



Alia's new journey
Actor Alia Bhatt expands her production house with a storytelling venture bringing magical childhood tales to life
LEISURE | P2



Netanyahu is alive
In the wake of social media posts regarding his death, Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu releases a video showing him ordering coffee
INTERNATIONAL | P10



Selling spree
Foreign investors withdraw ₹52,704 crore from domestic equities in the first fortnight of March, amid escalating tensions in West Asia
BUSINESS | P11



Young and fast
Kimi Antonelli becomes Formula 1's second-youngest race winner with a composed drive to victory for Mercedes in the Chinese Grand Prix
SPORTS | P12



GONE WITH THE WIND: Women stare at uncertainty as the season's first Nor'wester blows away the roof of their house at Kiapanaposhi village under Karanjia block in Mayurbhanj district Sunday
(REPORT P3) OF PHOTO

Poaching 'horses' at B'lore

An alleged horse trading attempt on the eve of the Rajya Sabha elections has raised serious concerns about the fairness and integrity of the electoral process. As the Upper House of the Parliament is intended to reflect the relative strength of political parties in state Assemblies, it is essential that MLAs uphold the true mandate of the electorate. However, when legislators are bribed or pressured to vote contrary to their party's stand, the very purpose of this system is undermined. MLAs who engage in cross-voting for personal gain betray the trust of both their parties and the electorate, thereby weakening accountability and eroding the integrity of the democratic process



mittee (OPCC) after Bangalore police arrested two persons for allegedly trying to bribe the party legislators. "They were trying to offer ₹5 crore each to Congress MLAs," Ulaka claimed. The ruling BJP, however, rejected the Congress' allegation. "The Congress allegation is false. They are making such baseless claims after realising their certain defeat in the Rajya Sabha polls tomorrow. The Congress has a habit of cross-voting," Odisha BJP spokesperson Anil Biswal told reporters. According to Ulaka, four persons - Birendra Prasad, Suresh, Ajit Sahu and Simanchal Mahakud - had checked into the same hotel where the Congress MLAs were staying. "These four persons, who came from Rourkela and stayed in the hotel Saturday night, attempted to give ₹5 crore each to MLAs. Blank cheques were recovered from their possession. During interrogation by

Karnataka Police, they named BJP-backed Independent candidate Dilip Ray," Ulaka alleged. "The hotel is owned by Ray. The name of one Jaiswal, who is allegedly close to Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, has also cropped up during the investigation," he alleged. Demanding a proper probe into the matter, Ulaka also alleged that the four persons had threatened the Congress MLAs. "If there is any harm to our MLAs, Odisha CM will be responsible," the Congress MP said. "Two people have been arrested. One of the accused has been named as Suresh. Hunt is on for the third accused," a source told PTI in Bangalore. Ulaka said Bidadi police took action after the Congress lodged a formal complaint in this regard. He said that they became suspicious after finding the four people roaming close to Congress MLAs while they were taking breakfast Sunday morning. They too enquired about the room numbers of the Congress MLAs, Ulaka said. A report from Bangalore said eight Congress MLAs, along with some party leaders, were camping at a hotel in Karnataka. The action was taken to shield the party MLAs from "horse trading". ■ **BJD, Cong notice to 3 MLAs P-4**

IRREGULAR by MANJUL

Should we take special care of voters with LPG connections?

Poll dates announced for 4 states, 1 UT

Press Trust of India
New Delhi, March 15: Assembly elections in Assam, Kerala and Puducherry will be held on a single day April 9, in Tamil Nadu April 23 and in two phases in West Bengal April 23 and 29, while votes will be counted for all polls May 4, the Election Commission announced Sunday. Compared to eight voting days spread across almost a month in 2021, there will be three polling days in a 20-day period in these

- Assam, Kerala & Puducherry - April 9
- West Bengal - April 23 & 29
- Tamil Nadu - April 23
- Counting - May 4

constituencies, Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar said at a press conference here. "Voting for all seats in Assam will be held April 9. Voting in West Bengal will take place in two phases April 23 and April 29. Voting for all seats in Kerala and Puducherry will take place April 9, while all Tamil Nadu seats will go to polls April 23," said Kumar. Model code of conduct has come into effect immediately with the announcement of the poll schedule.

Bangalore/Bhubaneswar, March 15: Amid fears of cross-voting in the Rajya Sabha elections that would be held in Odisha after 12 years, senior Congress leader and Koraput MP Saptagiri Ulaka Sunday alleged that attempts were made to bribe party MLAs with ₹5 crore each while they were staying at a hotel in Bangalore. Ulaka made the allegation in a video message released by the Odisha Pradesh Congress Com-

KALINGA INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES (KISS)

Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India
A home for 80,000 Tribal children

KISS HUMANITARIAN AWARD 2025

16th March 2026

AWARDEES ARE FROM

5 Continents

13 Countries

2 Nobel Laureates among the awardees

Chief Guest: Prof. Mohan Munasinghe, Nobel Laureate from Sri Lanka

Awardees:

- His Excellency Dr Alejandro Toledo, Former President of Peru (2015)**
- Ms. Anne F. Stenhammer, Former Regional Programme Director, UN Women, South Asia Regional Office (2014)**
- Madam Albina Du Boisrouvray, Founder, Association François-Xavier Bagnoud (FXB International), Switzerland (2013)**
- His Excellency Lyonchhen Jigmi Y. Thinley, Hon'ble Prime Minister, The Royal Government of Bhutan (2012)**
- Rt Hon. Lord Nicholas Addison Phillips, President (Chief Justice) of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom (2011)**
- Rt. Hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, Eminent Social Worker & His Excellency the President of Mauritius (2010)**
- Dr. Ham Kee-Sun, Eminent Educationist & Physician and Hon'ble President & Founder, Hanseo University, South Korea (2009)**
- Ms. Edna Bomo Molewa, Noted Social Worker & Hon'ble Cabinet Minister, Social Development, South Africa National Assembly, South Africa (2008)**

Past Recipients:

- Mr. Bill Gates, Co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and Co-Founder & former CEO of Microsoft (2023)**
- Her Excellency Mama Rachel Ruto, EGH, First Lady of the Republic of Kenya (2022)**
- Mr. Ratan Naval Tata, Chairman Emeritus, Tata Sons (2021)**
- Dr. Ary S Graça, President-International Volleyball Federation (FIVB) (2020)**
- Dr. Dansa KOUROUMA, President, National Transition Council of Guinea, Guinea (2019)**
- Professor Muhammad Yunus, (Nobel Laureate) Founder, Grameen Bank, Bangladesh (2018)**
- His Holiness The 14th Dalai Lama, Nobel Laureate, 2005 and Spiritual Leader (2017)**
- Ms. Ashley Judd, Hollywood Actor, Activist & Global Goodwill Ambassador, UNFPA (2016)**

KISS Humanitarian Award
Founded by Dr. Achyuta Samanta, Founder, KIIT-KISS-KIMS
Watch Live on Kalinga TV from 5.00 p.m. onwards

The KISS Humanitarian Award is a prestigious annual international award conferred by the Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS) in Bhubaneswar, India, conceptualized and the brainchild of visionary humanitarian and educationist Prof. Achyuta Samanta, Founder of KIIT, KISS & KIMS. The award was initiated in 2008 to recognize and felicitate individuals for their exemplary and distinguished service to humanity across the globe.

www.kiss.ac.in | www.kiit.ac.in | www.achyutasamanta.com | facebook.com/kissfoundation | facebook.com/KIITUniversity | facebook.com/achyutasamanta

leisure



ORTEGA TO STAR IN SINGLE WHITE FEMALE REMAKE
 Jenna Ortega will star in a remake of the 1992 erotic thriller *Single White Female* alongside Taylor Russell. The original film starred Bridget Fonda and Jennifer Jason Leigh. Titled *Single Female*, the new version is reportedly in development, aiming to revisit the cult psychological thriller for modern audiences today again

BRAFF DENIES RUMOURS OF DATING AI CHATBOT
 Actor Zach Braff has denied rumours that he is dating an AI chatbot after online speculation followed a podcast discussion on *I Need You Guys*. The actor clarified on Instagram that the claim is false, suggesting the confusion may stem from a storyline in an upcoming episode of *Scrubs*



FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshSpeaks.com
 accuracy • reliability • trust
 FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

ARIES
 Today, you may feel caught between the devil and the deep blue sea: while you must please your beloved, you can't afford to annoy your boss. It's okay once in while to walk the tight rope, smiles Ganesh. Life only gives you what you can handle.

TAURUS
 Stress might take its toll on you today. Ganesh foresees a demanding and difficult day. There may be a need for solitude to spend time with yourself. In relationships, you will look for a common ground to live and let live, says Ganesh.

GEMINI
 A fantastic day to enter into all kinds of partnerships, open joint accounts, strike deals, and make future plans, says Ganesh. Though your relationship with your spouse has been under some strains, today, you are likely to start working towards resolving those issues.

CANCER
 You may make a switch to a new job or get a job offer that you don't want to deny, predicts Ganesh. You are likely to go on a shopping spree and spend lavishly. In the evening, you will be spending your time and money on your loved ones.

LEO
 Professionalism always impresses, no matter who you are or what you do. Remember this, and adopt the professional attitude that is, in a way, intrinsic to you. It shall go a long way in helping you impress new business partners. Also, expect a few concessions from your seniors at work. You have earned them, so use them wisely. Everything said, today shall be the day when you say goodbye to your negativity and adopt a more positive outlook to life. In personal life, you will be mystified by your partner's devotion and commitment.

VIRGO
 Domestic troubles brewing for some time now might be sorted today. But put in extra efforts, says Ganesh. Plans may be to open a joint account or start a venture in partnership. Evening may be spent in socialising, says Ganesh.

LIBRA
 When it comes to your children, no pain is too much. Today seems to justify that statement as you may indeed take pains to improve your children's welfare. But it's all worth the effort in the end. Afternoon brings with it the possibility of happiness and success. You may make worthwhile material progress today.

SCORPIO
 Your beloved will pulsate with pangs of passion, and even you won't remain unaffected for long, says Ganesh. Your skills in negotiating will help you save a huge chunk of money. Some quiet and prosperity at home will help you relax. Ganesh expects you to turn up with fantastic new ideas to fight your way out of sticky situations.

SAGITTARIUS
 Love life and your sweetheart are likely to occupy your day. You may build castles in the air! You would like to give your wardrobe a makeover. To sum it up, you and your friends set out on a shopping spree and splurge big time! Make the most of the benevolent day, says Ganesh.

CAPRICORN
 Check if you have enough energy in store, as the day brings a slew of activities that will demand your participation and keep you pleasantly occupied for major part of the day, says Ganesh. On the career front, you may find the day to be encouraging as it will provide opportunities to take up new ventures, especially for those engaged in freelancing. All in all, it will be a fun day.

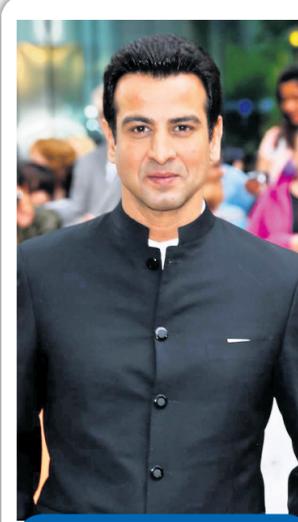
AQUARIUS
 It's a day of cheer and sunshine! Things go well and you're inspired to begin some educational course, or enhance your professional expertise. A good day for entrepreneurs and those dealing in finance. You will remain busy, albeit happily busy, says Ganesh.

PISCES
 Keeping a tab on your expenses ought to be a priority today. Learning to distinguish between your needs and your wants will be vital if you wish to avoid unnecessary extravagances, which you will invariably end up regretting later, says Ganesh.

ALIA'S NEW VENTURE

MUMBAI: Actor and producer Alia Bhatt has expanded the creative vision of her production house, Eternal Sunshine Productions, by launching a new children's storytelling initiative titled *Eternal Kids*. The announcement was made on her birthday through social media, where she shared that the venture will focus on imaginative and heartwarming content for young audiences. Revealing that several projects are already in development, Alia wrote that the production company "just had a baby" and introduced *Eternal Kids*. Among the first projects is a story titled *There's C and G and M*, inspired by characters and tales created by her grandfather. She shared that she and her sister Shaheen Bhatt grew up listening to these stories, making the project deeply personal. Another story, *OOLAN-GOO*, revolves around a mysterious creature so unique that Alia's

mother had to invent a new word for it while narrating the tale. The story has also been written by her mother. The third project will expand the world of *Adventures of Ed-a-Mamma*, based on her sustainable kids-wear brand *Ed-a-Mamma*, into a series along with new books. Meanwhile, Alia is also preparing for the release of *Alpha*, part of the YRF Spy Universe, scheduled to hit theatres July 10.



RONIT opens up on forgiveness

shares philosophically snackable bits on his social media. Earlier, the actor took to his Instagram, and shared a selfie. He wrote on the picture, "I don't walk away to teach people a lesson. I walk away because I learned mine". Last year in November, the actor had announced about his break from social media to focus on his personal growth. The actor shared a lengthy note on his social media account where he announced his break, breaking the hearts of a lot of his fans.

MUMBAI: Actor Ronit Roy, who has been a television star and is known for his work in films like *Udaan*, *2 States*, *Ugly* and several others, is sharing some weekend wisdom. The actor recently took to his Instagram, and shared a selfie. In the picture, the actor can be seen sitting inside his car behind the wheel. He wrote on the picture, "Forgive yourself for what you didn't know that only time could teach". The actor offered clarity to his followers with regards to being easy on themselves. He wrote in the caption, "Time is a great king! Time is the greatest teacher as well! The special thing about time is that it changes. Keep your spirits up, it's just a matter of time".

The actor often shares philosophically snackable bits on his social media. Earlier, the actor took to his Instagram, and shared a selfie. He wrote on the picture, "I don't walk away to teach people a lesson. I walk away because I learned mine". Last year in November, the actor had announced about his break from social media to focus on his personal growth. The actor shared a lengthy note on his social media account where he announced his break, breaking the hearts of a lot of his fans.

DIA CALLS FOR LIFESTYLE SHIFT

MUMBAI: Actress Dia Mirza frequently uses her social media handle to talk about the various environmental issues that tend to pose a threat to our survival in the future. This time, Dia decided to speak up about how to heal our rivers. The *Rehnaa Hai Terre Dil Mein* actress said that in order to save the rivers, one must make small changes in our habits in everyday life. Dia even gave some insightful suggestions, such as closing the tap while brushing, putting the water from the filters in the plants, switching to phosphate-free cleaners, and adding tap aerators, among other things. The *Lage Raho Munnabhai* actress shared a thought-provoking note on her official Instagram handle, saying, "To heal our rivers, we must change how we live...It starts at the tap: Closing it while brushing saves up to 12 liters of water every minute. In the kitchen, we can mimic the forest by repurposing "rejected" water from filters to water our plants, ensuring no drop is wasted." "We must also stop the "white foam" at the source

by switching to natural, phosphate-free cleaners like soaps-nuts. Adding tap aerators reduces our flow by 40%, and fixing a single leak can save 50 liters a day," she went on to write. Dia pointed out that by ensuring that our rivers are clean, we are securing a lifeline for the coming generations.

ASIM UTSAV CONCLUDES



On the concluding evening, members of the host troupe staged Odia play *Sunar Tarikha Mora* at Bhanja Kala Mandap, Sunday. The play, written by Suryasnata Tripathi, was directed by Debadutta Pati.

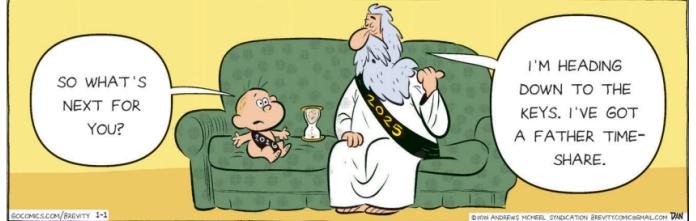
PEANUTS



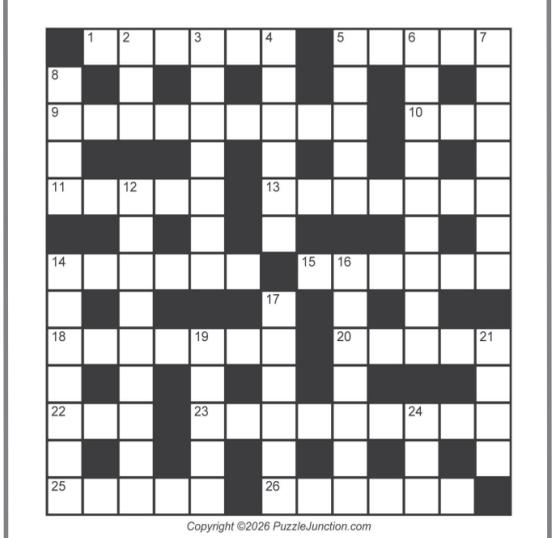
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



CROSSWORD



- Across**
 1 Cha-chas and sambas
 5 Petrol unit
 9 Turkish bath (5,4)
 10 Fleur-de-
 11 Perfect
 13 Deodorant type
 14 Move out
 15 Old World monkey
 18 Gin cocktail
 20 Underground chamber
- Down**
 22 Belfast grp.
 23 Some gags (3-6)
 25 Fencing swords
 26 Invalidates
- Down**
 2 Pub order
 3 King Arthur's kingdom
 4 Catch phrase
 5 Large-eyed primate
 6 Fisherman's tale, maybe (4,5)
 7 5th letter of the Greek alphabet
 8 Italian wine center
 12 Condemn
 14 Dracula, for one
 16 Bidding venue
 17 Movie theatre
 19 Wrinkle removers
 21 Undertaking
 24 Aquarium denizen

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.

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

SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

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

SUDOKU

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

Delhi trust row surfaces ahead of RS elections

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 15: On the eve of Rajya Sabha elections, all political parties in the state have stepped up efforts to keep their MLAs united and prevent cross-voting. However, it has been reported that several MLAs from the Opposition BJD and Congress have not been seen around for the past three days and are not staying with their respective groups, raising concerns over the development.

Meanwhile, fresh discussions have emerged over the candidatures of BJD's Rajya Sabha nominee Santrupt Misra and joint Opposition candidate Dattaswar Hota.

BJD president Naveen Patnaik has intensified efforts to ensure that all his party MLAs cast their votes in favour of the party candidate. The party is also leaving no stone unturned to persuade disgruntled MLAs.

Two days ago, 14 BJD MLAs visited the residence of former legislator and now-expelled leader Pravat Biswal, in an attempt to convince him. Notably, Pravat's son Souvic is currently the BJD MLA from the Choudwar-Cuttack constituency.

Patnaik Saturday summoned the MLAs who had gone to meet Pravat to Naveen Niwas and asked them about the outcome of their visit. In response, the legislators told Patnaik that Biswal had alleged that a trust

was opened in Delhi and that party funds had been misappropriated through it.

After this, Patnaik asked whose name the account had been opened under. The MLAs reportedly told him that the account had been opened in his (Patnaik's) name. They said the transactions were being carried out through a trust in which Patnaik's confidante VK Pandian is the chairman and Santrupt the secretary.

Hearing this, Patnaik instantly asked his personal assistant to call Santrupt, said reports, adding when Santrupt arrived, Patnaik asked why he was not speaking with Pravat over telephone and what exactly Pravat was claiming. When Patnaik questioned him about the alleged Delhi account mentioned by Pravat, Santrupt reportedly rejected the claim, saying no such account exists.

However, a million dollar question is if Naveen Patnaik was unaware of the matter, how was his Delhi residence cited as the address during the trust's registration, without his permission?

Some MLAs, after leaving Naveen Niwas and observing Santrupt's expressions, have started saying that the allegations raised by Pravat might be true.

At the same time, discussions are being held among the party MLAs about increasing the number of first-preference votes for Dattaswar Hota.



RECRUITMENT RUSH: Candidates who arrived for the Uttar Pradesh Police Constable recruitment process rest outside Varanasi Cantt Railway Station ahead of physical tests, in Varanasi, Sunday

11 ultras lay down arms

Hardcore Maoist with ₹22 lakh bounty on head, 10 others surrender to Odisha Police

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhawanipatna, March 15: Eleven Maoists, including a Divisional Committee Member (DCM) carrying a bounty of ₹22 lakh, surrendered before Odisha Police in Kalahandi district Sunday, an officer said.

They laid down their arms and handed over weapons to Director General of Police (DGP) YB Khurania, ADG (Anti-Naxal Operations) Sanjeeb Panda and other senior officers at a special function at the district headquarters here.

The surrendered Maoists belong to the BGN (Bansadhara-Ghumsar-Nagavali) division of the outlawed CPI (Maoist). Among them, divisional committee member (DCM) Nakul, a native of Maharashtra, carried a reward of ₹22 lakh as a member of the Odisha State Committee, while the remaining 10 cadres hail from Chhattisgarh. The Maoist group comprised one DCM, five area committee members (ACM) and five par-



ty members (PM). Together, they are carrying a reward of over ₹63 lakh. DGP Khurania said the surrender reflects the weakening influence of Left-wing extremism in the region, attributing it to sustained security operations that have eroded the Maoist base. Nuapada, Nabarangpur, Malkangiri, Koraput, Boudh and Bolangir districts have become Maoist-free. "Odisha Police is committed to make Odisha Maoist-free by March 31, 2026," the DGP said.

Panda said, "Operations will be intensified to nab the remaining Maoists active in the state. The surrendered Maoists will receive compensation of over ₹1.23 crore, including additional cash compensation of ₹60 lakh."

2 killed, 7 hurt as van overturns

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 15: Two persons were killed while seven others sustained grievous injuries when a rice-laden van overturned in Rayagada district, police said Sunday.

The accident took place near Kachapaju village under Bissamcuttack police station Saturday night. After milling their paddy into rice, around eight people from Kachapaju village were returning home from Bissamcuttack when the accident happened, a police officer said.

One person died on the spot while another succumbed to his injuries in a local hospital, he said. The deceased were identified as Drinz Saraka and Madan Saraka.

Among the injured, one person with serious injuries was shifted to MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur for better treatment while another person was being treated at Rayagada district headquarters hospital, the officer added.

Three persons were discharged after being administered first aid at Bissamcuttack hospital while two other injured persons were under treatment in the same hospital, he said.

2 killed, 5 critically injured as Nor'wester hits Mayurbhanj

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Baripada, March 15: Two persons were killed, five others seriously injured, and more than 200 houses damaged after a Nor'wester struck Mayurbhanj district Sunday, officials said.

More than 200 houses in 12 villages were damaged in the Nor'wester. Due to the strong winds, several trees and electricity poles were also uprooted, they said.

Two persons, identified as P Naik (54) and Malati Mahanta (45) died as a tornado-like system hit them along National Highway (NH)-220 around 4pm, while 5 seriously injured people were shifted to the Keonjhar medical college, they said.

Apart from the above, about 40 other people also sustained minor injuries in the natural disaster. Kia and Kankada villages were the worst affected by the Nor'wester.

The speed of the wind was so strong that an auto-rickshaw and a scooter flew in the air and fell into a water body in



Kankada village under Karanjia block, said Dhruba Biswal, a villager.

Villages including Dumuria, Pichuki, Badagaon, Batapalasa, Salarapada, Kunjia, Purunapani and Mendhasinga were also affected by the storm.

On receiving the news, the local administration, including police and fire service officers, rushed to the villages and started monitoring the rescue and restoration works.

According to the officials, the government would provide Rs 4 lakh ex-gratia to the families of the two deceased persons as

per norms.

Forecasting thunderstorms accompanied by lightning and hail, along with gusty surface wind, the IMD has issued an 'Orange Warning' (be prepared) for the Mayurbhanj district for Monday. It has issued a 'Yellow Warning' for Sundargarh, Keonjhar, Balasore and Bhadrak districts.

Besides, thunderstorms accompanied by lightning and gusty surface wind are expected to occur in Rayagada, Koraput, Malkangiri, Puri, Khurda, Nayagarh, Ganjam and Gajapati districts Monday, the IMD said.

Partially burnt bodies of father, son found in shop

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 15: Partially burnt bodies of a man and his son were recovered from their grocery shop in Khurda district Sunday, police said.

The deceased were identified as Rajesh Kumar Sahu, 57, and his son Laxmidhar, 27, residents of Sanapadar village under the jurisdiction of Begunia police station, a senior officer said.

The deceased were identified as Rajesh Kumar Sahu and his son Laxmidhar of Sanapadar village

Both Rajesh and Laxmidhar went to sleep inside the grocery shop Saturday night after having dinner at home. Sunday morning, they did not open the shop even after a family member called them out. Some of their relatives and a villager broke a portion of the asbestos roof and found the partially burnt bodies of the duo inside the shop, the police officer said.

"We have registered an unnatural death case and sent the bodies for post-mortem examinations. It was suspected that they died due to a fire caused by a short circuit," he said.

Iconic private waterfall put up for sale in Oregon

A beloved natural landmark in the US state of Oregon unexpectedly appeared for sale online. It may soon become public property after lawmakers moved to purchase it. The scenic Abiqua Falls, famous for its dramatic 92-foot vertical drop over striking basalt cliffs, has been privately owned for more than a century but has long remained accessible to visitors.

Earlier this year, the property's owner, a nonprofit organization connected to the Benedictine monastic community at Mount Angel Abbey, listed the waterfall and surrounding land for sale on the real-estate platform Redfin. The listing quickly attracted public attention and raised concerns that the popular natural site might eventually be closed to visitors if purchased by a private buyer.

In response to growing public interest and concern, a bipartisan group of lawmakers in the Oregon legislature stepped in toward the end of the legislative session. They approved \$2.1 million in funding to purchase the property and ensure



it remains protected and accessible. Supporters say the move reflects the state's commitment to preserving one of its treasured natural sites for future generations.

The waterfall lies roughly 30 miles east of Salem, the state capital, and about 50 miles south of Portland. According to the nonprofit foundation that owns the land, the decision to sell the property came after recognizing the increasing number of visitors using the area. While the foundation welcomed

hikers, officials felt the site required stronger oversight and management to ensure proper stewardship and long-term preservation.

The property was originally acquired by Mount Angel Abbey in 1908 and later transferred to The Abbey Foundation of Oregon in 2002. In February, the foundation placed the land up for open auction, meaning buyers could submit offers without a fixed minimum or maximum price. Eventually, the foundation accepted the

state's offer under the recently approved legislation.

Officials have noted that the site may not necessarily become a formal state park, as that designation would require additional funding and resources. Instead, it could be managed by another state agency, a local government, or even a tribal authority.

Many residents and outdoor enthusiasts have welcomed the state's decision, expressing hope that the waterfall will remain open to the public. However, some have also raised concerns that government management might bring entrance fees or larger crowds. Still, conservation groups argue that public ownership offers the best chance to protect the site's beauty and unique atmosphere.

For many visitors, Abiqua Falls holds a special appeal beyond its visual beauty. Conservation advocates describe it as a peaceful and almost spiritual place—one whose dramatic cliffs, cascading water, and secluded setting continue to inspire awe in those who make the journey to see it.

Gulf states under new missile, drone attack as Iran widens war

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Cairo, March 15: Gulf Arab states reported new missile and drone attacks Sunday after Iran threatened to widen its campaign and called for the evacuation of three major ports in the United Arab Emirates as the war in the Middle East, now in its third week, expands further.

Israel and the United States attacked Iran February 28, saying they were striking nuclear and military sites and encouraging the Iranian people to rise against their leaders. Iran has responded with attacks against Israel and neighbouring countries in the Persian Gulf.

The war has upended global air travel, disrupted oil exports from the region and sent fuel prices rising. US President Donald Trump said he hoped countries reliant on oil and gas exports would send warships to secure the Strait of Hormuz. None responded with firm commitments by Sunday, though



some said they were considering action. Israel said it continued to strike Iran Sunday as Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the UAE told residents they were working to intercept incoming projectiles, a day after Iran threatened three Emirati ports, the first time it has done so against a neighbouring country's non-US assets.

Iran had earlier accused the US of launching Friday's strikes on Kharg Island from the UAE, without providing evidence for the claim. The UAE and other Gulf countries that host US bases have denied allowing their land or airspace to be used for military operations

against Iran, including toward the island, home to Iran's primary oil terminal.

In Israel, 12 people have been killed by Iranian missile fire, and more have been injured, including three Sunday. At least 13 members of the US military have also been killed since the war began; six of them died in a plane crash in Iraq last week. Meanwhile, at least 820 people have been killed in Lebanon, according to its Health Ministry, and 850,000 have been displaced since Iran-backed Hezbollah started hitting Israel and Israel responded with strikes and sent additional troops into southern Lebanon.

Expedite industrial projects: CM

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi reviewed upcoming industrial projects at Paradip and ordered concerned officials to ensure that the projects commence without delay



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar/Paradip, March 15: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Sunday reviewed the progress of several major industrial projects, proposed in Paradip, and directed officials to resolve pending issues within a stipulated time to accelerate their implementation. Chairing a high-level review meeting, the Chief Minister said Paradip is set to emerge as one of the country's major economic zones in the coming years. He instructed officials to ensure that

all infrastructure and industrial projects planned for the region commence without delay. The meeting discussed in detail the expansion of Paradip Port, along with plans for establishing shipbuilding and ship repair facilities and other projects necessary for port development. Industrial initiatives proposed by Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) and JSW Group in the region were also reviewed. Discussions also covered the proposed Bhubaneswar-Cuttack-Puri-Paradip Eco-

nomie Region and various projects planned in Paradip by AMNS India. The meeting reviewed the progress of the Paradip Petrochemical Project and the proposed integrated steel project, including issues related to land acquisition, statutory approvals, and other preparatory works. The CM directed the district administration and officials of the concerned industries to resolve pending matters at the earliest and expedite the establishment of industrial units. Emphasising employment generation, Majhi stressed that industries should prioritise job opportunities for the youth of Odisha, particularly for local communities. The meeting was attended by Industries Minister Sampad Chandra Swain, Jagatsinghpur MLA Amarendra Das, Industries Department Additional Chief Secretary Hemant Sharma, Jagatsinghpur Collector J Sonal, and officials from the Paradip Port Authority, IOCL, JSW, and AMNS India, among others.

Sana, Arvind asked to vote for BJD nominee

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 15: Opposition BJD Sunday evening told its two suspended MLAs to cast their votes in Rajya Sabha elections on party line or may face disqualification of membership of the House. Patkura MLA Arvind Mohapatra and Champua MLA Sanatan Mahakud were suspended by BJD on charge of anti-party activities January 15. BJD Chief Whip Pramila Mallik, in a letter to them, said, "You were elected to the Assembly as a candidate of BJD. You have been placed under suspension from the party due to anti-party activities, but such suspension does not absolve you from your constitutional obligations as a member elected on the party symbol." In the letter, Mallik mentioned that BJD has issued a whip directing its MLAs to vote in favour of the party's authorised candidate in the Rajya Sabha polls. "Any act of voting contrary to the party whip or abstaining from voting without prior permission of the party may attract the provisions of the 10th Schedule of the Constitution, including disqualification on the grounds that the legislator has voluntarily given up the membership of the political party," Mallik said in the letter.

BIJU NAVEEN INSPIRATIONAL FOUNDATION ROW

BJP questions transparency in BJD RS candidate's affidavit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 15: The state BJP Sunday alleged BJD's official Rajya Sabha (RS) candidate Santrupt Misra of not disclosing information about his association with 'Biju Naveen Inspirational Foundation' (BNIF) in his election affidavit. Odisha BJP spokesperson Anil Biswal, in a statement, said that BJD candidate Santrupt Misra has deliberately concealed information about his association with BNIF and may be in serious trouble. Even if he wins the election, his membership could be challenged. "Misra is serving as the secretary of the Biju Naveen Inspirational Foundation," he said. "BJD candidate Misra needs to issue a clarification regarding his involvement in the foundation," Biswal said. The BJP leader noted that under the election rules, it is mandatory for candidates to



disclose all relevant information in their affidavit, including bank accounts, assets, criminal cases, as well as their association with NGOs or trusts. According to Section 125A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, if a candidate provides false information or conceals facts in the election affidavit, his nomination can be rejected, or the matter can be challenged in court, Biswal said, adding that if the offence is proven, the candidate may lose the position and can face imprisonment of up to six months. "We are winning, and the

BJP is getting desperate. As a result, it is pushing a flop, false, and fake narrative. BJD has nothing to do with any trust," BJD spokesperson Lenin Mohanty said in a post on X. BJD MLA Goutam Buddha Das said, "This is a conspiracy by the BJP before the Rajya Sabha polls." Misra, who unsuccessfully contested from the Cuttack Lok Sabha seat on a BJD ticket in 2024, is also the political secretary to BJD president Naveen Patnaik. He is the BJD's official candidate for the Rajya Sabha elections, voting for which is scheduled to be held Monday. Recently expelled from the BJD for opposing Misra's candidature, former MLA Pravat Biswal claimed that an organisation named Biju Naveen Inspirational Foundation has been established in New Delhi in the names of former Chief Minister Biju Patnaik and BJD president Naveen Patnaik.



Odisha Women in Media (OWM), a platform for female professionals working in media and related fields celebrated its third annual function in Bhubaneswar Sunday. Senior journalist Pamela Philipose graced the occasion as special guest and Vedanta Aluminium CSR head Harmeet Sehra graced the occasion as guest of honour. On the occasion, senior journalist Shantilata Mishra was honoured with first OWM Lifetime Achievement Award. Dignitaries also unveiled OWM's annual magazine 'Arohi'

OP PHOTO

SJTA suspends servitor for dereliction of duty

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Puri, March 15: The authorities of Srimandir have suspended a servitor for three months for alleged dereliction of duty that led to a delay in performing rituals at the 12th-century shrine February 28. In a statement, Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) chief administrator Arabinda Padhee said two other servitors, also accused of being negligent of duty, were also warned that they would face action for any misconduct in future.



"The SJTA will initiate disciplinary action against the two servitors if they indulge

in any type of indiscipline and misconduct in the future," Padhee said. The suspended servitor has been barred from performing the rituals at the shrine during his suspension period, the SJTA said in the statement. "We will be forced to extend the suspension period of the servitor and initiate stern action against him if he tries to create disturbances at the temple and obstruct others from performing rituals," Padhee said. The SJTA had earlier served show-cause notices to servitors

for delay in the rituals at the 12th-century shrine February 28. They were accused of misbehaving with the temple officials. There was a delay of around four hours in the performance of rituals and the availability of Mahaprasad for devotees. They submitted a reply, which was thoroughly examined before initiating action, the SJTA said. The three servitors traditionally assist priests to decorate the trinity- Lord Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra and Lord Jagannath, with flowers and clothes.

Stewart School hosts Nursery Graduation

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, March 15: Stewart School Cuttack celebrated two joyful events in March, highlighting the spirit of early childhood learning and creativity. The Nursery Graduation Ceremony was held recently, marking a proud milestone for the tiny learners as they prepared to move to the next academic level. The programme was graced by school principal D Martina Netanya, coordinator Reshma Pradhan, and Diocesan Board of Education secretary Rev F C North. The young graduates impressed the audience with lively performances in music, dance, and short speeches, confidently showcasing their talents. The guests at the event presented graduation certificates to each child, encouraging them to continue their learning journey with enthusiasm. Earlier, from March 10 to 13, the school organised Spring Fest for students from Nursery to Standard III. The celebration featured creative activities such as making flower bouquets, preparing fresh lemonade, and crafting leafy caterpillars. Zumba sessions and fun games added energy and excitement to the four-day event.

ODISHA PARBA IN NEW DELHI Governor calls for collective resolve to build Viksit Odisha



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 15: Governor Hari Babu Kamboh Sunday called for a renewed collective commitment to build a prosperous, inclusive and forward-looking Odisha as the state approaches centenary of its formation in 2036. Addressing Odisha Parba 2026 in New Delhi, the Governor said the milestone year would not only mark a historic moment in the state's journey

but also serve as an opportunity to reflect on its achievements and work together towards a stronger and more developed Odisha while preserving its rich cultural heritage. The governor said it was a matter of immense pleasure and honour for him to participate in Odisha Parba, which has emerged as a vibrant platform to showcase the soul, spirit and cultural richness of Odisha in New Delhi. Referring to this year's theme, 'Sanskriti and Prakruti', the governor said it beautifully reflects the timeless character of Odisha where culture and nature exist in harmony. Through exhibitions of handicrafts and handlooms, performances of classical and folk dances, traditional music, ethnic cuisine and intellectual discussions, the festival provides visitors with a glimpse of the vibrant life and heritage of the state, he said.

ABRSM for observing Rashtriya Nav Varsh

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, March 15: The Akhil Bharatiya Rashtriya Shaikshik Mahasangh (ABRSM) has urged the state government to instruct school, college, and university authorities to observe 'Rashtriya Nav Varsh' in their institutes. Mahasangh's national executive council member Narayan Mohanty has written to Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi raising the demand. In his letter, Mohanty stated that January 1 is not our indigenous new year, but rather an imposition by the British. He argues that, according to tradition, 'Chaitra Shukla Pratipada' or 'Varsha Pratipada' is the first day of creation, and thus, our new year. "This day holds natural, historical, spiritual, and cultural significance for us. Observing Chaitra Shukla Pratipada as Rashtriya Nav Varsh in educational institutions will help students understand Indian culture, heritage, and traditions, and instill patriotism in them," Mohanty mentioned.

SAFE PRODUCTS, CONFIDENT CONSUMERS

World Consumer Rights Day observed in City

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 15: The state-level celebration of World Consumer Rights Day 2026 was organised by Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare department at Jayadev Bhawan here Sunday. Department Director and Special Secretary Bishikeshan Dehuri attended the programme as chief guest. Addressing the gathering, he highlighted the significance of observing the day and stressed the need for greater consumer awareness in the rapidly changing digital world. He also provided insights into various welfare schemes being implemented by the department and urged consumers to remain vigilant about their rights. Dehuri advised consumers to approach consumer courts whenever necessary to seek justice. Khordha District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission member Shubhalaxmi Tripathy joined the event as



the guest of honour and spoke about various initiatives being taken by the government to strengthen the functioning of state and district consumer dispute redressal commissions. Emphasising the theme of this year's observance, 'Safe Products, Confident Consumers,' she called for building a strong and aware consumer community. On the occasion, the department also unveiled a magazine 'Khauti Barta', published by SI-

CA. Prizes were awarded to students who excelled in a speech competition organised by the department. Additionally, a play titled 'Sabadhan Soudagar' was staged by department employees to spread awareness about consumer rights. In the concluding session department's additional secretary Manoj Kumar Pattnaik shared about consumer rights, relevant laws, importance of awareness, and delivered the vote of thanks.

BJD, Cong issue notices to 3 MLAs for violating whip

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 15: Ahead of the Rajya Sabha elections March 16, Opposition BJD and Congress Sunday issued show cause notices to three MLAs, who have remained absent and violated party whips. While the BJD, headed by Naveen Patnaik, issued show cause notices to two MLAs - Chakramani Kanhar, (Baliguda) and Naba Kishor Mallick (Jayadev), the Congress also took similar action and asked its Mohana MLA Dasarathi Gomango, to present himself before the party Sunday evening. A statement issued by BJD chief whip Pramila Mallik said, "It has been noted that Chakramani Kanhar, MLA, Baliguda and Naba Kishor Mallick, MLA, Jayadev, have been absent from the meetings convened by the president, BJD, at Naveen Niwas for the past three consecutive days." "Despite the issuance of a whip mandating presence in Naveen Niwas, their attendance at these crucial meetings has



been lacking. Considering this communication as a show-cause notice, they are hereby directed to report to Naveen Niwas by 9pm March 15," Mallik said. However, though Choudwar-Cuttack MLA Souvic Biswal did not attend the meeting at Naveen Niwas, the party has not taken any decision against him so far. Earlier, the party had issued a whip to BJD MLAs to remain present in the meeting at Naveen Niwas from 5.30pm to 7.30pm for three days from Friday. However, these three lawmakers were not seen either at Naveen Niwas or at the Assembly, a senior leader said. The Congress Disciplinary

Committee, in a show-cause notice to Mohana MLA Dasarathi Gomango, said that he remained incommunicado ahead of the crucial Rajya Sabha elections scheduled for Monday. The committee accused him of deliberately going into hiding at a critical juncture, raising suspicions of potential cross-voting or defection that could undermine the party's strategic alliance. The notice said that since March 8, OPCC president, AICC Odisha in-charge Ajay Kumar Lallu, and Congress Legislature Party Leader Rama Chandra Kadam have repeatedly failed to contact the MLA from Mohana despite

numerous phone calls and visits to his Bhubaneswar residence and village home. This apart, the committee noted that there was no reports of kidnapping or coercion from Gomango's relatives have surfaced. Therefore, the committee observed that the MLA has voluntarily distanced himself from party duties. Gomango has been directed to appear in person at the party office and explain his conduct and show cause as to why no disciplinary action should be taken. Failure to comply with the directive or provide a satisfactory response will invite disciplinary action. OPCC president said strong disciplinary action could be taken against Gomango for his activities, which go against the party. Both the BJD and the Congress have decided to support the opposition common candidate Dr Dattesar Hota in the Rajya Sabha election. He is pitted against the BJP-backed Independent candidate Dilip Ray for the fourth Rajya Sabha seat in the state.

WEATHER			FORECAST
	BBSR	CTC	
Max Temp	32.2°	31.8°	Light to Moderate rain or thunderstorm
Min Temp	25.5°	23.2°	
Humidity	81%	78%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

I, Jaiwanti Bhuinya, W/o. Siril Bhuinya, Village : Dalposh, Near Khadan, PO : Jharhani, Dist. - Sundargarh, State - Odisha, Pin - 769042, declared by this Affidavit I have changed my name from Jaiwanti Bhuinya to Jawanti Bhuinya due to erroneously publication at the time of part II order in my husband service record as Jaiwanti Bhuinya. That both the names Jaiwanti Bhuinya and Jawanti Bhuinya stand for same and one person i.e. myself. Deponent.

Arribada begins at Rushikulya rookery

PNN & AGENCIES

Chhatrapur, March 15: Mass nesting of Olive Ridley turtles, also known as 'arribada', began at the Rushikulya river mouth in Ganjam district in the early hours of Sunday, with more than 10,000 turtles laying eggs along the sandy beach, forest officials said.

According to Berhampur Divisional Forest Officer Sunny Khokkar, around 10,220 female Olive Ridley turtles emerged from the Bay of Bengal under moonlit skies, and laid eggs along a 2.5-km-long beach near the river mouth on the first day of the annual mass nesting event.

The mass nesting was followed by sporadic nesting by over 5,700 turtles, he said.

Wildlife experts said the phenomenon is likely to continue for a few more days as beach and weather conditions remain favourable. Officials noted that the nesting began about a month later than last year. In



2025, the first phase of 'arribada' started February 15 and continued till February 22, while the second phase took place from March 21 to March 27, during which over 9.04 lakh turtles laid eggs, according to Forest department data. Regional Chief Conservator of Forests (RCCF), Berhampur, Vishwanath Neelannavar said February to April

is generally considered the ideal period for mass nesting at the Rushikulya rookery.

To safeguard the nesting site, the Forest department has deployed 10 protection squads and restricted visitor access to the entire four-km stretch of the beach. Entry points have been set up at Gokharkuda and Podampeta to regulate visitors.

An awareness camp has also been established at Bateswar beach. Assistant Conservator of Forests (ACF) Dibya Shankar Behera said the area has been fenced to prevent predators such as wild dogs and jackals, while round-the-clock surveillance is being maintained to protect the eggs.

During nesting, female turtles crawl onto the beach, dig pits in the sand and lay around 100 to 150 eggs each before covering them with sand and returning to the sea. The eggs typically hatch after 45-50 days, though the mother turtles do not remain to witness the emergence of hatchlings.

Olive Ridley carcasses found on Haripur beach



Several carcasses of Olive Ridley sea turtles were found washed ashore on Haripur beach in Ganjam district, raising concerns over their safety during the mass nesting season.

Local residents spotted the dead turtles lying along the shoreline early Sunday morning. Disturbing scenes of stray dogs dragging and feeding on the carcasses left villagers shocked and saddened.

The discovery has triggered questions among the people as the mass nesting season of Olive Ridley turtles has already begun. While the exact cause of the deaths is yet to be ascertained, doubts have been raised over the effectiveness of patrolling by the Forest and Marine Fisheries departments.

Every year, thousands of Olive Ridley turtles travel thousands of kilometres to reach the Odisha coast for nesting. Their deaths have caused concern among environmentalists, who have also questioned the performance of agencies responsible for protecting the endangered species.

Sources said that many turtles die after getting entangled in the nets of fishing trawlers operating illegally in the sea. In several cases, the turtles reportedly sustain serious injuries in the nets or suffocate, leading to death.

Although the government has declared a "no-fishing zone" to protect Olive Ridley turtles, strict enforcement of the restriction is reportedly lacking, putting the rare species at risk. According to official guidelines, fishing is prohibited every year from November 1 to May 31 in the coastal stretch from Aryapalli to Prayagi to safeguard the turtles during their breeding and nesting season.

Female jumbo found dead



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhanjanagar, March 15: A female elephant was found dead in a roadside forest near Narayanprasad under the Tarasingh forest range of the Ghumusar North forest division in Ganjam district Saturday night. Forest personnel reached the spot Sunday morning and launched an investigation. The elephant is estimated to be around five years old.

After a Joint Task Force (JTF) team arrived from Bhubaneswar, a post-mortem was conducted in the presence of wildlife experts, representatives of the voluntary organisation SNEHA, officials from Tata Power, and local panchayat representatives. Officials suspected the elephant may have died four to five days earlier.

Divisional Forest Officer Hi-

manshu Sekhar Mohanty said the exact cause of death will be known after the post-mortem report is received. Samples from different parts of the elephant's body have been sent to OUAT in Bhubaneswar for further examination. The remaining parts of the carcass were buried at the site.

JTF SP Batakrushna Mishra, DFO Mohanty, ACFs Bibek Das, Bimal Prasad Pradhan, Mujagada forest ranger Bimbahar Sahu, Tarasingh forest ranger Prashant Kumar Behera, wildlife enthusiast Ramesh Kumar Patra, SNEHA member Prashant Rout and a Tata Power SDO were present during the post-mortem.

The RCCF of Berhampur also visited the Tarasingh forest range and held discussions with departmental officials at the local Dak Bungalow regarding the elephant's death.

Ganjam SP leads cleanliness drive along sea shore

Ganjam Superintendent of Police Suwendu Kumar Patra Sunday led a massive cleanliness drive under the Community Policing Programme to ensure a pollution-free environment for Olive Ridley turtles' mass nesting and raise awareness about plastic waste management among the public. Thousands of Olive Ridley turtles began their mass nesting Sunday morning along the Rushikulya rookery. Patra, along with personnel from Chhatrapur police station, collected plastic, polythene waste and bottles in and around Tampara Lake near Chhatrapur. SDPO Chandan Kumar Ghadei, Chhatrapur IC Sabyasachi Malla and other police officials also carried out an extensive cleanliness drive at Tampara Lake. Similarly, following instructions from the district police chief, officials from Ganjam PS led by IC Sumitra Patra, Rambha PS led by Kumar Muduli, Marine PS and Humma outpost participated in cleanup drives at Aryapalli Beach, Bateswar Temple Beach, Gokharkuda Beach, Haripur Beach and Chilika Lake under the programme.

Man ends life after killing wife; 2-year-old daughter orphaned



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bahanaga, March 15: In a shocking incident, a man allegedly strangled his wife to death before committing suicide at Maharudrapur village under Baripada panchayat of Bahanaga block in Balasore district, leaving their two-year-old daughter orphaned.

The deceased were identified as Paresh Majhi, 22, son of Dibakar Majhi, and his wife Rashmirekha Parida of Maharudrapur village. The incident has cast a pall of gloom and mourning in the locality.

Paresh had married Rashmirekha, daughter of Gayadhar Parida of Nuagao village under Basudevpur police limits, following a romantic relationship about four years ago.

Sources said the couple had

been quarrelling frequently in recent days over suspicion of infidelity. Paresh was also allegedly addicted to alcohol and often picked fights and assaulted his wife while intoxicated. Village elders had previously intervened several times to resolve their disputes.

The incident occurred when another argument reportedly broke out between them over the same issue. In a fit of rage and allegedly under the influence of alcohol, Paresh strangled Rashmirekha to death.

Police said that after realising his wife had died, Paresh allegedly hanged himself from a mango tree behind the house.

The matter came to the fore when Paresh's father Dibakar returned home after fishing in the sea and heard the child crying late Saturday night. When he entered the house, he found his daughter-in-law lying dead on the floor. While searching for his son, he discovered Paresh hanging from the tree.

The local sarpanch was informed about the incident, following which Gopalpur police were alerted. Police reached the spot, seized both bodies and sent them for post-mortem Sunday morning.



RISKY RIDE: Two-wheeler riders negotiating a waterlogged road in Angul town after a Nor' wester accompanied by hailstorm lashed the area Sunday afternoon

Deogarh triple murder Accused dies by suicide

PNN & AGENCIES

Deogarh, March 15: A 52-year-old man allegedly died by suicide by consuming a poisonous substance after bludgeoning his wife, daughter-in-law and four-year-old granddaughter to death in Deogarh district following a domestic dispute, police said Sunday.

Ramesh Garia allegedly killed the three persons in Gariapali village in Kundheigola area Wednesday night and fled the spot. His two sons were out of the village at that time, a police officer said.

After getting information about the incident from Garia's son, police seized the bodies and launched an investigation. The police Saturday found Garia hiding atop an overhead water tank in the village, he said.

However, when the police and fire services personnel reached the spot and attempted to bring him down, he threatened to jump from the tank, prompting officials to conduct a rescue operation, Deogarh Superintendent of Police Anil Kumar Mishra said.

After an hours-long operation, the police, with help from fire service personnel, tried to overpower Garia, but as they came near him, he allegedly consumed some poisonous liquid substance, which he had kept with him, Mishra said.

He was immediately rushed to the Deogarh District Headquarters Hospital and was later shifted to VIMSAR, Burla as his condition deteriorated, the SP said. He later died at VIMSAR, Burla Saturday night while undergoing treatment, Mishra added.

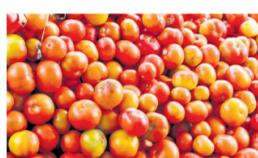


TOMATO FARMERS RESORT TO DISTRESS SALES IN GANJAM

POST NEWS NETWORK

Ganjam, March 15: Tomato farmers in parts of Ganjam district are resorting to distress sales after a sharp fall in market prices, leaving many unable to recover even their basic cultivation costs.

Farmers said tomatoes are selling for as little as ₹2 to ₹5 per kg in local markets. With prices so low, many growers say they cannot even afford to pay labourers to harvest the crop, forcing them to leave



ripe tomatoes unpicked in their fields. The situation has been reported in several villages under Ganjam block, including Sipakuda, Jhareidi and Binchanapalli, where vegetable cultivation is a major source of livelihood.

According to farmers, traders are reluctant to purchase tomatoes even at the reduced rates. A crate weighing about 27 kg is fetching only ₹50 to ₹60 in the market, making it difficult for farmers to cover harvesting and transportation expenses.

In several cases, the cost of hiring labourers to pick the tomatoes is higher than the income from selling them. As a result, some farmers have dumped heaps of tomatoes along roadsides after failing to

find buyers.

Farmers said the situation could have been less severe if cold storage facilities were available in the area, allowing them to store the produce until prices improve. In the absence of storage infrastructure, growers are forced to sell their harvest at throwaway prices to avoid spoilage.

They have therefore demanded compensation from the government and the fixation of a minimum support price (MSP) for tomatoes.

Catcher lets snake bite him in suicide bid after tiff with wife

Sunabeda: A snake catcher reportedly tried to end his life in an unusual way—through snakebite—following a fight with his wife at Maliguda village of the HAL Sunabeda PHD Colony area in Koraput district Saturday afternoon. Nabin Mali, 32, who is a snake catcher by profession, had an argument with his wife Saturday afternoon. Upset over the dispute, he reportedly brought a venomous snake he had kept with him and deliberately placed his hand near its mouth, allowing it to bite him. He also recorded a video of the act and posted it on social media before releasing the snake. The video has since gone viral. After seeing the post, some of his friends rushed him to the Shaheed Laxman Nayak (SLN) Medical College and Hospital in Koraput. As his condition deteriorated, doctors shifted him to MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur. However, family members and relatives later admitted him to a private hospital in Jeypore, where he is currently undergoing treatment in the ICU. His condition is reported to be critical.

Woman farmer registers for organ donation

POST NEWS NETWORK

Karlamura, March 15: A successful woman farmer from Dhanrakhaman village under Gajabahal panchayat in Karlamura block of Kalahandi district has registered for organ donation.

Expressing her willingness, Phalguni Bhoi, 40, applied to donate her organs after death and has been officially registered for voluntary organ donation. She said she has received a pledge certificate from the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare confirming her commitment. After her death, she has pledged to donate her liver, kidneys, heart, lungs, esophagus, pancreas and both eyes.

Notably, her husband, organic farmer Baladev Bhoi, had earlier also registered for organ donation.

CUO hosts seminar on 'Reimagining KBK'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Koraput/Bhubaneswar, March 15: The Central University of Odisha (CUO), in collaboration with Odisha Research Centre (ORC), organised a seminar titled 'Reimagining KBK: From Backwardness to Viksit Odisha 2036' at the university campus Saturday.

The programme brought together academicians, scientists and policy experts to deliberate on the development prospects of the undivided KBK region—Koraput, Bolangir and Kalahandi—and Odisha's long-term development vision.

The seminar was inaugurated by CUO VC (I/c) Narasingha Charan Panda. Other dignitaries present included ORC director Chandni Prasad Nanda, former IRS officer and Livelihood Al-

ternatives and PACE Foundation CMD-founder Sambit Kumar Tripathy, Odisha Centre for Integrated Development (OCID) organising secretary Rana Prithviraj Singh, NAFED Odisha head Anindita Guha, KPMG partner and director Aparajita Tripathi, CUO finance officer Duryodhan Sethi, seminar convener Jayanta Kumar Nayak and co-convener Debabrata Panda.

In his inaugural address, Panda stressed the need for focused planning and sustained implementation of development initiatives in the KBK region. He said CUO remains committed to supporting local farmers, weavers and small traders by educating them on modern technologies and effective marketing strategies.

Highlighting the agricultural potential of the region, Guha said Odisha needs to expand the

production of indigenous products from the KBK belt. She noted that while rice production is strong, the state still depends on other states for several essential commodities. According to her, the KBK region has immense potential for cultivating pulses, oilseeds, vegetables and dairy products, adding that NAFED would be keen to monitor progress in this direction.

Sharing his views, Tripathi emphasised the importance of value addition to local produce to enhance rural incomes, whereas Singh observed that initiatives taken by OCID had contributed to the preparation of key vision documents – 'Vision Odisha 2030' and 'Viksit Bharat 2047'.

During the inaugural session, a book titled 'Biodiversity and Agriculture for a Sustainable Future' was also released.

ODISHA HYDRO POWER CORPORATION LTD.
(A GOVT. OF ODISHA UNDERTAKING)
CIN: U40101OR1995SG003963
REGD.OFFICE: OHPC Corporate Office, Bhoi Nagar, Janpath, Bhubaneswar-751022
Phone: 91-0674-2542983, 2542802, 2545526, Fax: 2542102, E-mail: ohpc.co@gmail.com
No. OHPC: OHPC: TECH: C&P/60/25-26/1880 Date: 02.03.2026

NOTICE INVITING TENDER No.10/25-26

No.4001/69/2526 : Sealed Tenders are invited in two part i.e. (i) Techno Commercial bid & (ii) Price bid in separate sealed envelopes from consultants empaneled in the vendor list of Odisha Space Application Centre (ORSAC) to undertake DGPS/RTS survey having valid GST registration Certificate & IT PAN and fulfilling the other eligibility criteria as per terms and conditions for the work mentioned in the tender specifications.

Description of Services	Cost of tender papers in Rs.	EMD in shape of DD/BG only (Refundable) in Rs.
'Engagement of consultant for demarcation, preparation of land schedule, DGPS Survey and to obtain Forest Clearance under Forest (Conservation) Act 1980 for construction of Balimela Pumped Storage Project in the District Malkangiri, Odisha.'	11,800/- (10000 + GST @18%)	2,08,000/-

For details of the tender documents, terms & conditions please visit/refer our website www.ohpcitd.com from dtd. 20.03.2026. OIPR-4001/4088/1/25-26/0005 C & P Head

ODISHA HYDRO POWER CORPORATION LIMITED
OFFICE OF THE SENIOR GENERAL MANAGER (ELECTRICAL)
UPPER KOLAB HYDRO ELECTRIC PROJECT
AT/POST: BARINIPUT, DIST.: KORAPUT (ODISHA) - 764006
Phone : 06854-242001, Fax : 06854-242038, E-mail ID : sgmel.upteh@gmail.com

TENDER CALL NOTICE NO. UKHEP - No. 51/2025-26 Dated : 09.03.2026

No.4001/67/2526 : Sealed Tenders are invited in single bid basis from Vehicle Owners/Travel Agencies/Individuals fulfilling the eligibility criteria as per the tender specification for the work as mentioned below :

Sl. No.	Description/Type of Vehicle	Cost of Tender Paper (in Rs.) (Non-refundable)	EMD (in Rs.) (Refundable)
1	Deployment of 01 (One) No Diesel Run Hired Vehicle Bolero (BS-VI, Closed Body) for Official Work of Officers of Utility Division, UKHEP, Bariniput For a Period of 48 Months From 2026-27 to 2030-31	Rs. 7080/- (Paper Cost Rs.6000/- + GST@18%Rs.1080/-)	Rs.24,600/-

The sale of Tender Paper will be from : From 18.03.26 to 11.00 Hrs of 30.03.2026
The last date & time of receipt of tender : Up to 12:00 Hrs. of Date : 31.03.2026
The date and time of opening of tender : At 12:30 Hrs. of Date : 31.03.2026
For details of the tender documents, terms and conditions downloading please visit our website www.ohpcitd.com. OIPR-4001/4002/1/25-26/0006 Sd./-UNIT HEAD, UKHEP, Bariniput

If you can always smile at life,
life will always smile at you.

THE MOTHER



Most Vulnerable

The widening conflict in West Asia is beginning to cast a shadow over India's economic outlook. The country's heavy dependence on imported energy and the structural woes plaguing its long neglected economy due to which there is persistently high inflation, unemployment, ever-widening inequality and a depreciating rupee have all added up to make India the most vulnerable country during this period of global geopolitical turmoil. As crude prices hover around \$100 per barrel with the possibility of further steep hike very soon, the risks are no longer confined to the energy sector alone. They threaten to ripple across India's external balance, fiscal stability, financial markets and even the broader growth trajectory of the economy. No other major economy is as exposed to oil price shocks as India which imports nearly 90 per cent of its crude oil and about half of its natural gas. Much of this comes from the Middle East, a region now facing heightened instability. In normal times, such dependence was manageable through diversified supply chains and stable shipping routes. Unfortunately for India, when geopolitical tensions escalate and energy flows are disrupted as seen with the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, the vulnerabilities begin to unravel as is evident from the ongoing LPG crisis in the country.

Economists estimate that if crude prices average around \$100 per barrel for the next financial year, India's current account deficit, the gap between what the country earns from exports and what it spends on imports, could widen sharply to nearly 2 per cent of the GDP, more than double the current projections. In an environment already marked by financial volatility, this could significantly weaken the rupee and fuel inflationary pressures. The currency markets are already flashing warning signals. The rupee has slipped to a record low of 92.30 against the US dollar, as on 15 March, with analysts predicting that if the war persists for some more weeks, the currency could fall to as low as 95.

High oil prices also threaten to strain government finances. Analysts estimate that if crude remains around \$100 per barrel, government expenditure could rise by as much as Rs 3.6 trillion in the next financial year. Much of this increase would come from subsidies designed to shield the most vulnerable sectors of the economy. Fertiliser subsidies alone could rise substantially, as the government moves to ensure farmers continue receiving essential inputs at affordable prices. The burden could grow further if oil marketing companies are encouraged, as they often are when difficult economic periods coincide with national or state elections, to hold back increases in petrol and diesel prices despite rising global costs.

The risks are not limited to domestic economic variables alone. West Asia is also a crucial trading partner for India. Nearly one-fifth of India's exports are destined for the region while trade with the United Arab Emirates alone exceeds \$100 billion. Indian companies involved in engineering goods, energy infrastructure and construction rely heavily on projects across the Gulf. Any escalation of conflict that delays investment or disrupts logistics would affect export revenues as well.

Financial markets have already reacted nervously. Foreign investors have never been so bearish on India. Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) withdrew Rs 52,704 crore (approximately \$5.73 billion) from domestic equities in the first fortnight of March amid the escalating tensions in West Asia. Stock markets have corrected sharply, with benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty dropping more than 10 per cent from their recent highs. In a single week, the combined market capitalisation of India's largest listed companies shrank by Rs 4.48 lakh crore. The fall in India's stock markets has been among the worst in the world, with markets even in countries directly involved in the conflict, such as the US and Israel, faring better than India.

Another impact is on remittances. Nearly 40 per cent of the money sent home by Indians working abroad originates from the Gulf region. These inflows support millions of households and form a vital pillar of India's consumption-driven growth. Any disruption in Gulf economies could drastically reduce remittance flows. In a worst-case scenario, large numbers of expat workers returning home unemployed would place additional strain on India's already sluggish labour market.

The flawed policies of the government over the last decade starting with demonetisation, forcible digitization resulting in cash going out of the hands of the poor and middle class and a regressive taxation system have dealt one blow after another to the Indian economy. If the Middle East crisis drags on and energy markets remain volatile, there could be more economic pain in store for ordinary Indians.

WISDOM CORNER

What's money? A man is a success if he gets up in the morning and goes to bed at night and in between does what he wants to do. **BOB DYLAN**

Keep love in your heart. A life without it is like a sunless garden when the flowers are dead. **OSCAR WILDE**

It belongs to the imperfection of everything human that man can only attain his desire by passing through its opposite. **SOREN KIERKEGAARD**

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1521: Portuguese navigator Ferdinand Magellan, sailing under the Spanish flag on his circumnavigation of the globe, reached the Philippines, securing the first alliance in the Pacific Islands for Spain.
- 1921: The Treaty of Moscow established friendly relations between the nationalist government of Turkey and the Soviet Union.
- 1926: Robert Goddard launches the first liquid-fuel rocket. The idea for this revolutionary rocket engine first appeared in a book by Russian scientist Konstantin Tsiolkovsky.
- 1945: US Marines captured the Japanese island of Iwo Jima during World War II.
- 1960: Alfred Hitchcock's movie Psycho is premiered. The film starring Anthony Perkins and Janet Leigh is an all-time classic of the suspense movie genre and is widely regarded as one of the greatest films ever made.
- 1968: During the Vietnam War, U.S. soldiers dispatched on a search-and-destroy mission killed as many as 500 unarmed civilians in My Lai, which the U.S. military considered a stronghold of the Viet Cong.
- 1988: A poison gas attack kills 5,000 civilians in the Kurdish town of Halabjah. The war crime was in all likelihood executed on the orders of Iraqi despot Saddam Hussein.
- 1995: Mississippi ratified the Thirteenth Amendment—which abolished slavery—130 years after it was added to the U.S. Constitution. Mississippi's ratification was not made official until 2013, when the state notified the U.S. Archivist.

FOCUS GEOPOLITICS

GULF'S TOUGH CHOICES



The Islamic Republic appears to recognize that forcing the US to return to the negotiating table requires not only disrupting global energy markets, but also leveraging the damage it is doing to the Gulf's reputation for safety and stability



Don Aviv & Sam Worby

IN THE ABSENCE OF A CLEAR US STRATEGY FOR THE REGION, THE GULF WILL SEEK TO SHAPE EVENTS MORE ACTIVELY

The United States and Israel have launched a war that the Gulf states invested heavily in diplomacy to prevent. Now they find their civilian infrastructure under daily attack.

If there is a silver lining to the war, it is that by retaliating so broadly, Iran has put to rest concerns about it stoking existing divisions among the Gulf states. In recent months, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia had landed on opposite sides of armed conflicts in Sudan and south Yemen. But now the Gulf is united in anger at Iran for its aggression, in frustration with the US for ignoring its warnings, and in confusion about what comes next.

Iran's targeting of infrastructure and US bases across the Gulf reflects deliberate strategy. Commentators on Iranian state television have noted that Kuwait was a burgeoning global hub before 1991 but never fully recovered that status after the Gulf War. The Islamic Republic thus appears to recognize that forcing the US to return to the negotiating table requires not only disrupting global energy markets, but also leveraging the damage it is doing to the Gulf's reputation for safety and stability.

The Gulf Cooperation Council's six member states have no good options. Pursuing diplomacy too eagerly could anger a US president intent on absolute victory. It would also risk legitimizing a regime that has brazenly attacked the GCC on an unprecedented scale. Increasingly, GCC countries feel frustrated at having lost their ability to shape key outcomes in their own neighbourhood. This frustration has fueled speculation that the UAE, Saudi Arabia, or even Qatar could act offensively against Iran, essentially joining the war. Near-daily reports—often of Israeli origin and always quickly denied—have alleged that such operations are already underway.

The UAE is the focal point of

such speculation. Having mounted a stellar defensive operation against an extraordinary volume of Iranian strikes, there is a case for the UAE to reassert deterrence by striking Iranian targets. But Emirati leaders have been wary of assuming a belligerent role, given what is at risk.

Saudi Arabia has absorbed fewer strikes and kept a tighter lid on information. But the Saudis have historically seen themselves as leaders within the GCC and may look for opportunities to assert that role. Ideally, whatever effort they undertake would lead the way to a diplomatic resolution, but given the scope and scale of the Kingdom's military capabilities, it is easy to see why the Israelis seem to want them involved.

It is also worth considering whether competitive dynamics among the GCC could reemerge as the war continues. The UAE and Saudi Arabia are competing to position themselves as US President Donald Trump's indispensable Gulf partner. If Trump signals a strong interest in Gulf participation in attacking Iran, one or more Gulf leaders could see an opportunity to gain ground against the other. Once one Gulf state strikes Iran, it could create pressure on the other

to follow. For now, the first priority across the Gulf is stopping the Iranian strikes, reopening transit routes, and restoring energy production. But these states are also acutely aware that if the Islamic Republic emerges from this conflict intact and unmoderated, it will be emboldened and may be more likely to pursue a nuclear weapon.

Given the severity of Iran's aggression, the UAE and Saudi Arabia in particular will only support a resolution that meaningfully mitigates the threat of further Iranian attack. If diplomacy cannot deliver that outcome, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf states may, individually or collectively, consider other options.

The most likely near-term posture for the Gulf states is strategic patience—ironically, an approach Iran itself has long favoured. The UAE and Saudi Arabia, especially, will track the war's trajectory closely, looking, perhaps in vain, for signs that the US and Israel have a cogent strategy with achievable objectives.

If a decisive outcome appears within reach, the UAE and possibly the Kingdom could opt to join the effort, contributing air power or other resources at a relatively low-risk moment when the US-Israeli coalition

already appears poised to win. If, instead, the conflict begins to look more like an extended quagmire, the Gulf will move toward diplomatic facilitation, working to generate offramps that the US could accept without appearing to concede.

Strategic patience may be the wisest approach for now, but the longer the war goes on, the more the Gulf's credibility as a stable global hub erodes. And yet, if the GCC countries are seen to push the US toward diplomacy—consistent with Iran's own strategy of coercing the Gulf to pressure the US—it sets a dangerous precedent. The next time Iran wants something from the US, all it would need to do is attack the GCC to get it.

Of course, the GCC countries could consider a partial decoupling from the US to take the targets off their backs. In the past, they have flirted with hedging their US ties by seeking partnerships with China, which has vital interests in the Middle East and is hinting at a willingness to help resolve the current conflict. But China's primary concern—maintaining its flow of energy imports—can be addressed without major security investments or geopolitical confrontation with the US. Its current strategy is working, and it is unlikely to shift unless the regional order fully collapses.

Neither a Gulf-state offensive nor a war-ending deal is likely in the immediate term. But in the absence of a clear US strategy for the region, the Gulf will seek to shape events more actively. One or more of these states, either in concert or independently, will eventually begin to assert their own vision of how the US-Israeli war on Iran should end.

Don Aviv is CEO of Interfor International. Sam Worby is a senior adviser to Interfor International and a geopolitical risk consultant specializing in Iran and the Gulf states.

©PROJECT SYNDICATE

SPECTRUM SOCIETY

Fall of freedom in the free world

In the fall of 2026, all Florida middle and high school students are required to learn about "the horrors of communism" and the "destructiveness of Marxism-Leninism." These lessons are shaped by the conservative Heritage Foundation-funded project led by right-wing nonprofit organizations like the National Association of Scholars (NAS) and the Civics Alliance. These organisations produce curricula and ideas that are concomitant with the requirements of capitalism and the governing elites in the US. These forces indirectly influence the making of curricula across the globe by funding different educational projects in different parts of the world. These are not educational curricula that promote scientific, secular and critical knowledge traditions. These are political propaganda against alternative politics.

There are absolutely no issues with learning about the limits of socialist and communist regimes in terms of their ideological praxis. By all means, students should learn to be critical of all powers that domesticate and discipline their critical and creative minds. Students should learn everything that questions power in order to produce new knowledge and expand individual freedom,

peace, prosperity, and the happiness of people. However, the designed curriculum ignores the positive aspects of radical political movements led by communist and socialist parties, which deepen secular democracies and citizenship rights while expanding individual freedoms in politics, the economy, culture, and society by dismantling and transforming absolutely feudal and undemocratic societies in Europe, Asia, America, Africa, and Latin America.

Communists have played a major role in defeating Nazis and fascists in Europe, and they have sacrificed their lives to defeat colonial apartheid in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Students are not allowed to read this history because these histories of radical political struggles provide alternatives that guide struggles against capitalism and its imperialist dominance. The domestication of education is central to disciplining the minds of young students to produce compliant minds that work for capitalism and never try to resist capitalist injustice.

This is the context in which there is a growing assault on history, philosophy, and critical liberal, democratic, secular and scientific education. The capitalist governing classes and their

reactionary and religious allies are using every opportunity to rewrite history, philosophy, and liberal educational curricula in the name of employability to ensure that people forget their past, thereby normalising capitalist exploitation, imperialist domination, and the domestication of the future in order to eradicate every possible threat to capitalism as a system that accelerates the fading away of freedom in the everyday lives of people.

The intellectuals of the erstwhile colonial countries, under the leadership of imperialist US and their allies in the Western bloc, coined a propaganda term called the "free world" to undermine the rise of newly independent socialist countries in solidarity with communist Soviet Russia. Socialist alternatives were branded as utopian and totalitarian and as undermining individual freedom.

The everyday reality of human lives and the erosion of freedom on a daily basis challenge capitalist propaganda and reveal the alienating and undemocratic nature of capitalism, where the idea of individual freedom is merely access to goods and services based on purchasing power, limited by economic abilities or disabilities. The imperialist power of the industrial-military

complex both manufactures ideas and conflicts to sustain itself by undermining individual lives and freedom. This is not sufficient for the survival of contemporary capitalism. Therefore, educational curricula are domesticated to discipline young students to accept capitalism and its exploitative systems as normal.

The so-called free market, as a capitalist project, has taken over all institutions and every sphere of life—from families, community organizations, schools, colleges, universities, and hospitals to homes, prisons, media, and even judicial systems. Mass consumer culture has entered every step of human life and society, where human beings and citizens are treated as mere customers.

Freedom is fading away from education to everyday life in the so-called "free world." It is time to reclaim the freedom to pursue secular and scientific education and to restore democratic freedom in the everyday lives of people. Collective struggle is the only way to ensure individual freedom, which is undermined under capitalism pursued by the so-called free world.

The writer teaches at the London Metropolitan University.



Bhabani Shankar Nayak

THE DOMESTICATION OF EDUCATION IS CENTRAL TO DISCIPLINING THE MINDS OF YOUNG STUDENTS TO PRODUCE COMPLIANT MINDS THAT WORK FOR CAPITALISM

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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

Shield for health

Sir, After 13 years spent in a persistent vegetative state, Harish Rana, the 32-year-old Delhi resident, has been granted the right to have his life-sustaining medical treatment withdrawn. In a landmark ruling, the Supreme Court has allowed his parents' plea for passive euthanasia, marking a significant moment in the country's evolving jurisprudence on the "right to die with dignity." The ruling marks the first known instance of a court-approved passive euthanasia since the SC formally recognized it in 2018. The SC's ruling, permitting the withdrawal of life support for a patient in a vegetative state for the past 13 years has been widely hailed by the medical society as a compassionate, humane, and dignified decision for a patient with no hope of recovery, setting a concrete precedent for future medical practice in India.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

Right to die

Sir, Vaccines are one of the most effective public health tools for protecting our health. They prepare our immune system to recognize and fight diseases before they strike, helping prevent numerous infectious illnesses. Every year on 16 March, India observes National Immunization Day to raise awareness about the importance of timely vaccination for children, adolescents, and adults. This day originally commemorated the launch of the Pulse Polio Immunization Programme in 1995, when millions of children under five across the country received the oral polio vaccine in a single day. In recent years, India has made remarkable progress in immunization, introducing vaccines against diseases such as rotavirus, measles-rubella, pneumonia, and COVID-19 (Covishield and Covaxin) to millions of people. The recent launch of the indigenous HPV vaccine, Cervavac, marks a major step forward in cervical cancer prevention. Despite India's large population and challenging geography, healthcare workers tirelessly ensure vaccines reach even remote areas, safeguarding public health. National Immunization Day is not only a reminder of the importance of vaccines but also highlights our collective responsibility to build a healthy society. Timely vaccination protects individuals and serves as a strong shield for the health of the entire community.

Krishna Kumar Vepakomma, HYDERABAD

BENGAL POLLS

SIR, infiltration, corruption to dominate campaign rhetoric



With the electorate shrinking from 7.66 crore to just over 7.04 crore, the exercise has dramatically altered the state's electoral landscape and introduced a new element of political uncertainty just as the campaign season begins

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, March 15: With the poll season in West Bengal now officially underway, several issues are expected to dominate the campaign rhetoric of political parties in the weeks ahead.

SIR/CITIZENSHIP ANXIETY: The publication of post-SIR electoral rolls has triggered one of the most significant pre-election developments in the state in recent years, as the revision pruned nearly 63.66 lakh names from the voter list ahead of the Assembly polls.

With the electorate shrinking from 7.66 crore to just over 7.04 crore, the exercise has dramatically altered the state's electoral landscape and introduced a new element of political uncertainty just as the campaign season begins. Apart from the deletions, around 60.06 lakh additional names are under adjudication, indicating that the voter list remains in flux even as political parties gear up for the polls. The churn has forced parties to reassess their booth-level arithmetic, particularly in districts where large numbers of deletions have been reported. The deletions are also concentrated in several border districts and urban belts areas

Kishtwar: More than 30 vehicles stranded

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, March 15: More than 30 light motor vehicles were stranded after moderate snowfall in Sinthan top and Margan top in Kishtwar district Sunday, prompting a joint rescue operation by police and civil administration, officials said.

The vehicles got stuck due to fresh snowfall and slippery road conditions at the high-altitude passes, disrupting traffic movement on the road connecting Kishtwar in Jammu with south Kashmir's Anantnag district, they said.

The officials said soon after receiving information, teams of the police, Army, and the civil administration rushed to the spot and launched a rescue operation to ensure the safety of the stranded passengers.

Snow clearance machines were pressed into service from both Kishtwar and Anantnag sides, and efforts were underway to shift all vehicles to safer locations, they said. All passengers were safe and were being assisted by the rescue teams, they added. Authorities have advised commuters to avoid travel on the Sinthan "Margan stretch of the road until weather conditions improve and the route is declared safe for movement. Meanwhile, the traffic on Mughal road connecting the border districts of Poonch and Rajouri in Jammu with south Kashmir's Shopian district was also suspended Sunday evening due to fresh snowfall at Pir Ki Gali and adjoining areas, the officials said.

that are electorally sensitive and politically contested.

INFILTRATION: When PM Narendra Modi, from a rally in the Muslim-majority bordering district of Malda January 17, made infiltration the central plank of his offensive against the TMC government alleging that large-scale illegal migration altered demography, fuelled riots, and thrived due to the ruling party's "patronage and syndicate raj" "he left little doubt that the BJP would run its election campaigns with the 'ghospetiya' issue in forefront. Amid a charged pre-poll political atmosphere, fuelled vigorously by the controversial SIR "roll-cleansing" exercise, the saffron camp has left no stone unturned to justify the process in the name of identifying "Bangladeshis and Rohingyas" on this side of the border.

During one of his recent visits, Union home minister Amit Shah sharpened the BJP's pitch on infiltration, declaring that while "only names of infiltrators are being deleted now" from voter rolls, they would be "pushed out" once the party comes to power in the state. He accused CM Mamata Banerjee of abetting infiltration for poll benefits.

The TMC, on the other hand, has called the process a politically motivated exercise devoid of truth and reality, which is aimed at targeting the Muslim citizens of the state.

CORRUPTION: Allegations of corruption by the Opposition parties against the TMC dispensation continue to dominate Bengal's political landscape, with the school jobs scam taking centre stage. The Supreme Court had, in April 2025, cancelled appointments of more than 25,000 candidates as teach-

Mamata announces DA arrears, clergy honorarium hike

Kolkata: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Sunday made two crucial announcements in quick succession -- clearance of DA arrears of its employees and hike in honorarium of purohits and muezins -- barely minutes ahead of the scheduled announcement of the Assembly polls. While Banerjee took to X to announce the honorarium hike for Hindu and Muslim clergy at 2.40 pm, 80 minutes ahead of the scheduled Election Commission press conference to announce poll schedules in five states at 4 pm, she made the DA arrear disbursement announcement at 3.05 pm, 55 minutes prior to the EC event. The chief minister's first announcement confirmed an increase of ₹500 in the monthly honorarium for purohits and muezins across Bengal, with the beneficiaries now scheduled to receive ₹2,000 per month post the revision.

ers and staff recruited by the state School Service Commission due to irregularities found in the recruitment process. **RELIGION AND POLARISATION:** As the campaign for the elections gathers momentum, political observers expect the contest to witness heightened communal rhetoric and identity-driven mobilisation, with religion emerging as a key undercurrent in the electoral narrative. Bengal, where electoral discourse historically remained relatively insulated from overt communal politics, has gradually been drawn into sharper ideological contestation between the TMC and the BJP.

Both parties have accused each other of encouraging polarisation. The BJP alleges minority appeasement by the ruling party, while the TMC counters by accusing its rival of attempting to divide communities along religious lines.

Against this backdrop, the upcoming elections could witness a more pronounced communal divide in certain regions, particularly in districts with mixed demographic compositions.

Political analysts say the interplay between religious polarisation, the SIR-related voter churn and the anxieties of communities such as the Matuas could together shape the tone and trajectory of the campaign in the months ahead.



Vultures perch on a branch of a tree in Billawar, near Jammu

PTI PHOTO

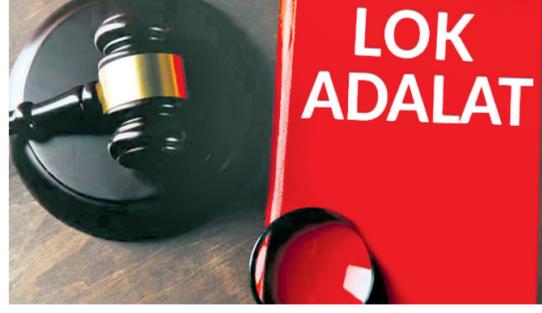
J&K Lok Adalat settles 68K cases

An amount of over ₹55.86 crore was awarded as compensation or settlement amount in motor accident claims, civil, criminal, labour disputes, electricity and water bills cases, land acquisition, family matters, cheque dishonour and bank recovery cases, according to an official spokesperson

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, March 15: About 68,000 cases were settled at the day-long National Lok Adalat across Jammu and Kashmir Saturday, officials said.

An amount of over ₹55.86 crore was awarded as compensation or settlement amount in motor accident claims, civil, criminal, labour disputes, electricity and water bills cases, land acquisition, family matters, cheque dishonour and bank recovery cases, according



to an official spokesperson.

Continuing its endeavour to fulfil the constitutional commitment of providing swift, cost-effective, and efficient dispute resolution to the masses in general and the litigant public in particular, the J&K Legal Services Authority organised the first National Lok Adalat for the year 2026 across the Union Territory to promote amicable settlements in a wide range of cases, the spokesman said.

According to the available information, out of the total 76,707 cases taken up by 194 benches, 67,993 cases were amicably settled and disposed of involving an amount of over ₹55.86 crore

as compensation or settlement amount, he said.

To ensure maximum participation and effective disposal of cases, the spokesman noted that pre-Lok Adalat sittings and pre-counselling sessions were conducted well in advance across the districts of the Union Territory, encouraging parties to explore amicable settlement of their disputes.

Several awareness programmes, meetings and sensitisation sessions were also conducted by the Legal Services Institutions to promote the concept and importance of Lok Adalats among litigants and stakeholders, he said.

Leaders to watch beyond TMC-BJP showdown in WB

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, March 15: In a state where politics has become synonymous with the TMC-BJP contest, certain key players outside the fold of the two parties reserve the potential to spring up surprises and expose fault lines in Bengal's political landscape.

Here's a look at some of the possible candidates who have pledged to simultaneously take on both Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's TMC and the BJP in the upcoming assembly elections:

MOHAMMED SALIM: The veteran CPI(M) leader and party's West Bengal secretary has had mixed fortunes at the hustings. He also shoulders the responsibility to manage an electoral turnaround for his party in the state as its tally has re-

duced from 176 seats (of the 235 bagged by the Left Front) in 2006 to zero in less than two decades. Having remained a member of the Rajya Sabha from 1990 for two terms, Salim won the 2001 state Assembly polls and was inducted as a minister in the then Left Front government. In 2004, he went to the Lok Sabha after winning the Calcutta Northwest constituency, only to lose the next polls in 2009 to TMC's Sudip Bandopadhyay from the newly formed Calcutta North seat following delimitation of seats.

HYUMAYUN KABIR: The MLA from Bharatpur in Murshidabad has rarely been far from political controversy. A former minister in the Mamata Banerjee government, Kabir grabbed national headlines in December 2025 after suggest-

ing that a Babri Masjid be constructed in West Bengal, triggering a fierce political storm and leading to his suspension from the TMC. Within days, the mercurial leader floated the Janata Unnayan Party, adding another twist to a career marked by sharp turns, public confrontations and headline-grabbing remarks. Kabir emerged on the state's political map as a Congress leader, winning the Rejinagar Assembly seat in 2011 from the minority-dominated Murshidabad belt.

Kabir joined the BJP in 2018 and unsuccessfully contested the Lok Sabha polls from Murshidabad a year later. He returned to the TMC following the expiry of his expulsion term and won the Bharatpur seat in 2021, reasserting his influ-

ence in the district's complex minority-dominated political landscape. But controversy continued to shadow him, reinforcing Kabir's image as one of Murshidabad's most unpredictable and combative political actors as the region heads into another electoral battle.

MINAKSHI MUKHERJEE: In her early 40s, the fiery youth leader of CPI(M) cut a sorry figure in the 2021 Assembly polls from Nandigram, where she was pitted against Mamata Banerjee and Suwendu Adhikari. She could garner only about 6,300 votes in a highly polarised election at Nandigram, which was narrowly won by the BJP's Adhikari.

NAWSAD SIDDIQUE: Indian Secular Front (ISF) leader and the party's lone MLA in the Bengal Assembly wrested

the Bhargar seat in 2021 from the TMC. 'Bhajjan' to his supporters, Nawsad's party fought the previous polls in alliance with the CPI(M)-led Left Front, and is in discussions with the Front for a seat-sharing arrangement this time. A descendant of Muhammad

MAUSAM NOOR: The prominent political figure from Malda is expected to drive the Congress' sinking poll fortunes in the 2026 polls in the district, following her recent return from the TMC. A former two-time Lok Sabha MP and later a Rajya Sabha member, Noor has long been associated with politics in Malda. Coming from the political family of veteran Congress leader ABA Ghani Khan Choudhury, Noor's strengths include legacy support and parliamentary experience.

J&K achieves 97 per cent target under PMAY-G; 3.23 lakh houses built

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, March 15: Jammu and Kashmir has completed more than 3 lakh houses under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin, achieving 97 per cent of the target, officials said Sunday.

Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Department Secretary Mohammad Aijaz Asad directed officials to accelerate the pace of work for the remaining 11,340 houses under the scheme.

During a meeting to review the progress of PMAY-G in the Union Territory, he said the current phase of the scheme is nearing completion, and all works sanctioned under the existing phase must be completed without delay before the new phase begins.

The meeting was informed that a total of 3,23,299 houses have been completed, while work is in progress on the remaining 11,340 houses.

Asad directed assistant commissioners of development (ACDs) and block development officers (BDOs) to track each case and ensure that no sanctioned house remains incomplete.

He also instructed that any technical or administrative bottlenecks hindering progress be resolved immediately.

The secretary said that all pending works must be completed by April 15, stressing that officers should make every possible effort even if it requires working around the clock, as houses left incomplete under the previous phase will not be taken up once the new phase begins.

He also directed the directors of rural development of the Jammu and Kashmir region to hold weekly review meetings and keep the department informed about the progress achieved.

He stressed the need for early release of pending instalments to beneficiaries, directing ACDs to conduct block-wise reviews in this regard.

LPG crisis: Belur Math turns to biogas, solar for bhog

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, March 15: Despite a shortage of LPG across the country triggered by the ongoing conflict in West Asia, the Belur Math in West Bengal's Howrah district is continuing its daily distribution of 'bhog' to thousands of devotees by relying on alternative energy sources such as biogas and solar power, officials said Saturday.

Belur Math, the headquarters of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, serves meals to a large number of visitors, devotees and residents every day as part of its long-standing tradition of community service inspired by the teachings of



Swami Vivekananda.

A Math official said the service continues unhindered to this date by tapping its own alternative energy resources.

"As we do not solely rely on LPG cylinders for cooking, we have been able to keep our commitment and service to devotees unhindered. We have

Belur Math, the headquarters of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, serves meals to a large number of visitors, devotees and residents every day as part of its long-standing tradition of community service inspired by the teachings of Swami Vivekananda

A Math official said the service continues unhindered to this date by tapping its own alternative energy resources

fully tapped other energy resources," a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission said.

"One of the key alternatives

is a biogas plant that produces fuel from waste generated at our cowshed. The organic gas generated from cattle waste meets a substantial portion of the kitchen's cooking requirements," he said.

In addition, a large solar power system installed on the premises generates electricity that is used for heating water and for other electrical cooking processes, further reducing dependence on conventional fuel.

The Math official said the current fuel stock, along with the energy produced through its in-house systems, is sufficient to manage the situation in the coming days.

"Keeping in mind the senti-

ments of devotees, the authorities said they are not in favour of suspending the distribution of 'bhog' or limiting the number under any circumstances," he said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had visited Belur Math in 2015 and 2020. Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar also went to the Math during his recent visit to Kolkata.

The Mission's decision comes at a time when several temples like Barama (Kali) Temple in Naihati, Maa Bargabhima temple in Purba Medinipur and others have been forced to put up notices restricting food to devotees due to fuel shortage.



“The government has already given replies twice, both in the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council. I have also written a letter. Regarding this shortage, I have said that efforts should be made to explore alternatives, such as bringing LPG from other countries to avoid the shortage. Even now, I am urging the central government

SIDDARAMAIAH | KARNATAKA CM

R-DAY: GOVT STARTS RECEIVING PADMA AWARD NOMINATIONS

The nominations and recommendations for the Padma awards to be announced on Republic Day 2027 for people's exceptional achievements and service began Sunday. The last date for filing the nominations is July 31, 2026, a government statement said



of the day quote

Earlier, many girls had to stay with relatives in distant places to pursue their studies, but now they are able to live at their home and travel five to 10 kilometres to their schools

We are asking for a seat in Assam, and even if that doesn't happen, we will support INDI allies

Maharashtra is the first state to formulate GCC (Global Capability Centres) policy and in such a situation mobility is very important. We are committed to making Pune congestion free by building metro rail lines. We are also planning underground tunnelling for uninterrupted mobility

Govt bars LPG for households with piped gas connections

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 15: The government has barred households with piped cooking gas (called PNG) connections from retaining or obtaining subsidised domestic LPG connections, even as the sector regulator pushed city gas distributors to accelerate PNG rollout to ease pressure on cooking gas supplies amid global energy supply disruptions.

In a notification issued March 14, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas amended the Liquefied Petroleum Gas (Regulation of Supply and Distribution) Order, 2000, under the Essential Commodities Act, making it mandatory for consumers with PNG connections to surrender their domestic LPG connections.

The amended order also prohibits government oil companies and their distributors from providing domestic LPG connections or refilling cylinders for consumers who already have a PNG supply.

“No person having a piped natural gas (PNG) connection and also having a domestic LPG connection shall retain a domestic LPG connection, or take refills of domestic LPG cylinders from any Government oil company, or through their distributors. Such persons will be required to immediately surrender their domestic LPG connection,” the order said.

Those having PNG connections have also been barred from obtaining a domestic LPG connection.

For government oil companies, the order prohibited them from “providing a domestic LPG connection, and/or supplying domestic LPG cylinder refills to a consumer who already owns a PNG connection”.

The move is aimed at prioritising LPG supplies for households that do not have access to piped gas. India imports about 88 per cent of its crude oil, 50 per cent of its natural gas and



- The government has barred households with PNG connections from retaining or obtaining subsidised LPG connections
- The move aims to prioritise LPG supplies for households without access to piped natural gas amid global energy supply disruptions
- The Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) is urging city gas distributors to expedite PNG rollout to ease pressure on LPG supplies
- City gas distribution companies are asked to prioritise PNG connections in areas with existing pipeline infrastructure
- Expanding PNG coverage supports India's energy transition by increasing access to cleaner fuels and mitigating supply disruptions

60 per cent of its LPG needs. Before the US-Israel strikes on Iran February 28 and Tehran's retaliation, more than half of India's crude imports, about 30 per cent of gas and 85-90 per cent of LPG imports came from West Asian countries, such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

The conflict has led to a blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, the main transit route for Gulf energy supplies. While India has partly offset crude supply disruptions by sourcing oil from countries, including Russia, gas supplies have been curtailed to industrial users and LPG availability to commercial establishments, such as hotels and restaurants, has been reduced.

In a related advisory, the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) has asked city gas distribution (CGD) companies to expedite conversion of households to domestic PNG (DPNG) and prioritise consumers in areas where pipeline infrastructure has already been laid.

NHAI hikes annual FASTag pass fee by ₹75 to ₹3,075



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 15: The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) Sunday said it has increased the rate of its annual pass by ₹75 to ₹3,075 for the next 2026-27 financial year.

The annual pass facility was launched August 15, 2025, to provide financial relief to commuters using national highways. In a statement, NHAI said it is revising the applicable fee for the FASTag Annual Pass from the current ₹3,000 to ₹3,075 for the Financial Year 2026-27.

Effective April 1, the revision in the fee has been carried out in accordance with the provisions of the National Highways Fee (Determination of Rates and Collection) Rules, 2008, National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) said.

With over 56 lakh users, the adoption of the FASTag Annual Pass has been growing among private vehicle owners.

The revised rate will be applicable for eligible non-commercial vehicles with a valid FAST-

Effective April 1, the revision in the fee has been carried out in accordance with the provisions of the National Highways Fee (Determination of Rates and Collection) Rules, 2008

ag seeking to avail the Annual Pass facility at about 1,150 fee plazas on National Highways and National Expressways.

The FASTag Annual Pass eliminates the need to frequently recharge FASTag through a one-time fee payment for one-year validity or 200 toll plaza crossings.

The annual pass gets activated within two hours on the existing FASTag linked to the vehicle after payment of the one-time fee through the Rajmarg Yatra App or the National Highways Authority of India website.

TDP MP, ex-BRS MLA test positive for drugs after raid at farmhouse

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hyderabad, March 15: TDP MP from Andhra Pradesh Putta Mahesh Kumar and former BRS MLA Pilot Rohith Reddy were among 11 people detained here following an alleged drug bust at a farmhouse in Moinabad near here, though the MP and seven others were subsequently released Sunday, officials said.

Mahesh Kumar, Rohith Reddy and four others had tested positive for alleged drugs consumption, they said.

On reliable information that several individuals had gathered at the farmhouse in Moinabad near here, owned by Rohith Reddy, and were celebrating a party with possession of narcotic and psychotropic substances along with a large quantity of liquor, the Elite Action Group for Drug Law Enforcement (EAGLE) Force in coordination with local police teams raided it Saturday night.

A businessman, was among those detained for allegedly opening fire three rounds in the air with a revolver during the party and later one round towards the police team.

Based on preliminary investigation, they said the person who opened fire is suspected to have resorted to the act under the influence of drugs. A 32 calibre revolver along with live and empty cartridges were seized.

SHORT TAKES

3 killed after truck hits autorickshaw

Hyderabad: Three people died and six others were injured after a truck hit an autorickshaw in Nalgonda district of Telangana Sunday, police said. The incident occurred in Nampally mandal at around 3.30 pm when a bricks-laden truck suffered a tyre burst, causing the driver to lose control of the vehicle. The truck then veered off its path and hit the auto. The auto-rickshaw had pulled over to the side of the road and passengers were alighting when the accident occurred.

CBI grills Vijay for more than 7 hours

New Delhi: The CBI questioned actor and TVK chief Vijay for over seven hours at its headquarters here Sunday over last year's stampede during his rally in Tamil Nadu's Karur that claimed 41 lives, officials said. The actor left the agency headquarters after the questioning and related formalities got over around 6 pm, they said. This was the third session of questioning for Vijay. He has been examined twice in January. Vijay was earlier summoned March 9. However, he had requested that the date be deferred by 15 days, officials said. However, both requests were declined by the agency, which summoned the actor to its headquarters here Sunday.

Cop shunted after killing of 2 seniors

Budaun (UP): The Uttar Pradesh government has shunted the circle officer of the area in connection with the recent killing of two senior officials at an HPCL compressed biogas plant in the district, officials said Sunday. Superintendent of Police (Rural) Hirdesh Katheriya said that Ujhani Circle Officer Devendra Singh has been attached to the Police headquarters in Lucknow, and Rahul Pandey of UP-112 emergency response service has been posted to Budaun in his place.

Pak terrorist killed

Srinagar: The army Sunday said that it has foiled an infiltration bid along the Line of Control in Uri sector of Jammu and Kashmir, killing a Pakistani terrorist. “Based on a specific intelligence input provided by JKP regarding an infiltration attempt, a joint operation was launched on intervening night of 14-15 Mar 26 in Gen area Buchhar, Uri sector,” Srinagar-based Central Corps of the Army posted on its X handle.

Assam government signs final pacts with four armed groups

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, March 15: The Assam government Sunday signed memoranda of settlement with three Kuki armed groups and one Hmar outfit, claiming that the agreements mark the end of “ethnic militancy” in the state, an official statement said.

The four groups had laid down arms in 2012 in the presence of the then Union home minister and the chief minister, and signed the Suspension of Operations (SoO) pact.

The Kuki groups which signed the pacts are United Kukigam Defence Army (UKDA), Kuki Revolutionary Army (KRA) and Kuki Liberation Organisation (KLO)/ Kuki Liberation Army (KLA).

The Hmar People's Conven-

tion-Democratic (HPC-D) also inked the final pact with the government at a programme here.

The UKDA was formed in 2010, and the KRA in 2000 in Karbi Anglong district, while the KLO and KLA were formed in 1992 and 1993, respectively, in Dima Hasao. The Hmar outfit was formed in 2003-04.

Several rounds of tripartite talks were held, with the process accelerated under the present government and culminating in the agreements, the statement said.

The two pacts, one each with the Kuki and Hmar groups, envisage the formation of welfare and development councils for the Kuki and Hmar communities, with headquarters in Guwahati.

Cong jibes EC: ‘MCC is Modi’s campaign code

The Opposition party also claimed that the poll schedule announcement “would have been given the go-ahead by the G2, since G1 would have completed this round of inaugurations, ribbon-cuttings, flag-offs, and launches”

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

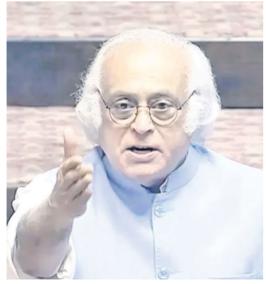
New Delhi, March 15: Ahead of the Assembly polls schedule announcement by the Election Commission, the Congress Sunday took a swipe, saying since 2014 the MCC has come to stand for “Modi's Code of Campaigning which will be full of defa-

mation, abuses, intimidation, fear-mongering, and spreading the virus of lies.”

The Opposition party also claimed that the poll schedule announcement “would have been given the go-ahead by the G2, since G1 would have completed this round of inaugurations, ribbon-cuttings, flag-offs, and launches”

The Congress frequently uses the term ‘G2’ to take swipes at Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, who are both from Gujarat.

In a post on X, Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said, “The Election Commission will announce the schedule for the 2026 Assembly elections at 4 PM today. It would have been given the go-ahead



by the G2, since G1 would have completed this round of inaugurations, ribbon-cuttings, flag-offs, and launches.”

“The Election Commission's Model Code of Conduct (MCC) will soon come into effect. But since 2014 this has come to stand for Modi's Code of Campaigning which will be full of defamation, abuses, intimidation, fear-mon-

gering, and spreading the virus of lies,” Ramesh said.

The MCC is a set of conventions agreed upon by all stakeholders during the elections. Its objective is to keep campaigning, polling and counting orderly, clean and peaceful and check any abuse of state machinery and finances by the party in power.

The Election Commission will announce dates for assembly polls in Assam, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal and Puducherry Sunday evening.

The terms of these legislative assemblies are ending on different dates in May and June.

Final electoral rolls of the four states and the Union territory of Pondicherry have been published as part of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of voters' list.

Unique polling stations in election-bound states

Addressing a press conference here to announce the schedule of Assembly polls, Kumar highlighted the unique polling stations in the election-bound states of Assam, Kerala, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, and the Union Territory of Pondicherry

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 15: Poll teams have to trek through the hills of the Buxa Tiger Reserve to reach three polling booths with less than 1,500 voters in West Bengal's Alipurduar district, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar said Sunday.

Addressing a press conference here to announce the schedule of Assembly polls, Kumar highlighted the unique polling stations in the election-bound states of Assam, Kerala, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, and the Union Terri-

tory of Pondicherry.

“Polling teams undertake an arduous journey of 50-60 km from Majuli in Assam via ferry and road, cross the Brahmaputra river and finally, reach the remote Dhanekhana polling station with 248 electors by tractor,” the CEC said.

A booth in the tribal area of Edamalakuddy in Kerala, with a total of 693 voters, is a unique remote polling station, where election officials reach after undertaking a 30-km journey through rugged off-road terrain on specialised vehicles, followed by an eight-km trek on foot.



“In Alipurduar district, polling teams trek through the Buxa Tiger Reserve hills to reach the polling booths at Buxa with 759 electors, Chunarhatti with 235 electors and Adma with 445 electors,” Kumar said.

In the Varusanad hills in Tamil Nadu's Theni district, polling officials travel for three hours on difficult terrain to reach the Vellimalai polling station that has five voters.

“Built in 1885, Pondicherry's V O Chidambaram Pillai School, once Ecole Primaire de Garçons under the French

system, was designated a model polling station that hosts two polling stations with 722 and 651 electors respectively,” the CEC said.

The Election Commission on Sunday announced the schedule of the Assembly polls in the four states and Puducherry. Polling will be held on a single day in Assam, Kerala, Puducherry (on April 9) and Tamil Nadu (April 23) and in two phases in West Bengal -- April 23 and April 29. The counting of votes for all 824 seats across the four states and Pondicherry will be taken up May 4.



With the launch of the Samridh Gram initiative in Umri, Guna, we are bringing the world to our Umri. From education and agriculture to healthcare and government services, technology is placing new opportunities directly in the hands of our people

MIZORAM GOVT LIKELY TO EXTEND ANTI-DRUG DRIVE

The Mizoram government is likely to extend its ongoing anti-drug campaign 'Operation Jericho' beyond its March deadline, officials said Sunday. The drive was launched jointly by the state police, excise department and the Young Mizo Association (YMA) September 1, 2025, to curb drug trafficking across the border. Mizoram shares a 510-km long border with Myanmar



of the day quote

Despite such a difficult situation, the Congress is indulging in irresponsible politics over the cooking gas

Everyone knows that West Bengal will be a very tough fight. But the Left is very confident. The Left will see a revival and will emerge as a force to be reckoned with that would shape the political discourse of the state

The Union BJP government which has earned the name Failure Model even in foreign policy has caused a severe cylinder shortage due to its wrong decisions

Rain, thunderstorms ease heat in parts of north India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Lucknow, March 15: Parts of northern India, especially the plain regions, received light rain accompanied by thunder in the past 24 hours, bringing relief from the recent heat. Many areas of the national capital witnessed drizzle in the morning, with the India Meteorological Department stating that 8 mm of rainfall was recorded till 8.30 am. According to the IMD data, Safdarjung and Lodhi Road recorded 0.8 mm rainfall each, while Palam received 0.4 mm. Ayanagar recorded 2.6 mm rainfall and Pitampura 3.5 mm, the highest among the stations. Uttar Pradesh, too, experienced light rain and witnessed a drop in temperatures in several parts of the state. Meanwhile, the IMD has forecast moderate thunderstorms with lightning and light to moderate rain over parts of Gautam Buddha Nagar, Bulandshahr, Hapur, Ghaziabad, Meerut, Baghpat, Bijnor, Muzaffarnagar, Shamli and Saharanpur districts and adjoining areas. The IMD has also warned of thunderstorms accompanied by lightning and gusty winds with speeds of 40-50 kmph across the state, while isolated places in eastern Uttar Pradesh may experience hailstorms. Rajasthan too experienced a brief spell of light showers Sunday, with the local weather office saying weather conditions across the state are expected to remain largely dry March 16 and 17. The impact of the western disturbance is expected to be the highest on March 19 and 20, when parts of the Jodhpur, Bikaner, Ajmer, Jaipur and Bharatpur divisions may experience thunderstorms, strong winds and rain at some places, the weather department said.



People walk with umbrellas during rainfall at the Ridge, in Shimla, Himachal Pradesh

POST OF THE DAY

Why doesn't India rise in spite of being 4th largest economy? Because best performing contributor States to India's economy are used as tax & resource loot colonies by Union govt, which diverts that into backward States, pulling rest to their level, destroying all possibilities.

SHORT TAKES

PM writes to Om Birla

New Delhi: In a sharp attack at the Congress, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday said the resolution brought against Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla was driven by motives of self-interest and that certain individuals steeped in "dynastic mindset" want to confine democratic institutions within their own narrow spheres. Prime Minister Modi made the remarks in a letter to Birla, days after the resolution moved by the Congress-led Opposition for the removal of the Lok Sabha speaker from office was defeated in the House. Expressing gratitude for the letter, Birla said the prime minister has always held an unwavering faith in the rules, procedures, and traditions of India's parliamentary democracy.

2 minors killed in road accident

Jamshedpur: Two boys died after coming under the wheels of a speeding truck in Jharkhand's Jamshedpur, a police officer said Sunday. The incident took place on Saturday evening in Kudada area under Sundarnagar police station limits, he said. The deceased, in the age group of 13-14 years, were identified as Durga Hembram and Marshal Soren, Officer-in-Charge of Sundarnagar police station, Ajit Munda, said.

6 linked to Pak-based smugglers arrested

Chandigarh: Punjab Police Sunday said it has arrested six people, who were allegedly part of two separate cross-border arms and drug smuggling modules with links to Pakistan-based smugglers. Amritsar Police recovered six sophisticated pistols and 60 live cartridges in the first case, and 3.5 kilograms of heroin in the second instance, Director General of Police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav said.

EXCISE POLICY CASE

Kejriwal, Sisodia move SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 15: Aam Aadmi Party convener Arvind Kejriwal and senior leader Manish Sisodia have approached the Supreme Court after the Chief Justice of Delhi High Court rejected their request to transfer CBI's plea against their discharge in the excise policy case from Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma to another judge, the party said. According to sources privy to the development, the Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court, D K Upadhyaya, while declining the request by AAP leader and others discharged in the case, opined that Justice Sharma was hearing the CBI petition against the trial court's decision in accordance with the roster and there was no reason to pass an order of transfer on the administrative side. A call for recusal has to be taken by the judge concerned, the chief justice clarified. The CBI's petition is listed for hearing before Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma Monday. The Aam Aadmi Party said both Kejriwal and Sisodia have challenged the decision in the SC. On March 11, Kejriwal, Sisodia, along with other accused in the excise policy case, made a representation to Chief Justice Upadhyaya to transfer CBI's plea against their discharge from Justice Sharma to another "impartial" judge. In the representation, Kejriwal claimed he has a "grave, bona fide, and reasonable apprehension" that the hearing in the matter would not be impartial and neutral. On February 27, the trial court discharged Kejriwal, Sisodia and 21 others and pulled up the CBI, saying its case was wholly unable to survive judicial scrutiny and stood discredited in its entirety. On March 9, Justice Sharma's bench stayed the trial court's recommendation on the initiative of departmental action against the CBI's investigating officer in the liquor policy case. Issuing notice to all 23 accused on CBI's plea against their discharge, Justice Sharma said certain observations and findings of the trial court at the stage of framing of charges prima facie appeared erroneous and needed consideration. Kejriwal claimed in the representation that his apprehension was based on Justice Sharma's past conduct and said that on the very first day of the CBI's revision petition against his discharge, she proceeded to record a prima facie view that the trial court's detailed order was "erroneous", even without hearing the other side.



The Aam Aadmi Party said both Kejriwal and Sisodia have challenged the decision in the SC. On March 11, Kejriwal, Sisodia, along with other accused in the excise policy case, made a representation to Chief Justice Upadhyaya to transfer CBI's plea against their discharge from Justice Sharma to another "impartial" judge. On February 27, the trial court discharged Kejriwal, Sisodia and 21 others and pulled up the CBI, saying its case was wholly unable to survive judicial scrutiny and stood discredited in its entirety.

Justice Sharma, Kejriwal's representation contended, did not disclose any "specific perversity" when she stayed the trial court's directions against the CBI official. The AAP leader also objected to Justice Sharma's direction on deferring the trial proceedings in the connected ED case. He submitted that Justice Sharma has decided multiple cases arising from the CBI FIR, including Kejriwal's petition against his arrest and bail applications by AAP leaders Manish Sisodia and Sanjay Singh, as well as Telangana Jagruti president K Kavitha, and "not even once" given relief to any of the accused. The representation added that Justice Sharma, while dealing with these earlier pleas, has already recorded "elaborate prima facie observations accepting the prosecution theory on critical questions". It informed the chief justice that three of the judgments have been set aside by the Supreme Court and one has been referred to a larger bench. In the representation, Kejriwal said the case against him was politically motivated and his request to transfer the pending matter to another judge was "not directed at any personal predilection, but at the objective test of reasonable apprehension in the mind of a fair-minded and informed litigant seeking justice".

Two dead as car crashes at 150 kmph while filming reel

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jetpur (Gujarat), March 15: The thrill for speed and obsession with social media popularity turned fatal when the sedan driven by a 20-year-old man, purportedly at a speed of 150 km/hour, crashed into the wall of a farmhouse in Rajkot district, killing him and another occupant. The incident occurred Saturday night shortly after Avadh Tiwari posted a video on Instagram in which he appeared to be driving the car at high speed, police said, adding that the third occupant of the car survived with injuries. Another video shows Tiwari purportedly recording reels while driving the car. He has 3,417 followers on Instagram, and his feed includes pictures of himself with several high-end cars. "The accident occurred Saturday night when three men were travelling in a car which was allegedly driven at the speed of around 150 kmph from Jetpur towards Dhoraji," said police inspector M.M. Thakor. Tiwari died on the spot, while Devraj Gosai (20) succumbed to his injuries on Sunday morning. The third occupant, Akshay Vaghela (20), is undergoing treatment, he added.

According to police, the incident occurred as Tiwari lost control of the sedan, which crashed into the wall of Balkrishna Farm House on Dhoraji Road, damaging its section and overturning, Thakor said. Police said the sedan had not yet been registered, and "applied for registration" was written on the vehicle. Police are attempting to trace the owner of the car. According to police, Tiwari had a criminal history, with cases registered against him under laws including the Prevention of Anti-Social Activities Act.

WEST ASIA CRISIS

EAM speaks to Saudi, UAE foreign ministers



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaishankar starts 2-day visit to Brussels

New Delhi, March 15: Against the backdrop of spiralling hostilities between Iran and the US, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar spoke to his counterparts from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) focusing on various aspects of the evolving situation in West Asia. Jaishankar held the phone conversations with UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan Saturday night. "Discussed ongoing developments related to the conflict in West Asia," the external affairs minister said on social media Sunday about his talks with the Saudi foreign minister. On his conversation with Zayed Al Nahyan, Jaishankar said: "Exchanged views on various aspects of the regional situation." It is learnt that India's energy security figured in Jaishankar's conversations with both foreign ministers. Global oil and gas prices have surged after Iran virtually blocked the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow shipping lane between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, that handles roughly 20 per cent of global oil and LNG (Liquefied Natu-

ral Gas). West Asia has been a major source of India's energy procurement. The external affairs minister's conversation also came at a time India has been trying to forge a consensus position among the BRICS nations on the conflict. India is the current chair of the influential bloc, which recently expanded to include Iran, the UAE and some other countries. Iran's counter-offensive against the UAE and other Gulf nations following the February 28 US-Israel strikes on Iranian targets has triggered some disquiet within the grouping.

Centre backs panel to define Aravalli hills range

In an affidavit filed before the top court, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has endorsed the names suggested for the high-powered expert committee comprising in-service and retired bureaucrats associated with the Forest Survey of India (FSI), Geological Survey of India (GSI) and Survey of India, along with academicians

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 15: The Union Environment Ministry has told the Supreme Court that it has no objection with the Central Empowered Committee's proposed 10-member high-powered expert committee which has been tasked to come up with a uniform definition for the Aravalli hills and ranges. In an affidavit filed before the top court, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has endorsed the names suggested for the high-powered expert committee comprising in-service and retired bureaucrats associated with the Forest Survey of India (FSI), Geolog-

ical Survey of India (GSI) and Survey of India, along with academicians. "The MoEFCC respectfully submits that it has no objection if this court as the aforesaid suggested names for the constitution of the proposed High Powered Committee. It is further submitted that the Ministry does not have any additional names to propose at this stage for inclusion in the said committee," the affidavit said. The MoEF, in its affidavit, said the aspects relating to the Aravalli Hills and Ranges require a comprehensive and analytical examination, including stakeholder consultation, by a group of domain experts in the relevant fields. The CEC in its



report to the apex court said Devi, a 1991 Indian Forest Service officer from the Madhya Pradesh cadre, has over three decades of experience in forestry education and research,

wildlife and forest policy, and institutional leadership. The other members include Subhash Ashutosh, former director general of FSI, former GSI director Rajendra Kumar

Sharma, climate and energy policy expert Tejal Kanitkar, senior academician and life sciences researcher Jaya Parkash Yadav, senior geographer and scholar Tejbir Singh Rana, former additional surveyor general of India SV Singh, former Gujarat principal chief conservator of forests NCCDF, and former Nagaland PCCF Dharmendra Prakash. The CEC also recommended names of RN Mishra, a noted author and Vijay Dhasmana, an ecological restoration practitioner and conservationist. On February 26, the top court had asked the environment ministry and other stakeholders to suggest names of domain experts for the panel

which would define the Aravalli hills and ranges, and observed that only lawful mining would be allowed in the region. The top court, December 29, took note of the outcry over the new definition of the Aravallis and kept in abeyance its November 20 directions that accepted a uniform definition of these hills and ranges. It had also stalled all mining activities. It remarked that there was a need to resolve "critical ambiguities", including whether the criteria of 100-metre elevation and the 500-metre gap between hills would strip a significant portion of the range of environmental protection.

international



I think we need to recognise that we have a problem with the Security Council today no longer represents the world as the world exists. It represents the world after 1945
ANTONIO GUTERRES | CHIEF, UN

US FLAG BACK IN CARACAS

The American flag was raised Saturday over the US Embassy in Venezuela for the first time since 2019, a move that highlighted the recent shift in relations between the two countries since then President Nicolas Maduro was captured by American troops in January. Though the flag is now waving, the building is undergoing renovations and it remains unclear when it will fully reopen



of the day quote

For two weeks, the peoples of the Middle East have been suffering the atrocious violence of war. In the name of Christians in the Middle East and of all women and men of good will, I appeal to those responsible for this conflict: Cease fire!
POPE LEO XIV | CATHOLIC CHURCH LEADER



This is not about being involved in operations. We are not at war with Iran. For us today, both the technology and the funding are important
VOLODYMYR ZELENKYI | PRESIDENT, UKRAINE



Fellow Ugandans and friends of Uganda all over the world, by the time you see this video, I will have left the country for some critical engagements outside Uganda
BOBI WINE | OPPOSITION LEADER, UGANDA



MIDEAST WAR

Ceasefire not in sight

The lack of interest from Washington and Tehran suggests both sides are digging in for an extended conflict, even as the widening war inflicts civilian casualties and Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz sends oil prices soaring

REUTERS

Washington/Dubai/Tel Aviv, March 15: President Donald Trump's administration has rebuffed efforts by Middle Eastern allies to start diplomatic negotiations aimed at ending the Iran war that started two weeks ago with a massive US-Israeli air assault, according to three sources familiar with the efforts.

Iran, for its part, has rejected the possibility of any ceasefire until US and Israeli strikes end, two senior Iranian sources told Reuters, adding that several countries had been trying to mediate an end to the conflict.

US strikes on Iran's Kharg Island, the country's main oil export hub, Friday night underscored Trump's determination to press ahead with his military assault. Iran's new Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei has vowed to keep the Strait of Hormuz shut and threatened to step up attacks on neighboring countries.

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, through which a fifth of the world's oil is transported.

ATTEMPTS TO OPEN LINES OF COMMUNICATION

Oman, which mediated talks



DIPLOMACY TAKES BACKSEAT

- Iran demands end to US-Israeli strikes before ceasefire talks
- Oman and Egypt attempt to mediate, but efforts stall
- US officials divided on war's impact and strategy

before the war, has tried multiple times to open a line of communication, but the White House has made clear it is not interested, according to two sources, who like others in this story were granted anonymity in order to speak freely about diplomatic matters.

A senior White House official confirmed Trump has rebuffed those efforts to start talks and is focused on pressing ahead with the war to further weaken Tehran's military capabilities.

"He's not interested in that right now, and we're going to continue with the mission unabated. Maybe there's a day, but not right now," the official said.

During the first week of the war, Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform that Iran's leadership and military were so battered by US-Israeli strikes that they wanted to talk, but that it was "Too Late!" He has

a history of shifting foreign policy stances without warning, making it hard to rule out that he might test the waters for restarting diplomacy.

"President Trump said new potential leadership in Iran has indicated they want to talk and eventually will talk. For now, Operation Epic Fury continues unabated," a second senior White House official said when asked to comment on this story.

UAE arrests 35, including 19 Indians, for posting misleading content online

Dubai: The UAE Sunday ordered the arrest of 35 individuals, including 19 Indians, for publishing video clips on social media platforms that contained misleading and fabricated content amid regional tensions due to the Israel-US-Iran war. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) official news agency Wam said the accused have been referred for an expedited trial. The latest list has 25 individuals of various nationalities, including 17 Indians, listed under different sections, separate from the 10 people, including two Indians, who were named and ordered to be arrested Saturday.

Iran arrests dozens of people accused of being informants for Israel

Dubai: Dozens of people accused of sharing sensitive information with Israel have been arrested in several areas of Iran, local media reported Sunday, as Israeli and US fighter jets continue to strike new targets in the country. In northwestern Iran, the semi-official Tasnim news agency reported Sunday that 20 people were arrested on accusations by the provincial prosecutor's office of sending location details on Iran's military and security assets to Israel. In northeastern Iran, which has remained relatively untouched by air strikes, Tasnim reported the arrest of 10 people Sunday, with some accused of collecting information on sensitive locations and economic infrastructure.

Netanyahu laughs off death rumours

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jerusalem, March 15: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu Sunday mocked at the widespread news on social media about his death as he released a video showing him ordering a coffee at what seems to be a roadside mini market.

Speculations have been rife over the social media for about a week questioning his absence from the public space even as rumour increased after a video surfaced apparently showing Netanyahu with six fingers against the backdrop of the US-Israel joint attack on Iran since February 28 and the retaliation by the Islamic nation that has extended the war to the entire Gulf region.

On Sunday, Netanyahu posted the video on his personal X handle, where he is heard saying, "Great (he tells the seller giving him coffee). Thanks."

"What did you ask me?" he is seen asking the videographer. When told that there are channels saying he is dead, Netanyahu mocks, "I am dying for coffee."

"You know what, I am crazy (interchangeable with dying, the word in Hebrew) about my people. They are behaving (conducting) in a fantastic way. You want to count the number of fingers. You can show us, here (raising left hand), here (raising right hand). You saw!" the Israeli prime minister said.

The video comes as an apparent dig at some news reports speculating that he is dead, posting a video where it seems that his left hand has six fingers, and hence doctored.

Raising the coffee, Netanya-



hu further says in the video, "lechaim (to life)."

Asked if he wants to give a message to people looking to go out, the premier cautions that they can go out for some fresh air but should be near protected shelters.

"The way you (Israelis) have stood by is wonderful. It gives me strength, to the government, to the army, to the Mossad and we are doing things that I cannot share at the moment but we are doing things. We are hitting Iran, even today, very hard," Netanyahu said.

"We are also continuing in Lebanon. You all are telling me to continue, I am telling you all to continue. Continue to listen to the Home Front Command all the time and also the Mayors to remain always close to the shelters," the Israeli prime minister stressed.

Netanyahu's video comes when earlier in the day, Iran's Revolutionary Guard said they will hunt down the Israeli prime minister.

Sri Lanka rolls out fuel rationing system amid ongoing conflict

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Colombo, March 15: Sri Lanka Sunday rolled out a fuel rationing system through QR code in view of a possible crisis situation due to the ongoing conflict in West Asia.

Cars are allowed 15 litres per week, while buses are allowed 60 litres per week, the Ministry of Energy said.

The QR rationing is introduced as a measure in view of hoarding by the consumers despite the continuous availability of enough fuel for 4 months, it said. The rationing comes after the government announced this week that it was hopeful of securing fuel supplies from India and Russia.

Long queues were witnessed outside fuel retailers due to problems with the operation of the QR code, retailers said.

Earlier last week, Sri Lanka raised fuel prices to contain



hoarding even as long queues were seen at fuel pumps since the war broke out February 28.

The government had appealed to people to cut down on non-essential travel to minimise fuel usage.

Rationing using QR code was successful in curbing the problem when the supplies ran dry due to forex shortage during the 2022 economic crisis, making it difficult to pay for the shipments.

Cars are allowed 15 litres per week, while buses are allowed 60 litres per week, the Ministry of Energy said

An Indian credit line through the Lanka Indian Oil Corporation (LIOC), the company's Sri Lanka operation, helped diffuse tensions. That year, between March and July, over 25 people died due to exhaustion after spending long hours in fuel queues.

Starting February 28, the US and Israel have launched a massive joint attack on Iran and with Iran's retaliation, it has extended to the entire Gulf region. Iranian strikes in Hormuz have affected maritime traffic in the strait, which is crucial for global supply chains for crude and oil.



People wait in a queue with LPG cylinders to brace for possible fuel shortages in the wake of the ongoing West Asia conflict, in Kathmandu, Nepal, Sunday

ELECTIONS AHEAD

Hungary's feuding parties gather for show of force

In power since 2010, Orbán faces what could be his toughest bid for re-election after three years of stagnation, a surge in the cost of living and the rise of a pro-EU rival seen by many as a viable alternative

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Budapest, March 15: Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and his main political opponent, Peter Magyar, each called their supporters to the streets of Hungary's capital Sunday for a show of strength before the two men face off in pivotal elections just four weeks away.

The rival rallies in Budapest, expected to draw hundreds of thousands of people in support of



Orbán's nationalist Fidesz party and Magyar's centre-right Tiszza, are being viewed as a barometer for which side commands more support as the campaign enters its final month.

In power since 2010 and looking for his fifth consecutive election victory, Orbán, 62,

faces a more competitive race than at any time in the past two decades as Magyar has shot to prominence and challenged what once seemed to be an unshakeable grip on power by the pro-Russian populist.

As crowds gathered on a bridge over the Danube ahead

of the pro-government march that would end with a speech by the prime minister, Orbán supporter Aniko Menyhart said his appeal could be summed up in three words: "God, homeland, family."

"Only this government is able to secure these three things for the future," she said.

In the days ahead of Sunday's events, held on the March 15 national holiday commemorating Hungary's 1848 revolution against the Habsburg Empire, both Orbán and Magyar stressed to their followers the importance of attending. Many observers were watching to see which party was able to mobilise more people to its rally, a possible glimpse into how they might perform April 12.

Magyar's supporters planned their own march through central Budapest later in the day. Tiszza has predicted it will be Hungary's "biggest ever polit-

ical event."

Hungary's stagnating economy, deteriorating public services and a cost-of-living crisis - compounded by increasingly salient allegations of government corruption - have helped fuel growing dissatisfaction with Orbán and his autocratic style.

While the long-serving leader has centred his campaign around what he says are the dangers to Hungary posed by the European Union and neighbouring Ukraine, Magyar, a 44-year-old lawyer and one-time Fidesz insider who broke with the party in 2024, has focused his message on improving conditions for ordinary Hungarians.

Through relentless campaigning across Hungary's rural countryside, traditionally an Orbán stronghold, Magyar has spread the message that he will restore Hungary's democratic institutions that have

eroded under Orbán, and steer the country back toward its Western partners and off its drift toward Moscow.

In a video posted to social media early Sunday, Magyar said his party "would like to give back to every Hungarian what the outgoing government has taken away: our belief in our freedom, and the feeling that our homeland truly belongs to every Hungarian."

Tiszza holds a lead over Fidesz in most independent polling, and in a February survey by pollster Median published by the news site HVG, Magyar's party was at a 20 percentage point advantage among decided voters.

But the outcome of the election remains far from certain as Fidesz has sought to engage its broad support in many rural areas and leverage its control over public broadcasters and a vast web of loyal media outlets to deliver its message.



“
 The focus is likely to be on products that use imported inputs from China, suspected of being made with forced labour. If such inputs are used in goods exported from India to the US, those shipments could come under investigation
”
 AJAY SRIVASTAVA | FOUNDER, GTRI

JAPAN TO RELEASE OIL STOCKS

Japan plans to start releasing oil from its stockpiles Monday to soften the shock from the US-Israeli war on Iran, a stark reminder of the oil crisis half a century ago that prompted Tokyo to create reserves. As gasoline prices across Japan started to rise with the war disrupting supplies from the Gulf's Strait of Hormuz, Tokyo pledged to release a record 80 million barrels of oil, about 45 days of supply for the resource-poor nation



of the day note

Things are not improving, but we are trying to manage our exports. Shipping lines should not take undue advantage of this situation
 SC RALHAN | PRESIDENT, FIEO

In the week ahead, focus will remain in the Middle East region as any signs of further escalation or de-escalation may lead to increased volatility in the financial markets
 PRANAV MER | VICE PRESIDENT, EBG - COMMODITY & CURRENCY RESEARCH, JM FINANCIAL SERVICES

Empowering women with knowledge, data, and decision-making roles can significantly enhance farm productivity, profitability, and sustainability
 ML JAT | DIRECTOR GENERAL, ICAR

SHORT TAKES

Gems, jewellery exports up 3.86%

Mumbai: India's gems and jewellery exports grew 3.86 per cent year-on-year to \$2,680.79 million (Rs 24,340.05 crore) in February, following the industry's diversification into other markets, according to the Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC). The overall exports stood at \$2,581.08 million (Rs 22,460.13 crore) during the corresponding month of 2025, GJEPC data showed. From April 2025 to February 2026, total gems and jewellery exports were almost flat at \$25,933.72 million (Rs 2,28,230.06 crores) compared to \$25,915.81 million (Rs 2,18,737.62 crores) in the year-ago period. "The past year has been challenging for the global gem and jewellery industry, shaped by evolving US tariff policies, geopolitical uncertainties, and changing consumer preferences across key markets. Despite these headwinds, the Indian gem and jewellery sector has demonstrated remarkable resilience," GJEPC Chairman Kirit Bhansali said. Exporters have actively diversified their export markets, strengthening their presence in destinations such as the UAE and Australia, where free trade agreements have played a significant role, while markets like Hong Kong have continued to provide strong support, he added.

ATGL slashes price for certain industrial users

New Delhi: Adani Total Gas Ltd (ATGL) has cut the price of excess natural gas supplied to certain industrial customers to Rs 82.95 per standard cubic metre (SCM) from Rs 119.90 per SCM, effective 0600 hours March 16, as upstream gas prices softened amid ongoing supply disruptions. The city gas joint venture of Adani Group and France's Total Energies said the revision aims to pass on the benefit of lower upstream prices to customers while maintaining system stability and equitable distribution of gas during the current supply constraints. Following the disruption in India's LNG supplies due to the halt in the movement of ships through the Strait of Hormuz as a fallout of the war in West Asia, ATGL had asked commercial and industrial customers to curtail consumption to 40 per cent of their contracted volumes. Spot market rates were applied to consumption beyond this threshold. Rates for this segment have not been cut. "We are pleased to inform you that the Excess Gas Price as informed vide our communication dated March 3, 2026, has been revised downward from Rs 119.90 per SCM to Rs 82.95 per SCM, which will be effective from 0600 hours on March 16, 2026," the company said.

OIL POISED FOR FURTHER GAINS

Brent, WTI surge more than 40% so far this month

REUTERS

Singapore, March 15: Oil prices could extend gains at Monday's open as the US-Israeli war against Iran entered a third week, putting oil infrastructure at risk and keeping the Strait of Hormuz shut in the world's largest supply disruption.

US President Donald Trump threatened further strikes on Iran's Kharg Island oil export hub, drawing a defiant response of further retaliation from Tehran.

Brent and US West Texas Intermediate crude futures have already spiked sharply and rattled global financial markets. Both contracts have surged more than 40% so far this month to their highest levels since 2022 after the US-Israeli attacks on Iran prompted Tehran to halt shipping through the Strait of Hormuz - a key chokepoint for a fifth of global oil supply.

Besides UAE's Fujairah, Saudi Arabia's Ras Tanura export terminal and Abqaiq oil processing facilities have been listed as critical and highly vulnerable energy nodes in the Gulf, the analysts said.

However, oil loading operations at Fujairah have resumed, a Fujairah-based industry source told Reuters Sunday.

Fujairah, outside the Strait of Hormuz, is the outlet for about 1 million barrels per day of the UAE's flagship Murban crude oil - a volume equal to about 1% of world demand.

Global oil supply is expected to fall by 8 million bpd in March due to disruptions to shipping while Middle Eastern producers have cut output by at least 10 million bpd, according to the



International Energy Agency. Last week, the IEA agreed to release a record 400 million barrels of oil from strategic stock-

piles held by member nations to combat price spikes. Meanwhile, the Trump administration has rebuffed ef-

Global oil supply is expected to fall by 8 million bpd in March due to disruptions to shipping while Middle Eastern producers have cut output by at least 10 million bpd, according to the IEA

OMCs weigh refinery price freeze

NEW DELHI: State-owned oil marketing companies are considering paying refineries a price lower than the import rates of petrol and diesel to limit mounting losses from a retail fuel price freeze, a move that could hit standalone refiners like MRPL, CPCL and HMEL. International oil prices have risen from about \$70 per barrel before the West Asia conflict to over \$100, but retail petrol and diesel prices in India have remained unchanged, forcing oil marketing companies (OMCs) to absorb the impact. With no immediate end to the conflict in sight, OMCs are exploring ways to limit losses on fuel sales, two sources aware of the matter said. One option under consideration is either

freezing or fixing a discount on the refinery transfer price (RTP) - the internal price at which refineries sell fuel to marketing arms - to effectively pay refiners less than the import-parity cost of the fuels like petrol and diesel. The proposed move would prevent refiners from fully passing on higher crude costs through RTP, forcing them to absorb part of the impact if global oil prices remain elevated. While integrated state-run firms such as Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) can offset part of the hit between refining and marketing operations, standalone refiners that rely on market-linked RTP for revenue

could face a sharper margin squeeze, they said. Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd (MRPL), Chennai Petroleum Corporation Ltd (CPCL) and HPCL-Mittal Energy Ltd (HMEL) - which have negligible retail presence and sell most of the petrol and diesel produced to the three OMCs - would be the most hit by the move. The changes would also impact refiners like Nayara Energy and Reliance Industries Ltd if the freeze or discount on RTP is also implemented for private refiners, sources said. The two private refiners sell a bulk of their production of petrol and diesel to OMCs, who own and operate 90 per cent of the over 1 lakh petrol pumps in the country.

Mcap of top-10 firms tumbles by ₹4.48L-cr

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 15: The combined market valuation of the top-10 domestic firms eroded sharply by Rs 4.48 lakh crore last week, in tandem with a steep decline in equities, with banking majors State Bank of India and HDFC Bank taking the biggest hit.

Last week, the BSE benchmark Sensex tanked 4,354.98 points or 5.51 per cent, and the NSE Nifty dropped 1,299.35 points or 5.31 per cent as surging crude prices raised concerns over inflationary pressures and global economic stability amid the widening conflict in West Asia.

"The primary driver behind the market weakness was the sustained rise in crude oil prices following the escalating conflict between Iran, the United States and Israel. Brent crude surged past USD 101 per barrel, raising concerns over India's fiscal position and inflation outlook," Ajit Mishra, SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

The market valuation of State Bank of India tumbled Rs 89,306.22 crore to Rs 9,66,261.05 crore. HDFC Bank faced an erosion of Rs 61,715.32 crore to Rs 12,57,391.76 crore.

The valuation of Bajaj Finance dived Rs 59,082.49 crore to Rs 5,32,053.54 crore and that of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) tanked Rs 53,312.52 crore to Rs 8,72,067.63 crore.

The market capitalisation (mcap) of ICICI Bank dropped by Rs 42,205.04 crore to Rs 8,97,844.78 crore and that of Bharti Airtel plunged Rs 38,688.78 crore to Rs 10,28,431.72 crore.

Reliance Industries' valuation fell by Rs 33,289.88 crore to Rs 18,68,293.17 crore.

The mcap of LIC diminished by Rs 31,245.49 crore to Rs 4,88,985.57 crore and that of Infosys declined by Rs 24,230.96 crore to Rs 5,06,315.58 crore.

Hindustan Unilever's mcap dipped by Rs 15,401.57 crore to Rs 5,07,640.94 crore. Reliance Industries remained the most valued domestic firm, followed by HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India, ICICI Bank, TCS, Bajaj Finance, Hindustan Unilever, Infosys and LIC.

SBI organises Green Marathon Season-6



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 15: State Bank of India, Bhubaneswar Circle organised SBI Green Marathon Season-6 in collaboration with Radio Mirchi at SOA University Cricket ground to celebrate the passion for environmental sustainability and better living for our future generations Sunday. AD Ratna Teja, CGM, Bhubaneswar Circle, Vandana Aggarwal, GM-I, Bhubaneswar Circle, Kaushal Kishor Singh, GM-II, Bhubaneswar Circle and Sanden Dorji Lama, DGM & CDO, Bhubaneswar Circle flagged-off the run that witnessed close to 4,000 enthusi-

astic runners. Participants from across the city joined the event, pledging commitment to a greener future. Senior official of the bank also participated in the run along with other participants. All the runners were given organic T-shirts to promote clean and green city. AD Ratna Teja, CGM, Bhubaneswar Circle, Vandana Aggarwal, GM-I, Bhubaneswar Circle, Kaushal Kishor Singh, GM-II, Bhubaneswar Circle felicitated the winners in different categories and congratulated all participants for their contributions. AD Ratna Teja requested all participants to strive for physical and mental fitness goals in life.

Hindalco denies extrusions operations halt report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 15: Hindalco Industries Sunday said that it has not halted operations of its aluminium extrusions business and emphasised that the customer communication -- issued after force majeure claims by some gas suppliers -- was just a routine business intimation regarding potential supply disruption.

Amid evolving geopolitical developments affecting global trade and the economy, Hindalco Industries clarified that there is currently no impact on the company's overall operations or financial performance. "Any potential disruption is limited to a small portion of the Aluminium Extrusions business," it said in a statement.

The statement comes in the wake of a report which said the company has halted aluminium product sales amid the West Asia crisis.

"Hindalco has not halted operations of its aluminium extrusions business," the company statement added.

"The communication issued



to aluminium extrusions customers follows a force majeure declaration by certain gas suppliers and was a routine business intimation regarding a potential supply disruption in a segment of the extrusions business," the statement said. The aluminium extrusions segment constitutes a small portion of Hindalco's total production capacity, with the potential impact confined to under 0.1 per cent of the company's overall operations. All other downstream and upstream operations including primary aluminium, continue to operate normally, supported by captive power and alternate energy arrangements, the company said. Aluminium extrusions are widely used across industries for their lightweight, high-strength, and corrosion-resis-

tant properties. Major applications include architectural framing, transportation, automotive parts, heat sinks in electronics, and structural components for solar energy systems.

Hindalco manufactures a wide range of customised aluminium extrusions from 100 per cent premium quality billets which are made inhouse.

The company added that its core aluminium smelting operations continue to run normally, as these facilities are powered by coal-based captive power, ensuring operational stability. The situation is therefore confined to a limited downstream segment, and the overall effect on the company's production and performance remains minuscule.

Hindalco operates across the value chain, from bauxite mining, alumina refining, coal mining, captive power plants and aluminium smelting to downstream rolling, extrusions, and foils.

Along with its subsidiary Novelis, Hindalco is the global leader in flat rolled products and the world's largest recycler of aluminium.

Gen Z to drive \$1.3tn spending in India by 2030

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 15: By 2030, Gen Z will comprise 27 per cent of India's population and will command \$1.3 trillion in consumption, reshaping consumer markets with a focus on experiences, sustainability and digital convenience, according to a report by Redseer Strategy Consultants.

The report, titled "Gen Z: Defining Trends, Influencing Spends," analyses how this demographic, born between 1997 and 2012, is prioritising value-driven choices.

"Gen Z will occupy a greater share of the population, and command \$1.3 trillion in consumption by 2030. This generation shuns labels, valuing inclusivity, self-expression and authenticity. Through this phase of self-discovery, they prioritise



aesthetics and new experiences -- all of which reflect in their behaviour as consumers," the report noted.

Gen Z's emphasis on aesthetics is evident in their engagement with the beauty and personal care (BPC) sector. By 2030, this group is projected to account for nearly \$19 billion share of India's BPC market.

One in two Gen Z women allocates more than 20 per cent of their disposable income to BPC products. The average number of products used by this demographic has doubled, with separate routines for skin, hair, and body care.

Their product choices prioritise solutions over specific ingredients, leading to reduced brand loyalty as they experiment with products tailored that better suit their needs. Beauty trends among Gen Z have become genderless, with increasing numbers of young men adopting makeup and personal care regimes. Interest in men's skincare has surged, as searches for "men's skincare routine" rose 850 per cent over the past five years. Men's cosmetology and makeup is an emerging space, as more Gen Z men enhance their appearance through acne concealment, fillers, hair removal, and brow work. Furthermore, Gen Z will drive half of the fashion (apparel, footwear and accessories) industry by 2030. Fast fashion items priced below Rs 1,000 remain the preferred choice. Although Gen Z has become the biggest user group on ma-

major fashion e-commerce sites in India, their average spend per purchase is roughly half that of the older cohort (millennials).

Fitness is another item on Gen Z's priority list, with one-third of the cohort spending at least 20 per cent of their income on fitness and sports.

Athleisure sales have doubled year-on-year. Affordable sportswear on online marketplaces supports this trend, with six out of ten top-selling sports footwear brands priced between Rs 500 and 1,000.

Healthy eating trends fuel demand for alternative proteins, with 40 per cent of regularly exercising Gen Z preferring these sources. Protein supplement listings on quick commerce platforms grew 230 per cent between 2024 and 2025, reflecting strong demand in balanced nutrition.

For the second half of March, the outlook remains cautious. Outflows could moderate if geopolitical tensions ease or if Q4 earnings from banking and consumption sectors surprise positively. However, any further spike in oil prices or renewed global uncertainty could extend the selling pressure

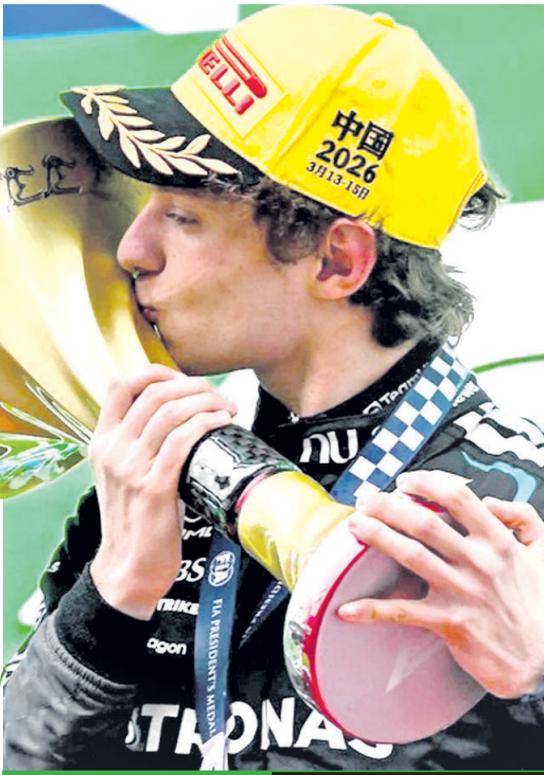
VAQARJAVED KHAN | SENIOR FUNDAMENTAL ANALYST, ANGEL ONE

gering a risk-off move. This was compounded by persistent rupee weakness near the Rs 92 level, elevated US bond yields and profit-booking after earlier inflows. On the positive side, heavy FPI selling in financial stocks has made valuations attractive for domestic investors.

BORN TO RACE

Antonelli era begins

The 19-year-old Italian driver became the second-youngest race winner in the sport's history after four-time world champion Max Verstappen, who took his first victory with Red Bull at 18 in 2016



Thank you everyone. Thank you so much. You made me achieve one of my dreams. I'm speechless. I'm about to cry to be honest
KIMI ANTONELLI

- Antonelli takes first F1 win with Mercedes one-two in China
- Hamilton secures first podium with Ferrari, Leclerc fourth
- McLaren's Norris and Piastri unable to start due to car issues

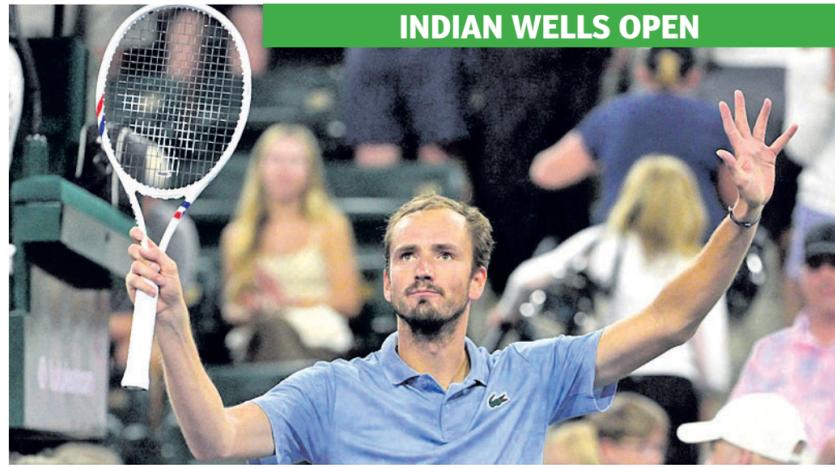
Shanghai, March 15: A tearful Kimi Antonelli celebrated a breakthrough first win of his Formula One career at the Chinese Grand Prix Sunday after leading championship-leading teammate George Russell in a Mercedes one-two in China from pole position. The 19-year-old Italian driver became the second-youngest race winner in the sport's history after four-times world champion Max Verstappen, who took his first victory with Red Bull at 18 in 2016. Lewis Hamilton finished a distant third, the seven-times world champion's first podium since he joined Ferrari last year and first since Las Vegas 2024, with teammate Charles Leclerc fourth after a lively battle between the two. McLaren's reigning world champion Lando Norris and teammate Oscar Piastri both failed to start due to prob-

lems with their cars. go, cutting his lead over Russell to 7.4 seconds and finishing 5.515 clear. It was Mercedes' second successive one-two in two grands prix after Russell led Antonelli

in the Australian opener last weekend. Russell, who won the Saturday sprint with Antonelli fifth, saw his championship lead cut to four points from 11, with the Briton on 51 to Antonelli's 47 with Leclerc third on 34 and Hamilton 33. "I gave myself a little bit of a heart attack towards the end with the flat spot (on his tyres)," said Antonelli, the first Italian winner since Giancarlo Fisichella for Renault in Malaysia in 2006. "It was a good race." Formula One chief executive Stefano Domenicali congratulated his compatriot, who was the youngest driver to start a full grand prix on pole, before the podium celebrations and the playing of the Italian national anthem. Oliver Bearman was fifth for Haas ahead of Alpine's Pierre Gasly and Racing Bulls' Liam Lawson. Isack Hadjar took eighth for Red Bull, after teammate Verstappen retired from the race, with Carlos Sainz ninth for Williams and Franco Colapinto finally back in the points for Alpine in 10th after failing to score last year. The race started with just 18 cars and both McLarens in the team garages. Norris's problem was detected well before the start but Australian Piastri, who has yet to complete a race lap this season after crashing on his way to the grid in Melbourne, was wheeled off. Antonelli ended the race with the fastest lap, the cherry on the cake after pole position and the victory.

Medvedev cancels Sincaraz final, sweeps Alcaraz 2-0

INDIAN WELLS OPEN



The Russian ends Alcaraz's 16-match winning streak to set up final against Sinner

Indian Wells, California, March 15: Carlos Alcaraz's bid for a third straight Indian Wells title was brought to a halt on Saturday by Daniil Medvedev, who swept past the world number one 6-3 7-6(3) to set up a final against Jannik Sinner after the Italian brushed aside Alexander Zverev 6-2 6-4. Medvedev, who ended Alcaraz's 16-match winning streak to start the season, won six points in a row in the tiebreak before serving an ace to close out the match. The Russian played smartly to break Alcaraz early and take a 3-1 lead, never relinquishing his advantage to

claim the opening set. The second set was a far more dramatic affair as Alcaraz stepped up a gear to break Medvedev and surge to a 3-1 lead, only for the 30-year-old Russian to dig deep and level at 3-3, taking advantage of the Spaniard's unforced errors. The pair traded blows to reach the tiebreak, where a ruthless Medvedev sealed his place in the final. "Playing someone like Carlos, you play many times, you lose many times," he said. "He's an amazing player with amazing shots, defence, attack, return, everything. So, you need to be at your best." Earlier in the day, Sinner dismissed fourth seeded Zverev to reach his first Indian Wells final, the world number two firing eight aces and committing just 13 unforced errors, eight fewer than his opponent, while winning seven of his eight net points. Zverev showed early prom-

ise, grabbing a foothold in the opening set, but Sinner broke twice to close it out before breaking again at 4-3 in the second to seal the match. The 24-year-old has not dropped a set throughout the tournament, a run of dominance that underlines his growing supremacy on hard courts. "It's a great achievement. The first time here in the final, it means a lot to me," Sinner said. "The third time that I've played the semis here... It was a great performance from my side. Sascha didn't play very well today. I broke him a couple of times in the first set, which gave me confidence to continue, and I served very well at important moments." Sinner is now seeking to complete the set of all six hard-court Masters 1000 titles having already won the events in Toronto in 2023, Miami, Cincinnati and Shanghai in 2024 and Paris last year.

SHORT TAKES

La Liga: Guler scores half-pitch screamer

Madrid: Real Madrid's Arda Guler scored one of the best goals of the Spanish league season Saturday after he struck a long shot from well inside his team's own half to polish off a 4-1 win over Elche. The 21-year-old Turkey midfielder spotted Elche goalkeeper Matias Dituero off his line and didn't hesitate to launch a long lob with his left foot that sailed over the hapless keeper and bounced once before settling into the net. The Santiago Bernabeu stadium erupted in applause for the memorable goal that came with the victory beyond doubt in the 89th minute. "I saw everyone put their hands on their heads. It is incredible to score a goal from 70 meters (yards) out," Madrid coach Alvaro Arbeloa said. "That goal was worth the ticket to see the game." Guler joined Madrid from Fenerbache in 2023. He has scored four goals this season, when he has gained more playing time after the exit of veteran Luka Modric.

More Iranian players drop Aus refugee plan

Melbourne: Another three members of the Iran's women's soccer team who accepted refugee visas to stay in Australia have decided to return to their homeland, an Australian government minister said Sunday. The departure leaves three of an initial seven squad members in Australia. "Overnight, three members of the Iranian Women's Football Team made the decision to join the rest of the team on their journey back to Iran," Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke said in a statement. "After telling Australian officials they had made this decision, the players were given repeated chances to talk about their options," Burke added. Iran's team arrived in Australia for the Women's Asian Cup last month, before the war in the Middle East began February 28.

Former Pak captain Sarfaraz retires

Karachi: Wicketkeeper-batter Sarfaraz Ahmed, the only Pakistani captain to win two major ICC tournament finals against traditional rivals India, Sunday announced his retirement from all forms of cricket. Sarfaraz, who last played for the national team in a Test match against Australia at Perth in December 2023, revealed his decision through a statement issued by the PCB.

Youth National Volleyball C'ship inaugurated at KIIT



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 15: The 26th Youth National Volleyball Championship 2025-26 (Men & Women) was inaugurated today at the Biju Patnaik Multipurpose Indoor Stadium, KIIT Deemed to be University, marking a historic moment for Indian volleyball. The prestigious championship is being jointly organised by the Odisha Volleyball Association (OVA) and KIIT Deemed to be University under the aegis of the Volleyball Federation of India (VFI). The tournament will be held from March 15 to 20 2026. The inaugural ceremony was graced by Achyuta Samanta, Chief Patron of the Volleyball Federation of India, Founder of KIIT, KISS and KIMS, and President of the Odisha Volleyball

Association, who formally declared the championship open. Among the distinguished guests present on the occasion were Virender Kanwar, President of the Volleyball Federation of India; Ramanand Choudhary, Secretary General of the Volleyball Federation of India; Gaganendu Dash, General Secretary of the Odisha Volleyball Association and Director General, Sports & Yoga, KIIT & KISS; and Jnyana Ranjan Mohanty, Registrar of KIIT University. Several dignitaries from various State Volleyball Associations and many volleyball legends also attended the ceremony. On this occasion, Achyuta Samanta felicitated Virender Kanwar and Ramanand Choudhary for their outstanding contributions to the development of volleyball in India.

Gill, Mandhana bag top BCCI awards

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Mar 15: Prolific batters Shubman Gill and Smriti Mandhana were named the Best International Cricketers (Men's and Women's) at the BCCI Naman Awards 2026 here Sunday, recognising their outstanding performances in the 2024-2025 season. Gill won the prestigious Polly Umrigar Award, while Mandhana received the award for the fifth time. For Gill, it was his second Cricketer of the Year award after first winning it in 2023. Former stars Roger Binny, Rahul Dravid and Mithali Raj were honoured with the Col CK Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Award, the BCCI's highest honour, recognising their outstanding service to Indian cricket. Gill enjoyed a stellar 2025 and established himself as one of the team's most dependable batters in the longer formats. On the tour of England, skipper Gill led from the front in the five-Test series, finishing as the top run-getter with 754 runs in 10 innings at an average of



75.40, including four centuries and a top score of 269. Gill also played a pivotal role in India's Champions Trophy triumph last year, having entered the tournament as the No 1-ranked ODI batter in the world. He made an unbeaten 101 against Bangladesh in India's opening match, and finished the tournament with 188 runs. Mandhana finished 2025 with 1,703 international runs, including 1,362 in ODIs, the most by any woman in a calendar year. In doing so,

- POLLY UMRIGAR AWARD (MEN'S INTERNATIONAL CRICKETER OF THE YEAR):** SHUBMAN GILL
- WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL CRICKETER OF THE YEAR:** SMRITI MANDHANA (WINS THE AWARD FOR THE FIFTH TIME)
- COL CK NAYUDU LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD:** ROGER BINNY, RAHUL DRAVID AND MITHALI RAJ

Mandhana became the first batter in women's ODI history to score 1,000 runs in a single

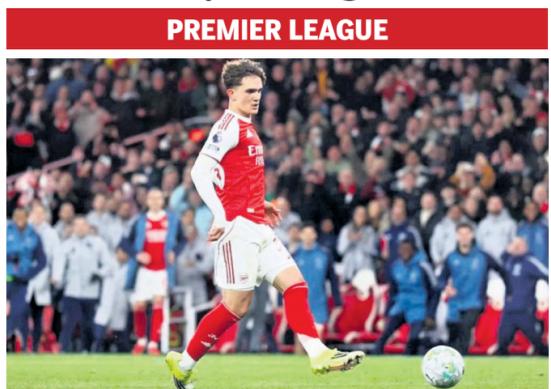
calendar year. Mandhana also made handsome contributions to India's maiden Women's World Cup title triumph, aggregating 434 runs in nine matches to end as the tournament as India's leading run-scorer and the second-highest overall. Before the World Cup the left-hander Mandhana smashed a 50-ball century against Australia in New Delhi to register the fastest ODI hundred by an Indian batter, surpassing Virat Kohli's 52-ball effort.

Max, 16, becomes youngest scorer in style

The English football prodigy seized possession in his own half, danced past two Everton players, and sprinted clear to score with Pickford stranded after a desperate corner charge

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, March 15: Max Dowman, a 16-year-old Arsenal winger, became the Premier League's youngest ever scorer with a remarkable stoppage-time goal in his team's 2-0 win over Everton. Dowman collected the ball midway in his own half, dribbled around two Everton players and raced clear unchallenged from the halfway line to tap into an empty net, with Everton goalkeeper Jordan Pickford stranded upfield having gone forward for a corner. An English football prodigy, Dowman - at 16 years, 73 days - was playing just his third Premier League match after two



previous substitute appearances at the start of the season. "He doesn't seem to be fazed by the occasion or the moment or the context or the opponent, he just plays so naturally," Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta said. "He makes decisions to make things happen, and what he delivered was incredible." Asked what he said to Dowman after deciding to bring

him on, Arteta replied: "Go and do your thing and win us the game." Dowman broke the record of former Everton player James Vaughan, who was 16 years, 270 days when he scored against Crystal Palace in 2005. In November, Dowman became the youngest player in Champions League history at 15 years, 308 days when he entered as a second-half substitute

PREMIER LEAGUE

- LIST OF PREMIER LEAGUE'S YOUNGEST SCORERS**
- Max Dowman: 16 years, 73 days (for Arsenal against Everton on 2026)
 - James Vaughan: 16 years, 270 days (for Everton against Crystal Palace in 2005)
 - James Milner: 16 years, 356 days (for Leeds against Sunderland in 2002)
 - Wayne Rooney: 16 years, 360 days (for Everton against Arsenal in 2002)
 - Rio Ngunzoh: 16 years, 361 days (for Liverpool against Newcastle in 2025) (AP) APA

against Slavia Prague. Dowman is still in school. He was 14 when he was asked by Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta to train with the senior team in December last year and he starred on the club's preseason tour of Asia in matches against AC Milan and Newcastle. To abide by Premier League regulations for players under 18, Dowman has to change into his Arsenal kit for training sessions and matches in a separate locker room than his senior teammates.

MIDDLE EAST CRISIS

F1 calls off races in Bahrain, Saudi

London: Formula One's Bahrain and Saudi Arabian Grands Prix will not take place in April due to the conflict in the Middle East, the sport announced Saturday. The announcement had been widely expected and the statement by the Liberty media-owned sport and governing FIA, as well as local promoters, said the races will not be replaced on the calendar next month. Sources have said they are also unlikely to be rescheduled for later in the year due to logistics and weather, although the statement did not explicitly rule that out, with the calendar set to be reduced from 24 to 22 races. "While this was a difficult decision to take, it is unfortunately the right one at this stage considering the current situation in the Middle East," said Formula One Chief Executive Stefano Domenicali. Bahrain's desert Sakhr circuit had been due to host the fourth round of the season April 12 with Saudi Arabia's Jeddah Corniche track following the weekend after. Formula One is currently racing in Shanghai, China, with Japan next on the calendar March 29. Miami will now be the next round after that May 3, a five-week gap.

MotoGP postpones Qatar Grand Prix

Washington: The Qatar Grand Prix scheduled for next month has been postponed to November due to the conflict in the Middle East, MotoGP announced Sunday. The Lusail International Circuit was set to host the fourth round of the 2026 championship from April 10-12 but it has now been rescheduled for November 8, organisers said in a statement. "MotoGP confirms that the Qatar Grand Prix, originally scheduled for April, has been postponed to November 8 due to the ongoing geopolitical situation in the Middle East," the statement said. "Following extensive scenario planning and calendar analysis, the revised date has been chosen to ensure minimal disruption to the wider MotoGP schedule." The Portuguese Grand Prix will now take place November 22 and the season finale in Valencia will move to November 29, organisers added. Aprilia's Marco Bezzecchi leads the championship after the first round in Thailand. The next two races will be held in Brazil (March 20-22) and the United States (March 27-29).

