crunch sent small-scale traders into financial distress. Naresh Chawla, who operates a fast-food stall near PVR Saket, said a single establishment often supports several workers and their families.

In the city's Adarsh Nagar, a food vendor named Vicky said he paid around ₹4,000 for a small cylinder. Many vendors

said they are now dipping into savings or taking loans to manage daily household expenses.

The Madhya Pradesh Hotel Association (MPHA) advised eateries to ditch gas-cooked rotis for traditional wood-fired "tandoors" and "crisis menus" to keep their businesses running. The association issued an advisory asking establishments to prioritise dishes that require lower gas usage or shorter cooking cycles. Kerala Hotel and Restaurant Association

Opposition MPs held a protest in the Parliament Complex over the LPG crisis issue, and raised slogans demanding answers from Petroleum Minister Hardeep Puri and Prime Minister Narendra Modi

(KHRA) told PTI that around 40 per cent of restaurants in the state were on the verge of closing down.

"Till Thursday, around 20 per cent of restaurants had closed. The number will increase to 40 per cent by Friday as LPG stocks will run out soon," he said. Kolkata's super-specialty Desun Hospital introduced temporary menu changes to cope with the limited availability of cooking gas.

"The ongoing disruption in gas supply has affected several institutions, including hospital kitchens that depend on a steady fuel supply for preparing patient meals. At Desun Hospital, we have temporarily restricted our menu to vegetarian and egg-based meals since non-vegetarian preparations generally require more fuel and longer cooking time," said hospital chairman Sajal Dutta.

Oppn MPs give notices in Parl for removal of CEC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 13: Opposition MPs have submitted notices in both Houses of Parliament seeking a motion for the removal of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar, sources said Friday.

According to a source, 130 Lok Sabha MPs and 63 Rajya Sabha MPs have signed the notice. The signatories include members from all the INDIA bloc parties, including the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which is no longer formally a part of the opposition alliance, the source said.

Some Independent MPs have also signed the notice while several others have evinced interest in joining the initiative, the source added. This is the first time a notice has been moved seeking the removal of the CEC. According to sources, the notice lists seven charges against Kumar, including alleged "partisan and discriminatory conduct in office", "deliberate obstruction of investigation of electoral fraud" and "mass disenfranchisement".

The Opposition parties have accused the CEC of aiding the ruling BJP on several occasions, especially with the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, which they alleged aims to help the saffron party at the Centre.

The process for removing the CEC is similar to that for the removal of a Supreme Court or a



According to a source, 130 Lok Sabha MPs and 63 Rajya Sabha MPs have signed the notice. The signatories include members from all the INDIA bloc parties, including the Aam Aadmi Party, which is no longer formally a part of the opposition alliance

high court judge, meaning an impeachment can be effected only on the ground of "proven misbehaviour or incapacity".

In a blogpost published Friday, TMC Rajya Sabha leader Derek O'Brien said the term "proved misbehavior" has been interpreted to include deliberate abuse of powers, partisan exercise of constitutional functions favouring one political formation over others and actions that undermine public confidence in the independence and impartiality of the CEC, amongst other attributes.

He pointed out that in the last 75 years, India has had 25 CECs and "neither House of Parliament has ever brought a removal motion against the CEC".

SHORT TAKES

Hooch tragedy: Toll rises to five

Saran (Bihar): The death toll in a suspected hooch tragedy in dry Bihar's Saran district rose to five Friday after two more persons died during treatment, officials said. One of the two men had been arrested Thursday on the charge of possessing illicit liquor. The incident occurred in Panapur and Mashraikh areas of the district in the state, where a total prohibition on alcoholic beverages was imposed in 2016.

Jharkhand police gets 1,485 vehicles

Ranchi: Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren Friday handed over 1,485 modern vehicles to the state police and laid the foundation stones for 12 new police stations in different districts. At a function held on the Jharkhand Assembly premises here, the Chief Minister flagged off the vehicles and inaugurated the projects remotely. Soren said the move would strengthen policing and improve law and order across the state by enhancing mobility, surveillance and quick response capability of the police force. The Chief Minister said the new vehicles would help the police improve patrolling in rural and urban areas and enable faster response to criminal incidents.

Motorcycle collides with car; four killed

Chatra: Four teenage boys were killed as their motorcycle collided head-on with a car in Jharkhand's Chatra district, police said Friday. The accident happened on the Piparwar-Tandwa Road in the Chiraiyatand area, they said. "The car was coming from Bachra when the accident happened, Thursday night," said Abhay Kumar, the officer in charge of the Piparwar police station. Three boys died on the spot, while the fourth one succumbed to his injuries on the way to RIMS-Ranchi, police said.

PM congratulates new Prez of Chile

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Friday congratulated Jose Antonio Kast Rist on assuming the office of the President of Chile and said he was looking forward to working closely with him to further strengthen bilateral ties. Far-right leader Kast was sworn-in Wednesday as Chile's new president, marking the Latin American nation's most pronounced shift to the right since the return of democracy in 1990.

India rebuts reports of pause in US trade talks



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 13: India and the US remain engaged in discussions for a mutually beneficial bilateral trade agreement, the commerce ministry said Friday.

Chief negotiators of the two countries were scheduled to meet last month in Washington to finalise the legal text for the first phase of the bilateral trade agreement, but it was agreed to be postponed following a decision of the US Supreme Court striking down sweeping tariffs of the American administration.

The ministry has denied reports about a hold off on bilateral engagement. "We have noted a media report regarding ongoing trade talks with the US. It is denied that there is any hold off in bilateral engagement. It is reiterated that the two sides remain engaged for a mutually beneficial trade agreement," the commerce ministry said.

The remarks came after the United States Trade Representative (USTR) March 11 launched a fresh round of Section 301 trade investigations targeting policies and industrial practices of 16 economies, including India and China. Following the US Su-

preme Court's ruling, President Donald Trump announced 10 per cent tariffs on all countries for 150 days from February 24. And now the US has announced these investigations.

An official clarified that at no point in time have the two sides ever stated that the trade talks have stopped or "we are not doing an agreement".

Some countries, such as Bangladesh, Malaysia, and Cambodia, have signed trade deals with America, but some others have only finalised and not inked the legal text. India and the US have finalised the contours of the first phase of the trade pact. "Every country is watching how the overall scenario of tariffs is in the US. The chief negotiators of India and the US have spoken at least 4-5 times since this (West Asia) crisis, and virtual sessions are also happening."

"There is no breakdown of talks. We are discussing. We are trying to see that we keep the agreement ready, but signing of the agreement will only happen at an opportune time, because this agreement, as you all are aware, is based on comparative advantage, preferential access to the US market," the official added. The US tariffs are not going away; they will be calibrated and placed at a level where India is going to get a comparative advantage vis-a-vis its competitors in the US market, another official said.



People gather around a chariot of Lord Ranganatha during the 'Rath ka Mela', near Rangji Mandir in Vrindavan, Uttar Pradesh

Assam: PM unveils ₹24,250cr projects

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, March 13: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Friday attacked the Congress, accusing it of endangering national security by handing over indigenous people's land to infiltrators, while launching projects worth over ₹24,250 crore on the first leg of his two-day tour to Assam ahead of the Assembly polls.

Modi said the state was writing a new chapter of peace and development under the "double-engine" government and that the BJP-led administra-

tion was bringing to an end a "historic injustice" towards the tea garden community by granting them land rights for their homes. Recalling the days of his profession as a tea seller, Modi charged the Congress with neglecting tea garden workers by denying them land rights for decades. The Prime Minister unveiled projects valued at over ₹4,570 crore in Kokrajhar and later launched development initiatives worth ₹19,680 crore in Guwahati. In the first programme of the day, Modi addressed a public meet-

ing in Kokrajhar district virtually from Guwahati after rain disrupted his travel schedule.

He said the sounds of bombs and gunfire because of insurgency are a thing of the past, and asserted that the BJP ensured long-lasting peace in the region, while the Congress, during its tenure, signed various accords for "selfish political interests."

The Congress handed over Adivasi land to the infiltrators, and in districts like Dhubri and Goalpara, the situation was grim, affecting Kokrajhar's demography, he claimed.

Rise in online crimes against women, children: Home Secy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 13: Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan Friday said online crimes against women and children are rising in an increasingly digital ecosystem and asked states and other stakeholders to step up efforts for a stronger and more coordinated response to tackle the issue, an official statement said.

He made the remarks while inaugurating the 'National Dialogue on Online Crimes Against Women and Children (OCWC)' here. The event was organised by the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). "The Union Home Secretary highlighted the growing challenges posed by online

crimes in an increasingly digital ecosystem and emphasised the need for strengthening institutional capacities at the State and Union Territory-level to combat such offences effectively," the statement said.

Mohan said states and Union Territories must develop robust, specialised units and coordinated response mechanisms to ensure timely investigation, victim support and swift action against perpetrators.

The secretary further urged IT intermediaries to strictly adhere to the provisions of the Information Technology Act and relevant rules, and called upon all stakeholders to work collectively towards ensuring a safe and secure digital ecosystem for women and children. The inauguration also



marked the launch of the 'Master Trainers Induction Programme for States and Union Territories on Online Crimes Against

Women and Children', aimed at creating a national pool of trained officers who will lead capacity-building initiatives in

Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan made the remarks while inaugurating the 'National Dialogue on Online Crimes Against Women and Children

The event was organised by the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) under the Ministry of Home Affairs

their respective regions.

According to the statement, the programme seeks to equip selected officers with specialised knowledge, investigative techniques and best practices to tackle emerging cyber threats targeting women and children. These officers will further train law enforcement personnel at the state and district levels, strengthening the country's response framework to such crimes. The dialogue saw participation

from senior officials of state and UT law enforcement agencies, representatives of various ministries and departments of the Government of India, social media intermediaries, internet service providers, academia, civil society organisations, legal experts and student representatives.

During the event, discussions focused on emerging trends and patterns in online crimes against women and children, strengthening investigative frameworks and digital forensics capabilities, improving victim support and reporting mechanisms, enhancing coordination with digital platforms for timely removal of harmful content, and promoting multi-stakeholder collaboration for prevention and awareness.



I am pleased to announce that our government intends to constitute soon five new Cultural and Development Boards for the Munda (ST), Kora (ST), Dom (SC), Kumbhakar (OBC) and Sadgope (OBC) communities
MAMATA BANERJEE | WB CM

MHA TO REVIEW VIP SECURITY MEASURES

The Union Home Ministry will conduct a comprehensive security audit of all VIPs under central protection after an assassination attempt on former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah. The decision was taken at a meeting led by Home Minister Amit Shah, attended by NSA Ajit Doval, Home Secretary Govind Mohan, IB Director Tapan Deka and other officials



of the day quote

Rahul Gandhi is not showing seriousness in the way he is functioning. This is wrong and should be condemned. It is a time of war (in West Asia), and the country demands unity
MOHAN YADAV | MP CM

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister You (BJP) members are individually sharing your opinion in the Assembly. You tell your decision to us as a party in the Assembly to revisit or withdraw the guarantee schemes. Let's discuss. Since it's your party's opinion, we cannot say it's wrong right away. Let's discuss. If you do it during this Budget session itself, we will discuss it
D K SHIVAKUMAR | K'TAKA DY CM

The police force is determined to reduce crime and maintain law and order in the state. This initiative will strengthen the surveillance mechanism
HEMANT SOREN | JHARKHAND CM

POST OF THE DAY

Not getting LPG - Let's buy induction Not getting clean water - Let's buy RO Not getting electricity - Let's buy inverter Not getting clean air - Let's buy air purifier But sure, let's never question why the hell we're paying taxes to the government.
@talk2anuradha

SHORT TAKES

2 held for hoarding 398 LPG cylinders

Madurai: Two persons were arrested and detained under the Goondas Act in Madurai for allegedly hoarding 398 LPG cylinders for black marketing, marking the first time such stringent action has been taken in Tamil Nadu for cylinder hoarding, police said Friday. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin has also requested the people "not to panic or feel anxious". In a post on X March 12, CM Stalin urged them to stand in support of the "efforts being undertaken by the Union Government".

Bihar Assembly receives bomb threat

Patna: The Bihar Assembly Friday morning received a bomb threat via email, which later turned out to be a hoax, officials said. The email threat was received at 11.11 am, prompting secretary in-charge Khyati Singh to inform Speaker Prem Kumar, they added. Kumar took notice of the threat and held a meeting with senior officials of the Assembly secretariat. He instructed officers to inform the chief secretary and the DGP about the situation, and ensure a thorough search of the assembly premises, an official statement said.

PM to visit WB today

Kolkata: Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to visit West Bengal Saturday to address a rally at the iconic Brigade Parade Ground here and inaugurate development projects worth around Rs 18,680 crore, in what will be his first trip to the state after the publication of the post-SIR electoral rolls February 28. The rally, organised by the BJP, will mark the culmination of the party's statewide Parivartan Yatra campaign ahead of the Assembly election.

RSS plans to expand 'shakhas'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, March 13: Rashtriya Swamasevak Sangh (RSS) Joint General Secretary C R Mukunda Friday said special emphasis is being placed on expansion of 'shakhas' and engagement of society through public outreach programmes to mark the organisation's centenary year.

Elaborating on the Sangh's plan of action to mark its centenary year, Mukunda said two types of programmes have been planned - organisational growth, focused on expansion of 'shakhas', and the other focused on bringing together the constructive forces of society to promote goodwill and social harmony.

In this context, 'grihasampark abhiyan' (mass contact programme) is being carried out, he added.

In Kerala, volunteers contacted over 55,000 Muslim and 54,000 Christian homes under the outreach initiative, he said in a press conference in Samalkha, Panipat.

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat and general secretary Datatreya Hosabale inaugurated the three-day meet of the RSS' top decision-making body -- Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha (ABPS) -- in Pattikalayana, Samalkha.

The meeting includes detailed discussions on major programmes and campaigns organised as part of the celebrations which also include Hindu Sammelan, youth conferences, gatherings of prominent citizens and social harmony meetings. Meanwhile, as the meet began, tributes were paid to the departed souls including former Union minister Shivraj Patil, former deputy chief minister of Maharashtra Ajit Pawar, actor Dharmendra, Tamil film producer A V M Saravanan, former Mizoram governor Swaraj Kaushal and Communist leader R Nallakannu. Addressing the media, Mukunda talked about the RSS' 'panch parivartan' initiative, which focuses on social harmony, preservation of family values, environmental protection, selfhood and self-reliance, and adherence to legal, civic, and constitutional duties.

Bill to define 'transgender' introduced in Lok Sabha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 13: A Bill seeking to give a precise definition of the term "transgender" and exclude "different sexual orientations and self-perceived sexual identities" from the proposed law's ambit was introduced in the Lok Sabha Friday.

The Bill also provides for graded punishments that reflect the gravity of the harm inflicted upon such persons.

It underlines that a transgender person "shall not include, nor shall ever have been so included, persons with different sexual orientations and self-perceived sexual identities".

"The intent, object and purpose of the Act is and was to protect a specified class of persons socially and culturally known as transgender people who face societal discrimination of an extreme and oppressive nature.

"The purpose was and is not to protect each and every class of persons with various gender identities, self-perceived sex/gender identities or gender fluidities," the Bill says.

Social Justice and Empowerment Minister Virendra Kumar introduced the Transgender



THE BILL ALSO PROVIDES FOR GRADED PUNISHMENTS THAT REFLECT THE GRAVITY OF THE HARM INFLICTED UPON SUCH PERSONS
T UNDERLINES THAT A TRANSGENDER PERSON "SHALL NOT INCLUDE, NOR SHALL EVER HAVE BEEN SO INCLUDED, PERSONS WITH DIFFERENT SEXUAL ORIENTATIONS AND SELF-PERCEIVED SEXUAL IDENTITIES"

Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill in the Lower House. It notes that it is imperative to give a precise definition for proper and definitive identification and protection of transgender persons, to whom the benefits of the present law

FM proposes ESF for resilience against global headwinds

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 13: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Friday said the Rs 1 lakh crore Economic Stabilization Fund (ESF) will help in dealing with the impact of an unanticipated crisis like the ongoing conflict in West Asia.

Replying to a debate on the second batch of supplementary demands for grants in the Lok Sabha, Sitharaman lashed out at the Opposition for disrupting the House proceedings and said instead of standing together in the interest of the

nation and giving confidence to the people, they are taking "irresponsible positions".

Opposition members trooped into the well of Lok Sabha, shouting slogans throughout the minister's reply to the debate. The second batch of supplementary demands for grants provides for inter-account transfers of Rs 1 lakh crore for the creation of an Economic Stabilization Fund. As per the document, the net cash outgo towards this fund will be Rs 57,381.84 crore, and the remaining amount will come from savings.

SC notice over data protection law plea

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 13: The Supreme Court Friday sought a response from the Centre on a fresh plea challenging the validity of a provision of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joyymalya Bagchi issued notice to the Centre on the plea and tagged it with pending pleas raising similar issue.

The fresh petition, filed by Anjali Bhardwaj and Amrita Johri, has sought a direction to declare that provisions of the 2023 Act shall not apply to processing, analysis, dissemination or re-publication of personal data accessed and obtained under the Right to Information Act, 2005.

It also sought a direction that provisions of the 2023 Act would not apply to processing of personal data in public interest, including by those blowing the whistle on corruption, misuse of public office or commission of an offence.

The plea has sought a declaration that Section 44(3) of the 2023 Act, insofar as it substitutes clause (j) of Section 8(1) of the Right to Information Act,

is unconstitutional, being ultra vires of Articles 14 and 19(1)(a) of the Constitution, for "impermissibly curtailing the fundamental right to information".

The bench has posted the matter for hearing March 23. The apex court had Thursday sought a response from the Centre on a separate plea challenging the constitutional validity of several provisions of the 2023 Act.

The separate petition has sought a direction to the Centre to incorporate and notify a specific and proportionate exemption under the 2023 Act and the Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025, for processing of personal data for journalistic, editorial, investigative and public interest reporting purposes, including protection of journalistic sources.

On February 16, the top court agreed to examine a batch of pleas challenging the validity of several provisions of the 2023 Act. It, however, refused to grant an interim stay on the impugned provisions, saying "by an interim order, it will not thwart a regime introduced by Parliament unless we hear the case".



People cover themselves on a sunny day, near Charminar in Hyderabad, Telangana
PTI PHOTO

Allow victim to file complaint against false cases: Plea in SC



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 13: A day after three members of a family in Uttar Pradesh's Fatehpur district allegedly committed suicide due to threats of false implication in SC/ST cases, a plea was filed in the Supreme Court Friday seeking directions to allow an aggrieved person or victim to file a complaint against false cases.

The plea filed by advocate Ashwini Upadhyay has sought directions for "purposive and harmonious interpretation" of sections 215 and 379 of the BNSS, claiming that innocent citizens are committing suicide due to false cases.

Section 215 of the BNSS relates to prosecution for contempt of the lawful authority of public servants, for offences against public justice and for offences relating to documents given in evidence.

The PIL referred to the March 11 incident at Chauferava village in Fatehpur district, where a woman,

her son and brother-in-law allegedly committed suicide.

"A suicide note, reportedly written by the son, suggested the family took the extreme step due to threats of being falsely implicated under the SC and ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act over a financial transaction," the plea said.

It also referred to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data and said there is no record of false information, cases, certificate, statement, and evidence, which are offences under chapters XIII and XIV of the BNS.

"A literal interpretation of sections 215 and 379 bars the aggrieved person/victim to file complaint against false information, cases, certificate, statement and evidence.

"Therefore, police stations are flooded with false cases, and the courts are overburdened with false information, cases, certificate, statement and evidence. As a result, the aggrieved person bears reputational harm, prolonged litigation, and financial and mental hardship arising from the false accusation, while being denied the opportunity to act as the complainant," the petition said.

It also said that data shows the discrepancy between cases being filed and persons being acquitted.

It said the conviction rate has been starkly low and the root cause of the problem is a literal interpretation of sections 215 and 379 of the BNSS. "Direct the NCRB to publish data on false cases, charges, information, certificate, statement and evidencDu," the plea said.

THE PLEA FILED BY ADVOCATE ASHWINI UPADHYAY HAS SOUGHT DIRECTIONS FOR "PURPOSIVE AND HARMONIOUS INTERPRETATION" OF SECTIONS 215 AND 379 OF THE BNSS, CLAIMING THAT INNOCENT CITIZENS ARE COMMITTING SUICIDE DUE TO FALSE CASES
SECTION 215 OF THE BNSS RELATES TO PROSECUTION FOR CONTEMPT OF THE LAWFUL AUTHORITY OF PUBLIC SERVANTS, FOR OFFENCES AGAINST PUBLIC JUSTICE AND FOR OFFENCES RELATING TO DOCUMENTS GIVEN IN EVIDENCE

यूनियन बैंक Union Bank of India
Regional Office: Sambalpur
1st Floor, Balaji Midtown, Budharaja
Sambalpur-768004, Dist.: Sambalpur, Odisha

E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE

SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTY

E-Auction Sale Notice of 15 days for Sale of Immovable Secured Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with Rule 8(6)/9(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable properties mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Union Bank of India (Secured Creditor) will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is" basis for recovery of outstanding dues to the Union Bank of India from the Borrowers & Guarantors mentioned below. The Reserve Price and the Earnest Money Deposit is stated in the column respectively.

Date & Time of Auction: 30.03.2026 between 12:00 Noon to 5:00 P.M. (with 10 min. unlimited auto extensions)

Sl. No.	BRANCH / Name Address of Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s)	Description of Property to be Auctioned	Total Dues (in ₹)	Reserve Price / EMD / Bid Increment
1.	BRAJRAJNAGAR BRANCH / Borrowers: 1) Mr. Chittaranjan Dash, S/o- Late Jenamani Dash, 2) Mr. Dinesh Kumar Dash, S/o- Mr. Chittaranjan Dash, Both are at Telenpali, Brajrajnagar, Dist.: Jharsuguda, Odisha, PIN-768216.	Property No.1: Land measuring Ac.0.300 dec. bearing Khata No.: 621/1545, Plot No.: 6014/9452 of Kissam: Gharbari-III, at Telenpali, Mouza: Brajrajnagar Town Unit No. 2, P.S.: Brajrajnagar No. 39, Tahasil/Dist.: Jharsuguda, belonging to Mr. Chittaranjan Dash and bounded by- North: Road, Plot No. 6026, South: Plot No. 6012, East: Plot No. 6053, West: Plot No. 6014(P).	₹18,43,546.20 as on 28.02.2026 + interest, costs & charges thereon	Property No.1: ₹32,00,000/- / ₹3,20,000/- / ₹32,000/-
		Property No.2: Land measuring Ac.0.248 dec. bearing Khata No.: 621/1543, Plot No.: 6026, of Kissam: Gharbari-III, at Telenpali, Mouza: Brajrajnagar Town Unit No. 2, P.S.: Brajrajnagar No. 39, Tahasil/Dist.: Jharsuguda, belonging to Mr. Chittaranjan Dash and bounded by- North: Plot No. 6025, South: Plot No. 6014, Road, East: Plot No. 6027, West: Plot No. 6015.	₹6,05,873.97 as on 28.02.2026 + interest, costs & charges thereon	Property No.2: ₹26,50,000/- / ₹2,65,000/- / ₹26,500/-
2.	SONEPUR MAIN BRANCH / Borrower: Mr. Jambeswar Haripal, S/o- Sri Guhalu Haripal, At: Jamgaon, PO: Jaloe, Via: Birmaharajpur, Dist.: Subarnapur, PIN-767018. Guarantor: Mr. Laxmi prasad Jagdala, S/o- Ganeswar Jagdala, At: Panisiali, PO: Sonapur, Dist.: Subarnapur, PIN-767017.	Land and Building belongs to Mr. Jambeswar Haripal at Khata No.: 209/98, Plot No.: 1728,1729,1730, measuring Total Area: Ac.0.27dec., Mouza: Jamgaon, PS: Birmaharajpur, Tahsil: ullunda, Dist.: Subarnapur, Odisha, PIN-767018. Bounded property- East: Bamana Haripal, West: Road, North: Keshaba Haripal, South: Govt Land.	₹6,05,873.97 as on 28.02.2026 + interest, costs & charges thereon	₹14,06,750/- / ₹1,40,675/- / ₹14,067/-
3.	SONEPUR MAIN BRANCH / Borrower: Pramod Kirana Store, Represented by Prop.: Manoj Kumar Naik, At/PO: Baldapali, Sonapur / Guarantor: Mr. Satya Narayan Naik, At/PO: Baldapali, Sonapur, Dist.: Subarnapur, Odisha, PIN-767017.	All that piece and parcel of Land and Building belonging to Mr. Satya Narayan Naik, S/o- Late Nilachala Naik, situated at Khata No.: 28, Plot No.: 184, Area: Ac.0.057 decimal, Baladapali, PS: Sonapur, PS No. 62, Dist.: Subarnapur, Odisha, PIN-767017 and Bounded by- East: Owner Land, West: Property of Ghasiram Bhoi, North: Plot No KA and 173, South: Property of Sasanka Shekhar Singhdeo.	₹9,49,787.00 as on 28.02.2026 + interest, costs & charges thereon	₹18,11,000/- / ₹1,81,100/- / ₹18,110/-
4.	REDHAKHOL BRANCH / Borrowers: (1) M/s Mahima Indane, through Legal Heirs' of the deceased Prop.: Mrs. Kalpana Nayak, represented by Shri Pradyumna Kumar Naik, (2) All the Legal Heirs of the deceased Mrs. Kalpana Nayak, represented by Shri Pradyumna Kumar Naik, All are At: Sakasingha, PS: Angul Sadar, Tahasil: Banarpal, Dist.: Angul, PIN-759123.	Land with commercial building thereon situated at Mouza: Barsikiakhhol, PS: Rampur, Tahsil: Redhakhol, Dist.: Sambalpur bearing MS Khata No.: 39/14, Plot No.: 139/397 having total Area of Ac.0.40 decimal, standing in the name of Mr. Pradyumna Kumar Naik, Prithiv Raj Singh Mantri, Khirabdi Mahima & Jayashree Mahima (Legal Heirs of Late Mrs. Kalpana Nayak). Bounded by- North: Vacant Land, South: Road, East: Vacant Land, West- Vacant Land.	₹19,27,394.91 as on 28.02.2026 + interest, costs & charges thereon	₹32,19,750/- / ₹3,21,975/- / ₹32,197/-

Date and Time of Inspection of Property for Intending Purchasers: up to 26.03.2026
Details of Encumbrances if any: Nil

LAST DATE FOR SUBMISSION OF EMD: on or before the commencement of E-Auction.

For registration and login and bidding rules visit:
<https://baanknet.com> and <https://www.unionbankofindia.bank.in/auCTION-property/view-auCTION-property.aspx>

STATUTORY 15 DAYS SALE NOTICE UNDER RULE 8(6)/9(1) OF SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002

This may also be treated as notice Rule 9(1) of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 to the borrower/s and guarantor/s of the said loan about the holding of E-Auction Sale on the above mentioned date.

For any query please contact: **Sl. No. 1: Mob.: 9973164454 / Sl No. 2 & 3: Mob: 9751060197 / Sl. No. 4: Mob: 9090776601**

Place : Sambalpur Date : 13.03.2026

Sd/- Authorised Officer Union Bank of India



Do those Christians who bear grave responsibility in armed conflicts have the humility and courage to make a serious examination of conscience and to go to confession? POPE LEO | CATHOLIC CHURCH LEADER

A 5.5 QUAKE JOLTS CENTRAL TURKIYE

A moderately strong earthquake struck central Turkiye Friday, Turkiye's emergency response said. The tremor sent some residents rushing into the streets but no damage has been reported. The magnitude 5.5 quake was centred in the town of Niksar in Tokat province, at a depth of 6.4 kilometers (4 miles)



of the day quote

This law is the most important legal instrument for Cambodia in combating scams online, fighting money laundering and demonstrating that Cambodia is not a paradise or a safe haven for criminals NETH PHEAKTRA | INFORMATION MINISTER, CAMBODIA

Poland is in shock. People are wondering if this is betrayal, the work of lobbyists, or lack of common sense DONALD TUSK | PRIME MINISTER, POLAND

These talks have been aimed at finding solutions through dialogue to the bilateral differences we have between the two nations MIGUEL DIAZ-CANEL | PRESIDENT, CUBA

Will hit Iran 'very hard': Trump

Prices have been whipsawing on Trump's changing comments on the likely duration of the war, which has prompted Iran to attack vessels in the Strait of Hormuz, the conduit for a fifth of the world's oil

- Trump pledges more strikes 'over the next week'
US issues 30-day waiver for Russian oil purchases
Israel and Iran exchange missile barrages
Oil prices rise despite US waiver, Brent crude at \$99.50



people have been displaced from their homes. US forces have also suffered casualties. The US military confirmed that all six crew members aboard a refuelling aircraft that crashed in western Iraq were dead.

I think he might be helping him (Iran) a little bit, yeah, I guess. And he probably thinks we're helping Ukraine, right? DONALD TRUMP | PRESIDENT, US

and central Iran over the past day, including ballistic missile launchers, air defence systems and weapons production sites. Iranian Press TV said a woman had been killed by an airstrike close to a rally in Tehran for Quds (Jerusalem) Day, one of many across Iran in support of Palestinians living in Israeli-occupied territory.

Dubai/Beirut/Jerusalem, March 13: President Donald Trump said the US was going to be hitting Iran "very hard over the next week", shortly after issuing a partial 30-day waiver for purchases of sanctioned Russian oil, hoping to ease prices fuelled by the US-Israeli war on Iran.

Prices have been whipsawing on Trump's changing comments on the likely duration of the war, which has prompted Iran to attack vessels in the Strait of Hormuz, the conduit for a fifth of the world's oil. Trump has previously said the war is "complete", and also promised to guarantee the safety of vessels in the Strait. In a Fox News interview aired Friday, Trump said the US would escort shipping there "if we needed to".

Trump said he thinks Russian President Vladimir Putin may be helping Iran a "little bit". "I think he might be helping him (Iran) a little bit, yeah, I guess. And he probably thinks we're helping Ukraine, right?," Trump told "The Brian Kilmeade Show". Benchmark Brent crude eased about 0.6% to around \$99.80, still up almost 40% since the start of the conflict.

WAR ON IRAN EXTENDS ACROSS MIDDLE EAST

After nearly two weeks of war, 2,000 people have been killed, most of them in Iran, but many also in Lebanon and a growing number in the Gulf, which has for the first time in decades of Middle East conflicts found itself on the front line. Several million

Beirut: The United Nations launched a \$325 million flash appeal Friday to help Lebanon cope with the fallout of a war that has forced more than a seventh of its population from their homes. "Solidarity in words must be matched by solidarity in action," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said as he announced the campaign from Beirut. Israel launched an offensive against Hezbollah last week after the Iran-backed Lebanese militant group opened fire on it March 2, saying it was avenging the killing of Iran's supreme leader. Hezbollah has kept up daily rocket and drone attacks, while Israel has expanded its ground operations and air strikes, bombing the capital on Thursday along with other parts of the country on Friday.

7 policemen killed in blast in Pakistan

Peshawar: At least seven police personnel were killed in an improvised explosive device (IED) blast targeting a police vehicle in northwest Pakistan Friday, police said. The banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed responsibility for the attack. The incident occurred in the Shadi Khel Bettani area in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Lakki Marwat district when the police vehicle patrolling near the Rasool Khel check post was hit by a roadside IED. As a result of the explosion, SHO Azam, police driver Shah Bahram, and four other police personnel were killed on the spot. One policeman, identified as Insafuldin, sustained serious injuries in the blast, but he later succumbed to injuries at the hospital where he was receiving treatment.

WHO ARE THE HOUTHIS? The Houthis are a military, political and religious movement led by the Houthi family and based in northern Yemen. They adhere to the Zaydi sect of Shi'ite Islam. The Houthis have a history of fighting guerrilla wars with

the Yemeni army but expanded their power and built closer ties with Iran after the 2011 "Arab Spring" protests. Seizing on instability in the country, the group captured the Yemeni capital Sanaa in 2014. The following year, Saudi Arabia led a coalition of Arab states in a military intervention to attempt to dislodge the group. The Houthis demonstrated significant missile and drone capabilities, attacking oil installations and vital infrastructure in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. After years of fighting that led to one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, the UN brokered a 2022 truce between the warring sides in Yemen that has since held.

Iran lets two gas tankers sail to India through Hormuz: Sources

New Delhi: Iran has allowed two Indian-flagged liquefied petroleum gas carriers to sail through the Strait of Hormuz, four sources with direct knowledge of the matter said, a rare exception to the Iranian blockade that has disrupted global energy supplies. The Indian-flagged LPG tanker Shivalik crossed the Strait under escort from the Indian Navy, said two of the sources, and the second vessel, Nanda Devi, was expected to clear in the next few hours. Since the United States and Israel launched a bombing campaign on Iran, Tehran has largely halted traffic through the strait, which runs past its coast and normally supplies around 20% of global oil and seaborne liquefied natural gas. Iran has said it will not permit any supplies for the United States or its allies to leave the strait, but India has sought exemptions. Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Thursday he had spoken to Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian and discussed the transit of goods and energy from the Gulf. India has also given safe harbour to 183 Iranian sailors from a vessel that docked after the war broke out. The vessel was one of three that had participated in exercises in India; one of the others was sunk by a US torpedo off Sri Lanka.

Araqchi and security chief Ali Larijani all appeared in videos verified by Reuters openly attending the rally in a gesture of defiance, despite an assertion by US Defense Secretary Peter Hegseth that the leadership were "cowering" underground. "People are not afraid of these attacks. As you can see, people have come out in this rain, under these hardships," judiciary chief Gholamhossein Mohseni-Ejei said at the march. "We will not back down in any way." The prospect that the jolt to global energy supplies could endure had boosted oil prices about 9% to \$100 a barrel Thursday, helping drive down US stocks. With gasoline and diesel prices rising at pumps in the United States and around the world, the US Thursday issued a 30-day licence for countries to buy Russian oil and petroleum products already at sea - where it is not uncommon for consignments to be sold or change their buyer.

UKRAINE AND EUROPE ANGERED BY US EASING SANCTIONS

The move is also the second time the US war in Iran has prompted a significant rollback of US sanctions related to the war in Ukraine in just over a week. While Moscow welcomed the move, Kyiv and its allies are angry. "Six members of the G7 expressed a very clear opinion that this was not the right signal," German Chancellor Friedrich Merz told a press conference in Norway. "We then learned this morning that the American government has apparently decided otherwise." Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the move could provide Russia with \$10 billion, adding, "It certainly does not help peace." In a post in the early hours, Trump had derided Iran's leadership as "deranged scumbags". "They've been killing innocent people all over the world for

IRAN UNLEASHES OIL SHOCK TO BLUNT US FIREPOWER

Dubai: Long before the US and Israel attacked Iran, the Islamic Republic had devised its own weapon: holding the world's main oil lifeline hostage to offset its foes' military superiority, three regional sources familiar with Iranian planning said. For decades Iran has signalled that if pushed into a confrontation, it would restrict tanker traffic in the Strait of Hormuz, the chokepoint where its adversaries are most exposed because disruptions there reverberate instantly through global energy markets. With the US's main export artery in the crosshairs, Tehran has turned the region's greatest economic asset into its most powerful deterrent, the sources said. About a fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas normally passes through the vital Strait, and Iran, which lies on its northern coast, has now effectively closed it. Traffic via the strait has dropped by 97% since the war against Iran began February 28, according to United Nations data. Iran has used similar tactics before. In the "Tanker War" of the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq conflict, attacks on vessels turned the Gulf into one of the world's most dangerous waterways, forcing Washington to escort tankers through the Strait. But Iran now wields far more potent tools, including large arsenals of cheap missiles and drones capable of threatening shipping across a far wider area. Its attacks this month have shown how quickly Tehran can disrupt traffic through the strait without heavily mining it.



Israel hits Beirut's northern suburbs for first time

Tel Aviv/Beirut: Israel warned Lebanon Friday that it would face further damage to its infrastructure until Iran-backed Hezbollah is disarmed, after the Israeli military destroyed a bridge in south Lebanon in what appeared to be the first such strike of the war. As Israeli troops push further into southern Lebanon and pound Beirut's suburbs with air strikes, Lebanon's interior minister said authorities were unable to accommodate the hundreds of thousands of people who have sought refuge in the capital. Israel launched its offensive against Hezbollah after it opened fire March 2 to avenge the killing of Iran's supreme leader at the start of the US-Israeli war on Iran. Israeli strikes have killed nearly 700 people and uprooted 800,000 more, according to Lebanese authorities. The United Nations Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, arrived in Lebanon Friday, saying its people "did not choose this war. They were dragged into it." Israel's military said it struck the Zraieh Bridge spanning the Litani River early Friday, claiming it was being used by Hezbollah militants to move between Lebanon's north and south. The military provided no evidence for the claim.



47 years, and now I, as the 47th President of the United States of America, am killing them. What a great honor it is to do so!"

But Iran's new supreme leader, Mojtaba Khamenei, in his first public comments Thursday, vowed to keep the Strait of Hormuz shut and urged neighbouring countries to close US bases on their territory or risk being attacked themselves.

Hegseth told a news briefing that the US knew he was "wounded and likely disfigured". An Iranian official told

Reuters Wednesday that Khamenei was lightly injured but continuing to work.

Hegseth also said the US would not allow shipping in the Strait of Hormuz to be "contested", without explaining how.

President Emmanuel Macron said one French soldier had been killed and several wounded during an attack in northern Iraq, hours after an Italian base in the same area was attacked. The French soldiers were providing training as part of an international coalition fighting Islamic State militants.

Pakistani airstrikes cause civilian casualties in Kabul

Kabul, March 13: Pakistan bombed the fuel depot of private airline Kam Air near Afghanistan's airport of Kandahar, the ruling Taliban said Friday, stepping up the neighbours' worst conflict in years, despite China's efforts to mediate. The overnight strikes also hit residential areas in Kabul, killing four people and wounding more than a dozen. In eastern Nangarhar province later Friday, a mortar shell that Afghan officials said was fired by Pakistan hit a house in the Momandara district, killing a woman and a child, a provincial

- Taliban say six killed in residential areas of Kabul, Nangarhar
Kam Air fuel depot supplies civilian, UN aircraft, Taliban say
Strikes follow recent Chinese mediation efforts
Pakistan's information minister denies targeting civilians

spokesperson said. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan said the airstrikes in Kabul had killed at least four civilians and injured 14 in the Pul-e-Charkhi area, including women and children. Pakistan's information minister, Attaullah Tarar, said in a post on X that the strikes were part of the ongoing operation dubbed

"Ghazb lil Haq", targeting what it described as militant camps and "terrorist support infrastructure" in Kabul, Paktia and Kandahar. Dozens of sites had been struck across Afghanistan he added, denying that "any civilian population or infrastructure" had been targeted.

Afghan administration spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid vowed that the aggression would "not go unanswered".

The strikes on the depot, which Mujahid said "supplies fuel to civilian airlines as well as to United Nations aircraft", threaten to spark further hostilities between two countries that neighbour Iran.

Why haven't the Houthis stepped into the war?

Riyadh, March 13: Iran's Shi'ite allies in Lebanon and Iraq have joined the war in the region unleashed by US and Israeli strikes on Tehran. But Yemen's Houthi rebels, heavily armed and capable of striking Gulf neighbours and causing major disruption to maritime navigation around the Arabian Peninsula, have not yet entered the fray.

the Yemeni army but expanded their power and built closer ties with Iran after the 2011 "Arab Spring" protests. Seizing on instability in the country, the group captured the Yemeni capital Sanaa in 2014. The following year, Saudi Arabia led a coalition of Arab states in a military intervention to attempt to dislodge the group. The Houthis demonstrated significant missile and drone capabilities, attacking oil installations and vital infrastructure in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. After years of fighting that led to one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, the UN brokered a 2022 truce between the warring sides in Yemen that has since held.

IRAN'S ALLIES IN YEMEN



RED SEA ATTACKS After the October 7, 2023, attack on Israel led by Palestinian militant group Hamas, which

triggered a devastating Israeli military campaign in Gaza, the Houthis began firing on international shipping in the Red

Sea, saying it was doing so in support of Palestinians.

They also fired drones and missiles at Israel, which responded with air strikes on Houthi targets. The US also launched strikes against the Houthis.

The Houthis ceased their attacks following a US-brokered ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in October 2025.

WHY HAVE THEY NOT ENTERED THE WAR?

Houthi leader Abdul Malik Al-Houthi said his group was ready to strike at any moment March 5.

"Regarding military escalation and action, our fingers are on the trigger at any moment should developments warrant it," he said in a tele-

vised speech. But unlike Lebanon's Hezbollah and Iraqi armed groups, they have not made any formal announcement of joining the war. Houthi religious doctrine does not adhere to Iran's supreme leader in the same way Hezbollah and the Iraqi groups do. While Iran champions the Houthis as part of its regional "Axis of Resistance", Yemen experts say the movement is motivated primarily by a domestic agenda though they share a political affinity with Iran and Hezbollah. The US says Iran has armed, funded and trained the Houthis with help from Hezbollah. The Houthis deny being an Iranian proxy and say they develop their own weapons.



Metals and auto stocks were among the worst hit, as supply constraints and higher input costs are expected to hit business and profitability
VINOD NAIR | HEAD OF RESEARCH, GEOJIT INVESTMENTS

AFTER AUDI, MERCEDES HIKES PRICES

Mercedes-Benz India Friday said it will hike vehicle prices by around 2 per cent from April to offset the impact of forex volatility and increase in input costs. "Starting April 1, we will be implementing a price correction of around 2 per cent across our portfolio," Mercedes-Benz India Vice President (Sales & Marketing) Brendon Sissing said. On Thursday, Audi announced that it will hike prices of its products in India by up to 2 per cent from April 1 to partially offset the rise in input costs and the adverse impact of currency fluctuations



of the day **QUOTE**

India doesn't have a founder problem. It has an infrastructure problem. The ambition is everywhere, in every city, every category, every first-generation entrepreneur betting on themselves



India's travel growth is increasingly driven by emerging cities that bring together education ecosystems, industrial development, social infrastructure and expanding corporate activity



Customers across the Northeast will receive their packages up to five times faster than they do today. But this expansion in speed is not just for customers. Sellers across Northeast India will now be able to reach customers across every single postcode in India much faster than they could earlier



MIDEAST MELTDOWN **D-St enters correction zone**
SENSEX, NIFTY SLIP INTO OVERSOLD TERRITORY

REUTERS

Mumbai, March 13: India's benchmark equity indexes fell 10% from their all-time highs this week, confirming a technical correction, a widely watched threshold that signals a meaningful market pullback, on persistent selling due to the Iran war and soaring oil prices. The conflict, which has spread across large parts of the Middle East, is expected to weigh on India's macroeconomic outlook with foreign investors pulling out from higher-risk emerging markets.

The Nifty 50 Thursday closed 10.4% below its record high of 26,373.20 hit earlier this year. The BSE Sensex settled 10.8% below its lifetime peak of 86,159.02 a day earlier.

They closed the week 12.2% and 13.5% below their record high levels.

"There is absolute panic selling in markets," said Avinash Gorakshakar, director of research at Profitmart Securities, as spiking crude prices fan worries over energy security, earnings stress, currency stability and softer consumption.

TECHNICAL INDICATORS
"Moving averages and momentum-based indicators continue to suggest a bearish undertone, indicating that the near-term trend remains under pressure," said Sudeep Shah, head of technical and



There is absolute panic selling in markets. Until there is some clarity, (foreign selling) will continue to roil markets and foreign investors are unlikely to return to India in a meaningful way

AVINASH GORAKSHAKAR | DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH, PROFITMART SECURITIES

derivatives research at SBI Securities. Both Nifty and Sensex are trading below their key 50-day, 100-day and 200-day moving averages, implying that the weakness is spreading across medium- and long-term trend signals as well.

When an index breaks all these levels, it implies that momentum has deteriorated sharply and buying support has thinned out. These moving averages are

widely tracked by institutions, traders and foreign investors, with the breaches potentially triggering fresh risk controls and selling pressure.

The benchmark indexes' relative strength index, or RSI, also fell below 30 this week, signalling they have moved into oversold territory.

Oversold conditions suggest the selling may have been excessive, though it can also indicate that bearish momentum remains intense.

A 10% fall at close from record high levels confirms technical correction
Nifty hit record high levels earlier this year, while Sensex logged an all-time high in Dec 2025

SILVER, GOLD CRASH

NEW DELHI: Precious metal prices declined up to 4 per cent in the national capital on Friday, with silver tumbling to ₹2,65,500 per kilogram and gold sliding to ₹1,63,200 per 10 grams amid a strong US dollar and uncertainty over global monetary policy. According to the All India Sarafa Association, the white metal slumped by ₹11,000, or 3.97 per cent, to ₹2,65,500 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes) from Thursday's closing level of ₹2,76,500 per kg. In the bullion market, gold of 99.9 per cent purity also declined by ₹2,000, or 1.21 per cent, to ₹1,63,200 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes). The yellow metal finished at ₹1,65,200 per 10 grams in the previous session. Gold prices in the domestic market faced sustained pressure from a resurgent US dollar and shifting expectations regarding monetary easing, Dilip Parmar, Senior Research Analyst, HDFC Securities, said. He added that the intensifying conflict in Iran has sent crude oil prices soaring, stoking inflationary fears that may force the central banks to maintain a hawkish stance for an extended period. In the international market, spot silver was trading nearly 1 per cent lower at \$83.14 per ounce, while gold went up marginally to \$5,088 per ounce. "Gold prices have retreated for a second consecutive week, shedding nearly 1.5 per cent in international markets to trade below \$5,100 per ounce," Aamir Makda, Commodity & Currency Analyst at Choice Broking, said. The primary catalysts for this decline are a strengthening US dollar -- bolstered by rising oil prices and geopolitical concerns in the Middle East -- and a surge in US Treasury yields, placing significant pressure on the precious metal, he added.



FOREIGN INVESTORS RESUME SELLING
Foreign portfolio investors have sold \$5.73 billion worth of Indian equities since the Iran war began, with March outflows so far already the highest in 14 months. Even as foreign investors dumped Indian stocks, domestic investors remained

buyers, though there has been a moderation in inflows and slowdown in new SIP registrations.

"This is natural in the context of a sideways or a subdued market as retail investors tend to wait for clearer market direction," said Santosh Joseph, chief executive at Germinate Investor Services.

Forex reserves fall most in over a year on RBI's ₹ defence

REUTERS

Mumbai, March 13: India's foreign exchange reserves fell to \$716.81 billion in the week through March 6 from \$728.49 billion in the previous week, Reserve Bank of India data showed Friday.

The \$11.68 billion decline in reserves last week came amid heavy dollar sales by the central bank to support the rupee against pressure stemming from the Iran war and the surge in oil prices. The rise in US yields and the dollar strength further contributed to the drop in reserves, analysts said.

Gaura Sen Gupta, economist at IDFC FIRST Bank, estimates the decline in reserves reflected net dollar sales of about \$6.1 billion by the RBI and valuation losses of roughly \$5.4 billion.

"The RBI sterilized the liquidity impact of the dollar sales through on-screen bond purchases," she added.

Much of the decline in the week for which the RBI shared data came from foreign currency assets, which fell \$9.8 billion, while the value of gold reserves dropped \$1.6 billion.

Changes in foreign currency assets, expressed in dollar terms, include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of other currencies held in its reserves. Foreign exchange reserves include India's Reserve Tranche position in the International Monetary Fund.

SHORT TAKES

Japan's KTD enters Indian energy market

New Delhi/Tokyo: Japanese utility company Kansai Transmission and Distribution has forayed into the Indian energy market, picking up a 10 per cent stake in OMC Power, which is in the process of building up a 1 gigawatt (GW) renewable energy portfolio in India. Kansai Transmission and Distribution (KTD), a part of \$27-billion Kansai Electric Power, has become the fourth Japanese entity to invest in OMC Power, after Mitsui & Co, Chubu Electric Power, and Honda Motor Co Ltd. In a video interaction, OMC Power Co-founder & CEO Rohit Chandra said both companies had been in talks for over a year to work out a business collaboration. It is the result of research, market and feasibility studies, which have led to this investment now. "It is also the first investment made by Kansai Transmission and Distribution in India's energy sector. They chose us for their India journey," the company official said, noting Japanese companies have been investing in OMC Power since 2017.

Amazon Business 2025 sales rise 35%

New Delhi: Amazon India's B2B platform Amazon Business has recorded a 35 per cent year-on-year growth in annual sales in 2025, a senior company official said. Amazon Business Director Mitranjan Bhaduri said the platform offers a catalogue of over 19 crore products from more than 17 lakh sellers across the marketplace. "Globally, Amazon Business has crossed \$35 billion in annualised sales, based on the last publicly shared figure. In India, the business has been growing strongly, with 35 per cent year-on-year growth in 2025," Bhaduri said. Amazon Business operates from Amazon India's e-commerce platform, but the login changes for business-to-business customers. Bhaduri said the price varies based on the bulk unit ordered by businesses for their consumption. "Amazon Business enabled businesses in India to realise over ₹2,000 crore in financial benefits and value in 2025. Adoption has been particularly strong beyond metros, with more than 70 per cent of customers now located in tier-2 and tier-3 cities," he said.

Ramraj Cotton inaugurates showroom in Berhampur



POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, March 13: Ramraj Cotton, a leading Indian brand known for premium traditional cotton garments, inaugurated its new showroom at Annapurna Market Square, Urban Bank Road in Berhampur Friday.

The showroom was formally inaugurated by chief guests Dr Rajendra Kumar Sahu, senior surgeon, and Dr Suchitra Kumari Sahu, senior gynecologist, who performed the ceremonial lighting of the lamp and made the first purchase at the store.

The event was graced by the presence of KR Nagarajan, Chairman of Ramraj Cotton, who highlighted the brand's vision of promoting Indian culture through high-quality

traditional cotton garments. The showroom is owned by franchisee Balakrushna Sahu and his wife Sanjukta Sahu, who welcomed the distinguished guests and attendees. The occasion was further honored by the presence of Director Amaresh Sahu and Anurag Panda, along with several prominent citizens, well-wishers, and customers.

Speaking on the occasion, the management expressed confidence that the new showroom will become a landmark destination for traditional cotton wear in Berhampur and surrounding regions. The store offers a wide range of premium cotton dhotis, shirts, and traditional attire reflecting the rich heritage and craftsmanship of India.

IDBI Bank sale bid falls short

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 13: The strategic sale of IDBI Bank is likely to have been scrapped as the financial bids put in by potential buyers were below the reserve price, sources said Friday.

The government and LIC were together looking to sell 60.72 per cent in IDBI Bank and had floated an Expression of Interest (EoI) in October 2022. Financial bids came in on February 6. Sources said the financial bids for the IDBI Bank strategic sale have come in lower than the reserve price set by the inter-ministerial group on disinvestment headed by secretaries in the finance ministry.

According to sources, the bids for IDBI Bank have been opened and they were below the reserve price set by the IMG and agreed to by the core group on disinvestment, which is chaired by the Cabinet Secretary. Prem Watsa-led Fairfax and Emirates NBD are reported to have put in bids for the strategic sale of IDBI Bank. Currently, the government and state-owned LIC together hold a 94.71 per cent stake in IDBI Bank.

WAR PUSHES JET FUEL PRICES

Air travel becomes expensive

IndiGo joins Air India in imposing fuel surcharge as rising fuel prices and airspace closures amid the Middle East war weigh on the carrier

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



New Delhi, March 13: IndiGo will start levying fuel charges ranging from ₹425 to ₹2,300 on domestic and international flight tickets from March 14 amid the steep surge in jet fuel prices due to the ongoing war between the US, Israel and Iran.

The move will increase the airfares. For domestic flights and those within the Indian sub-continent, the fuel charge will be ₹425, while it will be ₹900 for the Middle East services, the airline said in a statement Friday.

The fuel charge will be ₹1,800 for South East Asia and China, Africa and West Asia flights, and ₹2,300 for Europe flights. Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) accounts for nearly 40 per cent of an airline's operational costs.

While announcing the introduction of the fuel charge, the airline said the measure has been taken due to the significant surge in fuel prices following the ongoing geopolitical issues in the Middle East.

"While offsetting the entire impact of this fuel price surge requires a very substantial adjustment to fares, IndiGo has introduced a relatively smaller amount as a fuel charge, keeping in mind the consequential burden on customers," the airline said.

On March 10, Air India and Air India Express announced fuel surcharges on tickets. IndiGo and Air India are

facing a double whammy as the Iran war makes it difficult for carriers to use the Middle East airspace at a time when Indian airlines are already banned from Pakistan's airspace due to diplomatic tensions between New Delhi and Islamabad.

The airlines are lobbying the Indian government to provide financial relief, specifically related to aviation-related taxes and charges, Reuters reported earlier.

Rising jet fuel costs will have a material impact on all airlines' costs and network, including IndiGo's, the company said.

MIDEAST RISK LOOMS

Car sales to dealers on fast lane

PASSENGER VEHICLE DISPATCHES RISE 10.6% TO 4,17,705 UNITS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 13: Domestic passenger vehicle despatches rose 10.6 per cent year-on-year to 4,17,705 units in February as positive market sentiments continued but the war in West Asia remains a concern as it could impact manufacturing and exports, industry body SIAM said Friday.

Passenger vehicle despatches stood at 3,77,689 units in February 2025. Growth in PV sales last month was driven mainly by utility vehicles, which clocked a growth of 13.5 per cent at 2,36,957 units as compared to 2,08,795 units in February last year.

Passenger car despatches declined 3.8 per cent at 1,06,799 units last month as compared to 1,10,966 units in the year-ago period, SIAM said. Sales of vans in the domestic



market were at 11,620 units last month as compared to 11,493 units in February 2025, up 1.1 per cent, it added.

Two-wheeler sales rose 35.2 per cent to 1,87,14,06 units last month as against 13,84,605 units in February last year, Society of Indian Automobile

Manufacturers (SIAM) said in a statement.

Motorcycle sales in February were up 30.8 per cent to 10,96,537 units as against 8,38,250 units in the year-ago month.

Similarly, scooter sales rose 42.3 per cent at 7,29,774 units last month as compared to

Positive sentiments in the industry continue as passenger vehicles, two-wheelers, and three-wheelers posted their highest ever sales of February in 2026, with double-digit growth compared to February 2025. While March has festive drivers in several parts of the country, the recent conflict in West Asia remains a concern, both from the perspective of the supply chain, which could impact the manufacturing processes and exports

RAJESH MENON | DIRECTOR GENERAL, SIAM

5,12,783 units in the same period last year, SIAM said.

Three-wheeler despatches to dealers were up 29 per cent last month at 74,573 units as against 57,788 units in the year-ago period, it added.

BANKS BUZZ

Bank of India to hold 'Mega Samjhauta Campaign'

Bhubaneswar: Bank of India is set to organise "Mega Samjhauta Campaign" from March 16 to 20 to settle the NPA loan accounts of borrowers under One Time Settlement (OTS) at all its branches/zones and FGMOs across the country. The Samjhauta Day is specially designed for the NPA borrowers who could not repay their loan in time due to distress in business/medical condition of the borrower or any other genuine reason. The bank is equipped with special OTS schemes to settle small value accounts and mid-size accounts through which special and good discounts are offered to the borrowers whose accounts are NPA. The bank appeals to all the borrowers whose accounts are NPA to come forward and avail this golden opportunity by settling loan accounts during the campaign.



Union Bank of India Cuttack holds CSR activity

Cuttack: Union Bank of India's Cuttack Regional Office organised a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme in association with its DRIEMS Branch, during which a water filter was donated to Padmini Multi-Speciality Hospital. The event was headed by regional head Bibekananda Sarangi. Among those present were Chinmay Behera (CM PND), Subhasish Parida (branch head), RCLO Naaz, DRIEMS Industry Chairman Dr Pramod Chandra Rath, Registrar Krushna Prasad Pati, Vice-Chancellor Dr Prakash Kumar Hota, Director Administration Balaram Kar, Professor Dr Chitta Prasad Das, Nilanjana Mukherjee (MD, Padmini Care), Dr PK Mishra, Dr Manoranjan Mallick, Ashutosh Dewbedi, Sunaya Mishra, Prasanna Kumar Sahoo and other dignitaries.



FIH HOCKEY WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

Eves book final berth



Women in Blue beat Italy 1-0 in the semifinal with Manisha Chauhan (40') scoring the winning goal to set the summit clash against England

POST NEWS NETWORK

Hyderabad, March 13: The Indian Women's Hockey team earned their spot in the Final of FIH Hockey World Cup Qualifiers 2026 Hyderabad, Telangana as they beat Italy 1-0 in their semifinal contest at the GMC Balayogi Hockey Ground

(Gachibowli Hockey Complex) Friday. Manisha Chauhan (40') scored the winning goal for India and they will now face England in the Final.

It was an extremely tight contest in the first quarter as both sides constantly battled for possession in the midfield. India started the match strong with a couple of strong circle entries, however, Italy eventually started attacking aggressively and created a few good chances on goal.

India won the momentum back in the second quarter. The hosts used their flanks to push the ball ahead and started attacking in numbers and made crucial circle entries. In the 18th minute, India won the first penalty corner of the eve-

ning but Navneet Kaur's shot on goal was stopped well by Italian goalkeeper Lucia Ines Caruso.

In the 27th minute, they were awarded another penalty corner as India played out an interesting variation. The ball was played back to the injector, Captain Salima Tete, but her shot was stopped on the line by Italy's last defender, denying them a goal. In the 29th minute, India had another opportunity to score through a penalty corner but Navneet Kaur's shot went off target.

In the early minutes of the second half, Italy launched a strong attack on goal as Emilia Munitis was through on goal but India's goalkeeper Bichu Devi Kharibam came out and made a crucial save. In the 40th minute, India were awarded yet

another penalty corner and this time they successfully converted it to break the deadlock. Manisha Chauhan (40') delivered a powerful dragkick down the middle that pierced through the Italian defence and found the net.

India won two early penalty corners in the final quarter as they pushed to increase their advantage in the late stage but Italy remained resilient with their defending. Italy gave it their all in the final minutes of the match and won a crucial penalty corner in the 59th minute but India managed to deny their opposition the equaliser and emerged victorious.

India will next face England in the final March 14 at 7:30 pm IST.

NATIONAL RUGBY 15S CHAMPIONSHIP 2026

Three-peat for Hurricanes

Delhi Hurricanes complete hat-trick as the championship concludes in Bhubaneswar

RISHABH PAREKH, OP

Bhubaneswar, March 13: The National Rugby 15s Championship 2026 – Division 1 concluded at Kalinga Stadium, Bhubaneswar, with Delhi Hurricanes defending their title and securing a hat-trick by defeating Bombay Gymkhana 45-12 in the men's final.

Delhi Hurricanes reaffirmed their rule in Indian rugby with a commanding all-round performance in the final. Tries from Neeraj, Pradeep Kumar Tanwar, Mannu Tanwar, Aniket, Abhishek Shukla, and Prince Khatri led the charge, while Deepak Kumar Punia added crucial points to secure their third straight national title. Bombay Gymkhana showed resilience, with Shridhar Shrikant Nigade and Rohit Prakash Kadam scoring, but the Hurricanes' powerful attack ultimately proved decisive.

In the third place playoff, Future Hope Harlequins delivered a strong performance to outclass Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS) 31-12 and claim the bronze medal. Mithun Hazra, Arpan Chhetri, and Sheikh

Badal were key contributors for Future Hope, while Atma Murmu and Fagun Majhi scored tries for KISS, but they could not narrow the deficit.

While being asked about the game against KISS, Future Hope captain said, "It was a good match. We dominated the second half more. We could sense we had physical advantage over them in context to our height and size. We were upset with the semifinal loss. But sealing the bronze medal was a moment of joy for us. We love the venue and infrastructure. The food and stay has been really great too."

Sergeant Institute defeated Rebels RC 19-10 to secure seventh place, with Namjan Mundu scoring two tries, supported by Ankur Sarania and Anupam Bhengra. Rebels RC responded through Kevin Pandya and Vin-it.

In the Plate Final, Bangalore RC beat Calcutta Cricket and Football Club (CC&FC) 24-12 to finish fifth, with Arvinjit Oinam delivering a standout performance alongside Akhil A and Subash J, while CC&FC scored through Denzil Fredrick

Dsilva, Bhupinder Singh and Shuvomoy Brahma.

The closing ceremony and trophy presentation were conducted in the presence of several distinguished dignitaries including Bhupendra Singh Poonia, IAS, Commissioner-cum-Secretary, Department of Sports & Youth Services, Government of Odisha; Bijaya Kumar Swain, OAS, Additional Secretary, Department of Sports & Youth Services; Gerald Prabhu, Honorary Secretary, Indian Rugby Football Union; Sashwat Kumar Raut, Officer on Special Duty; and Upendra Mohanty, Vice-President, Odisha Rugby Football Association.

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 remains the country's premier club rugby tournament, bringing together the best teams from across India and strengthening the pathway for players to progress to the national stage.



Odisha's Pramod Bhagat added to TOPS core group

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 13: World champion para-shuttler Pramod Bhagat, rising pistol shooters Samrat Rana and Suruchi Singh and Asian gold-winning long-distance runner Gulveer Singh and are among eight athletes who have been added to the Target Olympic Podium Scheme's (TOPS) Core group following a recent assessment of performances.

Pramod clinched his sixth world title earlier this year. The 37-year-old, whose left leg was disabled by polio, is a former Olympic gold-medallist and returned to competition last year after serving an 18-month suspension for the anti-doping violation of missing three consecutive tests.

Badminton star HS Prannoy, former Asian gold-winning rifle shooter Divyansh Singh Panwar and wrestler Deepak Punia were among the major names dropped from the core group for failing to meet "the requisite parameters of performance", according to a well-placed source.

The rejig of the list was undertaken at the 169th meeting



of the Mission Olympic Cell (MOC), headed by TOPS CEO NS Johal, here.

While Samrat became a world champion last year in both the individual and team 10m air pistol events, Suruchi too enjoyed a fantastic run on the circuit, bagging four consecutive World Cup gold medals.

Another shooter who has been added to the list is this year's Asian silver medal-winner rifle-man Niraj Kumar. Former Asian gold-winner Shiva Narwal was, however, left out of the core group that continues to be 56-strong after the most recent omissions and additions.

WORLD PARA ATHLETICS GP

Hosts dominate the tournament as they bag 75 gold, 69 silver, 64 bronze

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 13: The New Delhi World Para Athletics Grand Prix 2026 concluded Friday after three days of thrilling competition, with India delivering a dominant performance across multiple events.

Competing against strong international fields, Indian athletes finished first in the medal tally with a remarkable 208 medals, including 75 gold, 69 silver, and 64 bronze.

Russia finished second with 35 medals (15 gold, 14 silver, and 6 bronze), while Bosnia and Herzegovina secured third place with 3 medals, including one gold and two silver.

The final day saw several standout performances from Indian athletes across track and field disciplines.

In the Women's 200m T35-T37, Preeti Pal clinched the gold medal with a time of 30.26 seconds, ahead of Russia's Karina Machulskaja, who took silver

India tops tally with 208 medals



in 32.22 seconds, while Bina Shambhubha of India secured bronze with 32.35 seconds. This marked Preeti Pal's second gold medal of the Grand Prix.

Reflecting on her performance, Preeti said, "I narrowly missed the target I was aiming for at the Grand Prix by a microsecond. Overall, things are going well. In four days, I will be heading to the Nationals, and since this is the off-season, I am satisfied with my performance."

She added, "My personal best

is 30.03 seconds, and in practice I have already clocked 29.6 seconds, which is encouraging. However, I noticed that I got tired as I approach the finish line, something that didn't happen before. I am currently working on improving that."

India also dominated the Men's Shot Put F57, claiming all three medals. Shubham Juyal won gold with a throw of 14.45 metres, while Bhagat Singh secured silver with 13.29 metres and Priyans Kumar took bronze with 13.07 metres.

From a mark of 13.72 metres at the World Championships 2025 to improving by 0.73 metres in just five months, Shubham Juyal's rapid progress highlights his dedication and also reflects the growing strength of Indian Army para athletes on the international stage.

Indian athletes continued their medal sweep across several events. In the Men's 200m T35, Vinay won gold with a time of 28.18 seconds, followed by Anubhav Choudhary with

The New Delhi World Para Athletics Grand Prix 2026 has once again showcased the incredible talent and determination of para athletes from across the world. I am extremely proud of the Indian athletes for their outstanding performances and for finishing on top of the medal tally

DEVENDRA JHAJHARIA | PRESIDENT, PARALYMPIC COMMITTEE OF INDIA

silver in 29.49 seconds, while Chui Yiu Bao of Hong Kong claimed bronze.

In the Men's 200m T37-T44, India again secured all three medals, with Rakeshbhai Bhatt winning gold in 25.20 seconds, Siddharth Manju Bellary taking silver in 28.23 seconds, and Ravikiran Asarelli finishing with bronze in 31.50 seconds.

BCCI downplays Abrar's The Hundred signing

New Delhi: The BCCI vice-president Rajeev Shukla Friday downplayed the acquisition of Pakistan spinner Abrar Ahmed by Sunrisers Leeds during The Hundred auction, saying the development in an "overseas league" is beyond the board's ambit. The Sunrisers Leeds, owned by Chennai-based media conglomerate Sun Group, Thursday signed Pakistan mystery spinner Abrar during The Hundred player auction, making him the first Pakistan cricketer to be picked by an Indian-owned franchise in the tournament. "It doesn't concern us. It's not the IPL. What happens in The Hundred or other overseas leagues, we have nothing to do with it," Shukla told PTI. The franchise paid GBP 190,000 (approximately Rs 2.34 crore) for Abrar after a bidding contest with Trent Rockets. The tournament will be held from July 21 to August 16. Sunrisers Leeds faced backlash following Abrar's signing, with the team's X account suspended briefly. IPL franchises have not signed any Pakistani player since 2009 due to strained diplomatic relations between the two countries. The Sun Group, which also owns Sunrisers Hyderabad in the IPL, completed a full takeover of the erstwhile Northern Superchargers last year, acquiring a 49 per cent stake from the ECB and the remaining 51 per cent from county club Yorkshire for around GBP 100 million. Sunrisers CEO Kavya Maran attended the Thursday's auction and raised the paddle during the bidding. The group also owns Sunrisers Eastern Cape in SA20 but does not have a Pakistan player in its squad. Abrar was the second Pakistan cricketer sold in the auction after mystery spinner Usman Tariq, who was picked by Birmingham Phoenix for GBP 140,000 (approximately Rs 1.72 crore). However, Phoenix have no IPL connection.



Iran football team pushes back on Trump comments

Geneva: Pushing back on US President Donald Trump's comments, Iran's national soccer team says "no one can exclude" it from playing in the men's World Cup in the United States. Instead, a post on the team's official Instagram account Thursday suggested maybe the US team should be excluded after Trump indicated that the host country couldn't guarantee the safety of the Iranian players. Trump wrote in a social media post Thursday that the Iranian team was welcome at the World Cup despite the ongoing war with Iran but that "I really don't believe it is appropriate that they be there, for their own life and safety." Iran is set to play all three of its World Cup group games in the US, which is co-hosting the tournament with Mexico and Canada. The regional war has put doubt on Iran's ability to fulfil its World Cup entry, and sports minister Ahmad Donyamali told state TV this week the current circumstances meant it was not possible to play. But the Iran team's riposte on Instagram confirmed it still wants to participate, and pointed out that the tournament is run by FIFA - not Trump or the US. "The World Cup is a historic and international event and its governing body is FIFA - not any individual, country," the post said. "Certainly, no one can exclude Iran's national team from the World Cup; the only country that could be excluded is one that merely carries the title of host" yet lacks the ability to provide security for the teams participating in this global event." Iran is scheduled to play in Inglewood, California, against New Zealand June 15 and Belgium June 21, before finishing group play in Seattle against Egypt June 26. Iran is a power in Asian soccer, ranked No 20 in the world by FIFA and has qualified for its fourth straight World Cup edition.



CONQUERING HEIGHTS

Pole vault king Duplantis does it again

Mondo Duplantis breaks pole vault world record for the 15th time. This win at the Mondo Classic was his 38 straight pole vault victory — a stretch dating to August 2023

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Uppsala, March 13: Swedish pole vaulter Armand "Mondo" Duplantis broke the world record for the 15th time Thursday, this time clearing 6.31 meters (20 feet, 8 1/4 inches) at an indoor meet where he trains that's named after him.

Duplantis, who broke records at the world championships last year and the Paris Olympics the year before that, has eclipsed his mark by 1 centimeter every time since he first broke it in 2020.

This win at the Mondo Classic was his 38 straight pole vault victory — a stretch dating to August 2023.

Only Sergey Bubka has broken the record more times. The



Ukrainian great broke the outdoor record 17 times and the indoor record 18 times in the 1980s and '90s.

Track and field's governing body changed the rules in 2000 to account for only one record, which can now be broken ei-

ther indoors or outdoors. Duplantis has three outdoor titles, along with two Olympic gold medals. He is scheduled to jump next week at world indoors in Poland, where he'll be going for his fourth straight title in that event.