



Pause matters

Actor Bhumi Pednekar opens up about dealing with burnout and the importance of taking a break

LEISURE | P2



Visa fraud

Eleven Indian nationals, living illegally in the US, charged with visa fraud for conspiring to carry out staged armed robberies

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Meta layoffs

Meta plans sweeping layoffs that could affect 20% or more of the company as it seeks to offset costly AI infrastructure bets

BUSINESS | P11



India's 94th GM

Talented youngster Mayank Chakraborty secures his final GM norm, becoming India's 94th Grandmaster and Northeast's first

SPORTS | P12



STRIKE ON OIL INFRA

Plumes of smoke and fire rise after debris from an intercepted Iranian drone struck an oil facility in Fujairah, United Arab Emirates, Saturday (MORE P10)

AP PHOTO

Iran retaliates as US strikes Kharg

REUTERS & AP

Dubai/Jerusalem, March 14: A missile struck a helipad inside the US Embassy compound in Baghdad and debris from an intercepted Iranian drone hit an oil facility in the United Arab Emirates as the US-Israel war with Iran entered its third week Saturday. Iran warned that it could target selected locations, including US "hideouts" in the United Arab Emirates, after American forces struck military sites on Kharg Island, the main hub for Iran's oil exports.

An Iranian military spokesperson urged civilians in the UAE to evacuate ports, docks and locations where US forces were allegedly operating, claiming the American strikes on Iranian islands had been launched from those areas.

US President Donald Trump had earlier warned that Iran's oil infrastructure on Kharg Island could be targeted if Tehran continued attacks on shipping in the Strait of Hormuz. In a social media post, Trump said US forces had "obliterated" military targets on the island, which handles about 90 per cent of Iran's crude exports.

Iranian officials, however, downplayed the damage and vowed stronger retaliation. The country's Revolutionary Guards

'Many countries' to send warships to Hormuz: Trump

US President Donald Trump said Saturday that many countries would send warships to keep the Strait of Hormuz open, but did not provide details on which countries would do so. "Many Countries, especially those who are affected by Iran's attempted closure of the Hormuz Strait, will be sending War Ships, in conjunction with the United States of America, to keep the Strait open and safe," Trump wrote in a post on Truth Social.

said Iran had the right to defend its sovereignty and could target the origins of missile launches, including facilities in UAE ports. Iranian media reported that nine ballistic missiles and dozens of drones were launched toward the UAE Saturday.

The US military later said it had struck more than 90 Iranian military sites on Kharg Island, including naval mine storage areas and missile bunkers. Meanwhile, Iran warned that any attack on its oil infrastructure would trigger strikes on energy facilities linked to US companies across the region.

Despite the attacks, Iranian officials said oil exports from Kharg Island were continuing, while global oil markets remained volatile amid fears that the conflict could disrupt energy supplies passing through the strategic Gulf shipping lanes.

Woman ends life day after killing 2 minor daughters

PNN & AGENCIES

Sambalpur, March 14: The police Saturday recovered the body of a woman, who allegedly threw her two minor daughters into a well in Sambalpur district, an officer said.

The woman, Sanju Madiki, allegedly killed her daughters in her village Friday and hanged herself March 14.

Kuchinda SDPO Pradip Kumar Das said Sanju's husband James Madiki informed police that his wife had thrown his two daughters -- one four-month-old and another six-year-old -- into a well in the village Friday evening.

Her body was found hanging in another village Saturday morning, the SDPO said.

The officer said a probe is being conducted to find out if the woman herself dumped the daughters into the well and then took her life.

Police said the matter came to light when James could not find his children at home Friday evening. After asking his wife about it, he came to know that she had thrown them into a village well.

Villagers and the woman's husband claimed that she was mentally unwell and suffering from some psychological ailments.

Youth beaten to death by friends

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir, March 14: A 25-year-old man was allegedly beaten to death by his friends following a dispute over sharing liquor during a gathering at a village in Bolangir district, police said Saturday.

The incident occurred Friday night at Rinbachan under Bolangir Sadar police station limits. The deceased was identified as Deepak Naik, a resident of the village. According to reports, Deepak and a few of his friends were drinking together in the village when an argument broke out over the sharing of liquor pouches. The dispute soon escalated into a violent clash, during which one of his friends allegedly assaulted him with a stick.

Deepak did not return home late at night, prompting his father to send his younger son to look for him. The younger brother later found Deepak being beaten in a field by a man



identified as Durga Prasad Behera, also known as Ilu, a resident of the same village. On seeing him, the accused reportedly fled the spot.

Police detained seven persons for questioning. Meanwhile, the family members of the deceased have lodged a written complaint at the police station, alleging that Durga Prasad Behera had taken Deepak from his house and assaulted him with a stick, leading to his death.

Bolangir Sadar police station officer-in-charge Raj Kumar Biswal said the prime suspect has been detained and is being questioned. Further investigation into the incident is on.

SONAM WANGCHUK FREED AFTER SIX MONTHS IN JAIL

The release of Sonam Wangchuk from detention for over six months under the NSA raises uncomfortable questions about the use of stringent laws against dissenting voices. Wangchuk, widely respected for his environmental innovations, had been protesting for constitutional safeguards and greater autonomy for Ladakh. His detention blurred the line between maintaining public order and suppressing legitimate democratic demands. The episode underscores the need for restraint and transparency when extraordinary powers are invoked against civil activism.

AGENCIES

Jodhpur, March 14: Climate activist Sonam Wangchuk was released from Jodhpur central jail Saturday after the Union government decided to revoke his detention with immediate effect.

Wangchuk, 59, an environmental advocate who became



a key figure in Ladakh's movement for greater autonomy, was held in September and later charged under the National Security Act following protests that left four people dead and dozens wounded.

The government had blamed the violence on "provocative speeches" by Wangchuk, who had been on a hunger strike demanding either full federal statehood for Ladakh or constitutional protections for its tribal communities, land and fragile environment.

Authorities in the sparse-

Elephant attacks claim 3 lives in Kandhamal dist

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Phulbani, March 14: Three persons were trampled to death by separate herds of elephants in the jungles of Kandhamal district, forest officials said Saturday. While two persons died at Damba forest in Petapanfa gram panchayat Friday evening, another man met the same fate at Paburia forest on Saturday morning, they said.

All three had gone to the forest to collect firewood, said Manikeswari Patnaik, the forest range officer, G Udayagiri.

The deceased persons were identified as Bama Pradhan (63), Kirtan Bugarty (65) and Duri Pradhan (32). The incidents sparked panic in the G Udayagiri area, where people prefer to remain indoors, fearing elephant attack. They alleged that the forest department did not alert the people regarding the movement of jumbo herds through their area.

Meanwhile, the forest department is tracking the jumbo movement using drones. **P5**

Thailand's 'Death Fest' invites visitors to embrace mortality

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Nonthaburi, March 14: Thailand's 'Death Fest' invites people to confront mortality while also offering practical services and spiritual advice for the inevitable.

The unusual fair, now in its second year, has broached the subject that's uncomfortable for many. It's also one of the central teachings of Buddhism, which shapes much of Thailand's culture, about life's unavoidable sufferings: birth, old age, sickness and death.

Sanguan Ngamvinijaroon attended the three-day event Friday with her mother in Nonthaburi province near Bangkok. She said death used to be a difficult subject for her family, but having spent more than 20 years caring for

ill family members, including her husband with a stroke and relatives with cancer, she has witnessed several deaths firsthand and now feels more at ease talking about it.

She said she liked the fair because "it's not just about dying well. It's also about the present moment and taking good care of our lives while we're still here."

The event brought together experts and organisations involved in health care, financial planning, palliative care, funeral services and memorial innovations. Activities and talks focused not only on preparing for death but also on maintaining quality of life until the final days.

"Death involves everybody. It's not just about you," said Zcongklod Bangyikhan, editor-in-chief of The Cloud mag-



azine and one of the event's lead organisers. "Instead of wondering what dying will be like, maybe we should think about how to make things easier for the people who remain after

we're gone." One popular exhibit is called "Test Die." Visitors can lie inside coffins of different sizes and styles while looking at themselves in a mirror sus-

pended above. The experience is designed to prompt reflection rather than fear.

Office worker Phinutda Seehad said it felt calming.

"I don't think I'm scared of death," she said. "I also don't want to die, but when the time comes, I don't think it will be that frightening."

One company displayed a biodegradable coffin made from mycelium - the rootlike fibers of fungi - which helps naturally with decomposition.

Founder Jirawan Kumsao said the design reflects a more environmentally friendly approach to burial. Although she brought a human-sized coffin to the event, her company mainly produces coffins for pets.

"It gives people comfort to know they've cared for their pets until the very end," she

said. "It looks like a spacecraft, a capsule, for sending them to another world."

Noppasaward Panyajaray, founder of the online memorial platform Sharesouls, has seen a similar emotional bond. Her service allows users to store photos and share stories about loved ones, creating a digital space where friends and family can leave messages and pay their respects.

She said her original idea was for the platform to preserve memories of family members. But she was surprised to find that many users were creating memorial pages for their pets.

"Many people sent me a message to say thank you, because nowadays we don't really have any space to store stories or memories about their pets," she said.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



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leisure

FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
At times it is a good thing to be under pressure, because it brings out your potential to the fullest. You will outsmart all your colleagues in the work you do. However, results may not match your expectations. Ganesh advises patience as results don't come overnight.

TAURUS
This is a great day for expressions your ideas and feelings. Ganesh urges you to open up and share hopes and concerns, dreams and aspirations with your others. Romance is in the air. You could be flying deliciously high on the wings of love, in the company of your sweetheart. You are likely to spend some intimate moments with children and youngsters.

GEMINI
A fantastic day to enter into all kinds of partnerships. A day to bond with your close friends, open joint accounts, strike deals, and make plans for a bright future, says Ganesh. You will be at the top of your game in almost everything you do. Some of you, who want to go for further studies, may take a well-informed decision today.

CANCER
Today, you may find yourself marooned in a sea of emotions, and the tides of turmoil will keep on getting stronger as the day progresses. However, such dire circumstances bring out the best in you, and you will be able to wade through the storm with nothing but patience on your side.

LEO
Some promises are like whispers in the wind — never meant to be realised. Today holds something similar, in that you shall be so close and yet so far from what you desire most. Ganesh advises you to be a generous winner and a graceful loser. Remember, every day is not Sunday; also, you cannot win each time. Lower your expectations in order to avoid disappointments.

VIRGO
Don't dilly-dally when it comes to matters of health, says Ganesh. You look lean and mean to take on those old wounds today. But peace and prosperity are the flavours of the day. Ganesh advises you to invest time in fun and entertainment today — just to get those batteries charged.

LIBRA
If ever there was a time when that industrious nature of yours was to listen to your conscience, it is today. Call it a positive day to embark upon new business adventures, particularly for freelancers. It is mighty hard to go wrong when you listen to your inner voice and back it up with zeal. The hard work of the morning and the pressure of the afternoon will give way to pleasure in the evening.

SCORPIO
Better get down to serious business if you want to reap the benefits of your past actions. You are liable to treat subordinates as equals when deciding the best course of actions to achieve your goals. A golden favourable day for you, says Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS
Zoom in on complicated problems and solve them with style, says Ganesh. Don't fret over problems; instead concentrate on ways to solve them. Your day will get even better when perhaps, news from an overseas friend reaches you.

CAPRICORN
Drag yourself out of the house, do some shopping, or better still, appoint an interior designer. You are very likely to move into a new house very soon, foresees Ganesh. This, of course, may also eat into your savings and force you to be thrifty by the end of the day, but you won't regret this once-in-a-while extravagant outing. It's all for a reason, after all.

AQUARIUS
A romantic liaison is headed towards you. Quite naturally, you don't want to be caught dead in a ratty old tee. Today, you want to keep everyone happy and amused, both at home and at work. And you manage wonderfully, says Ganesh.

PISCES
Being a graceful loser is just about as important as being a generous winner, for success does not come by every day. Lowering your expectations will help steel you against disappointments today. There are indications you will embark on a pleasure trip with your soul mate, says Ganesh.

Bhumi trusts her instincts

Mumbai: Actor Bhumi Pednekar recently spoke about dealing with burnout and the importance of taking a break when needed. She had earlier shared that she stepped away from work for a brief period to spend time with family and reconnect with herself after years of continuous film projects.

During an appearance on *The Right Angle with Sonal Kalra Season 3*, Bhumi was asked what advice she would give young people facing a similar sense of burnout. She said, "The world has set a lot of norms and standards for us to live up to, that we haven't set up for ourselves. My advice is that when you know what your personal goals are and what your larger vision for life is, it's okay to take a break."

Speaking about the pressure to constantly explain personal decisions, she said, "This can only happen when you cut out the external noise from your life. You don't owe anybody else an explanation but yourself."

She concluded by encouraging people to trust their instincts. "Always listen to your instinct because it's often wiser than what your mind might tell you."

AGENCIES



SWEENEY CREDITS EUPHORIA FOR GIVING HER BODY CONFIDENCE

American actress Sydney Sweeney has admitted she never felt confident about her body until she starred in *Euphoria*. "I just wanted to hide my chest. It wasn't until [I played] Cassie in *Euphoria* that I started realising that we should embrace our bodies and feel really good in our skin."

SPIELBERG BELIEVES ALIENS ARE REAL

Steven Spielberg believes aliens are real and is disappointed he's never met one. The 79-year-old filmmaker's upcoming movie *Disclosure Day* is about UFOs and while he doesn't know for sure if extra-terrestrials exist, he has a very strong suspicion that they do.



Art expo *Ekaa* celebrates sacred Yogini heritage

Bhubaneswar: The travelling art exhibition *Ekaa - The One* opened at the Buddha Art Gallery here Saturday, attracting artists, historians and cultural enthusiasts. Conceptualised by artist and social entrepreneur Beena Unnikrishnan, the three-day exhibition will continue until March 16.

Inspired by the spiritual heritage of the Hirapur Chausathi Yogini Temple, the exhibition presents a contemporary artistic interpretation of the 64 Yoginis, sacred forms of Shakti symbolising wisdom, intuition, courage and transformation. The show features a rare collection of all 64 Yoginis painted by a single artist, making it a unique cultural and artistic initiative.

Speaking at the opening, Debjani Bhuyan, Deputy Director of the Odia Language, Literature and Culture Department and Secretary of the Odisha Lalit Kala Akademi, appreciated the concept and said the exhibition highlights the rich spiritual traditions associated with the Yogini heritage.

The exhibition is organised by the Kankali Trust for Arts



PHOTO: BIRASH NAYAK

and Cultural Economic Development, founded by Unnikrishnan to promote artistic traditions, support underrepresented creative communities and encourage dialogue around gender inclusivity and cultural heritage.

Unnikrishnan said the exhibition is part of the "64 Yogini Trail", a national artistic journey covering more than 10,000 kilometres across 16 states.

The project began in Chennai and travelled through Kerala and Coimbatore before reaching Bhubaneswar, aiming to connect India's ancient sacred feminine traditions with modern artistic expression.

One of the key highlights of the exhibition is the painting of Mahamaya, inspired by the sacred traditions of the Hirapur Yogini Temple.

PNN

Rasha's kind gesture



Mumbai: Actor Rasha Thadani has adopted a rescued monkey named Angad, stepping forward to support the animal's recovery and rehabilitation after it was found injured.

According to updates shared by rescuers, Angad was discovered in a severely injured and fragile condition. Angad's condition and rescue story were later shared on social media to raise awareness and support for his treatment. The post caught the attention of Thadani, who decided to step in and contribute directly to the monkey's recovery. By adopting Angad, she will support the costs of his medical treatment, nutrition and long-term care during rehabilitation.

Reacting to the rescue story, Thadani reportedly expressed concern for the animal's condition and chose to help ensure he receives proper care. "Every animal deserves compassion and a chance to heal," she said while speaking about the importance of supporting rescued animals.

The development is consistent with Thadani's long-standing interest in animal welfare. In previous posts, she has also encouraged people to adopt animals rather than buy them. Sharing the story of animals she rescued earlier, she wrote, "A little love, care and compassion can go a long way. Adopt, don't shop."

Angad is currently under the care of an animal rescue team that is overseeing his treatment and rehabilitation.

AGENCIES

ASIM UTSAV - DAY II



The members of Ananya theatre troupe performed Odia play *Sebatira Shaba* on the second day of the festival organised by Asim Basu Foundation at Bhanja Kala Mandap, Saturday. Written by Pandit Godavarish Mishra, the story was dramatised by Pratap Rout and directed by Sunil Pattnaik. The play was centred on atrocities inflicted on people by British India government during *Na'anika Durbhikshya* or the Great Famine of 1866 that occurred in Odisha.

MANORANJAN MISHRA

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

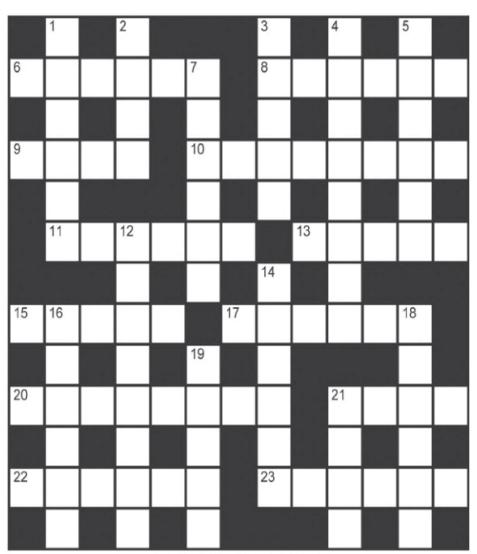


BREVITY



FUN POST

CROSSWORD



- Across
- 6 Necromancer
 - 8 Madness
 - 9 Picnic pest
 - 10 Mental state
 - 11 Strong-scented mat-forming Eurasian herb
 - 13 Small songbird
 - 15 English race place
 - 17 Puzzle
 - 20 Happy-go-lucky
 - 21 Carnival attraction
 - 22 Tame once
 - 23 Relish
 - 3 Dish
 - 4 Needlecraft
 - 5 Biting
 - 7 Wyvern
 - 12 Zimbabwe, once
 - 14 Ticks off
 - 16 Penumbra
 - 18 Totals (4,2)
 - 19 Salad oil holder
 - 21 Talk wildly

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.

								8	4
	2	6							
	7		1		4				9
	1		8					3	
8								4	7
3	6						9		1
				3					2
				2	9			7	

SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

L	E	A	D	F	I	L	M	N	O	I	R
A	M	G	N	O	R	D	I				
W	R	I	T	E	R	S	T	R	I	S	T
M	S	M	E	O	S	E					
A	S	S	A	I	C	E	R	I	S	E	
K	E	N	T								
E	U	C	L	I	D		C	A	N	Y	O
R	L						A	S			F
C	O	B	A	L	T		S	E	T	T	O
K	S	L	O				E	A	R		
I	N	E	P	T			L	I	T	H	I
E	U	E	L	S			N	E			
V	A	P	O	R	I	S	E		S	T	A

SUDOKU

1	7	9	5	8	2	6	3	4
3	6	5	9	7	4	1	8	2
4	2	8	1	6	3	5	7	9
5	8	7	6	3	9	2	4	1
2	9	3	4	1	7	8	5	6
6	4	1	8	2	5	7	9	3
8	5	2	3	4	1	9	6	7
7	3	6	2	9	8	4	1	5
9	1	4	7	5	6	3	2	8

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

TMC, BJP workers clash in Kolkata ahead of PM's rally

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, March 14: Clashes broke out between TMC and BJP supporters in central Kolkata Saturday, barely half an hour before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's rally at the Brigade Parade Ground, leaving a police officer and a leader of the saffron party injured, officials said.

Allegations also surfaced that stones were thrown at the residence of West Bengal minister Shashi Panja in Girish Park area. The violence took place around 5 km from the rally venue as BJP supporters were marching to attend the PM's meeting, which marked the culmination of the party's state-wide 'Parivartan Yatra' ahead of the Assembly elections.

Panja, flanked by her Cabinet colleague Bratya Basu and MP Saayoni Ghosh, told a press meet later in the day that she was hit on the abdomen by bricks hurled by the attackers from outside, and several supporters of her party, including her office staff, were injured.

Panja claimed that the attackers "wanted to kill me".

"Is this BJP's narrative about Poriborton (change) to mount an attack on a woman minister and the residence of veteran politician late Ajit Panja?" she said.



BLACK DIAMOND: With the LPG crisis engulfing eateries and restaurants, a daily wage worker sorts through a pile of coal stocked in a godown in Nerul area of Mumbai as the demand for same skyrockets

RS polls: BJP shifts MLAs to Paradip

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 14: The ruling BJP Saturday evening shifted all its MLAs to the port town of Paradip ahead of the Rajya Sabha elections March 16.

The BJP MLAs, including ministers, boarded two luxury buses to the port town after a crucial meeting with senior party leaders at the BJP state party headquarters here. The meeting was attended by Odisha BJP president Manmohan Samal, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, senior party leaders and the BJP's central observer for Rajya Sabha polls.

The BJP has fielded Samal and re-nominated MP Sujeet Kumar as the official candidates and backed party leader and hotelier Dilip Ray as an Independent candidate in the Rajya Sabha elections.

The BJP MLAs will stay at a luxury hotel in Paradip owned by Ray, party sources said.

While boarding the bus, Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister KC Patra said, "We are certain to win in three of the four Rajya Sabha seats going to polls on March 16. The party has already prepared a strategy. The MLAs will be imparted training at Paradip before they come to cast their votes."

Self-immolation bid over 'police inaction'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nuapada, March 14: Four members of a family attempted self-immolation on the premises of the District and Sessions Judge's court here during the National Lok Adalat Saturday, alleging police inaction in a longstanding dispute.

Sources said Dasarathi Meher, 40, his wife Upasi Meher, 27, daughter Anuradha, 7, and son Aditya, 5, of Duajhar village under Khariar police limits, poured petrol on themselves in front of the National Lok Adalat venue, protesting alleged harassment by neighbours and the lack of police action.

According to Dasarathi, the family has been embroiled in a land dispute with neigh-



bours for over three years. He alleged that their house was earlier set on fire at night while the family was asleep. However, they had a narrow escape. Despite filing a written complaint with the police, no action was taken, he claimed.

He further alleged that his auto-rickshaw, which he used to earn a livelihood, was also set ablaze by the same group. Despite approaching the police again, no steps were taken, Dasarathi said.

The situation escalated Friday night when the neighbours allegedly threatened to kill the family. Dasarathi alleged that his wife was raped during the incident and claimed repeated complaints to the police did not lead to any action.

Frustrated and fearing for their safety, the family attempted self-immolation in front of the National Lok Adalat on the court premises.

Police personnel and members of the public present at the spot quickly intervened and rescued them. The family was taken to Nuapada Sadar police station, where they were asked to wash off the petrol and were later detained for questioning.

The incident has sparked concern in the locality, with residents demanding a thorough investigation and action against those responsible.

Nuapada police station officer-in-charge Gangadhar Meher said the family has been detained and was being questioned.

N Korea fires 10 ballistic missiles during US-S Korea military drills

REUTERS

Yeoncheon, March 14: North Korea fired more than 10 ballistic missiles into the sea Saturday, South Korea's military said, as the US and South Korean forces conducted military drills and US President Donald Trump renewed overtures towards Pyongyang for dialogue.

Japan's coast guard said it had detected what could be a ballistic missile that fell into the sea. It appeared to have fallen outside Japan's exclusive economic zone, public broadcaster NHK said, citing the military.

The missiles were launched from an area near the capital Pyongyang, around 1:20 pm



(0430 GMT) towards the sea off the country's east coast, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement.

North Korea has test-launched a wide range of ballistic and cruise missiles for more than two decades in a push to develop the means to deliver nuclear weapons, which it is believed to have successfully built.

As a result, Pyongyang has

been under multiple UN Security Council sanctions since 2006 but it remains defiant, despite severe obstacles they created to its trade, economy and defence.

South Korea and Washington this week launched the annual major drills in South Korea, which they say are purely defensive, aimed at testing readiness against military threats from North Korea.

Hundreds of US and South Korean troops conducted river-crossing drills Saturday with hardware including tanks and armoured combat vehicles, overseen by the commander of their combined forces. The US military has about 28,500 troops and squadrons of fighter jets stationed in South Korea.

Bike taxi rider arrested for molesting woman passenger

NEW DELHI

New Delhi, March 14: A 34-year-old bike taxi rider has been arrested for allegedly molesting a woman passenger during a ride in northwest Delhi's Rohini, police said Saturday. The incident occurred March 12 when the woman booked a bike taxi through a mobile application to travel from Rohini Sector 15 to Pitampura.

As per a complaint lodged at KNK Marg police station, the woman was travelling as a pillion rider when the accused allegedly started misbehaving with her near the Sector 13 dividing road on KNK Marg. When she objected to his behaviour, the rider allegedly threatened her not to raise an alarm. The woman was later dropped near FU Block in Pitampura, following which she approached the police with a written complaint, officials said.

The accused, identified as Sachin, a resident of Badli village in Delhi, was subsequently arrested.

Stranded off Iran, Indian sailors just want to go home

REUTERS

New Delhi, March 14: Stranded for two weeks at the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas as drones and missiles set ships ablaze nearby, 26-year-old seafarer Ambuj says he has not been home for six months and cannot wait to see his family.

Ambuj, who asked Reuters not to use his second name for security reasons, is one of about 23,000 Indians working on merchant, harbour and offshore vessels across the wider Gulf region, which is bearing the brunt of the war between Iran and the US and Israel.

Hundreds of tankers and cargo ships have been waiting to pass through the Strait of Hormuz, where

Iranian attacks have killed three Indian crew members and left another missing. The plight of Indian sailors in and around the Strait has become a major issue at home, with Delhi saying it is coordinating with multiple authorities, including in Iran, to ensure their safety.

"We know how dangerous it could be to sail without a navy escort or without permission," Ambuj said by phone from his ship, stuck with 15 other crew members and surrounded by more than 50 other ships.

"The company I work for has released us from duty and we are now waiting for safe passage because flights from Tehran are not operating. If we get clearance to sail to the

Middle East or anywhere nearby, we will dock there and take the earliest flight home," he said.

Bound for a Southeast Asian country, Ambuj said the crew panicked early in March when the captain received a warning over wireless from Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps that passing through the Strait would have consequences.

The crew initially waited for clearance to sail, but it never came. They are now coming to terms with the possibility of being stranded for many more days or even weeks, Ambuj said.

India is the world's third-largest supplier of seafarers, with more than 300,000 sailors working across global shipping fleets, according to government data.

Dinosaur fossils in Brazil reveal new giant species

REUTERS

Sao Paulo, March 14: Brazilian scientists have identified a new species of giant dinosaur with ties to a similar animal found in Spain, reinforcing knowledge that land routes once connected parts of South America, Africa and Europe about 120 million years ago.

Named *Dasosaurus tocantinensis*, the species is one of the biggest found in the South American country and was described this month in the Journal of Systematic Palaeontology.

The fossils were uncovered in 2021 at a site hosting infrastructure works near Davinopolis, in Brazil's northeastern state of Maranhao, and the research was led by Elver Mayer of the Federal University of the Sao Francisco Valley.

The remains include a femur measuring about 1.5 metres (59 inches), which helped researchers estimate the animal stretched roughly 20 metres long.

"As the excavation progressed over the days, we began to see the evidence of that huge bone, which is the femur," said Leonardo Kerber, a palaeontologist at the Federal University of Santa Maria (UFSM) who contributed to the research.

"This indicates it was a very large dinosaur. Today we know *Dasosaurus* is among the biggest dinosaurs ever found in Brazil," he noted.

According to UFSM, analysis indicated the species is the closest known relative of *Garumbatitan morellensis*, a dinosaur described in Spain.

Their lineage was European and may have dispersed into what is now South America roughly 130 million years ago, likely via northern Africa, before the Atlantic fully opened, the university said.

Dasosaurus tocantinensis's name combines references to the region where the dinosaur was found, including the Tocantins River, a major waterway whose eastern margins lie near the fossil site.

Artist's impression of *Dasosaurus*

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RAJYA SABHA POLLS

Naveen raises alarm over 'horse-trading' attempts

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 14: Former chief minister and Biju Janata Dal (BJD) president Naveen Patnaik Saturday raised alarm over alleged "horse-trading" attempts by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the state ahead of the Rajya Sabha elections scheduled for Monday.

Reacting to the development, Patnaik said he firmly believes in democracy but feels "scared" that democratic principles are being undermined.

The BJD chief alleged that despite lacking adequate numbers, the ruling party has fielded a fifth candidate for the Rajya Sabha polls and is claiming victory, raising serious questions about the integrity of the electoral process.

Patnaik condemned the alleged attempts to influence elected representatives and urged the media and the public to remain vigilant.

He said strict monitoring of the activities of leaders and members of the ruling party was necessary to safeguard democracy and to ensure that elected representatives cast their votes in accordance with the Constitution and the norms laid down by the Election Commission of India.

The Congress has reportedly



Patnaik said he believes in democracy but feels "scared" that democratic principles are being undermined

He condemned alleged attempts to influence elected representatives and urged the media and public to remain vigilant

Senior BJD leader Dibya Shankar Mishra also raised concerns, alleging efforts to encourage "horse-trading" among legislators and calling for greater transparency in the election process

leader Dibya Shankar Mishra echoed similar concerns and called for greater transparency in the election process.

Mishra alleged that efforts were being made to encourage "horse trading" among legislators and warned that such practices could weaken democratic institutions.

Expressing concerns over the possible horse-trading move allegedly by the BJP, Mishra appealed to the media and the public to keep a close watch on the activities of leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party in connection with the Rajya Sabha election from the state.

"Protect democracy and ensure that no horse trading takes place so that the election process is conducted according to the norms of the Constitution and the rules set by the Election Commission," he said.

He added that every elected representative should exercise their franchise independently and in accordance with constitutional provisions and electoral norms.

The allegations have sharpened the political atmosphere in Odisha ahead of the Rajya Sabha polls, with opposition leaders raising questions about the conduct of the ruling party and the fairness of the election process.

moved some of its legislators to Karnataka, where the party is in power, amid fears of cross-voting in the closely contested Rajya Sabha elections in the state.

Meanwhile, senior BJD

CLASSIFIED

AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an Affidavit sworn before the Executive Magistrate, Nimapara, Affidavit No.08, dated 10.03.2026, I Rajesh Mangaraj, S/o Prashan Kumar Mangaraj resident of Village At/ PO-Garhchandapur, PS-Balanga, Dist.-Puri, Odisha, declare that the name of my father has been denoted as Hari Mangaraj, S/o Jita Mangaraj in the R.O.R. Mouza Garhchandapur, Khata No.323 instead of Prashan Kumar Mangaraj, S/o Jita Mangaraj. Hari Mangaraj & Prashan Kumar Mangaraj, S/o Jita Mangaraj of above noted address is one and same person. Sd./- Rajesh Mangaraj

LOST

Notice is hereby given that the original linked deeds relating to the property situated at Plot no. 838/6351, Mouza : Dumuduma, Tahasil : Bhubaneswar, Subregistrar : Khandagiri, standing in the name of Soumya Ranjan Mohapatra and Arpita Biswal, have been lost/ misplaced. The details of the documents are as mentioned: Sale deed bearing document no.11131708879, dated 22.11.2017 of Sanjukta Mohanty, W/o - Narayan Mohapatra. Original ROR issued in the name of Sanjukta Mohanty with Khata no. 432/4221. Original ROR issued in the name of Sujata Patra, W/o - Asim Amitabh Nayak with Khata no. 432/5951. If someone gets the said sale deed and Khata, kindly contact : Soumya Ranjan Mohapatra, 8249691431

Yr's 1st Nat'l Lok Adalat held across Odisha

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, March 14: The first National Lok Adalat of the year was held across Odisha Saturday, leading to the disposal of a large number of pending and pre-litigation cases across courts and tribunals in the state.

According to a press release issued by the Odisha State Legal Services Authority (OSLSA), the Lok Adalat was conducted in all 30 district courts as well as several tribunals, including the Debt Recovery Tribunal and State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission in Cuttack, and the Industrial Tribunal, State Education Tribunal and Labour Court in Bhubaneswar.

The Lok Adalat was held under the guidance of Chief Justice of the Orissa High Court Justice Harish Tandon, who



is also the Patron-in-Chief of OSLSA, and Justice Manash Ranjan Pathak, Executive Chairman of OSLSA.

During the drive, 19,801 court-based pending cases, 2,81,612 revenue matters, and 10,277 pre-litigation disputes were disposed of or settled

across the state.

Various categories of cases, including criminal compoundable offences, motor accident claims, bank recovery matters, traffic challans, labour disputes and other civil cases, were taken up for settlement during the Lok Adalat.

Khurda: 50,962 cases settled

Bhubaneswar: The first district-level National Lok Adalat was held across Khurda district under the aegis of the Khurda District Legal Services Authority, Bhubaneswar. The Lok Adalat was conducted at all judicial and revenue court premises in the district, including Bhubaneswar, Khurda, Banpur, Chilika, Tangi, Begunia and Jatni. According to official sources, a total of 88,694 cases were taken up, of which 50,962 were settled. An amount of ₹18.55 crore was realised through revenue recovery, fines and compromise settlements. Among the settled cases, 5,323 were civil and criminal matters, while 45,245 revenue cases and 394 pre-litigation cases were also disposed of. District and Sessions Judge and Chairman of the Khurda District Legal Services Authority, Biranchi Narayan Mohanty, thanked all judicial officers and officials for the successful conduct of the Lok Adalat. He also expressed gratitude to revenue officials, regional bank managers, telecom authorities and insurance officials for their cooperation.

3 arrested for tea stall theft in City



Bhubaneswar: Nayapalli police arrested three youths for allegedly breaking into a roadside tea stall near Vivekananda Hospital and stealing goods worth around ₹15,000 to ₹20,000, officials said Saturday. The accused have been identified as Bhagyaban Behera (19), Arjan Kumar Behera (18) and Deepak Nayak (19). According to police, the complainant had closed the shop and returned home on the night of February 22 as usual. When he came back the next morning to open the stall, he found the lock broken and several items used for the business missing. The shopkeeper subsequently lodged a complaint with Nayapalli police, following which a case was registered and an investigation was launched. During the probe, police examined CCTV footage from a nearby showroom, which reportedly showed three individuals entering the tea stall late at night and leaving after some time carrying bags. Based on the footage and local enquiries, police identified the suspects as residents of Ganapatnagar Basti under the Nayapalli police limits. Acting on a tip-off, a police team conducted a raid in the ID Market area and apprehended the three accused. A mobile phone and other stolen articles were recovered from their possession. During interrogation, the accused reportedly confessed to their involvement in the theft. They have been forwarded to court, while further investigation into the case is underway, police said.

BIPF marks 15 years of impact, presents Shambhavi Puraskar

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 14: The Bansidhar & Ila Panda Foundation (BIPF) commemorated 15 years of its journey in social development while presenting the 13th edition of the Shambhavi Puraskar, an annual award recognising excellence and innovation in grassroots social work in Odisha.

Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida attended the event as the chief guest, while Magic Bus India Foundation Global CEO Jayant Rastogi was present as the guest of honour. The ceremony was held at a city hotel here Saturday.

In her keynote address, Parida said, "The chain of support and networks that BIPF has created by reaching out to and backing grassroots changemakers will inspire more people and organisations and strengthen government initiatives to transform communities."

BIPF founder and CEO Shaifalika Panda said, "BIPF's 15-year journey has been shaped by relationships, shared learning and a deep sense of togetherness with our communities. At its core, development is about people. When given the opportunity, they can build futures far stronger than anything we could design for



them." Rastogi said, "Fifteen years of sustained development work is not easy; it requires conviction, patience and deep belief. BIPF has demonstrated that belief by recognising and supporting grassroots leadership. When the most invisible citizens of our country begin to believe in their future, that is when the nation truly begins to rise."

At the event, the Jury Commendation Certificate, carrying a cash award of ₹1 lakh, was presented to Sasmitha Meher of Bargarh for her contribution to preserving Odisha's textile heritage while adapting it to contemporary markets. She has also enabled nearly 100 marginalised women from Tora and nearby villages to secure sustainable livelihoods.

The Shambhavi Youth Icon Award was presented to sisters Sarmilata Pradhan and Yamuna Pradhan from Jiridikia village in Kandhamal district for empowering local girls through football and raising awareness against

child marriage through the sport.

Over the past 15 years, BIPF has created a significant impact across six districts in Odisha, reaching 690 villages and positively touching the lives of more than 2.7 million people through community-led development initiatives. To mark the milestone, a coffee table book chronicling the foundation's journey was unveiled by Deputy CM Pravati Parida.

At the event, two organisations—Sathee Parivar and Bolangir Gramodyog Samiti (BGS)—received the Shambhavi Puraskar 2026, each carrying a cash award of ₹5 lakh, a citation and a crest.

Sathee Parivar was honoured for its work in preventing snakebite deaths in Angul district through community awareness and village response teams, training over 9,800 volunteers and saving 490 lives in three years. BGS was recognised for empowering marginalised communities and transforming agriculture in 29 villages of Tureikela block.

Loyola School marks Silver Jubilee with grand finale



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 14: Loyola School Bhubaneswar concluded its Silver Jubilee celebrations here, Saturday, with a grand closing ceremony, marking 25 years of its journey in education, and value-based learning.

The event brought together students, teachers, alumni and distinguished guests. The closing ceremony began with welcoming Archbishop John Barwa and Father Jerome Cutinha as guests of honour, followed by lighting of the ceremonial lamp and a hymn presented by the school choir.

Rector Father Augustine Ezhakunnel delivered the welcome address, reflecting on the institution's growth and achievements over the past 25 years. The programme also featured a welcome dance by students.

On the occasion, the annual school magazine Loyola X-Pressions 2025-26, was released,

highlighting creative contributions from students and staff.

A major highlight of the evening was an original musical, titled 'Loyolean Rise - The Ignatian Inspiration,' performed by the students, showcasing the ideals and spirit of the institution.

During the event, the school honoured staff members who completed 25 years and 15 years of service, and felicitated teachers who achieved 100 per cent attendance during the 2024-25 and 2025-26 academic sessions. Students also presented a vibrant dance performance showcasing themes of perseverance and self-belief.

Addressing the gathering, Barwa congratulated the institution on reaching the milestone and appreciated its role in shaping young minds through discipline, compassion and holistic education. The programme concluded with a lively dance performance by staff members and a vote of thanks delivered by Principal A Amaladoss.

3-day 'Fit India Carnival' at Puri beach from March 21

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 14: The pristine shores of Puri will host a three-day 'Fit India Carnival' from March 21 to 23, transforming the iconic Puri beach into a vibrant hub for promoting healthy lifestyles and sports awareness.

At a high-level review meeting, Odisha Sports and Youth Services Minister Suryabanshi Suraj assessed the preparedness for the event along with officials from the Sports Authority of India (SAI), Puri district administration, MY Bharat, and NSS Odisha.

The carnival is being organised under the Fit India Mission by the SAI Regional Cen-

tre, Kolkata, in collaboration with National Centre of Excellence (NCOE) in Jagatpur. The initiative aims to encourage people to incorporate physical fitness into their daily routines.

Given Puri's status as a globally recognized heritage city and major tourist destination, a large turnout of participants and visitors is expected.

During the meeting, the Minister emphasised that the key focus of the carnival will be public outreach and ensuring safety. The event aims to promote health awareness not only among youth but also among tourists and the general public.

Designed as a community-driven initiative, the carnival will bring together resi-

dents, students, and visitors to spread the message of wellness against the scenic backdrop of the heritage city.

The festival will showcase a unique blend of modern wellness activities and traditional sports. Live competitions in wrestling (kusti) and Malkhamb will be held during the event, along with wellness activities such as Chair Yoga and Laughter Yoga sessions.

The carnival will also promote awareness through sand art displays and traditional folk performances, including Gotipua and Sahi Jata.

Students from local schools and colleges, along with tourists, will participate in various sessions throughout the three-

day event.

To ensure smooth crowd management, the venue will be divided into dedicated 'Activity Zones'. The Puri district administration and police will provide comprehensive security arrangements, including lifeguards, fire services, and first-aid facilities.

Adding to the festive atmosphere, the popular mascot 'Oilly' will be a major attraction for visitors.

The review meeting was attended by Commissioner-cum-Secretary of the Sports and Youth Services Department Bhupendra Singh Poonia, Additional Secretary Bijay Swain, along with other senior officials of the department.

Meet on digital rights, child safety

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 14: A discussion programme titled 'Juventica - Digital Rights and Child Safety' was organised at the State Police Headquarters here Saturday through a joint initiative of Odisha Police and Unicef.

The programme aimed to bring together administrators, senior police officials, academicians, parents, students and child rights experts to discuss the challenges and opportunities children face in the digital world. Participants deliberated on how institutions, families and society can work together to safeguard children's rights and well-being in the online environment. Joining the event, Director General of Police Yogesh Bahadur Khurania highlighted the growing cyber threats faced by children and emphasised the responsibility of law-enforcement



agencies to address them.

He informed that 20 new cyber police stations have been established in the state to strengthen cyber safety awareness, and cyber experts are being engaged for technical support.

He also noted that 71 police stations have developed child-friendly spaces, or 'Friendly Corners', and reiterated the commitment to make the entire police system more child-friendly across Odisha.

He stressed that ensuring children's safety in the digital space is a shared responsibility of the police and civil society.

Speaking on the occasion, Director General of Police (Crime Branch) Binaytosh Mishra said that India's internet user base has grown significantly—from 125 million in 2011 to 845 million in 2021. He also shared information about the initiatives taken by the Cyber Wing's Children and Women Online Abuse Monitoring Unit to identify and remove harmful and explicit online content (CSEAM).

During the discussion, several commitments were announced to strengthen digital safety for children. Odisha Police will launch 'Raksha Sathi' volun-

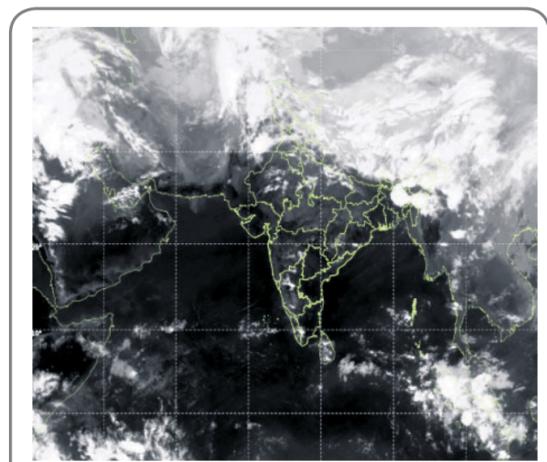
■ DGP Yogesh Bahadur Khurania said 20 new cyber police stations have been set up to strengthen cyber safety awareness in the state

■ He added that 71 police stations now have child-friendly 'Friendly Corners', with efforts underway to make the police system more child-friendly across Odisha

teer programme and provide advanced training for Child Welfare Police Officers (CWPOs).

The School and Mass Education department will incorporate digital safety education, including digital hygiene and psycho-social first aid, into the school curriculum.

In addition, the police and the education department will ensure the participation of Child Welfare Police Officers in parent-teacher meetings. UNICEF Odisha will also prepare a special training curriculum to support this initiative.



WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	33.2°	32.8°	Light to Moderate rain or thunderstorm very likely
Min Temp	25.1°	22.6°	
Humidity	84%	83%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	



NEPOTISM IN PACS RECRUITMENT

Admin recommends action against DRCS over illegal posting

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sonepur, March 14: The District Collector here has recommended action against the Deputy Registrar of Cooperative Societies (DRCS), Subarnapur division, following allegations of irregularities in recruitment at the Maradugochha Primary Agricultural Cooperative Society (PACS) under Tarbha block of Subarnapur district.

The issue triggered statewide buzz with the role of DRCS Sanjay Kumar Tripathy coming under scanner over the alleged illegal appointments.

The issue gained momentum after the matter was first reported in Orissa POST, sparking debate over nepotism in government-related recruitment. Meanwhile, Subarnapur Collector Nruparaj Sahu reportedly expressed surprise after examining documents related to the appointments. Following indications of the DRCS's involvement, the Collector has recommended the state government to take strict action against Tripathy.

According to reports, PACS secretary-cum-CEO Nabin Das, watchman Makunda Naik and peon Manoj Das allegedly attempted to secure jobs for their sons while still in service. They contacted higher authorities and, citing health reasons, applied for voluntary retirement. The PACS managing committee approved the proposal.

However, without reviewing the recruitment proposal of the managing committee, the DRCS allegedly misused his authority and granted administrative approval. The secretary, watchman and peon took VRS, and four new appointments were made the same day, reportedly in violation of government rules February 19.

Sources said PACS secretary Nabin Das managed to appoint



his son Ambareesh as the in-charge CEO and secretary of the society. His son-in-law, Anil Kumar Das of Remed village in Bargarh district's Barpali block, was appointed as assistant secretary.

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

Government rules prohibit the appointment of close relatives of a PACS secretary in the same society. However, the rule was allegedly ignored. No recruitment committee was formed and no advertisement was issued before making the appointments, which were allegedly done secretly.

Notably, Anil Kumar Das resides in Bargarh district, outside the PACS jurisdiction, yet he was appointed as assistant secretary.

Collector Nruparaj Sahu said he visited the PACS office after receiving complaints. During the inspection, Nabin Das, who had taken voluntary retirement citing health reasons was present in the office along with others and was carrying out work, while neither his son nor son-in-law was present.

Sahu said he sought an explanation from the DRCS and called for relevant files. After finding evidence of irregularities in the recruitment process, he recommended disciplinary action against the DRCS to the state government.

Residents are now awaiting the government's decision on the matter.

3 deaths in 12 hrs: Forest dept under fire over tusker attacks

POST NEWS NETWORK

Phulbani/G Udayagiri/Raikia, March 14: Panic gripped villages in Kandhamal district after a tusker trampled three people to death in separate incidents within 12 hours between Friday evening and early Saturday morning, sparking anger among residents who accused the Forest department of failing to warn them about the elephant's presence.

The deceased were identified as Bamadeb Pradhan, 63, and Kirtan Bagarti, 61, from Damba village under Raikia block, and Durita Pradhan, 27, of Tentuli Sahi in Paburia panchayat under Tikabali block.

According to reports, Bamadeb and Kirtan had gone to the forest near Gumikia in Da-da hill under Petapanga village along with another villager, Dhaneswar Pradhan, Friday. While returning, they encountered the tusker. Dhaneswar



managed to escape, but Bamadev and Kirtan were trampled to death by the elephant.

In another incident around 4am Saturday, Durita Pradhan reportedly came face to face with the tusker near the Danipanga forest close to Sindiriguda village. The tusker attacked and killed him on the spot.

Villagers alleged that despite the elephant moving in the area, the Forest department had not issued any warnings through announcements or other means. "People are unaware of the elephant's movement and

are losing their lives," several residents said, demanding immediate steps to drive the animal away from human habitation.

Forest officials, however, said efforts were underway to track the elephant and create awareness among villagers. Phulbani Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Pratap Kotapalli said the incidents were unfortunate and claimed that some villagers had allegedly tried to disturb the elephant, which might have provoked the attack.

He added that as per government norms, the families of the deceased would receive ₹1 lakh as immediate assistance, with the remaining ₹9 lakh to be paid after completion of formalities.

The Forest department has urged residents to stay indoors between 5pm and 6am and avoid entering forests or lighting fires in forest areas while the elephant is being tracked.

Inmate found hanging in jail; family cries murder



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir, March 14: The death of an inmate inside the Bolangir District Jail Saturday triggered protests by family members, who alleged that the incident was a case of murder rather than suicide.

The deceased was identified as Bishmadeb, alias Gopal Sahu, 37, a resident of Kushang village under Bolangir Sadar police station limits. Jail authorities said he was found hanging inside the jail premises early in the morning, reportedly using his towel.

Sahu had been arrested in 2021 for murdering his wife and was convicted by a court in 2023, which sentenced him to life imprisonment.

After the body was sent for post-mortem examination at the district headquarters hospital, the inmate's family

members rejected the suicide claim and alleged that he had been killed inside the jail.

Demanding justice, the family placed the body in front of the District Collector's office and staged a protest, saying they would not end the agitation until a proper investigation was conducted.

Jail Superintendent Uma-shankar Majhi said an inquiry into the incident has been initiated.

Additional Tehsildar Bishwambar Panda later reached the protest site and held discussions with the family in the presence of police officials. He provided ₹10,000 from the Red Cross fund as immediate assistance and assured the family that the case would be investigated as per law. Following the assurance from the administration, the family members eventually withdrew their protest.

Triple murder accused caught atop water tank

He reportedly attempted suicide by consuming poison before being taken into custody

POST NEWS NETWORK

Deogarh, March 14: Police Saturday apprehended a man accused of brutally killing his wife, daughter-in-law and granddaughter in Gariapali village under Kundheigola police limits in Deogarh district after he was found hiding atop an overhead water tank.

The accused, identified as Ramesh Garia, allegedly attempted suicide by consuming poison before he was taken into custody. He was first admitted to the Deogarh District Headquarters Hospital and later shifted to Veer Surendra Sai Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (VIMSAR), Burla, as his condition deteriorated.

According to police, villagers

spotted the accused sitting on top of the water tank Saturday morning and alerted authorities. A police team rushed to the spot but the accused reportedly threatened to jump if anyone approached him.

The police then sought assistance from the fire services. After some time, when the accused lay down on the tank, the rescue team managed to reach the top and overpower him.

He was taken to Kundheigola hospital for treatment, where doctors suspected that he had consumed poison in an attempt to end his life. Doctors tried to induce vomiting to remove the toxin, but he reportedly did not cooperate with treatment.

As his condition turned critical, he was first shifted to the



YOUTH HELD FOR RAPE OF MINOR

POST NEWS NETWORK

Patana, March 14: Police Saturday detained a 21-year-old youth on charge of raping a minor tribal girl under this police limits in Keonjhar district the previous day.

The action came after the survivor's family filed a formal complaint Saturday. According to police, the incident occurred when the girl visited a neighbour's house for work and was allegedly assaulted while she was alone. "We have detained the accused and the investigation is ongoing," said Kiran Prasad Sahu, the OIC of the Patana police station. Police registered case (123/26) and detained the accused during the investigation. The victim has undergone a medical examination and has been sent to Ghatagaon to record her statement before a female magistrate.

34 produced in court after attack on police

Baripada: Police have registered two cases and produced 34 persons in court following an attack on police personnel and vandalism of a tehsildar's vehicle during a protest at Bahalda on National Highway 220 in Mayurbhanj district. The protest erupted after the alleged molestation of a tribal minor girl, with locals blocking the highway and demanding justice. When officials reached the spot to pacify the crowd, protesters allegedly attacked police and damaged the tehsildar's vehicle. More than nine police personnel were injured in the incident. Constable Prashant Mahanta, who sustained a serious head injury, is undergoing treatment at PRM Medical College and Hospital in Baripada. Police said more arrests are likely and security has been tightened in the area.

Tusker electrocuted in Dhenkanal; 1 detained



POST NEWS NETWORK

Dhenkanal, March 14: A tusker died after being electrocuted in Bimbol village under the Sadar forest range in Dhenkanal district early Saturday morning. Forest officials have detained one person in connection with the incident and are questioning him.

According to Forest department sources, the elephant came in contact with a live wire installed around farmland to protect crops from wild animals. The incident occurred in a garden owned by Kailash Pradhan at Hatibari in Bimbol village. Pradhan had cultivated maize, cucumber and other vegetables on the land. To safeguard the crops from wildlife

intrusion, he had installed solar fencing around the field.

However, a lone tusker reportedly entered the field at dawn to feed on maize and accidentally came into contact with the wire. The fence had allegedly become charged with electricity, leading to the animal's death on the spot.

On receiving information, Forest department personnel rushed to the site and began an investigation. Officials detained Pradhan for questioning as part of the probe.

Divisional Forest Officer Sumit Kumar Kar said electric current had been illegally drawn from a nearby lift irrigation (LI) point by hooking the line to the fence. The elephant was estimated to be around 25 to 30 years old. Kar said the detained person is being questioned and, if found guilty, will be forwarded to court Sunday.

Further investigation into the incident is underway.

FMU to host nat'l Taekwondo c'ship

Balasure: Fakir Mohan University (FMU) will host the All India Inter University Taekwondo (Women) Tournament 2025-26, under the aegis of the Association of Indian Universities (AIU), New Delhi from March 16 to March 20 at its Nuapadhi Campus here. The prestigious national championship will witness participation from 159 universities across 25 states, bringing together 932 athletes along with their coaches and team managers. The mega sporting event marks a historic milestone as it will be the first national-level sports tournament to be organised by FMU. To ensure smooth and successful conduct of the event, the second preparatory meeting was held under the chairmanship of Vice-Chancellor Prof. Santosh Kumar Tripathy, in the presence of university authorities, officials, and members of various committees associated with the organisation of the tournament. Emphasising the importance of sports in holistic education, the VC expressed that hosting such a prestigious championship will not only promote the spirit of sportsmanship and discipline among students but also provide a national platform for women athletes to showcase their talent in Taekwondo.

Maoist leader rejects surrender call, vows to continue fighting

POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, March 14: A Maoist leader has rejected the government's call for Left wing insurgents to surrender by March 31 and join the mainstream, asserting that the armed struggle will continue.

In a press statement, Maoist divisional secretary Ranita said the organisation would not accept the government's proposal and would continue its fight. She said the sacrifices of fellow cadres would not be allowed to go in vain.

The government had earlier urged Maoists to give up violence and return to the mainstream



by March 31, promising favourable rehabilitation measures for those who surrender within the stipulated deadline. In recent weeks, several Maoists have reportedly come out of the forests and surrendered before security forces.

However, Ranita rejected the appeal in her statement and said the organisation would not lay down arms. She claimed

that the group would continue its activities and warned of consequences for those attempting to stop them.

She also criticised Maoists who have surrendered, describing them as weak, and said the group would directly confront both the government and former cadres who have laid down arms.

The statement has sparked fresh discussions among locals, with many expressing doubts over the possibility of the region becoming Maoist-free by the March 31 deadline. Observers say confrontations between security forces and Maoists may continue in the coming days.

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DDE ADMISSIONS 2026 (Calendar Year)

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Annual Fee ₹4,975/-**	1st Semester Fee ₹17,500/-**	Annual Fee ₹7,425/-**
*Incl. admission fee. Refer the website for other fee details.		
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EAST COAST RAILWAY
INDICATIVE NOTICE
RE-ENGAGEMENT OF RETIRED RAILWAY EMPLOYEES IN KHURDA ROAD DIVISION, EAST COAST RAILWAY
The detailed Notification No. DRM(P)/KUR/Staff/ Re-engagement/Medical/26, Dated 10.03.2026 is available on East Coast Railways website on the following Path: www.eastcoastrail.indianrailways.gov.in About us Division → Khurda Road Division → Recruitment.
PR-1228/Q/25-26 Divisional Railway Manager (Personnel) / Khurda Road

EAST COAST RAILWAY
RE-ENGAGEMENT OF RETIRED RAILWAY EMPLOYEES FOR THE POST OF LAB SUPERINTENDENT IN MEDICAL DEPARTMENT
No. ECoR/Pers/12/Med/Re-engagement/Lab Supdt/2026, Dated: 06.03.2026
APPLICATIONS ARE INVITED FROM THE RETIRED LAB SUPERINTENDENT FROM INDIAN RAILWAYS FOR FILLING UP 01 (ONE) VACANT POST OF LAB SUPERINTENDENT (LEVEL-6) FOR RE-ENGAGEMENT FOR ZONAL CADRE OF MEDICAL DEPARTMENT, HQ/ECOR FOR A PERIOD UP TO 15.10.2026 OR TILL THE DATE OF ATTAINING THE AGE OF 65 YEARS, SUBJECT TO EXTENSION OF VALIDITY OF THE SCHEME BY RAILWAY BOARD OR TILL THE VACANCY IS FILLED UP THROUGH REGULAR SELECTED CANDIDATE, WHICHEVER IS EARLIER.
NAME & NO. OF POSTS: LAB SUPERINTENDENT-01 (ONE) NO.
HOW TO APPLY: Eligible & interested retired employees are advised to submit their applications in prescribed format along with self-attested photocopies of relevant documents to Principal Chief Personnel Officer, East Coast Railway, Rail Sadan, 2nd Floor, South Block, Chandrasekharpur, Bhubaneswar-751017 superscribing on the envelope "Application for re-engagement of retired employee for Lab Superintendent" on or before 27.03.2026.
NB: For Remuneration, Mode of Selection, Application Format, Educational Qualification/ Eligibility, Age, Period of Engagement & other detailed terms and conditions, candidates may refer to the official website: www.eastcoastrail.indianrailways.gov.in or visit Principal Chief Personnel Officer, East Coast Railway, No TA/DA/Accommodation will be provided for attending the viva-voce test.
PR-1225/Q/25-26 Principal Chief Personnel Officer / Bhubaneswar

OFFICE OF THE NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL, BIJEPUR
AT/PO/PS : Bijepur, Dist.-Bargarh (Odisha), PIN-768032
Phone No.-06685-274153, E-Mail ID : bjepurnac2018@gmail.com
Letter No. 396/Dt. 11.03.2026
"e"-Procurement Notice
Bid Identification No.EO/Bijepur/05/2025-26
No.13001/646/2526: Bid documents consisting of specification, the schedule of quantities and the set of terms and conditions of contract and other necessary documents can be seen in the Govt. website i.e. www.tendersodisha.gov.in
1. Nature of work : Services
2. No. of works : 01 No.
3. Estimated cost : As per NIT
4. Period of completion : As per NIT
5. Date and time of availability of the Documents in the Portal : From 9.00 hours of 13.03.2026 to 17.00 hours of 30.03.2026
6. Last date/time for receipt of Bids in the portal : Dt.30.03.2026 up to 17.00 hours
7. Bids received online shall be opened on : Dt.31.03.2026 at 11 hours
8. Name and address of the Executive Officer : Executive Officer Bijepur NAC
Further, the details can be seen from the procurement Portal www.tendersodisha.gov.in
Sd./- Executive Officer
OIPR-13001/13123/125-26/0004 Bijepur NAC

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA WORKS DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, BALLIGUDA (R&B) DIVISION, BALLIGUDA
TELEPHONE & Fax : 06846-243242, E-mail : eeopxd.balliguda@gmail.com
e-procurement notice
Bid Identification No. S.E. B.LG-15/2025-26
No.34001/194/2526 Dated : 11.03.2026

Sl. No.	Name of the Work	Building Works as per DTCN available in the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in
1	Estimated Cost	Rs.66.72 lakhs
2	No. of Works	1 (One) only
3	Period & time of completion	06 (Six) Months
4	Date & time of availability of the bid document in the portal	18.03.2026 to 01.04.2026 (up to 5.00 P.M. for Online Bidding)
5	Last date/Time for receipt of bids in the portal	Up to 5.00 PM of 01.04.2026
6	Date & Time of bid opening	11.30 hours on Dated 02.04.2026
7	Name & Address of the officer inviting Bid	Superintending Engineer, Balliguda R&B Division, Balliguda, Dist.: Kandhamal, Pin-762103

Others can be seen from Detailed Notice inviting Tenders, available in website www.tendersodisha.gov.in. Corrigendum if any, shall only be published in the above website.
Sd./- Superintending Engineer Balliguda (R&B) Division
OIPR-34001/34162/125-26/0002

FOCUS BUREAUCRACY

INFERNO OF RULES



**The jobs of civil servants will have to be disincen-
tized and made less attractive, as is the
case in most developed countries, to ensure only
those who are really interested join them**

to prevent the bureaucrats from attempting long term reforms and, on the other, it is supplemented by the powers of the state to disincentivize attempts at honest functioning. Good performance may or may not reward you, depending on your luck, but becoming a politician's poodle almost certainly does. This is further complicated by the fact that most candidates do not join the service out of any earnest interest in influencing, drafting or implementing policies but out of a desire to get a secure permanent job, have access to power, opportunities to do corruption and live in subsidized housing at prime locations. Despite what they might say, very few actually join these services to "help and contribute to society". Those who really do want to help society and the most vulnerable, like Aruna Roy and Sanjay Hegde, end up leaving the service for either more appropriate jobs or social work.

What is the way out? These jobs will have to be disincen-
tized and made less attractive, as is the case in most developed countries, to ensure only those who are really interested join them. Bureaucrats should neither get outsized power nor outsized prestige. This is not to say there should be no incentive or prestige associated with the job. It is to say that the prestige and incentives associated with the job of a bureaucrat should be the similar to that of a doctor, a professor, a software engineer and an architect. It is only then that our youth will stop wasting their entire productive years in pursuit of a dream that the overwhelming majority of "aspirants" will simply not achieve. Such pursuits, in fact, detrimentally affect the nation's growth.

The writer is a columnist with a background in Global Affairs from Kings College London.

10% civil servants last more than 3 years. This leads bureaucrats to prioritize short term quick fixes over long term reforms, which they'll almost certainly have no way of seeing through. Those posted at remote regions are incentivized to resort to corruption to ensure transfer to a more amenable district. The money for such corruption comes from the local population in return of providing with basic amenities, which is ostensibly their right. Transfers also serve as a way of punishing bureaucrats seen to be antagonistic to either the state or to influential corporations and contractors. This is far more likely than the state transferring an officer owing to incompetency. At the higher levels, bureaucrats are incentivised to retain their positions depending on their loyalty, closeness or sycophancy to political actors.

The exams are essentially a sorting mechanism to exclude as many participants as possible in order to fill up the limited positions. This is done so that the process, at least in the eyes of the public, does not seem entirely arbitrary in theory. There is no reason why a bureaucrat needs to be generally versed in the Indian arts, for instance, or for that matter, the minutiae of Indian history. These exams do not primarily test the candidate's ability to conduct basic bureaucratic functions, managerial abilities, awareness of general laws and the limitation of powers or even motivation. They are, instead, a test of the candidate's knowledge on a whole variety of subjects. In other words, they sort for generalists. As Vikas Divyakirti, head of a coaching institute once pointed out, you do not need to have in depth knowledge of any subjects to pass these exams. Your awareness should instead be skin deep of the general basics.

The exams are where the quest for "merit" mostly ends. Once an individual gets entry into these jobs, they are promoted not on the basis of performance but seniority. On one hand, there are mechanisms

Rule by bureaucracy and its consequences has been a disaster for Indian society. From the 5,76,793 candidates who appeared in the UPSC 2025 examination, 958 were successful. This puts the success rate at 0.16%. In other words, you are as likely to succeed in the UPSC exams as you are to be struck by lightning in your lifetime. Yet, there are entire companies i.e. coaching centres dedicated to selling you the UPSC dream. They convince you that even if you don't get in, the lessons you'll learn will somehow make you a better human being. "UPSC Aspirants" has become a respected title for a large number of our youth. The problem with Indian bureaucracy is not these "aspirants" but larger systemic failures.

How does a bureaucracy that declines in absolute numbers every succeeding decade, with a sorting mechanism that is so selective, become synonymous with inefficiency and corruption? There were institutional mechanisms that incentivized rent seeking at every possible stage. The Indian state, from its very inception, was intoxicated with the idea of central planning. It is ironic that the years where our political actors had the most faith in state's emancipatory potential were also the years where the state was the most inefficient. This is best explained by the Rajiv Gandhi dictum - for every rupee the centre sends, the beneficiary receives 15 paise. Even as the state created lofty policies for the most disadvantaged, it failed to deliver basic needs. As Arvind Subramanian and Devesh Kapur have pointed out, the instability at the local level was caused by the state's instrumentalization of transfer. Civil servants on average last less than a year at any post at the local level. Only around



Anwesh Satpathy

GOOD PERFORMANCE MAY OR MAY NOT REWARD YOU, DEPENDING ON YOUR LUCK, BUT BECOMING A POLITICIAN'S POODLE ALMOST CERTAINLY DOES



When mind is still, then truth gets her chance to be heard in the purity of the silence.

SRI AUROBINDO

Diplomatic Drift

On 4 November 2013, then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh spoke to over 120 heads of Indian missions and outlined the five principles that defined his foreign policy. These were: first, recognition that India's relations with the world—the major powers and Asian neighbours—were shaped by its developmental priorities.

Singh said that "the single most important objective of Indian foreign policy has to be to create a global environment conducive to the well-being of our great country."

Second, that greater integration with the world economy would benefit India and enable Indians to realise their creative potential. Third, to seek stable, long-term and mutually beneficial relations with all major powers, and to work with the international community to create a global economic and security environment beneficial to all nations.

Fourth, to recognise that the Indian subcontinent's shared destiny required greater regional cooperation and connectivity. Fifth, a foreign policy defined not merely by interests but also by the values dear to Indians: "India's experiment of pursuing economic development within the framework of a plural, secular and liberal democracy has inspired people around the world and should continue to do so."

This was a clear exposition of what was sought to be achieved. India would use foreign policy to advance its economic development; it would be friendly with global great powers and its neighbours; and it would be doing this by continuing to be a pluralist and secular democracy.

I will not go into the present government's foreign policy principles, mainly because it doesn't have any. This is not a smear or a casual observation, and I have devoted a chapter in a book to explaining why. It is, in fact, the case that the foreign minister not only accepts that our policy has no principles; he says that the lack of principles is the basis of our policy.

In a book of his compiled essays and speeches, S. Jaishankar has laid out what he means. What India wanted was a "multi-polar Asia", meaning one in which India could claim parity with China. He offers no way of doing this, but assumes that we can merely because we desire it to be so.

He writes that many balls would need to be kept in the air (Jaishankar has a fondness for stock phrases), and India would handle them with dexterity. This was opportunism, but that was all right because opportunism was India's culture. The Mahabharata's lessons, Jaishankar writes, are that deceit and immorality are merely ways to "not play by the rules". Drona demanding Eklavya's thumb, Indra appropriating Karna's armour, and Arjuna using Shikhandi as a human shield—these were but "practices and traditions".

Inconsistency in policy was not only fine but required because "obsessing about consistency" made little sense in changing circumstances.

Here was a man who could put into words something insubstantial and make it sound reasonable. But what was such a doctrine to be called? In a speech where he first laid out this doctrine of opportunism and inconsistency, Jaishankar said it was hard to give it a name. He took up and discarded phrases such as "multi-alignment" ("sounds too opportunistic") and "India First" ("sounds self-centred"). He settled on "advancing prosperity and influence", which he said was accurate but admitted was not catchy.

He believed that some name for it would eventually emerge if it was pursued long enough, because part of the challenge was that we were still in the early phase of a major transition.

This was published some time ago, in the second term of this government. The world, as we can see all around us, has changed. It has become uncertain and dangerous, especially for nations that are dependent, as we are, on energy and on external employment, particularly in the Gulf.

US President Donald Trump has offered no real reason for starting this third American Gulf war and has articulated no real aims that he wants achieved besides tactical ones.

The minister handling America's defence department appears totally unhinged and incompetent in his press briefings. How the war will conclude is not known to anyone, because Iran has a say in how and when it will end. Israel's involvement in the attack makes this war particularly alarming because it, unlike America, cannot simply cut and run, since it is part of the region and armed with nuclear weapons.

What is to be done by India at this time, and what policy should be adopted? Perhaps we will get by through what Jaishankar says we should do. Looking at what we are doing, it seems clear that we have proceeded along the lines of opportunism.

Hours before the war, with an armada in place, we flew to Tel Aviv to receive a medal, effectively endorsing what was to come.

We have shied away from condemning state assassinations, the mass murder of schoolgirls, and the killing of sailors without a declaration of war. Where we see opportunity—such as getting a couple of tankers out—we take it. We have no role in the larger making of peace or the re-establishment of a rules-based order because our creed is opportunism. That means not shaping the world but taking short-term advantage where we can. Perhaps this will work, but it might not.

For this reason, we should go back to first principles. Reconsidering what Manmohan Singh said about India's external policy—what it was intended to achieve and for what reason—is a good start.



Aakar Patel

The world, as we can see all around us, has changed. It has become uncertain and dangerous, especially for nations that are dependent, as we are, on energy and on external employment, particularly in the Gulf

SPECTRUM GEOPOLITICS

Somaliland in new Middle East balance of power

Since December last, Somaliland has been at the centre of a cyclone that has gripped the Middle East and Horn of Africa. Israel's recognition of its sovereignty sent ripples from Turkey across Africa. Was this a catalyst for the crystallization of a new balance of power, or was it part of a planned regional reorganisation?

On 26 December, Israel formally recognised Somaliland as a sovereign and independent state, arguing it meets "the objective criteria for statehood under customary international law, as reflected in the Montevideo Convention." As per 1933 Convention, a state must possess following characteristics: a permanent population, a defined territory, a government, and the capacity to enter relations with other states.

In return, Somaliland declared it would join the Abraham Accords. In early January, Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sar visited Somaliland, and the official signing of the accession agreement was expected during the visit of the country's prime minister to Israel in March this year, which will probably be postponed due to the ongoing war with Iran.

The recognition is not an ad hoc decision, taken in isolation from broader plans. It coincides with the new President striving to improve the country's inter-

national standing, and, on the other hand, with plans being developed in Israel to rebuild the regional security architecture.

Somaliland is a quasi-state with a functioning democratic system, government, military, and currency. Since its proclamation of independence in 1991, it has operated in a political grey zone, unrecognised but also undisturbed by its neighbours, including Somalia, which formally considers it part of a federation. Somalia itself is close to failed state status, threatened by further disintegration. Despite its lack of international recognition, it maintains representations in several countries on a reciprocal basis such as diplomatic relations with Taiwan and cooperation agreements with China.

It is world's fourth poorest country. Livestock exports (sheep, cows, and camels), primarily to Saudi Arabia, account for majority of its GDP. Its only remaining military base, near port of Berbera, has been owned by UAE since 2017 and the naval base has been transformed into a nearly complete facility, equipped with advanced infrastructure, including a modern military port, a deep-water dock, and a runway with hangars and support facilities.

Of all European countries, Great Britain is most involved in economic development in

its former colony. For UAE, Berbera is both a link in an extensive network of ports and airports stretching across Africa, and a strategic outpost whose control creates power projection and allows it to influence the vital geopolitical environment.

The synergy between Israel and UAE, been strengthening in recent years, means their interests in Somaliland are largely aligned. For both, control of the crucial chokepoint between Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean is a stake worth playing for. Identifying and blocking threats from Iran, being able to influence maritime transport, building new logistics routes that bypass or diminish the importance of existing ones, offering transshipment and maintenance services to ship-owners, and taking over the transport channels for critical raw materials all represent significant gains in themselves.

Acquiring Somaliland as a client and protégé is part of a broader strategy to reshape the balance of power in the Middle East to Israel's advantage. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu recently announced a plan for a "hexagon of alliances" that would encompass Israel, Greece, Cyprus, India, and unnamed countries in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. This hexagon would encompass

a security zone on Israel's periphery and be capable of countering two axes: a Shiite axis led by Iran and a Sunni axis of states supporting radical Islam.

Modi's visit to Israel, two days before the launch of the attack on Iran, confirms the increasingly strong India-Israel ties and synergies of interests. India is the largest recipient of Israeli defence products. It shares with Israel Muslim extremism threat and terrorism. Both countries are vitally interested in maritime security, with India seeking to play an increasingly important role in its security architecture and build alternatives to China's BRI connecting Indian Ocean with the Mediterranean.

However, the new balance of power in Middle East following the war with Iran will be crucial. It's impossible to predict whether the Arab states of the Peninsula will reassess their security situation and seek alternative sources of weapons and alliances. Whether they will close ranks to oppose Israel's absolute hegemony, or whether their rivalry will deepen. And whether a victorious Israel will unimpededly pursue its future plans?

The writer is an expert, Centre for International Relations, Poland.



Janusz Bylinski

THE SYNERGY BETWEEN ISRAEL AND UAE MEANS THEIR INTERESTS IN SOMALILAND ARE LARGELY ALIGNED

WISDOM CORNER

We want deeper sincerity of motive, a greater courage in speech and earnestness in action. SAROJINI NAIDU

The woods are lovely, dark and deep. But I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep. ROBERT FROST

History is a cyclic poem written by time upon the memories of man. PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

1781: American revolutionaries won a strategic victory over the British at the Battle of Guilford Courthouse in North Carolina.

1940: Adolf Hitler decreed that church bells across Germany be confiscated for use in the ongoing war. About 175,000 church bells were taken by force, despite widespread protest, and melted down to make armaments for the German military.

1964: Following a highly publicized affair, American actress Elizabeth Taylor wed British actor Richard Burton in Montreal; they divorced in 1974 and briefly remarried (1975-76).

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



Think before vote

Sir, The famous words of Mark Twain — It is easier to fool people than to convince them that they have been fooled — kept echoing in my mind as I read the promises of various political parties. Before casting their vote, people must reflect on how many senior leaders, who are once again candidates in this election, have actually visited their constituencies after winning the previous elections. While many continue to win through money and muscle power, one must ask: can any of them truly stand on par with leaders like K. Kamaraj or Kakkann who won not elections alone but the hearts of the people? The finger we use to vote does not merely decide the outcome of an election; it shapes the fate of generations to come. This is a responsibility every voter must remember before choosing a leader. Only informed, vigilant citizens can protect democracy, ensuring that leadership is earned through integrity, service and accountability rather than empty promises and short-lived electoral rhetoric.

AP Thiruvadi, CHENNAI

Axis in retreat

Sir, Iran's so-called "Axis of Resistance" — comprising Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Gaza, Houthi Movement in Yemen, and Shia militias in Iraq — has historically served as a strategic buffer for Ali Khamenei's Iran against Israel and the United States. Recently, however, their effectiveness has diminished. Hezbollah launched missiles at Israel after Khamenei's killing but faced swift Israeli retaliation, limiting escalation. Hamas remains militarily weakened and largely sidelined. The Houthis, though capable of disrupting Red Sea shipping, are avoiding full confrontation due to domestic pressures and survival concerns. Iraqi Shia militias have attacked US bases, but their strikes lack the capability to cause significant damage. Fragmented coordination, military losses, and fear of wider war have reduced the bloc's potency. While these groups may revive once conditions stabilise, their current restraint lowers the risk of wider regional conflict. For India, this moderation helps protect vital energy supplies and maritime trade routes from severe disruption.

RS Narula, PATIALA

LPG CRISIS

Delhi eateries trim menus, pause corporate bookings

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 14: Large corporate gatherings and group parties are now taking a backseat in restaurant calendars across the Capital, as eateries scale back menus and bookings amid an LPG supply crunch, with concerns over shrinking cooking gas stocks growing after military escalations in West Asia.

Restaurant owners, particularly in Connaught Place, one of the City's busiest dining hubs, said that preparing food for large tables requires significant gas usage, prompting many establishments to temporarily halt big party bookings while focusing on regular diners.

Paramjeet Kaur, owner of Flavours of China, said the restaurant has scaled back certain offerings and limited group bookings in order to manage LPG consumption.

"We have had to make a few adjustments to manage the situation. For instance, we are currently not offering sizzlers as they require continuous and high flame usage. We have also trimmed our menu and are focusing only on basic dishes that can be prepared with limited gas consumption," she said.

Kaur added that the restaurant has also temporarily stopped hosting large gatherings to conserve fuel.

A manager at Amaltas, a restaurant in Greater Kailash, said the establishment has also been cautious about accepting large bookings in the current situation.

"With the uncertainty around LPG availability, we are being careful about taking big table reservations or corporate events. Preparing food for large groups requires continuous gas usage, so we are prioritising regular diners and smaller tables for now," the manager said.



Crisis triggers migrant worker exodus ahead of Ramzan, polls

Kochi: The ongoing LPG crisis, which has led to the mass closure of restaurants and hotels across Kerala, has triggered an exodus of migrant workers returning to their native places, as Ramzan approaches and elections are to be held in West Bengal and Assam. Restaurant and hotel operators are trying to retain their staff from other states, fearing that if migrant workers leave now, they may not return until after the election. G Jayapal, state president of the Kerala Hotel and Restaurant Association (KHRA), told PTI that migrant workers from West Bengal and Assam were expected to return home a week before the elections in their respective states. "However, with the LPG crisis forcing hotels and restaurants to shut down, migrant workers will start returning to their native places early. They will return only after the elections. Also, Ramzan will be celebrated next week, and people who were working in restaurants will start returning to their states due to the lack of jobs here," he said. Jayapal said that, in addition to exploring alternative cooking fuels, restaurant operators are also trying to prevent workers from leaving early, expecting that the LPG crisis will be resolved soon. "A majority of the workforce in hotels and restaurants are migrant workers. Restaurants are desperate to keep them here. However, small-scale restaurant operators find it hard to maintain staff when their shops are closed," he said.

Inder, owner of Minar restaurant in Connaught Place, said his establishment has also decided to avoid large-scale bookings until the LPG supply situation stabilises.

"At the moment, we are not taking corporate meetings or big events because managing such gatherings requires extensive cooking, and that means higher LPG consumption. Given the uncertainty around supply, it becomes difficult to plan for large bookings," he said.

The restaurant is offering 'tandoori roti', baked food and basic as the idea is to manage with the available resources

and keep operations running smoothly, he said, adding that the hospitality industry is often among the first to feel the impact of disruptions.

Ankur, owner of 38 Barrack, said his restaurant is attempting to reduce dependency on LPG by using alternative cooking methods while also streamlining the menu. "We are trying to manage the situation by using induction cooktops, electrical frying equipment and baking wherever possible. For certain dishes, we are also relying on charcoal-based tandoors, which helps reduce the pressure on LPG usage," he said.

Activists oppose Wayanad tunnel project, move SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Wayanad(Kerala), March 14: Environmental activists and groups have opposed the twin tunnel road project at Maripuzha here, alleging that it is 'suicidal' as it was undertaken without scientific studies or an environmental impact assessment (EIA).

The Wayanad Environment Protection Committee told PTI that tunnels are being drilled through extremely sensitive mountain ranges and could end up destabilising the area and causing landslides like the ones in Mundakkai and Chooralmala in 2024 that claimed over 200 lives.

It also said that the project was coming up near the areas that were hit by the landslides in 2024.

The committee has moved the Supreme Court against the project.

Environmental activist Bashaer Anand John, while speak-



ing to PTI, warned that the project will have a serious impact on the surrounding area.

He claimed that drilling through the extremely sensitive mountain ranges, which receive the highest rainfall in the world, will destroy the natural structure of Wayanad.

"When a one-kilometer tunnel is built, lakhs of litres of water are drained from the mountains. This will change the course of the groundwater and destroy the internal stability of the mountains,"

John claimed.

He also claimed that when the natural springs inside the rocks are cut as a result of the project, Wayanad will head towards a major drought.

He alleged that the environmental clearance for the project was given by hiding the real facts.

Environmental activist and Wayanad district secretary of the Environment Protection Committee, Thomas Ambalavayal, claimed that the proposed tunnel would destroy the very

subterranean structure of the Western Ghats.

He told PTI that the vibrations caused by blasting of the rocks would affect the natural stability of the mountains and this would lead to major landslides in the future.

He said that it would also completely destroy the habitat of the wildlife in the area, including elephant herds.

CPI(ML) Red Star district secretary K V Prakash alleged that there was a massive corruption and involvement of real estate and quarry mafias behind the tunnel project.

He told PTI that presenting this project as an easy way for Wayanad people to reach the medical college for their medical needs was just a scam.

Prakash contended that instead of building a super specialty hospital for the people of Wayanad, crores of rupees are being spent on the tunnel to help contractors and mafias.



People perform 'Kodimaram' fixing ritual at a pond in the 'Irumkulangara Devi Temple' during the 'Thrikkodiyettu' festival, in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, Saturday

Kerala able to meet peak electricity demands: Min

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, March 14: Kerala Electricity Minister K Krishnakutty Saturday said that there will be no power cuts or load shedding despite a rise in electricity consumption in the state.

Krishnakutty, speaking at a press conference here, said that there was no need for the people to be concerned as steps have been taken to meet a peak demand of upto 600 mega watt.

He also said that short term contracts for procuring an additional 300MW of power and long term agreement to purchase 700MW of electricity are in place and if required,

due to weather conditions or technical glitches, open market procurement will also be considered.

The minister said that electricity usage has increased significantly in the recent days, partly due to households relying on induction cooktops following the shortage of LPG cylinders.

He urged consumers to self regulate their electricity consumption as much as possible to ensure power supply remains stable.

He also said that a high-level meeting will be convened soon to assess the increasing power demand and the measures to be taken to address it.

Capital to prepare water master plan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 14: The Delhi government is preparing a comprehensive water master plan, with a provision to rope in private players, to relieve the city residents of their woes, Water Minister Parvash Singh said Saturday.

Under the plan, a study of the existing infrastructure and the future expansion will be undertaken, keeping in mind the city's increasing population.

There is a need for a holistic approach towards fixing the water sector challenges that we face, so for the first time a Water Master Plan will be presented. For this we have hired a consultant company which is studying all the major aspects including sources of water,

requirements in future, water pipelines maintenance and other things, Singh said.

Another aspect of the plan would be decentralisation and privatisation of the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) distribution network.

Within the next one year we will float tenders inviting big private players for management of each of DJB's existing eight Command Centres. In future these companies will be given each of the zones and they will be responsible for managing all the major operations in those areas, the minister said, according to a statement.

Under the plan, each of the companies will be tasked with the job of repairing and replacing old water pipes, billing and revenue collection, and regular water supply.



According to an official, The DJB has already started working on Chandrawal WTP command centre under which water supply infrastructure improvement, including replacement of old lines, providing house service connections and upgradation of Underground Reservoir (UGRs) etc., have already been awarded and are in progress.

Tenders will be floated soon for East, North-East, West and South-West zones, for which detailed project reports are being prepared, the person said.

Delhi is a largely urbanised

city with a huge and growing concentration of population, which requires to be serviced with a water supply and sewage treatment. In 2016, the Delhi government came up with a Delhi Water Policy with an outlook for the next nine years.

Besides increasing the water supply, we are also studying ways to reduce the losses during transmission. We are also studying previous DJB reports and studies and prepare the new, comprehensive master plan for the future. These insights will be used to develop a long-term plan, Singh said.

Currently, the city's average water production ranges between 900 and 100 million gallons per day (MGD), against an average requirement of around 1,200 MGD.

Delhi records min temp of 18.1 deg C

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 14: The national capital recorded a minimum temperature of 18.1 degrees Celsius Saturday, a day after it witnessed the hottest morning so far this year at 20.4 degrees Celsius, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

The IMD has predicted the temperature to drop further over the next few days.

Safdarjung, Delhi's base station, recorded a minimum temperature of 18.1 degrees Celsius 3 degrees above normal.



Plans on to remove 'kikar' from Ridge forests

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 14: The Delhi Forest department is planning a four-year eco-restoration exercise to remove 'kikar' and other invasive species from the Ridge forests of the national capital, officials said Saturday.

According to the officials, the project is taken up under a working plan approved by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. The exercise forms part of the working plan for the forests of the National Capital Territory of Delhi for the period 2026-27 to 2036-37.

The project was discussed during a meeting of the Delhi Tree Authority last month.

The plan identifies invasive species such as Prosopis juliflora (kikar), Leucaena leucocephala and eucalyptus as threats to native biodiversity in ridge forest areas.

"The plan requires final clearance from the Supreme Court as the Ridge is under

ECO-RESTORATION



judicial protection. Any major intervention in the forest area requires prior approval from the court," a senior official told PTI.

According to the document, eco-restoration and enrichment plantation are planned across about 6,303.55 hectares over four financial years.

In 2026-27, eco-restoration is planned across 1,490 hectares with the plantation of about

28.56 lakh saplings. This includes 14,27,160 tree saplings and 14,29,200 shrubs, climbers and bamboo saplings.

In 2027-28, around 1,670 hectares will be covered with a plantation of about 25.85 lakh saplings, including 7,05,650 tree saplings and 18,79,900 shrubs, climbers and bamboo saplings.

In 2028-29, the department plans to cover 1,450.55 hectares with about 24.43 lakh sap-

lings, comprising 7,09,220 tree saplings and 17,34,620 shrubs, climbers and bamboo saplings.

For the final phase in 2029-30, restoration is planned across 1,693 hectares with the plantation of about 21.62 lakh saplings, including 7,09,370 tree saplings and 14,53,000 shrubs, climbers and bamboo saplings.

Environmental experts say vilayati kikar, native to South and Central America, has been present in Delhi's forest landscapes for nearly a century. It has become one of the most widespread invasive species in the region.

Delhi, which spans 1,483 sq km, has a green cover of around 25 per cent. More than 60 per cent of this cover consists of kikar plantations, particularly across the Ridge.

Experts noted that the fast-growing species forms dense canopies that limit sunlight reaching the ground. The species spreads rapidly and displaces native vegetation, contributing to a significant loss of local biodiversity.

Kochi cyber police recovers over ₹1cr lost in online fraud

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kochi, March 14: The Kochi city cyber police has recovered over ₹one crore stolen from an 81-year-old man through the 'digital arrest' online fraud.

The incident occurred in November last year when the elderly man was defrauded of around ₹1.30 crore in a digital arrest scam, where fraudsters impersonate law enforcement officials to deceive victims, a police statement said Saturday.

They intimidate individuals by falsely accusing them of illegal activities and then demand money, pressuring them to make the payment to get out the case.

Police said that due to its timely intervention, around ₹1.06 crore of the lost amount was recovered from a bank in Jammu and Kashmir.

It said that when the man lodged the complaint, a case was registered at the Cyber Crime Police Station and its details were immediately uploaded on the National Cyber

Crime Portal.

Following the immediate investigation and technical interventions, the police were able to freeze ₹1,06,27,914 in a bank account, at Srinagar, where the money was sent by the victim, the statement said.

The investigation was carried out on the instructions of Kochi City Deputy Commissioner K S SHAHANSHA IPS, it said, adding that the timely interventions were carried out by Cyber Crime Police Station Inspector Shemir Khan, ASI Girish Kumar and CPO Robin under the supervision of Cyber Police Station ACP Anilkumar, it said. As a result, the amount frozen in the account as per court orders was returned to the complainant, it added.

Police said that in cases of cyber fraud, if it is approached immediately after the loss of money and the complaints are registered through the National Cyber Crime Portal, the chances of recovering the lost amount increases.

Under the scheme, beneficiaries receive Rs 10,000 annually, while those with very small landholdings receive a minimum of Rs 4,000. The amount is transferred directly to bank accounts in two instalments during the Kharif and Rabi seasons

YOUTH CONGRESS TO HOLD 'SANSAD GHERAO' MARCH 16

The Indian Youth Congress, led by Uday Bhanu Chib, Saturday announced a 'Sansad Gherao' protest March 16, alleging that the Centre's recently announced trade deal with the United States would harm India



of the day uote

I had said at the time of the assembly polls that even if the NDA won the elections, Nitish Kumar would not be the chief minister. My prediction may have seemed incorrect back then. But less than four months later, Nitish Kumar is on his way out

PRASHANT KISHOR | JAN SURAJA PARTY FOUNDER

All coal requirements we produce domestically. In the coming days, rising heat could push coal demand even higher, but we are ready to fulfil the demand. Demand for coal increases in summer. Similarly, in winter, increased use of heaters boosts electricity needs, particularly in hilly areas where power demand spikes sharply

G KISHAN REDDY | UNION MINISTER

The government is working to strengthen SGNP as a major eco-tourism and heritage destination. Plans are also underway to develop the historic Kanheri caves as a globally recognised heritage site with improved visitor facilities through public-private partnership initiatives

PYUSH GOYAL | UNION MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

India slams Pak's air strikes inside Afghan

New Delhi: India Saturday condemned Pakistan's air strikes inside Afghan territory, asserting that Afghanistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity should be fully respected. "India condemns the air strikes by Pakistan in Afghanistan's territory, leading to the death of several civilians and destruction of civilian infrastructure," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said. "This is yet another act of aggression by a Pakistani establishment that remains hostile to the idea of a sovereign Afghanistan," he said.

100 stray dogs poisoned to death

Hyderabad: In yet another incident of stray dog killings, nearly 100 canines were allegedly "poisoned to death" in Mancheril district, police said. An animal welfare activist, A Goutham, in a complaint to police, stated that on the intervening night of March 7-8 around 100 stray dogs were killed in Kishtapur village. The complainant, working as Cruelty Prevention Manager with the Stray Animal Foundation of India (NGO) accused that the Sarpanch and Gram Panchayat Secretary of Kishtapur village, hired two persons and killed the stray dogs by giving poisonous injections and buried them near a river.

AIIMS intern doctor ends life in Rajkot

Rajkot: A 25-year-old intern doctor at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in Rajkot died by suicide Saturday, with a note claiming he had been assaulted by his classmates, police said. The body of Ratankumar Meghwal, a native of Jaisalmer in Rajasthan, was found on a railway track between Ghanteshwar and Para Pipaliya near the city, said Deputy Commissioner of Police (Zone 2) Rakesh Desai. The Gandhigram police were alerted about the incident around 5.30 am. They reached the spot and found Meghwal's body, which had been struck by a train, the official said.

LPG crunch, coal spike hit eateries

FUEL CRISIS



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

- LPG CARRIERS SHIVALIK AND NANDA DEVI ARE NOW HEADED TO MUNDRA AND KANDLA PORTS IN GUJARAT, RAJESH KUMAR SINHA
- THE VESSELS ARE CARRYING 92,700 TONNES OF LPG
- SHIVALIK IS LIKELY TO REACH MUNDRA MARCH 16, AND NANDA DEVI IS LIKELY TO DOCK AT KANDLA THE NEXT DAY

New Delhi, March 14: Eateries have cut their menus, increased prices, while many have moved to coal to surmount the LPG crisis, even as two Indian ships carrying the domestic gas from the Gulf countries crossed the Strait of Hormuz early Saturday morning.

LPG carriers Shivalik and Nanda Devi are now headed to Mundra and Kandla ports in Gujarat, Rajesh Kumar Sinha, Special Secretary in the Ministry of Shipping, told a media briefing.

The vessels are carrying 92,700 tonnes of LPG, he said, adding Shivalik is likely to reach Mundra March 16, and Nanda Devi is likely to dock at Kandla the next day.

The West Asia conflict has impacted the supply of crude oil and petroleum products, following the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow water passage between Iran and Oman.

In Delhi, large corporate gatherings and group parties are now taking a backseat in restaurant calendars, as eateries scale back menus and bookings amid the crunch.

State authorities cracked down on hoarding and booked several people.

The Karnataka Food and Civil Supplies Department seized 316 domestic LPG cylinders allegedly being used for commercial purposes.

A case was registered against a gas agency shop in KGF, Kolar district, which was conducting illegal refilling of gas cylinders, a state authority said.

Uttar Pradesh's Food and Civil Supplies Department conducted raids at 1,483 locations

here and arrested six people in an operation to check black marketing of cooking gas.

The raids were conducted Friday, leading to the registration of 24 FIRs.

LPG distribution centres in Kolkata and several districts of West Bengal witnessed large queues at the doors of gas agencies. In Kolkata, the Enforcement Branch teams inspected at least 25 centres, including those in Lake Gardens and Jodhpur Park, to verify gas stock.

Kamarhati Municipal Councillor Bimal Saha distributed cow dung cakes to people standing in queues outside LPG dealerships, in what he termed a symbolic protest against the "shortage of cylinders."

Non-essential crew of Iranian ship IRIS Lavan depart India



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 14: India has repatriated the non-essential crew members of an Iranian warship that docked in Kochi March 4 amid the escalating military conflict between Iran and the US.

Over 50 of the 183 crew members have stayed back as the ship, IRIS Lavan, remains in Kochi, people familiar with the matter said.

External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the ship's non-essential crew members, as well as several stranded Iranian nationals, left India on board a chartered flight arranged by Tehran.

The sailors left India by a Turkish airline aircraft. The aircraft landed in Kochi late

last night after picking up the bodies from Colombo of over 80 Iranian sailors of another warship that was sunk by the US submarine off the coast of Sri Lanka March 4.

The Iranian ship IRIS Lavan remains in Kochi since March 4. The ship had developed urgent technical issues and was granted emergency docking approval March 1 following a request from the Iranian side. It is learnt that the Iranian sailors of IRIS Lavan will travel to Iran by road from Yerevan, Armenia's capital city.

The repatriation of the crew members came as New Delhi makes efforts to ensure safe passage for over two dozen Indian-flagged merchant vessels currently stationed on either side of the Strait of Hormuz.

BOGUS CHARGES, GOVERNMENT EXPOSED

Oppn attacks Centre after Wangchuk's release from jail

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 14: The opposition parties Saturday denounced the Centre for "completely bogus grounds" framed to keep climate activist Sonam Wangchuk in prison for almost six months and alleged that his release from jail had "exposed" the arbitrary use of the National Security Act.

The Congress said the Centre should apologise not just to Wangchuk and his family, but also to the people of Ladakh.

"The Indian National Congress had condemned the arrest of Sonam Wangchuk on completely bogus grounds six months back. Now the Modi Government has done a total U-turn. It stands fully exposed. It should apologise to not only Mr Wangchuk and his family, but to the people of Ladakh as well," Congress



general secretary Jairam Ramesh said in a post on X.

AAP National Convener Arvind Kejriwal said the Wangchuk case mirrors the treatment meted out to his party's top leadership in the alleged Delhi liquor scam, claiming they were kept in jail "for months and years" under fabricated charges.

"The Modi government

stands exposed once again. A scientist and climate activist who had dedicated his life to the nation was arrested without any evidence," Kejriwal said on X.

"The months he spent in jail were not only a personal loss for him but also a loss to the country. This sheer dictatorship must be called out and stopped immediately," the former Delhi chief minister added.

Samajwadi Party president said Wangchuk should never have been jailed.

"The question is: why was he sent to jail in the first place? He should not have been sent to jail. The BJP, too, should have supported his movement, as the BJP had promised that Ladakh would be granted full statehood status. It was the BJP that betrayed them," he told reporters.

Rare plant species rediscovered in Arunachal after 189 yrs

The species, Henckelia monophylla, had not been documented since the early 19th century, making the finding a significant addition to botanical records of the Eastern Himalayas



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Itanagar, March 14: Scientists from the Botanical Survey of India have rediscovered a rare plant species endemic to Arunachal Pradesh nearly 189 years after it was last recorded during a field survey in Lohit district, officials said Saturday.

The species, Henckelia monophylla, had not been documented since the early 19th century, making the finding a significant addition to bo-

tanical records of the Eastern Himalayas.

Belonging to the Gesneria-

humid forest environments. Species of the genus Henckelia generally have erect or slightly creeping stems and simple leaves that may be ovate or lance-shaped.

The plants produce axillary inflorescences bearing one or several tubular or funnel-shaped flowers, often with delicate colouration.

Their fruits develop as elongated capsules containing numerous tiny seeds, enabling them to reproduce effectively in suitable ecological niches.

Botanists say such findings underline the need for continued field surveys and conservation efforts in Arunachal Pradesh, which is regarded as one of India's richest biodiversity hotspots.

Chief Minister Pema Khan- du congratulated the scientists on the rediscovery.

"Delighted to learn about the remarkable rediscovery of Henckelia monophylla, a rare plant species endemic to Arunachal Pradesh, after nearly 189 years. My heartfelt congratulations to the team from the Botanical Survey of India for this significant scientific achievement," the chief minister said in a post on X.

He said the rediscovery from Lohit district highlights the extraordinary biodiversity of the state.

"Such findings not only add to global botanical knowledge but also remind us of the ecological treasures our state holds," Khandu said.

The chief minister also extended his best wishes to the researchers for their dedicated efforts in documenting and conserving the unique species.

PM unveils projects worth ₹18,680cr in West Bengal



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, March 14: Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled connectivity projects valued at Rs 18,680 crore in West Bengal Saturday, and said a new chapter of India's development was being written from the state.

The PM asserted that these projects will give new momentum to West Bengal and eastern India, boosting business and enterprise.

"A new chapter is being written for West Bengal and eastern India's development from Kolkata. Lives of lakhs of people will be eased; they will get new opportunities," Modi said after inaugurating and laying the foundation stone for the projects at a programme here. He said these projects will further strengthen eastern India's logistics system.

"These new projects related to roads, rail and ports are opening new vistas for Bengal's modern future," he said.

The PM said that these projects will benefit everyone, including farmers, traders, entrepreneurs and students.

"New opportunities will be created in the tourism sector also," he said, adding that local enterprise and services will get a boost from the projects.

"We are determined to ensure that Bengal, which once showed

the way to the rest of India, will once again become a developed state and regain its glory," he said. Modi said that strong connectivity and modern infrastructure will become the foundation of a developed Bengal.

The PM said that completion of the Kharagpur-Moregram expressway, for which he laid the foundation stone, will speed up economic activity.

He laid the foundation stone for five sections of the 231 km-long four-lane Kharagpur-Moregram economic corridor, which will reduce the distance by around 120 km and save nearly seven to eight hours.

The road, which is part of the economic corridor between Kharagpur and Siliguri, will pass through Paschim Medinipur, Bankura, Hooghly, Purba Bardhaman, Birbhum and Murshidabad districts, officials said.

The corridor will integrate key national highways, including NH-16, NH-19, NH-14 and NH-12, thereby strengthening multi-corridor connectivity, they said.

The PM also laid the foundation stone for the construction of a 5.6-km-long four-lane Dubrajpur Bypass and additional four-lane major bridges over the Kangshabati and Shilabati rivers on NH-14.

SIT formed to probe assassination attempt on Farooq Abdullah

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, March 14: Jammu and Kashmir Police have constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the recent assassination attempt on National Conference president Farooq Abdullah here, officials said Saturday.

Jammu Zone Inspector General of Police (IGP) Bhim Sen Tuti ordered the setting up of the SIT under the supervision of a deputy inspector general of police Jammu-Samba-Kathua range, considering the "seriousness and sensitivity" of the case.

Abdullah, the former chief minister, had a miraculous escape when a gunman opened fire on him Wednesday night after coming from behind while he was leaving a marriage function at the Royal Park banquet hall in the Greater Kailash area.

The 63-year-old accused Kamal Singh, a resident of Jammu, was overpowered and arrested on the spot. A revolver used in the crime was also recovered from his possession.

"At about 10 pm (March 11), while the protectee (Abdullah) was leaving the (marriage) venue, an individual flashed a revolver and attempted to open fire from close range. However, owing to the prompt action of the police personnel deployed with the protectee, the attempt was foiled. In this regard, a case under Section 109 BNS and Section 3/25 of the Arms Act has been registered at Police Station Gangyal, Jammu," the IGP said in his order issued March 12.

The police shared a copy of the order Saturday evening.

The members of the SIT include Senior Superintendent of Police Sanjay Sharma, Superintendent of Police, headquarters (Jammu) Irshad Hussain Rather, Deputy Superintendent of Police Arvind Kumar Sambyal and inspectors Saroop Singh, Paramjeet Singh, Sanjeev Chib and Shariq Majeed.



Russia will try to exploit the war in the Middle East to cause even greater destruction here in Europe, in Ukraine
VOLODYMYR ZELENSKYI | PRESIDENT, UKRAINE

MASS EXODUS HITS LEBANON

In just 10 days, more than 800,000 people in Lebanon have been displaced by war, just over a year since the last conflict uprooted over a million Lebanese from their homes. That's one in every seven people in the tiny country, according to the humanitarian organisation the Norwegian Refugee Council



of the day uote

For this unprecedented situation, the affordable and stable LNG supply from Australia is the lifeline of energy security in Japan and this region



RYOSEI AKAZAWA | INDUSTRY MINISTER, JAPAN

Should the RDF (Rwanda Defence Force) Command assess that the work being done by Rwandan Security Forces in Cabo Delgado is not appreciated, they would be right to urge the government to end this bilateral counter-terrorism arrangement and pull out



YOLANDE MAKOLO | GOVERNMENT SPOKESPERSON, RWANDA

With the increasing geo-political challenges, the shape of the world economy has totally changed these days



BALANANDA SHARMA | MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, NEPAL

SHORT TAKES

Russia strikes Kyiv

Kyiv: A combined missile and drone attack on the Kyiv region killed at least four people and wounded at least 15 overnight into Saturday, according to the head of the regional administration for the Ukrainian capital. Three of the wounded were in critical condition, of whom two were undergoing surgery, Mykola Kalashnyk reported on Saturday. The attack hit four districts, damaging residential buildings, educational institutions, enterprises and critical infrastructure, Kalashnyk added in a social media post. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the main target for the overnight strikes was "the energy infrastructure of the Kyiv region." He said Russia launched around 430 drones of various types during the night, as well as 68 missiles. The strikes came days after the US postponed peace talks between Russia and Ukraine scheduled for this week, citing the war in the Middle East. As US and Israeli missiles and bombs rain on Iran, Russia has responded with words of indignation but no action to support its ally. Moscow's failure to help another ally, after the 2024 ouster of former Syrian ruler Bashar Assad and January's US arrest of Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro, highlighted the limits of its influence - but the Kremlin expects to reap benefits from the Iran war.

Bolsonaro in ICU

Rio de Janeiro: Brazil's former President Jair Bolsonaro has pneumonia and is receiving treatment in an intensive care unit, a hospital in the capital, Brasilia, said Friday. One of his doctors, Brasil Caiaido, told journalists that the 70-year-old's medical situation was serious. "Pneumonia in patients over 70 is always serious because it can progress to septicemia, since the bacteria can normally enter the bloodstream and cause an even more severe condition," Caiaido said. Earlier in the day, Bolsonaro's eldest son Flavio said on X that his father was being transferred from prison to a hospital after waking up with chills and vomiting. "I ask for prayers that it not be anything serious," Flavio wrote. Flavio Bolsonaro has said he will run for president this year, and recent polls show him and President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva almost tied. Jair Bolsonaro is serving a 27-year sentence for attempting a coup after he was convicted last year by a panel of Supreme Court justices.

THIRD WEEK OF CONFLICT

The conflict has sharply escalated as Iran accuses US of launching strikes from UAE territory and warned civilians to evacuate key ports calling them potential targets

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dubai, March 14: Iran issued an evacuation warning for three major ports in the United Arab Emirates Saturday, including the busiest in the Middle East, openly threatening a neighbouring country's non-US assets for the first time as its war with the US and Israel entered its third week. Iran said the US had used "ports, docks and hideouts" in the UAE to launch strikes on Iran's Kharg Island, without providing evidence. It urged people to evacuate areas where it said US forces were sheltering.

Hours after the threat, there was no sign of an attack on Dubai's Jebel Ali port - the Middle East's busiest - or the Khalifa port in Abu Dhabi. But Associated Press images showed a fire at the third port, in Fujairah, caused by debris from an intercepted Iranian drone hitting an oil facility.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told MS NOW that the US attacked Kharg Island and Abu Musa Island with low-range artillery from two locations in the UAE, Ras Al-Khaimah and a place "very close to Dubai," calling that dangerous and saying Iran "will try to be careful not to attack any populated area" there. Iran has fired hundreds of missiles and drones at Arab Gulf neighbors during the war, but it said it was targeting US assets, even as hits or attempts

IOC'S LANKA OPERATION TO KEEP FUEL LINE



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Colombo, March 14: A top official of the Lanka Indian Oil Corporation, the company's Sri Lanka operation, Saturday assured continued fuel supplies amid the ongoing conflict in West Asia.

The statement from Lanka Indian Oil Corporation (LIOC) comes after Sri Lanka's foreign minister, Vijitha Herath, expressed confidence that the request to his Indian counterpart, Dr S Jaishankar, would help sustain island nations' energy supply chain.

Herath discussed the matter with Jaishankar during his official visit to India March 6.

Addressing a gathering of management students here Saturday, K Raghu, the managing director of LIOC, said, "As the Managing Director of Lanka IOC, I only want to tell the people that you are all in safe hands."

"We will maintain the fuel line and provide energy security to the country, which is very important," Raghu added.

"I will not say the situation is very rosy, but I will definitely assure you that you are all in safe hands," he said, adding that the companies and the government are doing their best. Raghu also assured that LIOC will continue to fuel the progress of the country.

LIOC also assisted the Sri Lankan people when the country was hit by an unprecedented economic crisis in mid-2022, and the people were forced to wait in long queues at fuel stations. Currently, LIOC operates 200 fuel stations throughout Sri Lanka and enjoys a 20 per cent share of the market. They first came in 2003 under a 20-year contract, which has again been renewed in 2023.

War shadows on UAE



were reported on civilian ones such as airports and oil fields.

On Friday, US President Donald Trump said the US "obliterated" military sites on Kharg Island, home to the main terminal handling Iran's oil exports.

He said oil infrastructure could be next if Tehran continues to interfere with ships' passage through the Strait of Hormuz, where vessels are backed up and one-fifth of global oil supplies usually transit.

Iran's parliamentary speaker has said strikes against the country's oil infrastructure would provoke a new level of retaliation.

As global anxiety soars over oil prices and supplies, Trump said Saturday that he hopes China, France, Japan, South Korea, the UK and others send warships to keep the Strait of

The war has killed more than 2,000 people, mostly in Iran, and created the biggest-ever oil supply disruption as maritime traffic has halted in the Strait of Hormuz

Hormuz "open and safe". Britain in response said it was discussing with allies a "range of options" to secure shipping.

On Saturday, Iran's joint military command reiterated its threat to attack US-linked

"oil, economic and energy infrastructures" in the region if the Islamic Republic's oil infrastructure is hit.

Iran's semi-official Fars news agency said the Kharg Island strikes caused no damage to oil infrastructure. It said they targeted an air defence facility, a naval base, the airport control tower and an offshore oil company's helicopter hangar.

US Central Command said it destroyed naval mine storage facilities, missile storage bunkers and other military sites.

Israel earlier announced another wave of strikes in Iran targeting infrastructure, and said its air force had hit more than 200 targets in the last 24 hours, including missile launchers, defence systems and weapons production sites.

A US official said Friday

Jurgen Habermas, influential German philosopher, dies at 96

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Berlin, March 14: Jurgen Habermas, whose work on communication, rationality and sociology made him one of the world's most influential philosophers and a key intellectual figure in his native Germany, has died. He was 96.

Habermas' publisher, Suhrkamp, said he died Saturday in Starnberg, near Munich. Habermas frequently weighed in on political matters over several decades. His extensive writing crossed the boundaries of academic and philosophical disciplines, providing a vision of modern society and social interaction.

His best-known works included the two-volume "Theory of Communicative Action".

Habermas, who was 15 at the time of Nazi Germany's defeat, later recalled the dawn of a new era in 1945 and his coming to terms with the reality of Nazi crimes as something without which he wouldn't have found his way into philosophy and social theory.

He recalled that "you saw suddenly that it was a politically criminal system in which you had lived".



He had an ambivalent relationship with the left-wing student movement of the late 1960s in Germany and beyond, engaging with it but also warning at the time against the danger of what he called "left-wing fascism" - a reaction to a firebrand speech by a student leader that he later said was "slightly out of place".

He would later recognise the movement as having driven a "fundamental liberalisation" of German society.

In the 1980s, Habermas was a prominent figure in the so-called "Historians' Dispute," in which Berlin historian Ernst Nolte and others called for a new perspective on the Third Reich and German identity.

Protesters in Cuba attack Communist party office

REUTERS

Havana, March 14: Anti-government protesters attacked a Communist Party office in northern Cuba early Saturday, a state-run newspaper reported, in a rare outburst of public dissent triggered by worsening blackouts that have been exacerbated by a US oil blockade.

A rally against power cuts and food shortages appeared to begin peacefully in the city of Moron late Friday then turned violent in the early hours of Saturday morning. Invasor newspaper said.

Videos on social media showed a large fire and people throwing rocks through the windows of a building as

voices shouted "liberty" in the background.

Reuters was unable to confirm the authenticity of videos that posters said showed the unrest in Moron, a city on Cuba's northern coast about 250 miles (400 km) east of the capital Havana near the tourist resort of Cayo Coco.

The United States has tightened the screws on Cuba this year since capturing Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro - Cuba's most important foreign benefactor - in January.

US President Trump cut off Venezuelan oil shipments to Cuba and threatened to slap tariffs on any country that sells oil to Cuba, piling pressure on the economy already struggling

RARE RIOT OVER BLACKOUTS



- BLACKOUTS EXACERBATED BY US OIL BLOCKADE
- VIOLENT PROTESTS VERY RARE IN CUBA
- CUBA SAYS IT HAS OPENED TALKS WITH US

with shortages of food, fuel, electricity and medicine.

Trump has in recent weeks made a series of statements, saying Cuba was on the verge of collapse or eager to make a deal with the United States. Cuba's government said on Friday it had begun talks with Washington to try to defuse the crisis. Public protests, particularly

FUEL CRISIS

Pak PM approves up to 30% salary cuts in state firms

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, March 14: Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Saturday approved salary deductions ranging from 5 to 30 per cent for employees of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and autonomous institutions as part of a broader austerity drive.

The new measures were cleared during a review meeting convened to evaluate a slew of austerity and savings plans announced on Monday to tackle the economic fallout of the fuel crisis triggered by the ongoing US-Israel-Iran conflict.

According to a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), Sharif chaired a high-level meeting to review the impact of fuel price fluctuations and the implementation of government austerity measures.

"It was decided in the meeting that, like government employees, there will be a 5-30 per cent cut in the salaries of employees of state-owned enterprises and autonomous institutions under government patronage," the statement said.

It added that the savings generated through the austerity measures would be used "only for public relief". Participants were also informed that a third-party audit would oversee a 50 per cent reduction in fuel allocations for government vehicles, while 60 per cent of these vehicles would be taken off the roads over the next two months.

The meeting further decided that government representatives on the boards of various corporations and institutions would no longer receive participation fees, which would instead be counted as part of the savings.

Visa fraud: 11 Indians charged in US

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New York, March 14: Eleven Indian nationals, living illegally in the US, have been charged with visa fraud for conspiring to carry out staged armed robberies of convenience shops, according to US federal prosecutors.

Authorities said the suspects are accused of organising fake robberies for the purpose of allowing the store clerks to falsely claim they were crime victims on immigration applications towards getting a Green Card.

Jitendrakumar Patel, 39, Maheshkumar Patel, 36, Sanjaykumar Patel, 45, Dipikaben Patel, 40, Rameshbhai Patel, 52, Amitabhen Patel, 43, Ronakkumar Patel, 28, Sangitaben Patel, 36, Minkesh Patel, 42, Sonal Patel, 42 and Mitul Patel, 40 have been charged with one count of conspiracy to commit visa fraud.

They all were living unlawfully in various US states such as Massachusetts, Kentucky and Ohio. Dipikaben was deported to India after unlawfully residing in Weymouth, Massachusetts, the Justice Department said in a statement.

Jitendrakumar, Maheshkumar, Sanjaykumar, Amitabhen, Sangitaben and Mitul were arrested in Massachusetts and



released following an initial appearance in federal court in Boston on Friday.

Rameshbhai, Ronakkumar, Sonal and Minkesh were arrested and made their initial appearances in Kentucky, Missouri and Ohio. They will appear in federal court in Boston at a later date.

According to the charging documents, in March 2023, Rambhai and his co-conspirators set up and carried out staged armed robberies of at least six convenience/liquor stores and fast food restaurants in Massachusetts and elsewhere.

It is alleged that the purpose of the staged robberies was to allow the clerks present to falsely claim that they were victims

of a violent crime on an application for a U non-immigration status (U Visa).

A U Visa is available to victims of certain crimes who have suffered mental or physical abuse and who have been helpful to law enforcement in the investigation or prosecution of criminal activity. The U visa offers an immigrant work authorisation and a path to a Green Card within 5 1/2 years.

Authorities said that in the course of the alleged staged robberies, the "robber" would threaten store clerks or the owners with an apparent firearm before taking cash from the register and fleeing, while the interaction was captured on store surveillance video.



OLA ELECTRIC'S #ENDICEAGE CAMPAIGN

Ola Electric Saturday launched #EndICEAge, a nationwide campaign aimed at accelerating India's transition away from petrol-powered or internal combustion engine (ICE) two-wheelers toward electric mobility. The campaign highlights the rising cost and inconvenience of petrol dependency while encouraging riders across the country to make the shift to electric vehicles



of the day quote

While the month of March has festive drivers... the recent conflict in West Asia remains a concern... could impact the manufacturing processes and exports

RAJESH MENON | DIRECTOR GENERAL, SIAM

With an overall investment of over ₹2,000 crore and a continued focus on BIS-certified manufacturing, we are reinforcing our Built to Lead commitment while steadily expanding our Made in India portfolio

ANDRE ECKHOLT | MD, HETTICH INDIA, SAARC, MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA

From inception, VLCC has approached weight management as a medical and metabolic science- not a cosmetic trend

VIKAS GUPTA | MD & CEO, VLCC GROUP

Govts cushion households

Brent crude contract settled Friday at \$102.90 a barrel, a 42% increase since the outset of US-Israeli strikes on Iran at the end of February

REUTERS

Seoul/Cairo, March 14: Governments from Asia to Europe are scrambling to shield consumers from surging fuel and food costs triggered by the US-Israeli war on Iran, rolling out measures ranging from fuel subsidies and price caps to emergency commodity releases.

The conflict has halted a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas supply from the Middle East and forced top regional energy producers Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Iraq and Qatar to cut output in what the International Energy Agency termed the largest disruption to energy supplies the world has ever endured.

The benchmark international Brent crude contract settled Friday at \$102.90 a barrel, a 42% increase since the outset of US-Israeli strikes on Iran at the end of February. The IEA is coordinating the largest-ever release of oil from emergency stockpiles and the United States has eased sanctions on Russian oil exports as a temporary salve for the supply shortage.

But countries most heavily dependent on energy imports are facing soaring prices and fuel shortages due to the disruption of shipping from the key Strait of Hormuz, where several vessels have been attacked as Iran uses its position at the narrow strait to blunt US military power.

Governments are taking numerous steps to deal with the magnitude of the shock to cushion businesses and households as transportation and power bills rise. Some are leaning on subsidies to try to prevent rising fuel costs from trickling into other parts of the economy, such as food prices and supply chains.

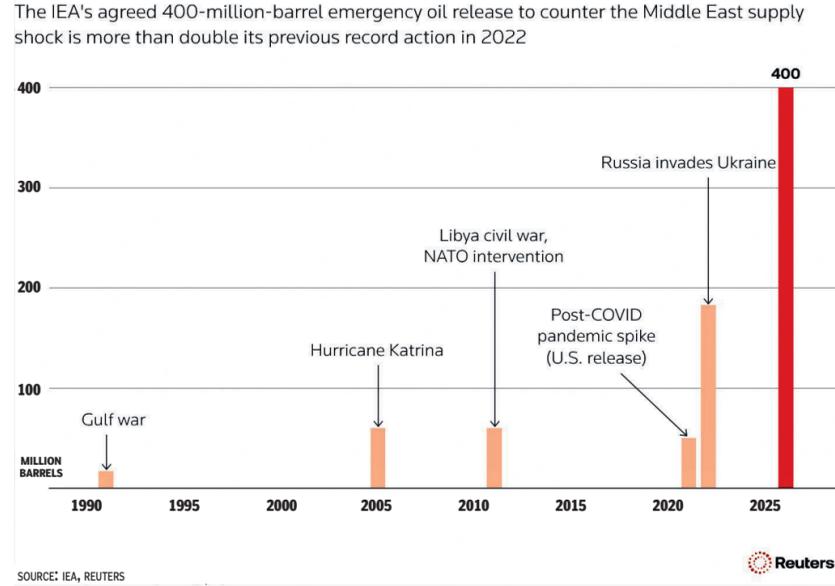
"A central question is how long importers can sustain fuel supply before shortages deepen," said Natasha Kaneva, head of global commodities research at JP Morgan, in a research note.

South Korean officials said they are considering providing additional energy vouchers to

RISING ENERGY CRISIS

Unprecedented oil intervention

The IEA's agreed 400-million-barrel emergency oil release to counter the Middle East supply shock is more than double its previous record action in 2022



SOURCE: IEA, REUTERS

subsidise vulnerable households if rising fuel prices push up electricity bills.

The government is also preparing contingency plans to boost nuclear and coal-fired power generation if LNG supplies from the Middle East remain disrupted.

- Governments intervene as fuel costs ripple through economies
- Power, food costs rise as energy shock spreads globally
- Countries tap reserves and subsidies to stabilise energy markets

FOOD PRICE PRESSURES

Governments are also moving to prevent higher energy costs from quickly feeding into food inflation. In Egypt, authorities capped prices for unsubsidised bread sold in private bakeries as rising fuel and transport costs threaten to drive up food prices.

Bread is a staple for millions in the country, one of the world's largest wheat importers, making price increases politically sensitive. Concerns about rising farming costs have also prompted action in China, which will release fertilizers from national reserves ahead of the spring planting season to stabilise prices and ensure farmers have adequate supplies.

POWER, GAS MARKETS

Across Asia and Europe, governments are also stepping directly into energy markets to cushion households from rising fuel and power costs.

The Philippines said it may

avoid delaying shipments needed to stabilise supplies during the crisis. Diplomats said the move could benefit imports from Azerbaijan, whose pipeline gas reaches Europe through the Southern Gas Corridor.

SUBSIDIES, TAX RELIEF

Many governments are also turning to subsidies and fiscal tools to contain rising prices.

In Malaysia, the government said it will increase spending on petrol subsidies to about \$510 million to keep the price of its widely used midrange RON95 fuel fixed, and authorities in Ethiopia sharply increased fuel subsidies to cushion consumers.

European governments are also weighing tax measures. Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said the government is considering cutting fuel excise duties while warning it could impose higher taxes on companies seen as profiting excessively from the crisis. Australia said it would release petrol and diesel from domestic reserves and temporarily loosen fuel quality standards to boost available supply, particularly in rural areas facing shortages.

Brazil has cut diesel taxes and imposed a levy on crude exports to help stabilise domestic fuel costs.

Meta planning sweeping layoffs

The company laid off 11,000 staffers in November 2022, or around 13% of its workforce at the time. Around four months later, it announced it was cutting another 10,000 jobs

AI COSTS MOUNT



REUTERS

New York, March 14: Meta is planning sweeping layoffs that could affect 20% or more of the company, three sources familiar with the matter told Reuters, as Meta seeks to offset costly artificial intelligence infrastructure bets and prepare for greater efficiency brought about by AI-assisted workers.

No date has been set for the cuts and the magnitude has not been finalized, the people said.

Top executives have recently signaled the plans to other senior leaders at Meta and told them to begin planning how to pare back, two of the people said. The sources spoke anonymously because they were not authorized to disclose the cuts.

"This is speculative reporting about theoretical approaches," Meta spokesperson Andy Stone said in response to questions about the plan.

If Meta settles on the 20% figure, the layoffs will be the company's most significant since a restructuring in late 2022 and early 2023 that it dubbed the "year of efficiency." It employed nearly 79,000 people as of December 31, according to its latest filing.

The company laid off 11,000 staffers in November 2022, or around 13% of its workforce at the time. Around four months later, it announced it was cutting another 10,000 jobs.

ZUCKERBERG FOCUSING ON GENERATIVE AI

Over the last year, CEO Mark Zuckerberg has been pushing Meta to compete more forcefully in generative AI. The company has offered huge pay packages, some worth hundreds of millions of dollars over four years, to court top AI researchers to

a new superintelligence team.

The company has said it plans to invest \$600 billion to build data centers by 2028. Earlier this week, it acquired Moltbook, a social networking platform built for AI agents. Meta is also spending at least \$2 billion to buy Chinese AI startup Manus, Reuters previously reported.

Zuckerberg has alluded to efficiency gains from the investments, saying in January he was starting to see "projects that used to require big teams now be accomplished by a single very talented person."

Meta's plans reflect a broader pattern among major US companies, particularly in tech, this year. Executives have pointed to recent improvements in AI systems as one reason for the changes.

In January, Amazon confirmed it would cut some 16,000 jobs, amounting to nearly 10% of its workforce. Last month, the fintech company Block chopped nearly half of its staff, with CEO Jack Dorsey explicitly pointing to AI tools and their growing capability to help companies do more with smaller teams.

Meta's planned AI investments follow a series of setbacks with its Llama 4 models last year, including criticism that it provided misleading results on the benchmarks it used for early versions. It abandoned the release of the largest version of that model, called Behemoth, which had been due out in the summer.

The superintelligence team has been working to reassert the company's standing this year by building a new model called Avocado, but the performance of that model has also lagged expectations.

SHORT TAKES

Coal production hits record 200MT mark

New Delhi: Captive, commercial and other coal mines crossed the landmark of 200 million tonne (MT) of coal production on March 11 during FY 2025-26, Coal Ministry said Friday. Out of the total production, Captive and commercial coal mines contributed 194.17 MT, while other mines contributed 6.06 MT, taking the overall production beyond the historic 200 MT mark. Notably, coal production in FY 2025-26 surpassed the total production of FY 2024-25 (197.32 MT) on March 7, 2026, achieving this milestone 24 days ahead of last year. The sector has continued to demonstrate strong momentum, recording a year-on-year growth of 10.56 per cent during the same period. "This achievement reflects the collective efforts and unwavering commitment of various Central and State Public Sector Undertakings (CPSUs/SPSUs) along with private sector participants, whose relentless work and resilience have played a crucial role in strengthening the nation's coal production," said the ministry.

NMDC scripts history

New Delhi: NMDC Saturday said it has become the first mining company in the country to produce 50 million tonne (MT) iron ore in a single financial year. As India advances towards its target of expanding steelmaking capacity to 300 million tonne by 2030, ensuring a stable and reliable domestic supply of iron ore has become a strategic priority, NMDC CMD Amitava Mukherjee said. Iron ore is a key steelmaking raw material. "NMDC has scripted history by becoming the first mining company in the country to produce 50 million tonne (MT) of iron ore in a single financial year, ahead of the close of FY 2025-26," a company statement said.

After Air India and IndiGo, now Akasa Air to levy fuel surcharge



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 14: Akasa Air will levy fuel surcharges ranging from ₹199 to ₹1,300 on domestic and international flight tickets from March 15 due to the spike in jet fuel prices amid the West Asia conflict.

Air India, Air India Express

and IndiGo have started levying similar charges on domestic and international flight tickets.

In a statement Saturday, Akasa Air said it would levy fuel surcharge for each flight and the quantum would vary based on the duration of the flight. "Akasa Air will introduce a fu-

el surcharge ranging from INR 199 to INR 1300 on our domestic and international routes, for all bookings that are made with effect from 00:01 hrs on March 15, 2026," it said.

According to the airline, there has been a significant increase in the price of aviation turbine fuel, driven by evolving geopolitical developments in West Asia.

"As fuel represents a significant portion of airline operating costs, this impacts the cost of operations across the aviation industry," the statement said.



TPCODL announces its Adhikaar Information Centre at Daspatha is now a Government-approved Common Service Centre (Jana Seva Kendra), bringing essential services closer to people while strengthening grassroots support

TRADE DEALS OFFER NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Services exports reach 10% of GDP

India's services exports have recorded strong and consistent growth in recent years, emerging as one of the most resilient drivers of the country's external sector performance

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 14: India's services exports have maintained strong momentum in FY2025-26, supported by sustained global demand for Indian services and over the April-January 2025-26 period, services exports are estimated

at \$348.4 billion, an official fact-sheet said Saturday.

India's services exports share in GDP averaged 9.7 per cent during FY23-FY25, marking a notable rise from 7.4 per cent in the pre-pandemic period, and highlighting the growing role of the services sector in supporting economic growth.

"This stabilising contribution strengthened further in the first half (H1) of FY26, with the share of services exports in GDP increasing to 10 per cent, highlighting the continued expansion and resilience of India's services-led growth trajectory," the fact-sheet revealed.

The services sector has also emerged as a major source of employment generation.

MacBook Neo Apple's most repairable laptop in decade

Apple is widely believed to be targeting the same education markets with its MacBook Neo that Google targets with its low-cost Chromebooks

REUTERS

San Francisco, March 14: Apple's MacBook Neo, the laptop it announced last week that starts at \$499 for students, is the most repairable laptop the company has released since 2014, according to an analysis released Friday by iFixit.

iFixit publishes repair guides and sells parts and tools for consumer electronic devices, but also provides ratings for



how easy items are to fix and keep running. Laptop makers such as Dell Tech and Lenovo Group have used those ratings to improve the repairability of their products.

In the teardown published Friday, iFixit found that Ap-

ple had made key changes from previous laptops, such as attaching the computer's batteries and keyboard with screws rather than glue or rivets, and making it easy to swap out parts such as the device's camera and fingerprint sensor.

Apple's future for privacy-centered AI has to be local models. I would argue this is a flaw across Apple's entire Mac product line

KYLE WIENS | CHIEF EXECUTIVE, IFIXIT

Apple is widely believed to be targeting the same education markets with its MacBook Neo that Google targets with its low-cost Chromebooks. Kyle Wiens, iFixit's chief executive, said Chromebooks are frequently repaired, with some school districts such as those in Oakland, California even tapping student interns to fix them.

But Apple's MacBook Neo still scored only a 6 out of 10 on iFixit's scale, where other machines

such as a recent Lenovo ThinkPad have scored 9s and 10s.

Apple, which has prioritized thinner and lighter devices over the past decade, has made its products harder to repair.

Wiens said one of the reasons is that MacBook Neo's 8 gigabytes of DRAM are directly soldered to the circuit board of the machine as part of a package with the machine's main processing chip, which is similar to all of Apple's Mac designs in recent years but will make MacBook Neos impossible to easily upgrade with more memory.

"Apple's future for privacy-centered AI has to be local models," Wiens said. "I would argue this is a flaw across Apple's entire Mac product line."

HISTORIC MOVE MAYANK NORTHEAST'S FIRST GM; INDIA'S 94TH

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi, Mar 14: Talented youngster Mayank Chakraborty crossed the final hurdle in his promising career by securing his third and final GM norm, becoming the 94th Grandmaster and the first from India's North-East region to achieve the coveted title.

Hailing from Guwahati in Assam, the 17-year-old Chakraborty -- who became an International Master in 2024 -- achieved the feat with a round to spare in the eighth round of the Hotel Stockholm North

by First Hotels Chess Talents Tournament, defeating Swedish IM Philip Lindgren. Chakraborty was at the top of his game in the victory over Lindgren, accumulating the required 6.5 points that were enough to secure his final Grandmaster norm. In the final round, he played out an exciting draw with English International Master Jonah B Willow to seal what was his most memorable performance to date.

Chakraborty also crossed the critical 2500 Elo rating mark in the process, with his current rating standing a



few points above the threshold, thereby confirming the Grandmaster title as per the rules of the international

chess federation, FIDE. Chakraborty lost one game, drew two and won the remaining six to finish with seven points out of a possible nine, also clinching the tournament title in the process with a half-point lead over Norway's Aksel Bu Kvaloy, who received a last-round walkover.

In 2024, Chakraborty had become an International Master and has been one of the top performers in his age group. Chakraborty, the former India and Asia No 1 in the Under-11 category, had a breakthrough season in 2021 when he competed in Europe, jumping

from an Elo rating in the 1800s to nearing 2200 while also becoming world No 6 in the Elo rankings for boys born on or after 2009.

His precocious talent also saw him emerge as the Under-9 national silver medallist and Under-11 national gold medallist, besides winning the Under-10 silver at the Asian Youth Chess Championship in Sri Lanka.

Behind his rise has been strong family support -- his doctor mother serving as a pillar of strength, while his father quit his job to travel with him during tournaments.

SHORT TAKES

ICC reprimands Pakistan captain

Mirpur: The International Cricket Council (ICC) has officially reprimanded Pakistan batter Salman Agha and added one demerit point against his disciplinary record after he was found breaching the Code of Conduct during the second One-Day International (ODI) against Bangladesh in Dhaka Friday. The incident occurred in the 39th over of Pakistan's innings when Agha, after being run out, threw his batting gloves and helmet to the ground in an inappropriate manner. The ball rolled towards Agha, who was standing outside his crease at the non-striker's end after backing up. As the ball made contact with his pads, Agha bent down and picked it up before handing it back. Miraz quickly collected the ball and broke the stumps with Agha still outside the crease, appealing for a run-out. The on-field umpire upheld the appeal and referred the decision upstairs. The third umpire also ruled in Bangladesh's favour, confirming Agha's dismissal. Agha reacted angrily in the heat of the moment by throwing down his gloves and helmet, which led to him being sanctioned by the ICC.

Antonelli on pole for Formula 1 Chinese GP

Shanghai: Kimi Antonelli stepped up when his Mercedes teammate George Russell hit trouble in qualifying to become the youngest-ever driver on pole position for a Formula 1 Grand Prix Saturday. After holding off a challenge from Ferrari to win the sprint race earlier in the day, Russell seemed near-unbeatable. Then he stopped on track in qualifying and limped back to the pits with technical problems. Russell's team got the car going again with seconds to spare for him to set a time. It was only good enough for second on the grid, 0.222 of a second off Antonelli, who kept up Mercedes' run of qualifying dominance after F1's sweeping changes to the cars for 2026. The Ferraris of Lewis Hamilton and Charles Leclerc will start third and fourth. Their fast starts could threaten Mercedes off the line, as they did last week in Australia and in Saturday's sprint race.

20 clubs to battle for OCA league title

POST NEWS NETWORK
Bhubaneswar, March 14: The Odisha Cricket Association (OCA) has announced the commencement of the OCA Club League 2026, with the tournament set to begin March 16, 2026. The competition will be played in the 50-over limited-overs format using the white leather ball, and the official fixtures have already been released.

A total of 20 clubs affiliated with the OCA will participate in the championship. The teams have been divided into four groups of five teams each. During the league stage, every team will play four matches within its respective group, ensuring competitive action among the participating clubs.

At the end of the league phase, the top two teams from each group will advance to the quarterfinals, from where the tournament will move into the knockout stage, followed by the semifinals and the final to determine the champion.

Overall, the tournament will feature 47 matches, in-



cluding 40 league matches, four quarterfinals, two semifinals, and the final. The league stage will follow the standard points system, where a win will earn two points, while a tie or no result will award one point to each team.

To encourage individual performances, the organisers have also announced a Player of the Match award after every game. The award will include a trophy and a cash prize of 5,000, recognising standout contributions during the matches.

FIH HOCKEY WC QUALIFIERS Fighting eves finish runners-up



at the GMC Balayogi Hockey Ground in Hyderabad Saturday. Grace Balsdon (13') and Elizabeth Neal (43') found the back of the net for England. India began the game on the front foot with Navneet Kaur helping her side earn a penalty corner within the opening two minutes. However, England grew into the game towards the end of the first quarter, earning a penalty corner with two minutes to go. Grace Balsdon (13') made the most of that opportunity, finding the back of the net with her drag flick, to give England the lead.

The second quarter began similarly to the first, with both teams not giving much away in this engaging contest. India had a few opportunities to pile on the pressure, but the visitors stood firm at the back. They eventually doubled their lead courtesy of Elizabeth Neal (43'). The midfielder was fortunate as her effort deflected off an Indian defender before finding its way past Bichu Devi, giving England a 2-0 lead at the end of the third quarter.

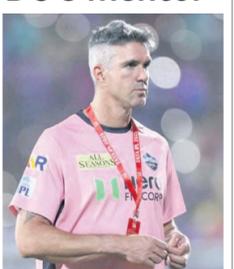
India continued to push forward in search of a goal that would get them back into the game. The hosts created multiple attacks that seemed to be vital.

However, they couldn't find the back of the net and eventually succumbed to a 2-0 defeat.

IPL TALES

Pietersen quits as DC's mentor

New Delhi: Former England captain Kevin Pietersen, who mentored the Delhi Capitals last year, said Saturday that he won't be able to serve the role in the upcoming season of the Indian Premier League. The IPL 2026 is starting March 28 with defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru hosting Sunrisers Hyderabad at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium. "I cannot be the mentor for Delhi Capitals this IPL season. I cannot give the time that the job requires. Best wishes to all the players for this season! "However, I'll see you back in the commentary box. IPL is the world's best league and I can't wait to see you all soon!", Pietersen said on X in a post written in Hindi. Delhi Capitals will start their IPL 2026 season against Lucknow Super Giants at the Ekana Stadium in an away game in Lucknow April 1. DC's first game at home is against the Mumbai Indians April 4. Pietersen, who has played for three teams across five IPL seasons, was appointed as DC's mentor before the start of the 2025 edition. He has also represented the erstwhile Delhi Daredevils franchise. Pietersen also led in 17 matches in the IPL, captaining Royal Challengers Bengaluru briefly in IPL 2009 before leading Daredevils in 2014.



'Lines of legacy': KKR unveils new jersey

Kolkata: Three-time champions Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) have unveiled their new jersey ahead of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026, designed in the theme of Lines of Legacy. At the heart of the design are the defining moments that have shaped KKR's journey over the years. From the unforgettable opening night when Brendon McCullum smashed 158* back in 2008, to Rinku Singh's five sixes in the final over, KKR have produced many such moments that have become part of IPL folklore. Each iconic moment forms a line in the franchise's star-studded story, and when these lines come together, they create the initials (K) (K) (R) in the style of abstract linear art. "This season, those lines are not just remembered - they are woven into the jersey itself, allowing fans to wear a piece of the team's story," KKR said in a statement.

PCB targets Muzarabani for breach of contract

Lahore: The PCB is set to take legal action against Zimbabwe fast bowler Blessing Muzarabani for signing a contract with IPL team Kolkata Knight Riders, while pulling out of his deal with Islamabad United in the Pakistan Super League. A reliable source in the board said Saturday that the legal department had been instructed to file a case against the Zimbabwean, who has now inked a contract with the Knight Riders, replacing Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman who was dropped by the franchise as per BCCI's directions. "Since the IPL and PSL are now clashing after being held in the same window since last year we want to give a clear message to players that once they commit to playing in the PSL they can't just go and breach their contract and sign a new one with any franchise in the IPL," he said. The Islamabad United roped in Muzarabani as replacement for West Indian fast bowler Shamar Joseph.



INDIAN WELLS OPEN

Sabalenka, Rybakina set up epic blockbuster final

REUTERS
Indian Wells (USA), March 14: Aryna Sabalenka and Elena Rybakina moved into the Indian Wells final with straight-sets victories over Linda Noskova and Elina Svitolina Friday, setting up a rematch of their Australian Open Grand Slam title clash.

World number one Sabalenka has been in formidable form this season, winning 16 of her first 17 matches, with her only defeat coming against Rybakina in the Melbourne showpiece in January. She powered past Noskova 6-3 6-4 and will compete for the Indian



Wells crown for the third time in four years, seeking her maiden title in the Californian desert. "It feels great, I've lost a couple of

finals here, so I'll make sure that I'm more than ready on Sunday. I'll bring my best tennis and this is the year," Sabalenka said.

Twice Grand Slam champion Rybakina overcame a stiff test to see off Ukraine's Svitolina 7-5 6-4, staying on track to claim a second title in the event.

Sunday's title match will mark the third final between Rybakina and Sabalenka in the last six months. Kazakh Rybakina has won their previous two encounters, lifting the WTA Finals trophy in November and securing the Australian Open title.

"I'm going to fight as much as I can," Rybakina said. "Hopefully it's going to be a great match."

BHAMBRI-GORANSSON'S DREAM RUN ENDS IN SEMIS

Indian doubles ace Yuki Bhambri and his Swedish partner Andre Goransson's impressive campaign came to an end after losing in the semifinals of the Indian Wells Masters in California. The unseeded pair went down 5-7, 7-6(7), 5-10 to France's Arthur Rinderknech and Monaco's Valentin Vacherot in a closely-fought contest that was decided by a tie-breaker. Despite the defeat, the tournament marked a significant milestone for the 33-year-old Indian as it was his maiden semifinal appearance at an ATP Masters 1000 event. Earlier in the tournament, Bhambri and Goransson had produced a strong performance to reach the last-four, defeating the Austrian-Italian pair of Alexander Erler and Andrea Vavassori 6-3, 7-6(7). Their run also ended a two-year wait for an Indian presence in the semifinals of a Masters 1000 tournament since Rohan Bopanna won the title at the Miami Open in 2024.

GOLDEN JUMP Lokesh leaps to NCAA top spot

With a leap of 8.21m, he set a new indoor national record and moved to third on the all-time list of Indian long jumpers, behind Jeswin Aldrin (8.42m) and Murali Sreeshankar (8.41m)

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi, March 14: Young Indian athlete Lokesh Sathyathan achieved a major milestone in his fledgling career by winning the gold medal in the men's long jump at the NCAA Indoor Championships in Fayetteville, Arkansas.

With a leap of 8.21m, he set a new indoor national record and moved to third on the all-time list of Indian long jumpers, be-

hind Jeswin Aldrin (8.42m) and Murali Sreeshankar (8.41m). Lokesh, who is enrolled at Tarleton State University, set an indoor national record of 8.21m on his way to clinching the top podium spot in the fourth attempt of the final.

Lokesh finished ahead of De'Aundre Ward of University of Southern Mississippi, who leapt 8.20m to claim the second spot, and Tafadzwa Chikomba of Kansas State



University, who finished third with a jump of 8.15m. "I'm grateful and thankful to

God because I know nothing is possible without Him and of course my family back home (in Bangalore) and my coach, who is my family here," Lokesh told The Stride Report after the achievement, which made him only the fourth Indian after Mohinder Singh Gill, Vikas Gowda and Tejaswin Shankar to win the NCAA Division I Indoor Track and Field Championships.

The Indian athlete was placed fifth at NCAA Outdoors a season ago. While his 8.17m final leap Friday marked a significant leap from his 8.02m personal best, Lokesh is no stranger to the spotlight. His journey to this breakthrough includes multiple junior

I'm grateful and thankful to God because I know nothing is possible without Him and of course my family back home (in Bengaluru) and my coach, who is my family here

LOKESH SATHYATHAN

national titles and a stint representing India at the 2018 World Athletics U20 Championships. On the competition Friday, he said, "I think 26'11" was the leading jump until the fourth (attempt) and then I got 26'11-1/2", which is like 8.21m -- which is my personal best as well... so that is it," he said.