

Kangana's claim

Actor Kangana Ranaut alleges that superstars bully filmmakers in the Indian film industry

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Trump in trouble

US President Donald Trump ends the third week of the Iran war confronting a crisis that seems to be slipping out of his hands

INTERNATIONAL | P10

Twitter takeover fraud

US jury finds Elon Musk liable for defrauding Twitter shareholders during the 2022 takeover attempt

BUSINESS | P11

A swim into history

Olympic and world champion Cameron McEvoy breaks the men's 50m freestyle world record, ending a 17-year-old mark

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Noted Odissi dancer Madhumita Raut dies of cardiac arrest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 21: Renowned Odissi dancer Madhumita Raut died of a cardiac arrest here Saturday. She was 59. "She was ailing for some time and was admitted to a private hospital in Delhi, where she had a massive cardiac arrest at 6:22 am this morning," her brother Manoj Raut told PTI.

Raut is survived by two younger brothers, Manoj and Manmath.

The daughter of Odissi guru Mayadhar Raut, Madhumita had received many national and international awards and recognition for her promotion of Odissi dance, including Bharat Nirman Award 1997, Orissa State Ghungur Samman 2010, and Odisha Living Legend Award 2011.

She participated in major dance festivals in India, Ireland, the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, Hungary, Austria, Spain, Morocco, France, Portugal, Japan and the US.

Her works included compositions on poetry, choreographic compositions on poems of Goethe, and fusion dances with Balinese dancer Dia Tantri in the Netherlands.



COMEBACK CONCERT



After a four-year hiatus, K-pop sensation BTS performs during 'BTS The Comeback Live Arirang' concert in central Seoul, Saturday. The spectacle drew tens of thousands of fans. REUTERS

CM: Odisha added 558 sq km forest cover in 2 years

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 21: Asserting that Odisha has emerged as a leading state in forest protection and expansion of green cover, CM Mohan Charan Majhi Saturday said 558 square kilometres of forest and tree cover have been added in the last two years.

Majhi made the remarks while addressing the state-level celebrations of World Forest Day 2026 here. "In the last two years alone, the forest and tree cover in the state has increased by 558 square kilometres. Now, 37.63 per cent, or 58,597 square kilometres, of the total geographical area of the state is under forest and tree cover," he said.

He noted that 1.49 crore saplings were planted in one day under the 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' (EPMN) campaign launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. A total of 8 crore saplings were planted under the EPMN campaign in one year, he said. Highlighting the need to balance development and conservation, Majhi said advancements in science and technology have made it possible to pursue industrialisation with minimal environmental impact.

"If we maintain a proper balance between environment and industry, both can complement each other," he said. Referring to this year's theme, 'Forests and Economy', he said forests are crucial not only for environmental sustainability but also for economic development.

Iran's main nuclear site hit

Tehran fires missiles at UK-US base in Indian Ocean

An airstrike hit Iran's main nuclear enrichment facility at Natanz, though authorities reported no radiation leakage. The escalation comes as Iran targeted the Diego Garcia air base, highlighting its long-range missile capability. While fresh strikes across Tehran and regional drone attacks signal a widening conflict, Iran insists it seeks a lasting end to the war, not merely a ceasefire

AGENCIES



Satellite image of Iran's Natanz nuclear facility

Saturday that Iran's "lashing out across the region and holding hostage the Strait of Hormuz" is a threat to British interests and British allies. Britain has not participated in US-Israeli attacks on Iran, but has allowed American bombers to use UK bases to attack Iran's missile sites.

Iran's official news agency, Mizan, said there was no leakage after Saturday's strike on the Natanz nuclear facility, nearly 220 kilometres (135 miles) southeast of Tehran. The facility, Iran's main uranium enrichment site, was hit in the first week of the war, and several buildings appeared damaged, according to satellite images. The U.N. nuclear watchdog - the International Atomic Energy Agency - had said "no radiological consequence" was expected from that earlier strike. Natanz had also been targeted in the 12-day war last June.

On Saturday, the IAEA said on X that it was informed by Iran about the Natanz strike and about there being no increase in off-site radiation levels.

had previously acknowledged. Overnight and into the morning, Tehran, Iran's capital, saw heavy airstrikes, residents said. In Iraq, a drone struck the intelligence service headquarters in Baghdad, killing an officer. No group immediately claimed responsibility for that attack.

Saudi Arabia said it downed 20 drones in just a couple of hours in the country's eastern region, home to major oil installations. No injuries or damage

were reported. The attacks - and threats of more to come - indicate the Iran war shows no sign of abating. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told Japan's Kyodo news service on Friday that Iran wanted "not a cease-fire, but a complete, comprehensive and lasting end to the war."

UK officials have not given details of the attempted strike on the ocean air base Friday, which was unsuccessful. Britain's Ministry of Defence said

BJD suspends 6 MLAs for cross-voting in RS election

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 21: The BJD Saturday suspended six of its MLAs for cross-voting during the recent election to four Rajya Sabha seats from Odisha.

The suspended legislators are Chakramani Kanhar (Baliguda), Naba Kishor Mallick (Jayadev), Souvic Biswal (Choudwar-Cuttack), Subasini Jena (Basta), Ramakanta Bhoi (Tirtol) and Devi Ranjan Tripathy (Banki). The decision was taken at the party's political affairs committee (PAC) meeting presided over by BJD chief Naveen Patnaik.

BJD's disciplinary committee, at its meeting Friday, had recommended action against the six MLAs for violating party orders and indulging in anti-party activities.

"The six MLAs are hereby suspended from the party with immediate effect for their involvement in anti-party activities, including cross-voting, in the recent election to Ra-



Naba Kishor Mallick



Devi Ranjan Tripathy



Chakramani Kanhar



Souvic Biswal



Ramakanta Bhoi



Subasini Jena

jya Sabha, violating the core principle of BJD constitution, which mandates absolute loyalty to the party's collective decisions," the party's office order said.

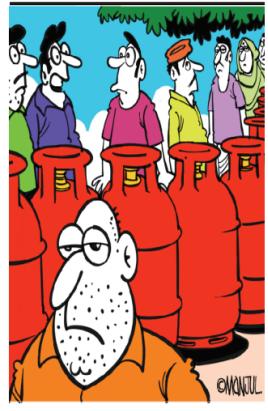
Opposition chief whip Pramila Mallick said the party would write to the Assembly Speaker seeking disqualification of the six suspended MLAs.

"If required, the party will also take the matter to court," Mallick said.

On March 17, the six MLAs were issued show-cause notices, and they submitted their replies to the party Friday.

In their replies, the MLAs separately asked the chief whip to withdraw the notices and also threatened to sue her.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



The govt is doing great...just watch TV news and films for proof

King Harold's 200-mile march to Battle of Hastings a 'myth'

King Harold's legendary 200-mile march across England to the Battle of Hastings in 1066 is a 'myth' that likely never happened, according to research published Saturday.

In arguably the most famous battle in English history, the Anglo-Saxon leader was defeated by William the Conqueror, who became the first Franco-Norman king of England, at Hastings on October 14, 1066.

The decisive clash, which marked the start of the Norman conquest of England, is depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry, set to be brought to London from France this year.

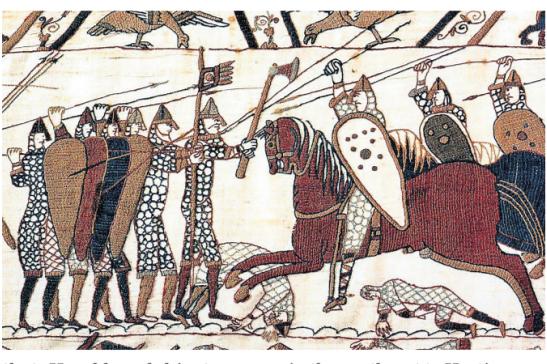
Ahead of the tapestry's ex-

hibition, starting in September 2026, new research from the University of East Anglia (UEA) revealed that the tale of Harold's famed march to the fight was a "misunderstanding."

The account of the march, as taught in British classrooms and museums, rests on what a UEA historian argues is a misinterpretation of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, a written record of medieval English history.

The Chronicle recounts that Harold's ships "came home." For at least 150 years, historians understood that to mean the king dismissed his fleet in September 1066.

That shaped the narrative



that Harold and his troops were forced to march over 200 miles (320 kilometres) from Stamford Bridge in Yorkshire

in the northeast to Hastings on the south coast to ward off the Norman invasion.

But Tom Licence, a profes-

sor of medieval history and literature at UEA, found the ships returned to their home base in London and remained operational, which suggests that they were likely used by Harold during his journey and to defend against the invasion.

"I checked the evidence for him having sent the fleet home and found that it was just a misunderstanding. I went looking in the sources for evidence of a forced march and found there wasn't any," said Licence, who will present the findings at the University of Oxford Tuesday.

According to Licence, the story of Harold and his men traversing the vast distance in 10 days is "implausible."

The historian also pointed to other early accounts which describe Harold sending hundreds of ships to Hastings after William's landing, suggesting he still had a fleet at his disposal.

"Harold's campaign was not a desperate dash across England, it was a sophisticated land-sea operation. The idea of a heroic march is a Victorian invention that has shaped our understanding, or misunderstanding, of 1066 for far too long."

The 68-metre-long (224-foot-long) Bayeux Tapestry, on loan from France, will be on display at the British Museum for 10 months.

leisure



CILLIAN MURPHY'S LOVE FOR SLEEP

Hollywood star Cillian Murphy is quite particular about his bedtime. The actor has shared that he likes to think about bedtime at 5.30pm because he loves an early night. The *Oppenheimer* star admitted he starts fantasising about turning in at least four hours before he's due to retire, reports *Female First UK*.

APPLEGATE FREQUENTLY THINKS ABOUT DEATH

American actress Christina Applegate has revealed that she has purchased a final resting place for herself because she regularly thinks about death after being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS) five years ago. The *Married... with Children* star explained that her health is a major factor why she frequently contemplates her mortality.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Some decisions are hard to take, but a firm resolve will help you stay committed. Sentimentality may shake your purpose, but once decided, you must stick to it. Also, learn to take heartbreak in your stride, says Ganesha.

TAURUS
This day you will be compelled to be resigned to your fate. Ganesha does not see your own will power in operation today. Though you would be surrendering yourself to the whims of destiny, do not expect anything good to come out of it. You are likely to take wrong decisions and go of course. This is one of those days when you are liable to feel extremely lost and lonely.

GEMINI
You will try very hard to strike a balance between logic and emotions. Though you may succeed in doing so in front of the world, you may not be so discreet with your friends. You will have an excellent time with your sweetheart, but your physical appearance will be a cause of concern to you, says Ganesha.

CANCER
A string of domestic responsibilities awaits you; today, you are about to realise that it is a long, long string. Chances are that this sudden rise in work pressure may also lead to blood pressure problems. Ganesha advises you to stop presuming how people may react to everything; also, avoid being too proud to avoid excess heartache.

LEO
Nothing will overshadow your love for your kids today, and they will be the number one priority for you. It seems like a good day to take time out and monitor their progress in school; so, do not skip that PTA meeting. Remember, there are various ways to teach children, so consider taking them out on a small picnic or a field trip to help educate them better.

VIRGO
You will begin your journey on the long, hard road to success, predicts Ganesha. Hard work will be the key to any progress that you make. Avoid short cuts, and all the toil and trouble will pay off with rich returns as recognition and rewards will come your way.

LIBRA
Today promises a definite sense of pride and joy from children who bring home glory, says Ganesha. Fiscal gains are also on the cards, and you may consider it worthwhile to put your money into lucrative businesses.

SCORPIO
It is more than likely that you will be in high spirits today, says Ganesha. All your energy and exuberance may not yield expected results. That is no reason to lose heart though. Keep up the effort from your end and you will eventually taste success in the days to come.

SAGITTARIUS
You will find yourself rubbing shoulders with Lady Luck today. Sharpen your multi-tasking skills as you will keep busy and have only occasional moments of respite. Good will and green print, you might find them both with ease and in abundance, predicts Ganesha.

CAPRICORN
You have sacrificed a lot on enjoyment with friends and family, done some back-breaking work and kept your focus to reach where you are right now. Ganesha gives you a pat on your back for all the hard work you've put in. Now, it is time to watch the tree bear fruits. With some additional responsibilities, promotion in terms of salary or position is on the cards for you.

AQUARIUS
You blessed with a very high level of patience and practicality, and you can easily untangle any problem. But, it gives an excuse to the people around you to wash their hands of any responsibility. It may put you in a tight spot at times leaving you frustrated.

PISCES
You could swing both ways today! Fortunately, this alludes to nothing more sinister than the mix of the introvert and the extrovert that you are. So, between a quiet evening out by yourself at a classical music concert, or performing on the dance floor at the local disc – take your pick, says Ganesha.

Nayanthara richest South Indian actress

Chennai: Several south Indian actresses deserve the term 'Bankable star' but Nayanthara leads the pack.

She stands at the top of the list in 2026. The Jawan actress is widely regarded as the richest South Indian actress. Sources such as Siasat, Zee News say that Nayanthara's estimated net worth exceeds Rs 200 crore, with some reports placing it comfortably above that mark as of March 2026.

Apart from acting, she runs a production house and has made smart investments. Her luxury assets include high-end properties in Chennai, Mumbai, and Hyderabad. Reports also suggest she owns a private jet valued at around Rs 50 crore.

Next on the list is Anushka Shetty. She remains one of the top earners, with a net worth of over Rs 135 crore as reported by Siasat website.

Samantha Ruth Prabhu is also not behind. She has built a strong portfolio across cinema and OTT. Reports say that her net worth is estimated between Rs 110 crore and Rs 120 crore. Meanwhile, Tamannaah Bhatia also holds a net worth in the Rs 110-Rs 120 crore range reportedly.

Trisha Krishnan continues to enjoy a strong career, with a net worth estimated between Rs 85 crore and Rs 100 crore as per Siasat website report.

AGENCIES

Deepika sparks SocMed debate

Mumbai: Bollywood superstar Deepika Padukone has sparked a massive social media debate after she was seen absent from the recent special screening of her husband Ranveer Singh's film *Dhurandhar 2: The Revenge*.

The actress, however, the very next day was spotted attending a concert in Mumbai with her in-laws, further raising eyebrows.

Several users on social media have now questioned her absence from the film's screening, with multiple posts criticising the actress and drawing comparisons with her recent public outing. One user wrote, "Deepika with her in-laws today at a private event in Mumbai. But did you guys see Deepika watching *Dhurandhar*:"

The *Revenge*? NO!! Why can't she support her husband's film? I'm not against Deepika, but something is very fishy."

Deepika Padukone has also been facing online backlash for not sharing any social media post in support of Ranveer Singh or his movie *Dhurandhar-2: The Revenge*.

Pointing this out, one of the social media users wrote "Deepika Padukone wrote long paragraphs on Instagram about *Gaza* and *JNU*, but didn't post even a single story to congratulate her husband Ranveer Singh and the *Dhurandhar 2* cast on their success. Speaks volumes!!"

Another comment read, "She is against Aditya Dhar because

he commented on her shift hour issue, plus she's not nationalist like us. She stood with

the *JNU* tukde tukde gang, and there are rumours that she met Dawood in Dubai before 2019."

Meanwhile, the actress has chosen not to react to the ongoing online discussions so far.

Kangana's accusation

Mumbai: Actress and politician Kangana Ranaut is often seen sharing her candid opinion on subjects others refrain from talking about. In her latest Instagram post, the *Queen* actress alleged that superstars bully filmmakers in the Indian film industry.

Kangana said that while in Hollywood, filmmakers usually have a bigger or at least equal name than that of the prominent actors, which is not the case in Bollywood.

The *Emergency* actress pointed out that the Indian filmmakers do not get enough credit for their work and are often overworked and underpaid.

She took to the Stories section of her official Instagram handle and wrote an appreciation note for director Aditya Dhar on the overwhelming success of his recent release *Dhurandhar 2*.

Kangana penned on the photo-sharing app, "The best thing about *Dhurandhar* success is that Aditya Dhar is a superstar director which has been established. Hollywood superstar directors are always bigger than superstar actors. Eg: Spielberg, Tarantino, Nolan. We never give our filmmakers enough respect or credit. They are over worked, underpaid and bullied by superstars as a result of that I never meet any young person insider/ outsider who dreams of becoming a filmmaker or director of photography or any other technician. (sic)"

"Everyone claims to be talented, but they only want to be actors. Here is a superstar filmmaker shining brighter than any hero. Today, so many youngsters are watching his story who will aspire to be like him and take the film industry to greater heights!!

Salutations, sir @adityadharfilms," added Kangana.

Aditya Dhar on the overwhelming success of his recent release *Dhurandhar 2*.

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I'm open to love: Divya

Mumbai: Divya Dutta has recently gone viral for her candid views on marriage and singlehood.

In a world where societal expectations often dictate personal choices, her honest perspective stands out. Speaking about her journey, she emphasised that fulfillment is deeply personal and cannot be defined by relationship status alone.

Reflecting on her past, Divya shared that she has been in relationships before but eventually realised they weren't aligned with what she truly wanted. "Maybe we were better off as friends... our thinking was different," she said, highlighting how self-awareness shaped her outlook.

She admits she's both surprised and amused by people's reactions to her being single. "It's almost amusing how people react. I've had people ask me, 'What is a woman like you doing without someone in your life?' or even bluntly, 'Why are you not married?' But I'm very clear about what matters to me," she added.

For Divya, being with the right person is what truly counts — not being in a relationship just for the sake of it. "I am open to a relationship if it genuinely feels right over time. But if it doesn't, I am completely at ease with myself. Self-contentment, peace of mind, happiness, and self-nurturing are far more important than societal validation," she said.

AGENCIES

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

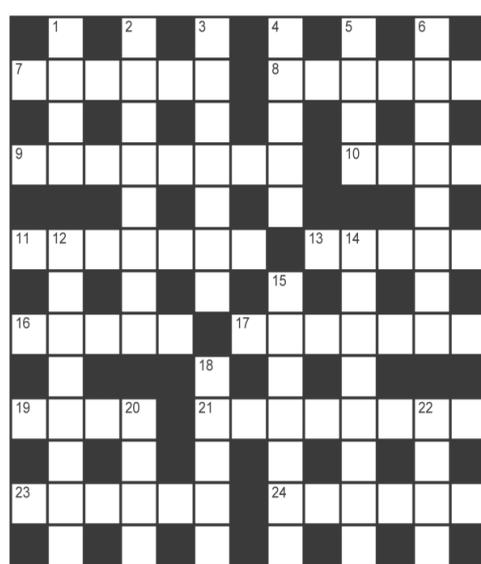


BREVITY



FUN POST

CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Sheen hobby
 - 8 Number one Hun
 - 9 Snake killer
 - 10 Begrudge
 - 11 Gopher's chores
 - 13 Inside info
 - 16 Enticed
 - 17 Flimsy
 - 19 Sweetheart
 - 21 Expensive hobby
 - 23 Poem part
 - 24 Bistro
 - 5 Eyelid problem
 - 6 Salad ingredient (5,3)
 - 12 Casino game
 - 14 Ponder
 - 15 Leaping insect
 - 18 Rock rabbit
 - 20 Coffee dispensers
 - 22 Roman Emperor

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



WORLD WATER DAY TODAY: A view of the dry riverbed along the Ganga river, in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, Saturday

MAYURBHANJ SHOCKER

15-yr-old girl's body found stuffed in sack

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada/Karanja, March 21: In a shocking incident, the body of a 15-year-old girl, who had been missing since Friday evening, was found stuffed in a sack near a bamboo thicket under Karanja police limits in Mayurbhanj district, Saturday.

According to sources, the girl, a Class VIII student of Banasahi area, had gone missing Friday evening. Family members and locals searched for her at every possible place but failed to locate her till late in the night. Later, her father approached the police and named an official posted in the office of the Block Education Officer as a suspect in the FIR.

Locals discovered the body stuffed in a yellow sack near a bamboo thicket close to a timber depot in the area in the morning and informed the family members. The family rushed to the spot, identified the body, and informed officials of the Karanja police station.

Panchapadma Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO) Nabakrushna Nayak, Karanja Inspector-in-Charge (IIC) Mrutyunjaya Pradhan, and other police personnel reached the spot and sent the body to Karanja Sub-Divisional Hospital for post-mortem examination.

"The exact cause of the death



The Class VIII student had gone missing Friday evening

Family members and locals searched for her at every possible place but failed to locate her till late in the night

Her father approached the police and named an official posted in the BEO office as a suspect in the FIR

will be ascertained once the autopsy report is available," the Karanja IIC said. Meanwhile, police have registered a case and detained a person for interrogation. "Further investigation is under way," they said.

The recovery of the girl's body has sent shockwaves across the area, with locals demanding the immediate arrest of those responsible and compensation from the government for the grieving family.

Indian-origin US judge found guilty of money laundering

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Houston, March 21: An Indian-origin county judge identified as KP George, has been convicted of money laundering following a jury verdict in a high-profile campaign finance case in the US state of Texas and faces removal from office after official sentencing scheduled June 16.

George's conviction, a third-degree felony under Texas law, carries a possible sentence of two to 10 years in prison and a fine of up to USD 10,000.

George, who serves as county judge of Fort Bend County - one of the most diverse counties in the country with a significant Indian-American population - was found guilty of misusing campaign funds for personal expenses.

According to prosecutors, George transferred over USD 46,000 from his campaign account into personal accounts and used the money for private purposes, including a home-related payment.

The defence argued that the funds were reimbursements for personal loans he had extended to his campaign.

Navy set to commission stealth frigate 'Taragiri' April 3

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 21: Indigenous stealth frigate 'Taragiri', endowed with the cutting-edge weapon suite including supersonic missiles, is set to be commissioned into the Indian Navy April 3, officials said Saturday.

The ceremony in Visakhapatnam is scheduled to be presided over by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, and it will serve as a powerful testament to the nation's journey towards becoming a completely self-reliant naval power, they said.

"As the fourth potent platform of the Project 17A class, 'Taragiri' is not merely a ship; it is a 6,670-tonne embodiment of the 'Make in India' spirit and the sophisticated engineering capabilities of our indigenous shipyards," a Navy spokesperson said.

The fourth ship of Nilgiri-class (Project 17A) and the third one built by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilding Ltd (MDL), 'Taragiri' (Yard 12653), was delivered to the Navy November 28 last year at MDL, Mumbai, marking a major milestone in achieving self-reliance in warship design and construction.

Close shave for MLA, 36 others as bus catches fire

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Malkangiri, March 21: As many as 37 passengers, including Congress MLA Mangu Khilla, narrowly escaped when the bus in which they were travelling from Bhubaneswar to Nabarangpur caught fire after its rear tyre burst early Saturday, police said.

The incident took place near Ramabhadrapuram in Andhra Pradesh. All the passengers and crew members were safely evacuated before the bus was completely gutted, Khilla told reporters.

Police said all the passengers, including the MLA, were safely evacuated without any injuries. The prompt response of the driver and the alertness of passengers helped avert a major tragedy, the police said, adding that fire services personnel and local authorities reached the spot and brought the fire under control, although the vehicle could not be saved.

The MLA from Chitrakonda Assembly segment in Malkangiri district said, "The bus caught fire when all the passengers, including me, were in deep sleep. The driver's presence of mind saved all. He stopped the bus, opened all the windows and awakened all the passengers."

"A major tragedy was averted. I had boarded the bus at Rasulgarh bus stand in Bhubaneswar," he said.

Police have launched an investigation to ascertain the cause of the fire.

Himalayan glacier ice loss doubled since 2000

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kathmandu, March 21: Glaciers across the Hindu Kush Himalaya are melting at an accelerating rate with ice loss rates doubling since 2000 even as they lost 12 per cent of their area between 1990 and 2020, two reports by ICIMOD said Saturday.



Coinciding with the World Day for Glaciers, observed annually March 21, the reports were published by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), a regional inter-governmental body headquartered in Kathmandu, providing the most comprehensive evidence of glacier change in the region.

The reports - Changing Dynamics of Glaciers in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) Region from 1990 to 2020 and HKH Glacier Outlook 2026: Insights from 50 years of Himalayan Glacier Monitoring - reveal a total loss of up to 27 metres of ice thickness since 1975, ICIMOD said.

The reports call for a massive scale-up in glacier monitoring, better standardisation of methodologies, and robust investment in climate-resilient adaptation planning to mitigate the impacts of a rapidly changing cryosphere. The Himalayan mountain range holds the largest volume of ice outside the poles, the report said, adding that these are also the source of at least 10 major Asian river systems, supporting the food, water, energy, and livelihood security of billions of people.

Around 78 per cent of this glacier area, located between 4,500 and 6,000 metres above sea level, is highly exposed to elevation-dependent warming, according to the report.

Pema Gyamtsho, Director General of ICIMOD, termed this a crisis unfolding in real time.

"The fact that ice loss rates have doubled this century should shock us all into action," he said, adding that the HKH is at a crossroads.

"The rapidly escalating impacts we're seeing from water uncertainty to catastrophic floods underscore that we are in a critical decade for the cryosphere. We must scale up monitoring and invest in adaptation now. They are our new reality," he said.

The comprehensive analysis reveals that between 1990 and 2020, HKH glaciers lost about 12 per cent of their total area and 9 per cent of their estimated ice reserves, the report highlighted. "But the losses are most acute for the region's smallest glaciers - those below 0.5 sq km - which are shrinking more rapidly than others," said Sudan Maharjan, Remote

Sensing Analyst at ICIMOD and lead author of the glacier dynamics report "This poses immediate risks of localised water shortages for high mountain communities and intensifies hazards like glacial lake outburst floods," he said. "The danger is magnified because three quarters of the region's glaciers fall into this vulnerable size class."

"We are not just losing ice; we are facing a rapid escalation of risks," the report pointed out.

"The HKH Glacier Outlook 2026 synthesises data from 38 monitored glaciers, revealing that widespread wastage has doubled post-2000, signalling that parts of the Himalayan cryosphere may be nearing critical tipping points toward irreversible retreat," the ICIMOD said.

The report also highlighted a critical data gap: of those 38, only seven meet the global benchmark monitoring standards of the World Glacier Monitoring Service (WGMS). Major glacierised regions, including the Karakoram, Sikkim, Zaskar, and Bhutan, remain largely unmonitored, it added. "Large parts of the Himalaya remain blind spots. Without expanding our monitoring networks and standardising methodologies, accelerated changes in water flows and cryosphere risks could remain undetected until the impacts are severe," said Mohd Farooq Azam, a cryosphere specialist at ICIMOD and one of the report's authors.

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NEET

STATE RANK #2 AIR 128

Aditya Kiran Bal

AILET

STATE RANK #1 AIR 8

Prathmesh Gaurav

CLAT

STATE RANK #1 AIR 14

Prathmesh Gaurav

NEET

114

STUDENTS

JEE MAIN

51

STUDENTS

JEE ADV

19

STUDENTS

CLAT

22

STUDENTS

FOREIGN UNIVERSITIES

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2025 RESULTS

Attack on BJD leader's house; Naveen seeks CM intervention



PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 21: BJD chief Naveen Patnaik Saturday sought Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi's intervention to restore law and order following an attack on the residence of a senior party leader and former minister here, police said.

According to a complaint lodged at the Capital Police Station, security staff of BJD leader Pratap Jena alleged that around 15 miscreants attacked his residence Friday night and used abusive language.

According to the complaint, the attackers were armed with

iron rods, a knife and a gun, and attempted to terrorise the security personnel.

Friday morning, the party had issued a notice, signed by Jena in his capacity as vice-president (headquarters), suspending 10 members of the party's youth and student wings on charges of anti-party activities.

Speaking to reporters after the attack on his house, Jena alleged that some suspended members of the party's youth and student wings created a ruckus outside his residence.

In a post on X, Patnaik said, "I strongly condemn the armed attack that took place last night

on the residence of Pratap Jena, senior leader of the Biju Janata Dal and former minister. Those who insulted democracy with the power of money in the Rajya Sabha elections -- their goons carried out this act of violence. This is not two separate incidents but a blatant example of misrule and lack of lawlessness."

Patnaik demanded that immediate action be taken in this matter and the culprits arrested. "I urge the chief minister to intervene to restore the law and order situation that has deteriorated in the state," he said.

Odisha BJP spokesperson Manoj Mohapatra, however, rejected Patnaik's allegation and questioned how Jena was staying at the government quarters despite not being an MLA.

The government quarters was allotted in the name of BJD MLA Prasant Behera.

"The incident was a result of internal conflict within the BJD and nothing to do with the law and order situation," Mohapatra said.

Meanwhile, a police statement said two persons identified as Sidhartha Kumar Swain (28) and Debi Prasad Lenka (34) were arrested under different sections of BNS in connection with the attack on Jena's house.

Cuttack book fair draws huge crowd

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, March 21: The 'Cuttack Sahitya Sarobar' book fair, inaugurated Friday after several years, has drawn an overwhelming response, with large crowds thronging the Bali Yatra Ground Saturday.

The 10-day fair is jointly organised by the Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC), Cuttack Development Authority (CDA) and the state government.



Enthusiasm among book lovers was palpable as hundreds thronged the 165 stalls set up by leading publishers from across Odisha and beyond. Visitors praised the wide collection, ranging from classic Odia literature to modern thrillers and competitive exam guides.

"We are amazed by the range and variety of books on display here. The administration should organise more such book fairs in the future," said Ranjita Mishra, a visitor. "Cuttack has always been a historic bastion of art and culture—a city where every corner breathes heritage. Yet, we must evolve to keep that intellectual spirit alive in the modern era. Our aim is to create a vibrant ecosystem that celebrates the written word. To promote the timeless value of literature and encourage youth to read, we are proud to organise its first-ever grand book fair," said CMC Commissioner Kirandeep Kaur Sahota.

Odisha organises cultural & tourism event in Ahmedabad



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, March 21: A three-day cultural and tourism outreach event organised by the Odisha government began in Ahmedabad in Gujarat Saturday.

Speaking at the inauguration session of Odisha Parab 2026 at the Gujarat University Convention and Exhibition Centre here, Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida said visitors to the event will experience Odisha's living traditions, artistic expressions and tourism potential by bringing together culture, cuisine, crafts, handlooms, and destination showcases under one roof.

'Odisha Parab', which will be open to the public from 11am to 11pm till March 23, is a flagship initiative of the Odisha government's department of tourism aimed at presenting aspects of the state's culture and traditions in major cities across India.

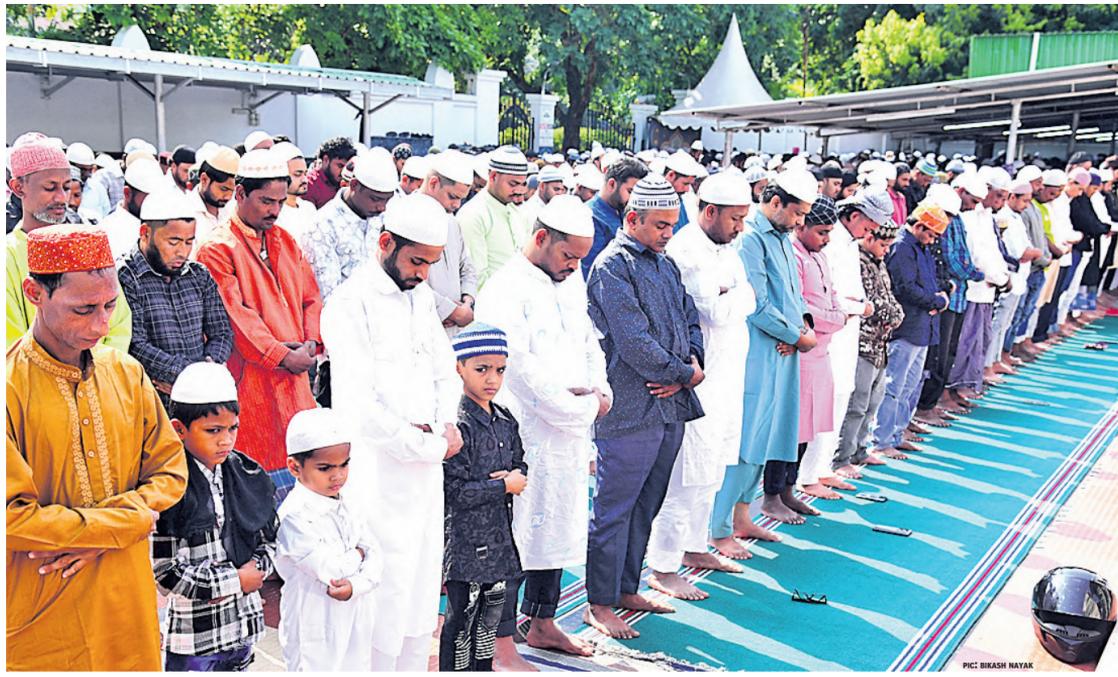
"A key highlight of the event will be live craft demonstrations by master artisans from Odisha, offering visitors the opportunity to witness traditional craftsmanship in real time. Dedicated craft and handloom

stalls will showcase Odisha's renowned textiles and handicrafts, including handwoven fabrics, traditional motifs, and GI-tagged products," a release said.

"The culinary segment will present an engaging experience through curated food stalls and live cuisine demonstrations, showcasing the rich diversity of Odia cuisine. The event showcases authentic dishes reflecting Odisha's coastal, tribal, and traditional food cultures, along with celebrated Odia desserts such as Chhena Poda," the release noted.

It will also feature a vibrant line-up of classical, folk, and tribal cultural performances, capturing the rhythm, storytelling, and martial traditions of the state, with performances such as Odissi, Gotipua, Sambalpuri dance, Paika Akhada, Ghumura, Dhamsa, Chhau, and Ghudukri giving audiences a dynamic glimpse into the state's rich performing arts heritage.

"When we are in Odisha, we see Gujarat as a second home, and similarly, Gujarat, especially cities like Surat, feels like a 'mini Odisha' because of the large Odia community here," Parida said at the event.



FESTIVE DEVOTION: Muslim community members gather to offer Eid-ul-Fitr prayers at Unit IV Mosque in Bhubaneswar, Saturday, marking the end of Ramadan

Eid celebrated with religious fervour

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 21: Thousands of devotees flocked mosques and open-air Eidgahs across Odisha Saturday to offer prayers and celebrate the occasion after a month of fasting.

Police made elaborate security arrangements in different cities. In Cuttack, Balasore, Bhadrak, Sambalpur and other places police conducted flag marches to maintain peace.

Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati extended greetings, expressing hope that the occasion would promote kindness and strengthen brotherhood

Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati greeted people and hoped that the occasion would spread kindness and strengthen the bonds of brotherhood.

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, Leader of Opposition Naveen Patnaik and others also conveyed their wishes to the Muslim community across the state

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, Leader of Opposition Naveen Patnaik and others also extended their greeting to the Muslim community across the state on the occasion. Majhi said, "Greetings to

Muslim brother and sisters on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr. Also, wish happiness and prosperity for all."

"Eid Mubarak! May this beautiful day strengthen the bonds of brotherhood, spread kindness and fill every heart with happiness and good health," the Governor said on X.

In a video message, Patnaik said, "Eid Mubarak to all. My greetings to all brothers and sisters of Muslim community."

Valuing every drop: Odisha's vision for in-stream storage structures



Due to the adverse effects of climate change, there is a great variation in the temporal and spatial distribution of rainfall. The rivers in our state which were flowing earlier till the end of April are now drying up in the month of February. This situation may further worsen in the time ahead. The Odisha government has taken a revolutionary step for sustainable water management by taking up construction of in-stream storage structures (ISS) across various rivers to store water inside the streams.

The core objectives of these structures go far beyond simple storage; they are comprehensive solutions to modern

climatic challenges. Storage of water within the natural river channels not only reduces the seasonal variation of groundwater levels through ground water recharge but also significantly enhance water availability for nearby localities.

They are designed to cater to drinking water supply and other domestic requirements of nearby locality while simultaneously supporting fishery development and livestock farming. Furthermore, they play a crucial role in meeting our state's growing industrial water demand, providing beautiful recreational spaces, and assisting in the partial moderation of seasonal floods.

The scale of our commitment to this vision is unprecedented. The scheme was initially launched with a substantial outlay of ₹11,700 crore for a six-year implementation period spanning 2019-20 to 2024-25. Seeing the positive impact of this initiative, the state government has extended this scheme for an additional five years, from 2025-26 to 2029-30, with a massive dedicated outlay of ₹19,941 crore. Till date, the state government has approved 89 ISS projects in a phased manner out of which six ISS has already been completed and 22 ISSs are under progress.

These ISSs will certainly play a great role for making Odisha a water-secured state.

ADN India chapter launched at KSPH

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 21: The KIIT School of Public Health (KSPH) hosted the launch of the India Chapter of the Avoidable Deaths Network (ADN), a global initiative focused on reducing preventable deaths through research, policy dialogue and collaboration. The India chapter is led by, Professor Pratap Kumar Jena and KSPH Director Ramya Pinnamaneni.

The event brought together public health experts, UN specialists, policymakers, academics and students to discuss strategies to address avoidable deaths caused by disasters, climate risks, health system gaps and social vulnerabilities.

Pinnamaneni emphasised the need to place avoidable deaths at the centre of public health and disaster risk reduction efforts. She noted that many deaths associated with disasters and crises occur not only during the event itself but also due to disrupted health services, delayed care, and structural vulnerabilities. KIIT Deemed to be University Pro-VC Prof KD Raju and Registrar Prof Jnyana Ranjan Mohanty highlighted the institution's commitment to interdisciplinary research and global collaboration. The global vision of the Avoidable Deaths Network was presented by its founding presidents, Prof Nibedita S Ray-Bennett of the University of Leicester, UK, and Hideyuki Shiroshita of Kansai University, Japan.

Garg reviews fire safety, Budget outreach



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 21: A high-level secretaries' meeting, chaired by Chief Secretary Anu Garg, was held at Kharavela Bhawan Saturday to review key administrative, financial and development issues, with departments directed to ensure timely action and better coordination.

Development Commissioner and Additional Chief Secretary Deoranjana Kumar Singh, along with Additional Chief Secretaries, Principal Secretaries, Commissioners and Secretaries of various departments, attended the meeting. At the outset, Garg expressed concern over recent fire incidents at various locations and directed all departments to inspect electrical wiring in government

buildings. She emphasised regular checks of equipment, necessary upgrades and strict adherence to safety norms to prevent accidents.

The Finance department presented the current financial status for 2025-26, with discussions focusing on expenditure trends and revenue targets in line with the approved Budget. Spending in social sector departments, including Agriculture, Farmers' Empowerment, Cooperation and Energy, has increased compared to the same period last year. The meeting was informed that overall revenue collection has reached 78.77 per cent of the target, with departments asked to expedite spending and collection to meet goals by March-end. Infrastructure-related departments also presented their expenditure

progress. The "We Will Know Our Budget" outreach initiative for the 2026-27 Budget was also reviewed, with a decision to hold awareness meetings from the state to village level to inform citizens about state and central development programmes in Odisha. The initiative aims to ensure transparency and effective implementation of welfare schemes. The meeting also reviewed progress in filling vacant government posts, with a target of 65,000 appointments by June. So far, 41,063 posts have been filled, and the Public Administration and Public Grievances department said steps are underway to complete recruitment within the stipulated timeframe.

Garg also reviewed progress on key directives issued by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, including the 15-point action plan and flagship initiatives under the "36 for 36" roadmap aligned with Odisha Vision 2036 and Developed India 2047 goals.

UU's conference on Indian Knowledge Systems



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 21: Utkal University (UU) here recently hosted an international conference on 'Rethinking Development and Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS): A Sociological Reflection' organised by department of Sociology.

The first plenary session on the second day was on 'Development, Displacement and Contestation,' chaired by department's former professor Balgovind Baboo. Joining the occasion, PIB and CBC, Bhubaneswar DG Akhilar Kumar Mishra highlighted the role of media and development in 21st century and Birendra Suna delivered on the theme 'Indigenous Ethics, Collective Goals and Grassroot Governance in Odisha'.

The second plenary session was on 'Environment, Ecology, and Indian Knowledge Systems'. It was chaired by IIT-Kanpur former professor Binay Patnaik. Nagaraju Gundimeda from University of Hyderabad, Upul Lekamge from University of Sri Lanka, Thomas Reuter from World Academy of Arts and Science USA, Annapurna Pandey from University of California, and Jayanathan Govender from University of KwaZulu-Natal joined the plenary discussion virtually.

One technical session was also conducted on the theme 'Urban Development, Transformation and Sustainability'. The two-day conference in plenary sessions collectively featured 30 panelists, while the technical sessions included over 95 paper presentations, reflecting the wide academic engagement and interdisciplinary nature of the conference.

The annual departmental magazine 'Looking Glass Self' was also released. Prize winners of departmental competitions were awarded and Anwesha Panigrahi extended vote of thanks.

WEATHER			FORECAST
Max Temp	BBSR 33.2°	CTC 31.6°	Light to Moderate rain or thunderstorm very likely
Min Temp	21.2°	18.4°	
Humidity	65%	72%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	

Nayagarh sugar mill hopes rekindled

SURVEY CONDUCTED AFTER UNION HOME MIN AMIT SHAH ANNOUNCED THE PROJECT IN MARCH

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh, March 21: A technical team from the Indian Potash Limited (IPL) Saturday visited multiple locations in Nayagarh district to assess the feasibility of setting up a new sugar mill, raising fresh hopes for the revival of the long-pending project.



The team inspected sites at Gamei and Panipoila under Nayagarh tehsil as part of a preliminary survey. The visit follows an announcement by Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah March 6 in Bhubaneswar regarding the establishment of a sugar industry in the district, with IPL entrusted to take the project forward.

District Collector Madhuma Mitra, Additional District Magistrate Rozina Das and other senior officials were present during the inspection. Prior to the field visit, the IPL team held discussions with the district administration at the Collector's office on the prospects of both the old and proposed sugar mills.

According to officials, five potential sites had been identified across Panipoila, Gamei, Odagaon and Nuagaon tehsils. However, the technical team inspected

two locations—Panipoila, which has about 70 acres of land, and Gamei, with around 40 acres.

Das said the administration would submit a detailed report after the technical team finalises its feasibility assessment and proposal.

Patra said the focus should be on "performance, not politics," adding that he had promised the revival of the sugar mill before the elections. He said steps had been taken within 100 days, including consultations with the

Centre and the state leadership.

Notably, a sugar mill had earlier been set up at Panipoila in 1992 over 143 acres at a cost of ₹17.37 crore. The unit changed hands multiple times between the state Cooperation department and private operators before ceasing operations in 2014.

Officials said the old mill remains entangled in legal issues, with dues amounting to around ₹5,000 crore pending before the Supreme Court. As a result, authorities have prioritised setting up a new facility instead of reviving the defunct unit.

IPL officials said they have assessed the technical feasibility of the shortlisted sites and initiated the process for early implementation. The proposed project is expected to boost industrial development in the region and generate employment for local farmers, youth and residents.

If realised, the new sugar mill could mark a significant step towards economic growth and self-reliance in Nayagarh district.

Man gets 25-yr RI for rape of visually impaired minor

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jeypore, March 21: A special POCSO court in Koraput district has sentenced a man to 25 years of rigorous imprisonment (RI) for raping a 15 year old visually impaired girl.



Additional District Judge and Special POCSO Court Judge Sanghamitra Das delivered the verdict Saturday, against accused Laichhan Bhoi of Kangara village under Semiliguda police station. The court also imposed a fine of ₹15,000, with a further three years of imprisonment in default of payment.

The prosecution, led by Special Public Prosecutor P. Sanyasi Rao, presented evidence and nine witnesses. The court found that in 2024, Bhoi lured the victim under the pretext of performing rituals to cure her eyesight, administered intoxicants, and raped her. A case (273/24) was registered in this regard at Koraput Town police station.

In addition to the sentence, the court directed that the victim be awarded ₹5 lakh compensation through the District Legal Services Authority (DLA).

Prime accused, 2 others held for raping, killing college girl

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kamakhyanager, March 21: Police arrested the prime accused in the rape and murder case involving a Plus II first year college student in Dhenkanal district, three days after the crime, officials said Saturday.



Police conducted a reconstruction of the crime scene with the accused and arrested two other accomplices. However, they refrained from naming the accomplices.

The accused, identified as Gangadhar Patra alias Jaga of Santarapur village, was taken into custody from a relative's house near the Dhenkanal-Keonjhar district border.

Police said the accused waylaid the victim at Jagannath Bazaar Square in Kamakhyanager town while returning home after an examination March 18. The accused allegedly abducted her in a car and took her to a nearby forest

and raped her.

Police said the victim's condition deteriorated, prompting the accused to briefly bring her back towards town before returning to the forest. She later died.

The accused allegedly fled the scene and later sought help from relatives to dispose of the body. The body was reportedly dumped in a forest near Sarualli village late at night.

Police recovered the body the next morning and launched an investigation. The vehicle used in the crime has been seized.

Minor detained for smuggling hooch in cold drink bottles

POST NEWS NETWORK

Udala, March 21: Police here seized country liquor being smuggled in cold drink bottles concealed inside expensive bags and detained a minor, while two accomplices fled late Friday night.

Police seized three bags—two large and one small—containing 32 bottles of country liquor totaling 64 litres.

The breakthrough came when police were tipped-off about the smuggling. Police conducted a raid at the Udala bus stand in Mayurbhanj district late Friday night and seized the consignment. The liquor was being transported in a private bus from Khunta to Bhubaneswar, with the destination identified as Salia Sahi.



A minor from Patashanipur, posing as a passenger, was apprehended, while two others managed to escape taking advantage of the crowd. Officials said the bags were marked with red-coded symbols. The minor was reportedly tasked with carrying the smaller bag, while the two absconding suspects are believed to be adults.

Preliminary investigation revealed that the carriers were promised ₹500 to ₹1,000 for delivering the consignment at Salia Sahi in Bhubaneswar.

Udala police registered a case (106/26) and detained the minor for questioning. Efforts are underway to trace and arrest the two absconding suspects, said IIC Banamali Barik.

RAGGING IN SCHOOL HOSTEL

Class I student critical in assault by seniors

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, March 21: A Class I student of Toranipokhari Upper Primary School in Keonjhar district was critically injured after an alleged assault by senior students in a school hostel, police said Saturday.



The child, identified as Satya Munda, 6, is the son of Biju Munda of Baidabaja village under Dumuria panchayat in Ghatagaon block. He studies at the state government-run school and stays in a 40-seat hostel operated by the ST/SC Development department.

The incident occurred Thursday night but came to light after family members noticed injury marks and took him for treatment. The boy sustained injuries to his eyes and private parts. A doctor at Patana Com-

munity Health Centre informed police after examining him.

Ghatagaon police registered a case following a complaint by the boy's father, Inspector-In-Charge Subhranta Kumar Jena said.

Police said two Class V students are accused of assaulting the child after a quarrel. The attackers allegedly tied a thread around his private parts and pulled it, causing severe inju-

ries. They also allegedly applied a hot substance, leading to burn injuries.

School authorities initially said the child reported he had fallen and could not explain the injuries. Family members later observed marks on his eyes, back and private parts, and sought medical care.

Block Education Officer Ramesh Chandra Jena said about 40 students, including 20 girls, stay in the hostel, which is overseen by a single cook-cum-attendant. There is no provision for a teacher to reside in the hostel. On Thursday night, the senior students called the victim to bring water. Following this the incident happened, he added.

District Welfare Officer Bishaksh Kumar Mohanty said officials visited the site and a police investigation is underway.

Ex-MLA's family ostracised over daughter's inter-caste marriage

POST NEWS NETWORK

Dabugaon, March 21: The Bhatra community in Nabarangpur district has reportedly ostracised the family of former MLA Sadasiva Pradhani for fixing his daughter's marriage outside the community.

daughter is set to marry into a Brahmin family from Jeypore in April, with the engagement already held in February.

Community leaders from all 10 blocks discussed the issue and alleged violation of traditional norms.

They subsequently resolved to socially boycott Pradhani's family.

Several office-bearers, including district secretary Pratap Chandra Nayak and block-level presidents, attended the meeting.

Pradhani's response could not be obtained at the time of filing this report.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Akhil Bhartiya Bhatra Vikas Parishad held Saturday at Maa Danteshwari temple in Dhamanaguda village under Dabugaon police limits. The meeting was chaired by district president Jagannath Majhi. Sources said Pradhani's

Fillip to Jharsuguda airport expansion

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jharsuguda: The state government has stepped up efforts for expansion of Veer Surendra Sai Airport in Jharsuguda, with a high-level review conducted Saturday. Commerce and Transport department Principal Secretary NBS Rajput chaired a meeting at the airport to assess the proposed expansion plan and related administrative preparations. The expansion aims to upgrade the airport to international standards and enable the landing of wide-body aircraft such as the Boeing 777, officials said. Jharsuguda Collector Kunal Motiram Chavan attended the meeting and presented details on land requirements and administrative readiness for the project. He informed that an additional 235 acres of land would be required for the expansion and outlined steps to expedite the acquisition process. At present, the airport operates only domestic flights. Officials said that following land acquisition, the runway and terminal infrastructure will be expanded to accommodate larger aircraft and increased passenger traffic. Senior officials from the airport authority and district administration were also present during the review meeting.

Watchman killed, principal injured in late-night attack

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada: A night watchman was killed and a female school principal injured in a late-night attack by unidentified assailants in Mayurbhanj district, police said Saturday. The incident occurred near Kalama Chhak under Baisinga police limits Friday night. The deceased has been identified as Sanyasi Das, 50, a resident of Dhanapal area. The injured woman, Kadambini Rout, 60, is the principal of Sri Aurobindo Integral Education Centre in Kalama. According to preliminary information, Das, who worked as a night watchman, had fallen ill and was being taken on a motorcycle by Rout to a clinic run by the school's owner, Dr. Bijay Rout. However, before reaching NH-18, just a short distance from the school, unidentified attackers ambushed them and launched a violent assault. Das died on the spot, while Rout sustained serious injuries and was initially admitted to Balasore DHH. Following a complaint lodged by the school's owner, police from Baisinga and Balasore reached the spot and began an investigation.

Bamanghati shutdown called off after bail for 34

Rairangpur: A 48-hour shutdown in the Bamanghati region of Mayurbhanj district was withdrawn following assurances from the police administration and the granting of bail to 34 arrested tribal villagers. The arrests were made in connection with an attack on road blockade participants protesting an alleged assault on a tribal minor under Tiring police limits. Demanding the release of those arrested, various tribal organisations, had called the shutdown from Friday. The agitation was called off after a local SDJM court granted bail to all 34 accused Saturday.

Derjang turns new tourism gem with modern boating facilities

PNN & AGENCIES

Angul, March 21: The Derjang project in Angul district, once known primarily for irrigation and drinking water supply, is now transforming into a modern tourist destination with the inauguration of a new boating facility.



Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan Saturday inaugurated the long-awaited boating amenities at Derjang in Banarpal.

Developed at a cost of over ₹6 crore, the initiative is expected to give a fresh identity to the district's tourism sector while boosting the local economy.

The facility offers a range of recreational activities, including speed boating, pedal boating, jet skiing, and pedal swan boats. These attractions are also expected to generate employment opportunities for local youth.

Looking ahead, the Forest department plans to develop an

eco-lodge in the area, aimed at providing visitors with a more immersive and memorable experience. The Union minister praised the district administration, Forest and Irrigation departments for their collaborative efforts in bringing the project to life.

Highlighting the region's potential, Pradhan noted that Angul district is rich in natural and cultural heritage. Attractions such as Satskosia

Sanctuary, the scenic Rengali reservoir, and the revered shrine of Maa Budhi Thakurani add to its appeal. The presence of the sacred rivers Mahanadi and Brahmani further enhances the region's significance.

He emphasised that through coordinated efforts, the government aims to harness this potential and develop Angul into a major hub on Odisha's tourism map.

GOVT. OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER,
MINOR IRRIGATION DIVISION, GAJAPATI
AT/PO: PARALAKHEMUNDI, DIST: GAJAPATI.
e-mail- oemi_gajapati@yahoo.co.in eomigajapatiparalakhemundi@gmail.com
e-Procurement Notice No. 809 Date: 19/03/2026
BID IDENTIFICATION NO. MIDGJP-08/2025-26
No.32001/233/2526 : The Superintending Engineer, Minor Irrigation Division, Paralakhemundi on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites Percentage Rate bid in Double Cover System in ONLINE MODE for the construction of following works as detailed in the Detailed Tender Call Notice (D.T.C.N) from the eligible class of contractors.
1. Name of the work : Improvement to Minor Irrigation Projects under Critical Scheme/ 2026-27.
2. No. of works : 2 Nos. (Two)
3. Estimated cost Rs. 59.00 to 84.00 Lakhs.
4. Class of Contractor : 'B1' class Contractor
5. Period of completion : 6 (Six) calendar months (Including Rain Season)
6. Date and time of availability of bid documents in the portal: from 10.30 Hours of 26.03.2026 to 17.00 Hours of 04.04.2026.
7. Last date/time for receipt of bids in the portal : 17.00 Hours of 04.04.2026
8. Date of opening of Technical Bid: 11.00 Hours on 06.04.2026.
9. Name and address of the Officer inviting Bid : Superintending Engineer, Minor Irrigation Division, Gajapati, AT/PO- Paralakhemundi, Dist- Gajapati, PIN-761200
Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>
Sd/- Superintending Engineer
MI Division, Gajapati
Paralakhemundi
OIPR-32001/32013/1/25-26/0001

भारतीय जन संचार संस्थान
Indian Institute of Mass Communication
(A Deemed to be University)
Aruna Asaf Ali Marg, JNU New Campus, New Delhi 110067
(Advt. No.01/2026)
The Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC), Deemed to be University under the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Government of India with its main campus in New Delhi and Regional Campuses at Aizawl, Amravati, Dhenkanal, Jammu and Kottayam invites ONLINE applications from eligible candidates for 02 posts of Professor in the field of Mass Communication. Details of Proforma for application, pay scale, eligibility qualifications, etc. are available in vacancy section on the website of the Indian Institute of Mass Communication. i.e., <http://www.iimc.gov.in/vacancy>
The last date to submit Online applications : 21 April, 2026
CBC 22103/11/0014/2526

EAST COAST RAILWAY
Tender Notice No. 71/ET/SBP/ENGG/2025-26, Dated : 16.03.2026
e-Tender No. 62-eT-DENS-SBP-25
NAME OF WORK: CONSTRUCTION OF ROAD UNDER BRIDGE / LIMITED HEIGHT SUBWAY IN LIEU OF LEVEL CROSSING LJ-25 NEAR KM.-44/17-18-6 OF BHAWANIPATNA-JUNAGARH ROAD BLOCK SECTION OF SAMBALPUR DIVISION.
Approximate Cost of the Work : ₹ 3,80,14,453.54, Bid Security : ₹ 3,40,100/-, Completion Period for the Work : 06 (Six) Months.
Tender Closing Date and Time: At 1500 Hrs. of 06.04.2026.
No manual offers sent by Post / Courier / Fax or in person accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.
Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website : www.ireps.gov.in
Note : The prospective tenderers are advised to visit the website 15 (Fifteen) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / corrigenda issued for this tender. The tenderers/bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate and must be registered on IREPS Portal. Only registered tenderer/ bidder can participate on e-tendering.
Divisional Railway Manager (Engg./PR-1248/Q/25-26 Sambalpur

AXIS BANK

Important Announcement

We are moving

Axis Bank's branch in Udala will move to new location from the 25th of May 2026.

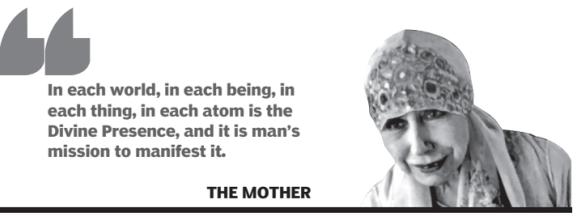
Current address:

Axis Bank Ltd., Udala Branch, Ground Floor, Plot No. 407/742 College Road, Near IOC Petrol Pump, PO/PS: Udala, Kaptipada, Dist: Mayurbhanj, Odisha - 757041.

New address:

Axis Bank Ltd., Udala Branch, Ground Floor, Plot No. 66, Tehsil - Udala, Main Market, Near Tehsil Office, PO/PS: Udala, Dist: Mayurbhanj, Odisha - 757041.

We look forward to welcoming you.



In each world, in each being, in each thing, in each atom is the Divine Presence, and it is man's mission to manifest it.

THE MOTHER

Defiant Iran

I want Iran to win. What does win mean? Iran defines it in the following way: The United States of America must lift its decades-old sanctions on Iran; it must dismantle its military bases in the Arab states; Israel must end its occupation of Lebanon; and Iran must be compensated for the damage it has suffered over the years and in this war.

Though more than a thousand Iranis have already died in American and Israeli bombardment and more will die, if Iran is able to secure these things, it will be total victory.

Why do I want Iran to win? At the most basic level, it is the underdog in the fight against two nuclear-armed opponents, Israel and America. It is weaker than them militarily, yes, but it is not feeble, as the world has witnessed since February 28. It has more resolve than most other states. Another instinctive reason for me to support Iran is that it is, like we are, a nation that has been trampled on by what is called the west. I have solidarity with them also for this reason.

At a deeper level, the Jewish state of Israel and America are colonists imposing themselves brutally on a world which does not want them. They should be resisted, along with their actions. American sanctions on Iran isolate it from the global banking system, making trade with the world difficult and are designed not only to weaken the Irani state but to keep Iranis poor. These are not United Nations sanctions, but unilaterally imposed by America, which uses its economic power to harass nations it doesn't like, including, as we are also witnessing, Venezuela and Cuba.

Iran demanding that they be removed is just. I want them to go and for that Iran must win.

America has military bases in Bahrain, Kuwait, Iraq, UAE, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia. Why does it have all those soldiers and weapons there? America runs an empire in all but name. The American military should not threaten the world and must focus on its homeland. Iran has begun that conversation.

Israel is today what South Africa was 40 years ago, but worse. It is an apartheid state (it controls millions of people who have no vote and no rights) which is guilty of genocide according to many human rights organisations, including the one I represent, and even organisations inside Israel itself. It has used its military might and its access to almost unlimited American arms and funding to terrorise the Middle East and this has to end. An Irani win would do much to resolve this.

Iran has suffered damage of hundreds of billions of dollars over the years because of the sanctions on it and has been harmed more since this war was inflicted on it. Iran is entitled to damages and these have to be paid to it by the US and its allies.

These are the reasons I want Iran to win. Why I think it is possible and perhaps even likely that Iran will win? The answer is of course that it is in control of this war, despite appearances. America and Israel can inflict terrifying punishment on Iran and its population, and they have, murdering schoolgirls and attacking infrastructure. They have assassinated Irani leaders and will likely murder more of them. But they have failed in regime change, which was the goal of this war. The Islamic Republic of Iran remains.

Iran's response is focussed and narrow: it will not allow oil, gas or any supplies to exit or enter the Middle East through the sea. Its control of the water is based as much on the violence it can inflict as it is on the threat of violence, which is really what has deterred commercial ships from attempting to cross the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran's response is also calibrated and its own oil is free to flow. And it retains some capacity to attack American bases and the nations who host these bases as we have seen. These two things are all it needs to prevail.

So long as US president Donald Trump cannot wrest control of the passage of ships out of and into the Persian Gulf, the price of crude oil and gas will rise as it has done since the war. Americans are paying more for petrol and diesel today and will pay even more as the war continues.

Unfortunately, the entire world is also hostage to this problem and will suffer, but so far the world has not called on the original perpetrators, the real villains, America and Israel, to end their war. This is because they are afraid of them and that is also why I want Iran to win.

From here on, America needs to do something dramatic to change the status of the conflict, which as it stands is in Iran's favour. Assassinations and carpet bombing have not worked. One hopes that what America does is arrive at a compromise and end its violence and agree to at least two of the Irani demands: that guaranteeing no future violence and the permanent lifting of sanctions. From Israel, I have no expectations because it has shown over the years that what it wants is mindless and endless destruction.

I want Iran to win, and for that to happen America does not have to lose. It only has to do the right thing.



Aakar Patel

THE UNITED STATES AND ISRAEL HAVE ASSASSINATED IRANI LEADERS AND WILL LIKELY MURDER MORE OF THEM. BUT THEY HAVE FAILED IN REGIME CHANGE, WHICH WAS THE GOAL OF THIS WAR. THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN REMAINS



Avilash Rouf

RESTRUCTURING DECISION-MAKING IN WATER GOVERNANCE IS KEY TO RESOLVING WATER CHALLENGES, PARTICULARLY THOSE RELATED TO GENDER

To begin with, managing freshwater, the elixir of life, has once again been put at the top of the unresolved scheme of the world. Several conferences, workshops and hybrid consultations are being organised to set the agenda for the Third UN Water Conference to be held in early December this year in the UAE. Meanwhile, the UN General Assembly sponsored the International Water Decade, designed to galvanise collaborative action on water-related challenges, which ends in 2028 and is largely off track. More strikingly, 2030 is fast approaching to meet the deadlines of 'availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all' under Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Despite collective failure in managing water, the UN calls on all stakeholders on World Water Day (March 22) to amplify the role of water in reducing gender inequality. In fact, on World Water Day 1995, the UN emphatically urged world leaders to provide women with access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene. After three decades of much pomp and circumstance, including several World Water Forums, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and current SDGs, 26 per cent of women and girls - 1.1 billion - of the world lack access to safely managed drinking water. A joint WHO/UNICEF report (2026) estimates that 2.1 billion people still lack access to safe drinking-water, 3.4 billion lack safely managed sanitation, and 1.7 billion lack basic hygiene services. Isn't it disturbing that some 1 million lives continue to be lost each year due to inadequate access



As a whopping three billion people are fed by an estimated 313 rivers and lakes and 468 aquifers shared by more than one country, which carry 60 per cent of the world's freshwater, transboundary rivers have immense significance in managing an unequal water world

to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)?

India is not far behind. In one of the so-called cleanest cities, Indore, 25 people died from contaminated drinking water in December 2025 and January 2026. Interestingly, between January 2025 and January 7, 2026, according to the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), at least 5,500 people fell ill, and 38 people died in 26 cities, including 16 state capitals, across 22 states and Union territories after consuming sewage-contaminated piped drinking water. It is still a common sight in peri-urban India for women and girls to fetch water from a distance. The gloomy arithmetic of water does not end in gender disparity alone. It is now crystal clear that climate change has severely disrupted and shifted the hydrological cycle, consequently putting lives, societies, and the security of the state at high risk. Water-related disasters in 2025, as per the Global Water Monitor Report, took nearly 5,000 lives, displaced around

8 million people, and resulted in economic losses of nearly \$360 billion globally.

Since the 'Water for Peace' of the 2024 World Water Day, which was anchored in cooperation over transboundary rivers, hardly any member countries have entered into cooperation with basin countries. Rather, India has opted out of the 1960 Indus Water Treaty with Pakistan. On the Brahmaputra River, India has yet to enter into any long-term cooperative mechanism with the upper riparian China. A litmus test for India and Bangladesh is unfolding over the renewal of the Ganges Water Treaty that expires this year.

As a whopping three billion people are fed by an estimated 313 rivers and lakes and 468 aquifers shared by more than one country, which carry 60 per cent of the world's freshwater, transboundary rivers have immense significance in managing an unequal water world. While Target 6.5 of Goal 6 of the SDG states that it will implement integrated water resources management

at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate by 2030, it is evident that the UN has been strained in its effort to facilitate the optimisation of transboundary cooperation.

Moreover, the UN or the collective approach to meeting the growing water needs must be reimagined and recalibrated. It can't be the usual UN-type decadal developmental cycle of on-and-off focus on water management.

It is said that the world is entering an era of 'global water bankruptcy', in which replenishment and recovery are constrained. Who is responsible for this water bankruptcy? Aren't the five decades of water bureaucracy, with aid and abetment of multilateral agencies and bilateral agencies, responsible for this water bankruptcy? What has been achieved under the 'Water for All' of ADB or 'Water Secure World for All' of the World Bank so far? If gender mainstreaming in water-sector investments worldwide is the hallmark of multilateral and bilateral donor agencies, there shouldn't be gender disparity.

Water governance requires a transition from the present techno-bureaucratic crisis mode to a hydro-social, comprehensive, transparent, inclusive and flexible approach. Restructuring decision-making in water governance is key to resolving water challenges, particularly those related to gender. Galvanising global action on water must not be limited to slogans, campaigns, a day-long thematic focus or two days of conference.

The writer is international advisor on climate change risk and transboundary rivers. Views are personal

SPECTRUM MIDDLE EAST CRISIS

Regional integration for lasting security

For decades, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have exported oil and recycled petrodollars through Western markets and received military protection from the United States. This arrangement has often been described as a strategic alliance.

The US-Israeli war with Iran has exposed the inherent fragility of this model and called into question the credibility of the entire deterrence architecture. Despite the massive US military presence in the region, Iran's ability to close the Strait of Hormuz and unleash a barrage of strikes across the GCC has demonstrated that the US cannot guarantee the security of its own installations, let alone that of the Gulf countries.

The reason for this asymmetry is clear: missile and drone warfare have fundamentally changed the cost structure of conflict. Low-cost drones, in particular, have enabled Iran to pose a credible threat to extremely expensive assets such as airbases, ports, and oil facilities. The marginal cost of disruption is now far lower than the marginal cost of defense.

This shift erodes the economic logic behind the long-standing GCC-US security contract. GCC countries allocate a significant share of public

spending toward purchasing advanced weapons systems from the US. But the Iran war has demonstrated that technological superiority alone cannot guarantee safety. A \$30,000 drone can disable infrastructure protected by billions of dollars' worth of military equipment.

The Gulf's arms race, among the most expensive in the world, generates massive profits for external suppliers but has failed to produce stability at home.

But there is a way to reduce the probability of conflict by raising the opportunity cost of war: economic interdependence. When countries are deeply integrated through trade, infrastructure, and financial networks, the economic losses from confrontation become too large to ignore. Mutual gains from cooperation begin to outweigh the perceived benefits of coercion.

For the GCC and Iran, the potential for such integration is substantial. While it may appear unrealistic in the short term, economic integration is ultimately the most viable path to reducing conflict in the long run. Iran has a large domestic market, significant industrial capacity, and vast energy resources. GCC economies, meanwhile, possess financial capital, logistics infrastructure, and global trade

connectivity. Instead of living in a permanent state of suspicion, the two sides could form the backbone of a regional economic bloc spanning energy, transportation, and finance.

Attacking a trade partner's infrastructure is economically irrational because it means disrupting one's own supply chains, investment returns, and energy flows. This is the same logic that underpinned Europe's reconstruction and long-term stability after World War II: economic interdependence transformed former rivals into mutually dependent partners.

By contrast, the current Gulf security architecture outsources the task of protection to a distant power whose strategic priorities do not always align with those of GCC countries. We now see the limits of this arrangement. Even the strongest external military actor cannot fully shield geographically exposed partners from the realities of modern warfare.

Moreover, reliance on foreign protection can produce what economists call moral hazard. When governments believe that a powerful ally will ultimately guarantee their safety, they may have less incentive to pursue diplomatic negotiations with regional rivals - a dynamic that sustains, rather than mitigates

or resolves, conflict.

The GCC faces a strategic choice. It can either continue to rely on external military guarantees that leave it structurally vulnerable, or it can pursue a shift toward security rooted in regional economic integration. Of course, such a shift does not imply abandoning defense capabilities or strategic partnerships. Instead, it means recognizing that durable peace cannot be imported; it must be produced locally through shared economic interests.

The Iran 2026 war may prove a turning point, exposing the limits of the "protection for sale" system that has defined Gulf geopolitics for decades. No amount of foreign weaponry can substitute for a stable regional order built on cooperation, interdependence, and rational economic incentives. Security purchased from abroad will always remain conditional and incomplete. Security built through economic integration, however, has the potential to become self-sustaining.

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Jamal Ibrahim Haidar & Adeel Malik

THE MARGINAL COST OF DISRUPTION IS NOW FAR LOWER THAN THE MARGINAL COST OF DEFENSE

WISDOM CORNER

You cannot believe in God until you believe in yourself.
SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

A thousand words will not leave so deep an impression as one deed.
HENRIK IBSEN

It is amazing how complete is the delusion that beauty is goodness.
LEO TOLSTOY

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

1622: Opechancanough, brother of Chief Powhatan and his successor as the leader of the Powhatan Indian empire, led an attack on the Jamestown Colony, killing at least 347 colonists and initiating the Powhatan War.

1765: British Parliament passed the Stamp Act, which placed taxes on various printed papers in the colonies; highly unpopular, the legislation was particularly contentious in America.

1929: Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama—who achieved success as a self-described "obsessional artist," known for her extensive use of polka dots and for her Infinity Mirror Rooms—was born.

1945: The Arab League, a regional organization of Arab states in the Middle East, was organized in Cairo by Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Transjordan (now Jordan), Saudi Arabia, and Yemen.

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



Missing in action

Sir, That there is no shortage or disruption in the supply of LPG cylinders to the 'aam aadmi' has to be taken with a pinch of salt. On the one hand, India appears to be hanging by its eyelids, as it awaits LPG ships to dock in our ports, and on the other hand, responsible officers of the GOI are seen doing their bit of firefighting, taking cudgels on behalf of the government. Both the shortage as well as its rebuttal comes as a double whammy to poor families who simply can't afford an LPG cylinder at 'any cost' (read, in the 'black' market). This is an opportune moment for our PM to come on national TV and clear the air. That the government is doing its best to maintain the LPG supply and also cracking down on hoarders and black marketers, is something that the PM can, and should, convey to the people. Remember, he did appear on national TV while announcing demonetisation, the lockdown during Covid, to announce GST rate cuts, and on other occasions too. However, as reports of LPG cylinder shortages get validated by serpentine queues and rising tempers, our PM seems to be missing in action. If the 'Pradhan Sevak' is silent during crunch times, it's a huge let down.

Avinash Godbole, DEWAS (MP)

Barbaric act

Sir, No words are strong enough to condemn the police action leading to the eviction of scribes, staff from the offices of the UNI after declining to show any court order. I am really at a loss to understand how this barbaric act could happen in a democratic country where the news agency in question has been working for the last several decades with high degree of integrity and morality. The Delhi CM should be asked to show cause what prevented her police force showing the court's order for raiding the agency's offices without allowing its staff to confront. This highhandedness of Delhi government must be condemned by all right thinking persons.

Arun Gupta, KOLKATA



Delhi plans themed forests to boost green cover in city

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 21: The Delhi government is planning a series of themed forests or 'special vans', including those based on zodiac signs, stars and ancient traditions to enhance the city's green cover while blending ecology with cultural traditions, officials said.

The proposed plantations, to come up on around more than two acres of land in select pockets of the Central and South Ridge, are part of efforts to create green spaces rooted in traditional concepts.

The planned forests include Ritu Van, Nakshatra Van, Rashi Van, Thirthankar Van, Bel Van and Panchvati Van, each based on a distinct cultural or ecological theme.

"These forests will enhance plantations in the national capital, add ecological value, and attract more people to forest areas while educating them about different cultural aspects in an engaging manner," an official told PTI. Explaining the concept further, he said, "Under Ritu Van, trees linked to different seasons will be planted so people can actually see how flowering and foliage change through the year."

He said the Nakshatra Van will have plants linked to different stars and constellations. "The Rashi Van will be based on the 12 rashis, (zodiac signs of the Indian astrology) that represent different personality traits and life paths, with each section representing these traditional systems in a simple and easy-to-understand manner," the official added.



The proposed plantations, to come up on around more than two acres of land in select pockets of the Central and South Ridge, are part of efforts to create green spaces rooted in traditional concepts.

Thirthankar Van will honour the 24 Jain Tirthankars, respected spiritual teachers in Jainism believed to have attained enlightenment and shown the path to liberation, he said.

According to the official, Panchvati Van is based on the idea of sacred groves often linked to forest life and the five elements, inspired from the epics such as Mahabharat and Ramayana.

He said the Bel Van, planned in the southern ridge, will focus on the 'bael' tree (wood apple tree), which is known for both its religious and ecological importance.

The forest department has started the process to develop several of these themed forests in the Central Ridge, while separate work on Nakshatra Van and Bel Van will be taken up in the South Ridge as part of the broader plan to create such green spaces across Delhi, an official tender document said.

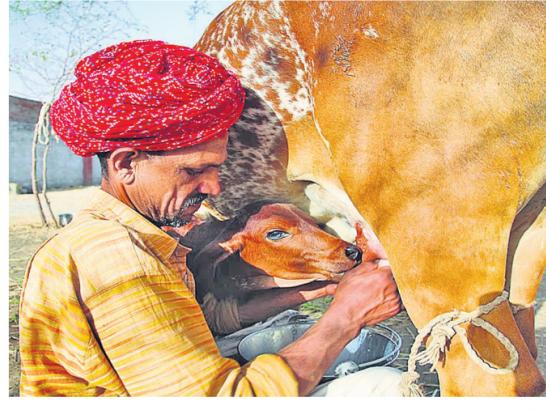
From 17 to 247 MT: India's milk boom

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, March 21: Secretary, department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE) and Director General of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) M L Jat has said India's milk production rose from 17 million tonne in 1950 to 247 MT in 2025.

Jat, a distinguished agronomist, highlighted dairy's dominance within the Rs 17.25 lakh crore livestock sector -- contributing 65 per cent of output and driving 16 per cent of India's gross value added (GVA), which supports 46.1 per cent of the population.

"The Union Budget has allocated Rs 6,153 crore for animal husbandry (up 16 per cent) to



recruit 20,000 veterinarians, subsidize colleges/labs and provide cooperative tax relief, pow-

ering Viksit Bharat in 2047," he said, while addressing the 22nd convocation of ICAR-Na-

tional Dairy Research Institute (ICAR-NDRI) at Karnal in Haryana Friday.

According to an NDRI release, Jat said India's milk production surged from 17 MT (1950) to 247 MT (2025), led by Uttar Pradesh, with Punjab-Haryana topping yields and NITI Aayog projecting 480-606 MT demand by 2047.

Share of milk production was the highest (31.18 per cent) from the indigenous buffaloes followed by crossbred cattle (30.80 per cent), indigenous cattle (11.20 per cent), non-descript cattle (9.64 per cent), non-descript buffaloes (11.97 per cent), goat (3.32 per cent) and exotic cattle (1.89 per cent) in the total milk production in the country, it said.

4,156 smart tablets for patwaris, kanungos

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, March 21: In a move aimed at digital reforms in revenue administration, the Haryana government has approved the procurement of 4,156 smart tablets for 'patwaris' and 'kanungos' across the state, officials said Saturday.

While patwari is a village-level government official responsible for maintaining land records, kanungo is a revenue official acting as a link between the patwari and the higher authorities.

The initiative, which has been approved by Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini and Revenue Minister Vipul Goel, aims to modernise field operations, reduce procedural delays and improve the overall delivery of revenue services, an official statement said.



Quoting Financial Commissioner (revenue and disaster management) Sumita Misra, the statement said the initiative reflects the government's commitment to taking technology beyond offices and urban centres to the field level, where officials interact directly with the citizens.

She emphasised that the move is designed to benefit

both field staff and the public by making services more accessible, efficient and transparent, particularly in the rural areas.

For decades, patwaris and kanungos have relied on manual records, hand-drawn maps and extensive paperwork, making the process time-consuming and physically demanding, the statement said.

With the introduction of tablets, the officials will now be able to conduct field surveys, record data, capture GPS-tagged photographs and upload information directly to the central servers in real time, it said.

Misra said the tablets will be equipped with high-end specifications, including large display, advanced processing capability, sufficient storage and long battery life to support a full day of fieldwork.

PWD launches QR code boards on roads

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 21: In a move aimed at citizen participation, the PWD has introduced QR code-enabled display boards on roads undergoing strengthening, officials said Saturday.

PWD minister Parvesh Sahib Singh said the initiative seeks to transform how people engage with public infrastructure projects by providing easy access to key information while also creating a direct channel for feedback.



"Transparency is not just about sharing information; it is about listening to the people. With this initiative, citizens will not only know the details of road works but will also be able to give their feedback directly," the Public Works department (PWD) minister said.

According to officials, the display boards will be installed within seven days of the completion of any road work.

"These will be placed at prominent public locations such as bus queue shelters, major intersections, and other high footfall areas to ensure visibility," Singh said.

Each QR code will allow citizens to access detailed information about the project, including the name and length of the road, date of last strengthening, contractor or executing agency, etc.

"In addition, the system incorporates a feedback feature enabling residents to share complaints, suggestions, or their overall experience regarding the quality of work," the minister further said.

The PWD minister has directed all divisions to ensure that boards remain clearly visible, QR codes are functional at all times, and information is updated after any subsequent work.



Muslims offer prayers on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr, at Leisure Valley ground in Gurugram, Haryana, Saturday

Fog returns as min temp dips to 13 degrees Celsius

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 21: Delhi woke up in a shroud of fog Saturday with the minimum temperature dipping to 13 degrees Celsius, 3.5 degrees below the normal, as a chilly wind swept the City.

Delhi had Friday registered a minimum temperature of 16 degrees Celsius.

Saturday, the air quality index (AQI) stood at 94 (satisfactory) at 8am.

Owing to rain, air quality improved dramatically Friday with an AQI of 93, marking the first 'satisfactory' air day in about five months in the national capital.

The last time the city recorded the same air quality was October 9, 2025, when the AQI stood at 99.

The air quality is likely to be in the 'moderate' category from Saturday to March 23, according to the Air Quality Early Warning System.

According to CPCB standards, an AQI of 0-50 is considered 'good', 51-100 'satisfactory', 101-200 'moderate', 201-300 'poor', 301-400 'very poor', and 401-500 'severe'.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) said the maximum temperature Saturday

is likely to settle at 27 degrees Celsius. No rain was recorded in the morning, unlike Friday, when the city received 7 mm of precipitation.

Delhi's average rainfall for the month is 16.2 mm, making it the wettest March since 2023, when the average stood at 50.4 mm.



According to forecasts, very light rain is expected to return to Delhi on Monday, with the possibility of thunderstorms and lightning caused by an active western disturbance.

The Safdarjung station recorded a maximum temperature of 21.7 degrees Celsius, 9.6 degrees below normal, Friday -- the coldest March day since March 8, 2020, when the mercury dropped to 21.2 degrees Celsius.

The minimum temperature Friday was 16 degrees Celsius, 0.5 degrees below normal.

Eid holiday draws large crowds to Delhi zoo 'Abhedya' app to curb cybercrime, extortion

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 21: The Delhi zoo witnessed a heavy footfall of around 18,000 visitors on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr, with authorities organising a series of activities to mark the International Day of Forests.

According to a statement, the large turnout created a lively atmosphere at the zoo, with nearly 1,500 visitors taking part in a doodle activity aimed at spreading awareness about forest conservation and biodiversity and 18,000 people visited on Eid holiday.

As part of the day's events, students from Bhaskaracharya College of Applied Sciences were taken on a guided tour of the zoo, where they were briefed on various animal enclosures and their ecological significance, it stated.

It said that around 60 stu-

dents also attended an interactive session that focused on the role of zoos in wildlife conservation, environmental education and biodiversity preservation.

The programme concluded with an interaction with the zoo director, who shared insights into ongoing conservation efforts and the functioning of the facility, as per the statement.

Plantation drives were also carried out within the premises to mark the occasion, it said, and added that 58 shrubs of different species were planted at a newly renovated bird enclosure, aimed at improving habitat conditions and enhancing green cover.

It added that the events were organised to raise awareness about the importance of forests and sustainable environmental practices among visitors.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, March 21: The Haryana Police Saturday launched 'Abhedya', a mobile application designed to curb cybercrime, extortion and threatening calls.

Officials said this is the first mobile-based security platform of its kind in India. The application aims to protect citizens from suspicious calls, threatening messages, stalking, and digital harassment.

With this initiative, Haryana has become the first state in the country to introduce such a measure.

Haryana Director General of Police (DGP) Ajay Singhal said criminals are using internet-based calling and fake numbers to defraud people. He noted that the app will serve as a protective shield for citizens.

Following the state government's zero-tolerance policy,

the DGP said strict directions were issued by Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini to tackle extortion.

He added that the app would provide relief to doctors, traders and contractors who are often targets of such threats. Singhal warned that those attempting to create an atmosphere of fear and terror would be treated as a terrorist and face action.

The DGP explained that while domestic calls are easier to trace, foreign numbers pose technical challenges. Experts within the Haryana Police developed the solution in-house.

The app was launched following successful testing by 25 selected users. To download the application, users must contact the Superintendent of Police of their respective district to receive authorised access. The app is available on both Android



and iOS platforms.

According to police data, proactive measures led to a 40 per cent reduction in extortion calls and an 8 per cent drop in overall crime during January and February 2026 compared to the previous year.

The app identifies and blocks calls and messages from unknown or suspicious numbers before they reach the user. It monitors international, virtual and unsaved numbers, automatically rejecting suspicious communication. It also deletes

suspicious chats, voice messages, notifications, and voice notes from the device to prevent mental stress for the user.

While the user remains protected, the police backend systems will work to trace the person making the suspicious calls.

The DGP said that the Haryana Police will soon implement a 'Dual OTP System' to prevent 'digital arrest' scams. Developed in collaboration with HDFC Bank, the system will initially include account holders aged 60 and above, he said.

Under this system, transaction OTPs will be sent to both the primary account holder and a trusted family member.

Transactions will be approved only after dual confirmation. The police are coordinating with the Reserve Bank of India and other banks to finalise the framework, the DGP added.



We should take the right positive steps taken by anyone which is good for society at large
CP RADHAKRISHNAN | VICE PRESIDENT

ARUNACHAL SUBMITS PROPOSAL TO HOST 4TH NE GAMES 2026

The Arunachal Olympic Association (AOA) has submitted a proposal to the Indian Olympic Association to host the 4th North East Games 2026 in the frontier state. In a communication to IOA President PT Usha, AOA Secretary General Bamang Tago said the proposal aligns with the resolution adopted during the IOA AGM, which emphasised the promotion of regional and youth games across the country



of the day quote

If nature did not exist, there would be no living beings in the world. This entire system has been created and sustained by nature, and tribal communities have an unshakeable faith in this natural order



HEMANT SOREN | CHIEF MINISTER, JHARKHAND

Chakankar has tendered her resignation considering the current circumstances and ongoing investigation. To ensure that the probe is conducted in a fair and transparent manner, I have forwarded her resignation to the Chief Minister for further process



SUNETRA PAWAR | NCP CHIEF AND MAHARASHTRA DEPUTY CM

Today, I only prayed for an end to this illegal war that has been imposed by the United States and Israel on us



OMAR ABDULLAH | CHIEF MINISTER, JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Modi speaks to Iran Prez

In call with Modi, Iran President proposes regional security framework, urges India's BRICS role to end hostilities

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 21: In a phone call with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian Saturday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi condemned attacks on critical infrastructure in West Asia and called for keeping the critical shipping lanes "open and secure", amid major disruption in global energy supplies in view of Tehran's blockade of the Strait of Hormuz.

Significantly, the Iranian president proposed setting up a regional security framework comprising West Asian countries to bring peace and stability in the region "without foreign interference," according to an Iranian readout of the talks.

Pezeshkian also urged India, as the current BRICS chair, to leverage its "independent role" to halt the US-Israel hostilities against Iran. According to the readout, the president rejected Washington's claims that the US launched the military offensive against Iran to prevent it from acquiring nuclear weapons.

Pezeshkian also stressed that late supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei "firmly opposed" nuclear weapons and had issued both administrative and religious directives prohibiting any move toward their develop-



The talks between the two leaders came against the backdrop of increasing global concerns over fresh attacks on West Asian gas hubs

ment, it said.

Separately, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar spoke to his Iranian counterpart Seyed Abbas Araghchi and discussed the conflict in West Asia and its implications for the larger region.

In a post on 'X', Modi said he conveyed Eid and Nowruz greetings to Pezeshkian and expressed hope that the festive season brings peace, stability and prosperity to West Asia. "Condemned attacks on critical infrastructure in the region, which threaten regional stability and disrupt global supply chains. Reiterated the

importance of safeguarding freedom of navigation and ensuring that shipping lanes remain open and secure," the prime minister said.

"Appreciated Iran's continued support for the safety and security of Indian nationals in Iran," he said. It is the second phone conversation between Modi and Pezeshkian in the last 10 days. The talks between the two leaders came against the backdrop of increasing global concerns over fresh attacks on West Asian gas hubs.

The president reiterated Iran's consistent readiness to

engage in dialogues with world leaders, including on the sidelines of the United Nations, for "verification and oversight" of Tehran's peaceful nuclear activities, Tehran said in the readout.

He described the "actions" of the US and Israel against Iran as "profoundly inhumane and unethical, and strongly condemned them", it said. "The president also proposed the establishment of a regional security framework composed of countries of West Asia, aimed at ensuring peace and stability in the region through regional cooperation without foreign interference," it said.

"He further underscored that a prerequisite for ending the war and conflict in the region is the immediate cessation of aggressions by the US and Israel," it said. Referring to India's presidency of BRICS, Pezeshkian called for the group to play an independent role in halting aggressions against Iran and in safeguarding regional and international peace and stability, the readout said.

The Iranian readout said PM Modi emphasised the importance of ensuring the security of the Strait of Hormuz and the freedom of navigation in the Persian Gulf.

Govt hikes commercial LPG allocation to 50%



The three-week-long war in the Middle East disrupted energy supplies to India, leading to initial curtailment in LPG supplies to commercial establishments like hotels to prioritize supplies to household kitchens

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 21: The government has approved an additional 20 per cent allocation of commercial LPG to states and Union Territories, taking the total allocation to 50 per cent, as increased domestic output is helping the situation crawl back to normalcy.

The three-week-long war in the Middle East disrupted energy supplies to India, leading to initial curtailment in LPG supplies to commercial establishments like hotels to prioritize supplies to household kitchens. Later, a fifth of their supplies were restored, and the government offered an additional 10 per cent, subject to states expediting piped gas projects.

The government announced Saturday, a 20 per cent enhanced allocation to key sectors such as restaurants, hotels, industrial canteens, food processing units, community kitchens and subsidised food outlets, while also supporting migrant workers through targeted distribution.

The additional allocation will be subject to commercial establishments registering with oil companies and applying for a piped natural gas connection, according to a letter written by the oil secretary to states.

An official statement said domestic LPG supply remains stable, with no reported shortages at distributorships and normal delivery operations continuing.

Panic bookings have declined, and citizens have been advised to avoid crowding and rely on home delivery.

To ease supply pressures, the government is also promoting a shift towards piped natural gas (PNG), particularly for commercial establishments, and has urged states to expedite approvals for city gas distribution networks. In parallel, all refineries are operating at high capacity with adequate crude inventories, ensuring sufficient availability of petrol and diesel. No fuel shortages have been reported at retail outlets, and the public has been advised against panic buying, it said.

Natural gas supplies to priority segments, including domestic PNG and CNG transport, are being fully maintained, while industrial consumers are receiving about 80 per cent of their usual supply. Additional steps include increased domestic LPG production, extended booking intervals, and allocation of extra kerosene supplies to states to provide alternative fuel options.

States and Union Territories have been directed to maintain strict vigilance against hoarding and black marketing, it said, adding more than 3,500 raids have been conducted nationwide, leading to the seizure of around 1,400 LPG cylinders.

Most states have also set up control rooms and district-level monitoring committees to oversee supply and distribution.

In the maritime sector, the government said 22 Indian-flagged vessels with 611 seafarers remain in the western Persian Gulf region, with no reported incidents in the past 24 hours.

SHORT TAKES

SIR: Preliminary works started in Tripura

Agartala: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha Saturday said preliminary works for the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls have begun in the state. Speaking to reporters after attending a workshop conducted by the BJP, Saha said there is no need for people to panic over the exercise. "The Election Commission has initiated SIR in different states to ensure that no valid voters are left out. In our state, officials have already begun preliminary work for the exercise even as formal notification is yet to be issued," he said. The workshop, held at the Saheed Bhagat Singh Youth Hostel, was attended by BJP national general secretary Tarun Chugh and former MP Vinod Sonkar, besides state ministers and party leaders.

Avalanche alert issued for Sikkim high-altitude

Gangtok: An avalanche alert has been issued for high-altitude regions of Gangtok and Pakyong districts of Sikkim, officials said Saturday. According to an advisory issued by the Sikkim State Disaster Management Authority, avalanches are likely to occur in areas located above 3,500 metres over the next 24 hours. The alert comes amid changing weather conditions in the region, which can increase the risk of snow instability and trigger avalanches, it said. Authorities continue to monitor the situation closely, and have advised people to stay updated with official alerts.

CM Sukhu presents ₹54,928-cr budget

Shimla: Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu Saturday presented a Rs 54,928-crore budget for 2026-27 with thrust on rural economy, and blamed the discontinuation of the revenue deficit grant to the state for annual losses of over Rs 8,000 crore. The grant -- a financial assistance provided by the Centre to fill the gap between the state's revenue and expenses -- was discontinued earlier this month. Sukhu's Budget speech was disrupted by sloganeering from opposition BJP members after he accused them of "not siding with the state" on the issue of the discontinuation of revenue deficit grant (RDG) that had impacted the state's budget, resulting in a loss of Rs 8,105 crore annually.

Safety of Indians living in UAE a 'priority': Envoy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 21: The UAE has assured India that the safety of Indians living in the Gulf country is its "priority", stressing that they are protected and treated like family, especially amid the ongoing conflict in West Asia which has seen the emirate facing attacks from Iran.

UAE Ambassador to India Abdunnasser Alshaali also hailed India's move to co-sponsor a UN resolution that condemned Iran's attacks against Gulf countries, saying it was a statement of principle from a country that the UAE considers a strategic partner and friend, at a moment when it mattered most. The UAE will remember that India was among those "who stood with us first", he said.

"The safety of Indian nationals in the UAE is a priority. They are protected and are treated as family, including the 200 nationalities living in the country in peace and harmony," Alshaali told PTI Videos.

He said that UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan visited five injured civilians in the hospital: two Emiratis, one Indian, one Sudanese and one Iranian. He said: "They are all our responsibility."



Rajasthani folk artists perform during the 'Gangaur' festival, at Tripolia Bazar in Jaipur, Saturday

PTI PHOTO

KOLKATA HOSPITAL LIFT ACCIDENT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, March 21: Police arrested three lift operators and two security personnel Saturday over the death of a man who allegedly got trapped in an elevator at the state-run RG Kar Hospital a day ago, a senior officer said.

The five people were detained Friday evening after police registered an FIR under the BNS section related to culpable homicide not amounting to murder based on a complaint lodged by the victim's father.

3 elevator operators among 5 arrested

They were placed under arrest Saturday with the police alleging that they were negligent in ensuring the safety of patients, their relatives, doctors and non-medical staff of the hospital.

Those arrested have been identified as lift operators Milan Kumar Das, Biswannah Das and Manas Guha, and security personnel Subhadip Das and Asrafal Rahman, a police official said.

The family of the victim, Arup Bannerjee, has alleged that the elevator he got stuck



in, was under maintenance, had no operator on duty, and was not properly secured.

Bannerjee had brought his four-year-old son to the hospital when the incident occurred. His wife was reportedly at the trauma care unit at the time.

A senior hospital official Friday said the man was bleeding from the nose at the time of his rescue. He was taken to the emergency unit, where he died.

The post-mortem indicated that the death was caused by "polytrauma", including compression of the chest wall, rupture of the heart, lungs, and liver, and multiple fractures of the legs, hands, and ribs.

The injuries were ante-mortem in nature, suggesting they occurred before death, police said.

A team from the state forensic laboratory visited the Trauma Care building of the hospital and collected samples from the spot of the death, as well as the elevator shaft wall, collapsible gate, fourth-floor gate of the lift and the ground floor.

The death led to a political blame game in the poll-bound state, with Leader of the Opposition Suvendu Adhikari terming it "murder".

Eid celebrated across India with prayers, feasts

Peaceful protests seek end to West Asia conflict

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 21: Eid al-Fitr was celebrated across India Saturday with special prayers for peace, progress and brotherhood at large congregations in mosques and eidgahs, followed by peaceful protests in several parts of the country condemning the US-Israel attacks on Iran and seeking an immediate end to the hostilities in West Asia.

From the busy lanes of Old Delhi to the eidgahs in Jammu and Kashmir and the bustling Nakhoda Masjid in Kolkata, lakhs of faithful dressed in their best embraced each other and exchanged 'seviyan' to celebrate the festival that marked the end of the fasting month of

Ramzan.

Greeting the citizens, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a post on X, "Best wishes on Eid-ul-Fitr. May this day further brotherhood and kindness all around. May everyone be happy and healthy. Eid Mubarak!"

Chief ministers, including Omar Abdullah of J&K and Mamata Banerjee of West Bengal, governors and other prominent leaders in different states also extended their greetings to the people, and attended the Eid festivities.

In Delhi, people flocked to mosques across the capital to offer namaz, embracing the spirit of unity and devotion, even as a blanket of fog hung over several parts of the city, creating a striking visual against the backdrop of mosque domes and minarets. The sense of celebration was



palpable as people exchanged greetings after offering namaz, with mosques such as the Jama Masjid, Fatehpuri Masjid, and those in Seelampur, Okhla and Nizamuddin witnessing a significant turnout.

Uttam Nagar in west Delhi, however, saw subdued celebrations, days after a clash on the day of Holi left a man dead and triggered communal tension in the area.

Heavy deployment of Delhi Police and paramilitary personnel was in place across Hastsal village, where the incident took place March 4, with barricades at key entry and exit points and movement of outsiders restricted.

Despite the heavy security presence, residents said they offered prayers peacefully, though the celebrations were low-key this time.

In J&K, Eid was celebrated

across the Union territory with the largest gatherings assembling at the Hazratbal shrine on the banks of Dal Lake in Srinagar, and the eidgah on Residency Road in Jammu.

However, the authorities did not allow Eid prayers at the historic Jama Masjid in Nowhatta in the Old City area of Srinagar for the seventh year in a row.

Terming the development "unfortunate", Chief Minister Abdullah, who offered prayers at Hazratbal along with his father Farooq Abdullah, said, "On one hand, they claim that everything is normal, and on the other, they close the historic mosque. What kind of normalcy is this? I hope such decisions will be changed in future."

He also said the "illegal" war imposed by the United States and Israel on the world should end at the earliest.

Dressed in new clothes, Muslims of all ages assembled at the eidgahs, mosques and shrines across Uttar Pradesh to offer Eid prayers and exchange greetings. In Lucknow, the main congregation was held at the Aishbagh Eidgah, where a large number of worshippers offered namaz, with special prayers for peace, progress and brotherhood around the world.

Reports from Sambhal, Kaushambi, Deoria and Amethi indicated that the festival was celebrated peacefully amid tight security.

Some worshippers were seen offering prayers wearing black armbands to protest against the attacks on Iran.

Similar peaceful protests marked Eid celebrations in various parts of Rajasthan, with members of the Muslim community demonstrating in Jaipur and other districts.



The government may call it normal, but the reality is: Production and transport will become more expensive; MSMEs will be hit the hardest; prices of everyday items will go up; and FI money will flow out even faster, putting more pressure on the stock market
RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

VAISHNO DEVI YATRA SUSPENDED

The pilgrimage to the cave shrine of Mata Vaishno Devi was suspended Saturday due to heavy rush at the Bhawan, as 39,000 devotees offered prayers till late afternoon, officials said. The rush has increased due to the ongoing Chaitra Navratra, which began March 19 and will end March 27. The shrine board is expecting a heavy rush of devotees from across the country during this period



of the day quote

During the meeting, progress of second cycle of Management Effectiveness Evaluation of zoos was reviewed. Progress on conservation breeding programme of two to three species per meeting be presented by zoos in forthcoming meetings of Central Zoo Authority
BHUPENDER YADAV | ENVIRONMENT MINISTER

India's healthcare and medtech ecosystem is undergoing a major shift, with a strong focus on global quality benchmarks, indigenous innovation, and integration of research with industry
JITENDRA SINGH | UNION MINISTER

I had the privilege of a heartfelt meeting with the Honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi during which I received his invaluable guidance. His visionary leadership and special affection for Delhi always fill us with fresh energy and inspiration
REKHA GUPTA | CHIEF MINISTER, DELHI

PM biggest infiltrator: Mamata

Addressing worshippers after Eid prayers at Kolkata's iconic Red Road, the TMC supremo described the upcoming Assembly elections as a battle to protect democratic rights and Bengal's plural social fabric



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, March 21: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Saturday launched a sharp attack on the BJP-led Centre, accusing it of trying to snatch away voting rights through the SIR, describing Prime Minister Narendra Modi as the "biggest infiltrator" and warning that those targeting Bengal "should go to hell".

Addressing worshippers after Eid prayers at Kolkata's iconic Red Road, the TMC supremo described the upcoming Assembly elections as a battle to protect democratic rights and Bengal's plural social fabric.

"We will not allow Modi ji and the BJP to take away your voting rights. We will fight till the end," Banerjee told the gathering, adding that she had approached courts from Kol-

kata to Delhi to challenge the process.

Her remarks come amid an escalating political confrontation over the Election Commission's voter roll revision exercise, which the ruling Trinamool Congress alleges has led to the deletion of names of genuine voters, particularly from minority-dominated areas.

"When you go abroad, you shake hands with leaders and speak of friendship. That is your choice, and I respect all countries. But when you return to India, suddenly the Hindu-Muslim narrative begins, and people are called infiltrators," she said.

We will not allow Modi ji and the BJP to take away your voting rights. We will fight till the end

MAMATA BANERJEE | CHIEF MINISTER, WEST BENGAL

"You then call for deleting names and labelling people as infiltrators. I would say you and your government are the biggest infiltrators," Banerjee said, in an apparent swipe at Modi and the BJP's repeated allegations of illegal immigration in the border state.

The BJP, however, reacted sharply to Banerjee's remarks, accusing her of lowering the

dignity of constitutional offices.

"Anyone who calls the prime minister of the country an infiltrator does not deserve to hold a constitutional post. I think she has lost her mind, she should visit Ranchi immediately," BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari said.

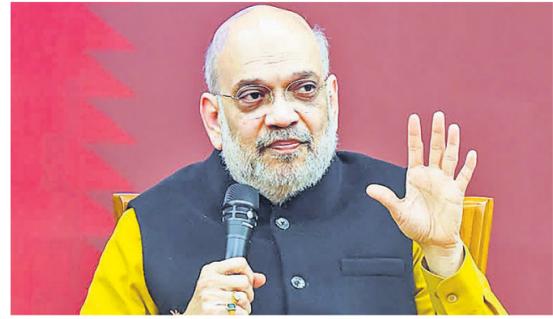
The party also rejected the TMC's allegations regarding the voter roll revision, asserting that the exercise was being conducted by the EC to remove duplicate and ineligible names.

With the state heading towards a high-stakes Assembly election, Banerjee used the occasion to reinforce her party's campaign narrative that the BJP was attempting to influence the electoral process through institutional mechanisms and polarising rhetoric.

Illegal immigration has emerged as one of the BJP's central campaign planks in Bengal, with party leaders repeatedly accusing the TMC government of encouraging infiltration from neighbouring Bangladesh to consolidate its minority vote bank.

"Many people's names have been deleted from the voter list during the SIR exercise. I have knocked on the doors of the Calcutta High Court and even the Supreme Court. I still hope people's rights will be protected," she said.

Shah to introduce bill for 'umbrella' law on CAPFs



Union Home Minister proposes 50 pc posts for IPS at IG level

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 21: Union Home Minister Amit Shah will introduce in the Rajya Sabha Monday an "umbrella law" for central armed police forces (CAPFs) to regulate recruitment, deputation, promotion and other conditions of services of their officers, according to the List of Business issued by the House.

All the CAPFs - CRPF, BSF, ITBP and SSB -- are governed by their respective Acts. The rules under these Acts govern the recruitment and conditions of service of Group A General Duty Officers and other officers and members in the CAPFs.

The Central Armed Police Forces (General Administration) Bill, 2026, provides that for the purposes of appointment of officers from the Indian Police Service in CAPFs, 50 per cent of the posts will be filled by deputation in the rank of Inspector General and a minimum of 67 per cent of the posts will be filled by deputation in the rank of Additional Director General.

The posts in the ranks of Special Director General and Director General shall be filled

by deputation only, it proposes. The proposed legislation comes after the Supreme Court, in October last year, dismissed the Centre's plea seeking a review of its 2025 verdict that directed that IPS officers' deputation in the CAPFs be reduced and asked for a cadre review to be carried out in six months.

"In view of expanding functional and operational requirements, the distinct organisational structure of these Forces have evolved over a period of time. In recent years, due to the absence of an umbrella law, regulatory provisions have evolved in a fragmented manner, resulting in several litigations on service-related matters, leading to some functional and administrative difficulties," the objectives of the bill state.

The bill seeks to regulate the recruitment, deputation, promotion and other conditions of services of Group A General Duty Officers and other officers appointed in these Central Armed Police Forces, the Objectives of the bill circulated among Rajya Sabha members said.

A group of retired CAPF officers have gone to the Supreme Court with a contempt plea against Home Secretary Govind Mohan for not implementing the Supreme Court's October order in this regard.

Govt decides to remove domestic airfare caps

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/ Mumbai, March 21: The government has removed temporary caps on domestic airfares that were imposed in the wake of the IndiGo flight disruptions in December last year.

The airfare caps removal will be effective from March 23, according to an order issued by the civil aviation ministry.

The removal also comes at a time when airlines are facing significant operational disruptions in international routes due to the West Asia conflict.

In the order, the ministry also said that airlines are required to exercise pricing discipline and act responsibly.

"Airlines shall ensure that fares remain reasonable, transparent and commensurate with market conditions, and that passenger interests are not adversely impacted," it said.

The ministry also stressed that any instance of excessive or unjustified surge in fares, if observed particularly during periods of peak demand, disruptions, or exigencies, would be viewed seriously.

On a real-time basis, the ministry is monitoring the airfare trends.

According to the order, the temporary caps on domestic airfares were imposed December 6 to contain an abnormal surge in ticket prices arising out of large-scale flight disruptions of IndiGo.

SNIPPETS

'Big fish' linked to rape-accused godman must face action: Oppn

Mumbai: A day after Maharashtra State Women's Commission chief Rupali Chakankar resigned over her links with rape-accused Ashok Kharat, opposition leaders Saturday demanded that the "big fish" including ministers who allegedly patronised the self-styled godman must face probe. Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar said she has forwarded Chakankar's resignation to Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis for acceptance. Chakankar, who belongs to the Nationalist Congress Party headed by Pawar, tendered her resignation Friday. But the opposition continued to pile pressure on the BJP-led government, with Congress leaders Vijay Wadetiwar and Varsha Gaikwad saying that her resignation was not enough and there should be a comprehensive probe. Wadetiwar alleged that attempts were underway to shield the influential people linked to Kharat who was arrested by Nashik Police earlier this week after a woman accused him of raping her multiple times.

Punjab min Laljit Bhullar resigns amid row over suicide of warehousing official

Chandigarh: Punjab minister Laljit Singh Bhullar tendered his resignation from the state Cabinet on Saturday after Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann asked him to step down amid allegations of abetment of suicide of a state warehousing corporation official. Gagandeep Singh Randhawa, the district manager of the Punjab State Warehousing Corporation in Amritsar, allegedly took his own life after consuming a poisonous substance Friday. A purported video surfaced on social media Saturday in which Randhawa, who held the additional charge of Patti, was heard saying that he had consumed some poisonous substance and accused the transport minister of harassment. "Kha layi 'celphos' tuhade yaar ne. Minister Laljit Bhullar de dar ton. Hun nahi main bachda." (Your friend consumed poison because of fear of minister Laljit Bhullar. I will not survive now), Randhawa could be heard saying in the video. However, Bhullar, the MLA from Patti in Tarn Taran, rejected allegations against him as baseless.

POST OF THE DAY



Throwing people in jail for criticising you, taking down tweets, silencing social media, coercing the press, weaponising the taxman against rivals, terrorising minorities, dodging reporters, destroying lives, disappearing during crises. Hallmarks of a leader of courage.

@kapskom

SHORT TAKES

Rahul to launch Kerala poll campaign Mar 25

Thiruvananthapuram: Senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi will kick off his election campaign for the upcoming Assembly polls in Kerala March 25 with a major rally in Kozhikode. The rally is scheduled to be held at Kozhikode beach in the evening, marking the beginning of his campaign tour in the state ahead of the April 9 elections, senior Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala said on Saturday. Chennithala, who heads the election campaign committee, said Gandhi is expected to elaborate on key promises of the United Democratic Front (UDF), including the proposed "guarantee card".

Arms, ammunition, 50 IEDs seized in Manipur

Imphal: Security forces seized at least 29 firearms and ammunition and 50 IEDs from several hills and valley districts of Manipur, a police statement said Saturday. All the recoveries were made Friday. During an operation, six firearms, including an AK-56 rifle, three grenades and ammunition were recovered from the Wabagai Turel Mamei area in Kakching district, the statement said. Twenty-nine improvised explosive devices (IEDs), along with five locally made hand grenades, five electric detonators and several other explosive items, were also seized.

Taxi driver killed as SUV strikes rickshaw

Gurugram: An auto-rickshaw driver was killed and two passengers injured after an SUV struck the passenger vehicle on the Southern Peripheral Road here, police said Saturday. The driver of the SUV (Thar) fled after leaving his vehicle in the spot.

Journalists condemn 'force' in UNI premises sealing

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 21: Four prominent journalists' organisations Saturday condemned the alleged "manhandling" of journalists and "use of excessive force" by Delhi Police while sealing the premises of news agency United News of India.

In separate statements, the Press Club of India (PCI), the Editors Guild of India (EGI), the Indian Women's Press Corps (IWPC) and the Press Association (PA) said the police showed "undue haste" in implementing a high court order that cancelled the allotment of land to UNI, and journalists were allegedly "manhandled" in the process.

The PCI said several journalists at the news agency claimed they were physically removed by the Delhi Police and Central Reserve Police Force personnel from their workplace on Friday evening "by use of force", not even allowing them to collect their personal belongings.

"The PCI expresses deep shock at the manhandling of journalists at work at the United News of India premises at 9, Rafi Marg, New Delhi, by police last evening following a court order regarding a land dispute," the PCI said.

The PCI also condemned in the "strongest possible" terms the "highhandedness" unleashed by authorities on the journalists, including women. The EGI said that even



before the order was made available on the court's website, hundreds of police and paramilitary personnel had arrived at the UNI premises.

Journalists, including female staff, were forcibly evicted while they were carrying out their duties.

The Guild said that while it

does not question the need to implement the high court order, what was disturbing was the lack of due process, and the manifestly excessive display of force by the authorities in executing the court's directions.

The IWPC too said that while the judicial process has taken its course leading to the recent high court order, what was "extremely disturbing" was the manner in which the police force behaved with the journalists present at the office.

"The move to clear the UNI premises on that day itself saw the police act in a manner that, according to those present, was high-handed, rough and undignified. Women journalists were not spared either, it is said," the IWPC said.

SC concerned over cops uploading videos online

The bench was hearing a PIL that alleged that police upload videos and photographs of the accused on social media and create a bias in people's minds

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 21: The Supreme Court has expressed its concern over the trend of people instantly uploading videos shot on mobile phone on social media and said that such activities pose a serious threat to a fair trial.

The remark was made by a bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi Friday.

The bench was hearing a PIL that alleged that police upload videos and photographs of the accused on social media and create a bias in people's minds.

The PIL argued that the court, in another case, had al-

ready asked the states to frame guidelines for media briefing by the police, and it would cover social media posts as well.

The bench suggested the petitioner Hemendra Patel to await the outcome of those guidelines, and agreed with senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan, appearing for Patel, that every person nowadays with a mobile phone has become media.

The senior counsel flagged the recent trend of police posting the images of accused persons being handcuffed, tied by ropes, paraded, forced to kneel, etc, on social media, which, apart from causing an affront to personal dignity, adds to the public bias.



Justice Bagchi told Sankaranarayanan that instead of talking of police, which have been given three months to formulate a standard operating procedure on police media briefings, he should seek a comprehensive mechanism

for police, conventional, and social media.

The judge said, on a larger canvas, the court believes police should not create a bias against the accused through briefings. "Police can be restrained through the SOP. But

what about the media, especially social media, and the public? Can they be restrained? Comparatively, TV channels are much more restrained, even though one might disagree with their views," Justice Bagchi observed.

The present issue may require broader consideration extending beyond the immediate question raised in the petition, he said.

Justice Bagchi told Sankaranarayanan, "We understand that police briefings to the media must be responsible and reasonable, and must not be exposed to bias, because in a criminal justice system, the investigating agency is neither pro-victim nor pro-accused." Sankaranarayanan pointed out that the issue of "media trial" was first addressed by the Supreme Court in the Sahara versus SEBI decision of 2012.

Justice Bagchi said the concern is of police authorities

getting carried away during media briefings and the emerging risks of media trials in pending criminal cases.

"It is the duty of the investigating agency to conduct an independent investigation to unravel the truth. To ensure that a balance is maintained, the manual is a very positive step. The manual will restrain the police from making over-enthusiastic statements which may be inferable with regard to matters that are subject to adjudication in a forensic and dispassionate manner. However, what happens when such an exercise, though restraining the police, is not able to remove the cloud or the vitiated atmosphere created through third-party indulgence, where sections of the media go on spinning narratives either way, resulting in a media trial that completely subverts the rule of law," he said.



This week, the intensity of the attacks that the IDF and the US military will carry out against the Iranian terrorist regime and against the infrastructures on which it relies will increase significantly ISRAEL KATZ | DEFENCE MINISTER, ISRAEL

TAPS GO DRY IN HAVANA

Residents across Havana, the capital of Cuba, hauled buckets and lined up for water from tanker trucks as a combination of fuel shortages and power grid instability left thousands of taps dry. State water utility Aguas de La Habana confirmed that pumping schedules and supply operations have been disrupted by a lack of electricity



of the day quote

Hizballah's reckless attack on Israel demonstrates yet again that it prioritises the pursuit of terrorism on behalf of the Iranian regime over the peace and safety of the Lebanese people



TOMMY PIGOTT | PRINCIPAL DEPUTY SPOKESPERSON FOR THE US DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Pakistan will not allow terrorists operating from Afghanistan to spoil peace and endanger its security



ASIM MUNIR | CHIEF OF ARMY STAFF AND CHIEF OF DEFENCE FORCES FIELD MARSHAL, PAKISTAN

The pause is temporary; we hope it's temporary regarding the continuation of the trilateral format



DMITRY PESKOV | KREMLIN SPOKESMAN, RUSSIA

SHORT TAKES

US names Colombian prez 'priority target'

New York: Colombian President Gustavo Petro has been designated a "priority target" by the US Drug Enforcement Administration as federal prosecutors in New York probe his alleged ties to drug traffickers, according to people familiar with the matter and records seen by The Associated Press. DEA records show Petro has surfaced in multiple investigations dating to 2022, many based on interviews with confidential informants. The alleged crimes the DEA has investigated include his possible dealings with Mexico's Sinaloa cartel and a scheme to leverage his "total peace" plan to benefit prominent traffickers who contributed to his presidential campaign. The records also suggest the use of law enforcement to smuggle cocaine and fentanyl through Colombian ports. The "priority target" label is reserved for suspects DEA deems to have a "significant impact" on the drug trade.

Two Indians killed in Nepal road mishap

Kathmandu: Two Indian nationals died Saturday after a local passenger bus hit them in Nepal's capital, Kathmandu. Padam Upadhyay and Satish Kumar Kushwaha, both Indian nationals working in Kathmandu, sustained serious injuries after they were hit by the private bus at Bhotebahal area on the outskirts of Kathmandu Friday night. They were admitted to National Trauma Centre where they breathed their last on Saturday, said Naresh Raj Subedi, Deputy Superintendent of Police and spokesperson at Kathmandu Valley Traffic Office. Bus driver Man Bahadur Basnet, 35, was arrested in the case and police are conducting further investigation, he added.

10 killed in South Korean factory fire

Seoul: South Korean rescue workers Saturday recovered 10 bodies from the charred wreckage of an auto parts factory in the central city of Daejeon, where a blaze likely triggered by an explosion injured at least 59 others and left four missing. The Ministry of the Interior and Safety said 25 people were seriously injured but officials didn't immediately confirm whether any were in life-threatening condition. More than 500 firefighters, police and emergency personnel were deployed to contain the fire and conduct rescue operations after the fire broke out Friday afternoon. Videos and photos from the scene showed thick grey smoke billowing from the complex and some workers jumping from a building.

Conflict now out of Trump's control

More than 2,000 people have been killed in Iran since the US and Israel attacked February 28

REUTERS

MIDDLE EAST WAR

Washington, March 21: President Donald Trump ends the third week of the Iran war confronting a crisis that seems to be slipping out of his hands: Global energy prices are surging, the United States stands isolated from allies and more troops are preparing to deploy despite his promise the war would be only a "short excursion."

A defensive Trump called other NATO countries "cowards" for refusing to help secure the Strait of Hormuz and insisted the campaign was unfolding according to plan. But his declaration Friday that the battle "was Militarily WON" clashed with the reality of a defiant Iran that is choking off Gulf oil and gas supplies while launching missile strikes across the region.

Trump, who took office promising to keep the US out of "stupid" military interventions, now appears to control neither the outcome nor the messaging of a conflict he helped to initiate. The lack of a clear exit strategy carries risks both for his presidential legacy and his party's political prospects as Republicans scramble to defend narrow majorities in Congress in the November midterm elections.

"Trump has built himself a box called the Iran war, and he can't figure out how to get out of it," said Aaron David Miller, a former Middle East negotiator



for Republican and Democratic administrations. "That's his biggest source of frustration."

A White House official challenged that characterization, with many of Iran's top leaders eliminated in targeted killings, most of its navy sunk and its ballistic missile arsenal largely destroyed.

"This has been an undisputed military success," the official said.

LIMITS OF TRUMP'S POWER

The limits of Trump's power — diplomatically, militarily and politically — were thrown into sharp relief over the past

week. He was caught off-guard by the resistance of fellow

NATO members and other foreign partners to deploying their navies to help secure the Strait of Hormuz, according to another White House official who, like other officials Reuters spoke to for this story, was granted anonymity to discuss internal deliberations.

With the president not wanting to appear isolated, some White House aides have advised Trump to quickly find an "off-ramp" and set limits on the military operation's scope, said one person close to the discus-

Iran defies US-Israeli strikes, allies spurn Washington's calls

Analysts highlight Trump's miscalculations, lack of clear exit strategy

Rising gas prices and troop deployments threaten support for Trump and his Republicans

Trump struggles to control narrative as Iran blocks oil shipments, launches missiles

Hawaii suffers worst flooding in two decades

Over 5K told to evacuate as officials warn 120-year-old dam could fail

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Honolulu, March 21: Hawaii suffered its worst flooding in more than 20 years as heavy rains fell on soil already saturated by downpours from a winter storm a week ago, officials said Friday while warning that still more rain was expected during the weekend.

Muddy floodwaters smothered vast stretches of Oahu's North Shore, a community world-renowned for its big-wave surfing. Raging waters lifted homes and cars and prompted evacuation orders for 5,500 people north of Honolulu. Authorities cautioned that a 120-year-old dam could fail.

Governor Josh Green said the cost of the storm could top \$1 billion, including damage to airports, schools, roads, people's homes and a Maui hospital in Kula.

"This is going to have a very serious consequence for us as a state," Green said at a news conference.

Most of the state was under



a flood watch, with Haleiwa and Waialua in northern Oahu under a flash flood warning, according to the National Weather Service.

Green said his chief of staff spoke to the White House and received assurances the islands would have federal support.

No deaths were reported and no one was unaccounted for. About 10 people were taken to a hospital with hypothermia, he said.

Crews searched by air and by water for people who had been stranded - efforts that were hampered by people flying personal

drones to get images of the flooding, said Ian Scheuring, a spokesperson for Honolulu.

The National Guard and Honolulu Fire Department airlifted 72 children and adults who had been attending a spring break youth camp at a retreat on Oahu's west coast called Our Lady of Kea'au, according to city and camp officials. The camp is on high ground but authorities didn't want to leave them there, the mayor said.

Green said the flooding was the state's most serious since 2004 floods in Manoa inundat-

ed homes and a University of Hawaii library.

Dozens - if not hundreds - of homes were damaged Friday but officials haven't been able to fully assess the destruction, Honolulu Mayor Rick Blangiardi said. Some 5,500 people were under evacuation orders.

"There's no question that the damage done thus far has been catastrophic," he said.

Officials blamed some of the devastation on the sheer amount of rain that fell in a short amount of time on saturated land. Parts of Oahu received 8 to 12 inches (20 to 30 cm) of rain overnight. Kaala, the island's highest peak, got nearly 16 inches (40 cm) in the past day, the National Weather Service said. More rain was expected: Blangiardi said 6 to 8 inches (15 to 20 cm) of rain was forecast to fall on Oahu in the next two to three days.

Winter storm systems known as "Kona lows," which feature southerly or southwesterly winds that bring in moisture-laden air, were responsible for the deluges in the past two weeks. The intensity and frequency of heavy rains in Hawaii have increased amid human-caused global warming, experts say.

Gautam Singhanian injured, two missing in speedboat accident

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Male, March 21: Raymond Group Chairman & Managing Director Gautam Hari Singhanian has sustained injuries, while two Indian nationals are reported missing after a speedboat capsized near Felidhoo island in the Maldives, according to local media reports.

There were seven people on board at the time of the incident near Vaavu atoll early Friday morning. Two women - a British national and a Russian national - and five Indian men were on board, the Edition.mv reported.

Police said five people fell into the sea when the vessel overturned, including the Russian woman and four Indian men.

Singhanian, 60, who was among the tourists, has been rescued.

Citing police, news portal Adhathu reported that he sustained minor injuries in the accident. He was discharged from the hospital after treatment, it added.

"The two missing persons are Indian nationals," police said, adding that search operations are on.



"The speedboat belongs to his yacht, TT Ashena. The Maldivian Coast Guard is still looking for two people who went missing in the accident," Adhathu reported.

Citing sources, it said that the vessel involved in the accident was a Cigarette racing boat designed to be driven at high speeds.

Maldives National Defence Force's Male Area Command Coast Guard Second Squadron is searching for the missing individuals. The incident occurred about two nautical miles southwest of Keyodhoo, MNDF said.

Iran's missile attack puts Diego Garcia under global focus

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, March 21: Iran has launched missiles at Diego Garcia, an Indian Ocean island that is home to a strategic UK-US military base.

Britain condemned "Iran's reckless attacks" after the unsuccessful attempt to hit the base. It's unclear how close the missiles came to the island, which is about 4,000 kilometres from Iran.

Here is what to know about the remote but strategic base.

Hub for US ops in Middle East, beyond

The US has described the Diego Garcia base as "an all but indispensable platform" for security operations in the Middle East, South Asia and East Africa.

Home to about 2,500 mostly American personnel, it has supported US military operations from Vietnam to Iraq and

Afghanistan. In 2008, the US acknowledged it also had been used for clandestine rendition flights of terror suspects.

Last year, the US deployed several nuclear-capable B-2 Spirit bombers to Diego Garcia amid an intense airstrike campaign targeting Yemen's Houthi rebels.

Britain initially refused to let the base be used for US-Israeli attacks on Iran, but after Iran lashed out at its neighbours, the UK said American bombers could use Diego Garcia and another British base to attack Iran's missile sites. On Friday, the British government said that includes sites being used to attack ships in the Strait of Hormuz.

The UK insists British bases can only be used for "specific and limited defensive operations".

But Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on X that Prime Minister Keir Starmer "is putting British lives in danger by allowing



UK bases to be used for aggression against Iran".

Iran currently has a self-imposed limit on its ballistic missile program, limiting their range to 2,000 kilometres. Diego Garcia is well outside that range. However, US officials long have alleged Iran's space programme could allow it to build intercontinental ballistic missiles.

Part of a contested island chain

Diego Garcia is part of the Chagos Archipelago, a chain of more than 60 islands in the middle of the Indian Ocean off the tip of India. The islands have been under British control since 1814, when they were ceded by France.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Britain evicted as many as 2,000 people from Diego Garcia so

the US military could build the base there.

In recent years, criticism has mounted over Britain's control of the archipelago and the way it forcibly displaced the local population. The United Nations and the International Court of Justice have urged Britain to end its "colonial administration" of the islands and transfer sovereignty to Mauritius.

Trump has criticised UK plans for the island

After long negotiations, the British government struck a deal last year with Mauritius to hand over sovereignty over the islands. Britain would then lease back the Diego Garcia base for at least 99 years.

The UK government says that will safeguard the future of the base, which is currently vulnerable to legal challenge. But the agreement has been criticised by many opposition politicians in Britain who say

giving up the islands puts them at risk of interference by China and Russia.

Some of the displaced Chagos islanders and their descendants also have challenged the deal, saying they were not consulted and it leaves them unclear on whether they will ever be allowed to return to their homeland.

The US administration initially welcomed the deal, but in January, President Donald Trump changed his mind, calling it "an act of GREAT STUPIDITY".

Starmer's initial refusal to let the US attack Iran from Diego Garcia further angered Trump, who said earlier this month that "the UK has been very, very uncooperative with that stupid island that they have".

Passage of the UK-Mauritius deal through Britain's Parliament has been put on hold until US support can be regained.

of the day **QUOTE**

Gen Z is entering the workforce with a very different set of expectations compared to previous generations. They value transparency, learning opportunities, and meaningful growth over traditional markers of employment

ANKIT AGGARWAL | FOUNDER AND CEO, UNSTOP

Women entrepreneurs in India are building serious businesses and creating real economic value. The opportunity today lies in making access to credit more transparent and efficient

NITIN KHANDELWAL | FOUNDER & CEO, ONENFD

The integration of AI agents within higher education institutions like MAHE showcases the potential of intelligent digital platforms to transform learning, research, and institutional operations

ARUNDHATI BHATTACHARYA | PRESIDENT & CEO, SOUTH ASIA AT SALESFORCE

SHORT TAKES

Pharma industry 3rd largest globally

New Delhi: India's pharmaceutical industry has evolved into a globally integrated and policy-supported system, ranking third globally by volume and 11th by value, with more than 3,000 companies and 10,500 manufacturing units, an official factsheet showed Saturday. The domestic pharmaceutical market, valued at \$60 billion, is projected to reach \$130 billion by 2030. According to the Economic Survey 2025-26, in FY25, the sector's annual turnover reached Rs. 4.72 lakh crore, with exports growing at a CAGR of 7 per cent over the last decade (FY15 to FY25). "India is the largest global supplier of generic medicines, accounting for around 20 per cent of global supply, manufacturing about 60,000 generic brands across 60 therapeutic categories," according to the fact sheet. Strong manufacturing capabilities, rising exports, growing foreign investment, and targeted government schemes have collectively strengthened domestic production, reduced import dependence, and expanded global market presence. At the same time, initiatives promoting affordable access, innovation, quality assurance, and regulatory oversight have reinforced public health outcomes and international confidence. Moreover, the proposed and recently concluded trade agreements with the European Union, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand are expected to further strengthen India's pharmaceutical and medical devices sector.

OpenAI to double workforce to 8K

Washington: Artificial intelligence start-up OpenAI plans to nearly double its workforce to 8,000 from 4,500 by the end of 2026, the Financial Times reported on Saturday, citing two people with knowledge of the matter. The ChatGPT-maker is also ramping up recruitment of specialists focused on "technical ambassadorship," aimed at helping businesses make better use of its tools, the report added. The company's latest funding round valued it at \$840 billion, as Big Tech and Masayoshi Son's Softbank joined its blockbuster \$110 billion round. OpenAI CEO Sam Altman reportedly issued an internal "code red" in early December last year, pausing non-core projects and redirecting teams to accelerate development in response to Google's Gemini 3.



We are quite hopeful that this (Middle East) crisis is not going to impact us in terms of meeting demand

PANKAJ AGARWAL | POWER SECRETARY

INDIA, BHUTAN BOOST UPI ADOPTION

In yet another example of UPI going global, India and Bhutan have announced to launch a cross-border remittance initiative, which will enable efficient and affordable remittance services between both the countries. This will happen via the postal network by integrating the Universal Postal Union (UPU) PosTransfer system with India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI)



Refiners scramble to buy Iran oil

US WAIVES SANCTIONS ON IRANIAN OIL AT SEA FOR 30 DAYS TO TAME PRICES

REUTERS

New Delhi/Singapore, March 21: Indian refiners plan to resume buying Iranian oil while refiners elsewhere in Asia are examining such a move after Washington temporarily removed sanctions to alleviate an energy crunch caused by the US-Israeli war on Iran, traders said Saturday.

Three Indian refining sources said they will buy Iranian oil and are awaiting government directions and clarity from Washington on details such as payment terms.

Refiners in India, which has much smaller crude stockpiles than other big Asian oil importers, rushed to book Russian oil after the US recently lifted sanctions temporarily. The Indian government could not be immediately reached for comment outside office hours.

Other Asian refiners are making checks to see if they can purchase the oil, several people with knowledge of the matter said.

The Trump administration Friday issued a 30-day sanc-

India set to buy while other Asian refiners making checks

About 170 million barrels Iranian oil on water - Kpler data



Oil on boil: Global benchmark oil prices have already risen more than 50% to over \$110 a barrel since the war started. The impacts are more pronounced for Middle East crudes - a staple for Asian economies - with prices hitting records near \$164

tions waiver for the purchase of Iranian oil already at sea, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said.

The waiver applies to oil loaded on any vessel, including sanctioned tankers, on

or before March 20 and discharged by April 19, according to the Office of Foreign Assets Control. It is the third time the US has temporarily waived sanctions on oil since the start of the war.

UNLOCKING MILLIONS OF BARRELS OF OIL

About 170 million barrels of Iranian crude are at sea, said Emmanuel Belostrino, Kpler's senior manager for crude oil market data, on ships scattered from the Middle East Gulf to the waters near China.

Consultancy Energy Aspects March 19 estimated 130 million to 140 million barrels of Iranian oil on water, equivalent to less than 14 days of current Middle East production losses.

Asia relies on the Middle East for 60% of its crude supply and the near-closure of the Strait of Hormuz this month is forcing refineries across the region to run at lower rates and cut fuel exports.

Trump re-imposed sanctions on Iran in 2018 over its nuclear programme. Since then, China has become Iran's main client with its independent refiners buying 1.38 million barrels per day (bpd) last year, Kpler data showed, attracted by deep discounts as

most countries shunned the crude due to the sanctions.

OTHER ISSUES COMPLICATE BUYING

Potential complications for buying Iranian oil include uncertainty over how to pay for it and the fact that a large share of it is aboard aging shadow fleet ships, traders said.

Also, some former purchasers of Iranian oil were contractually obligated to buy from National Iranian Oil Co., two refining sources said. However, since the U.S. re-imposed sanctions in late 2018, Iranian oil has been sold in significant part by third-party traders.

"It usually takes some time to work through compliance, administration and banking, etc., but I guess people will try to work ASAP," a Singapore-based trader said.

The sources declined to be named due to company policy. Other than China, major buyers of Iranian crude before sanctions were re-imposed included India, South Korea, Japan, Italy, Greece, Taiwan and Turkey.

ENERGY BOOSTER
India achieves 1BT coal production again



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 21: The country has successfully achieved the landmark of 1 billion tonne (BT) coal production for the second year in a row, Coal Ministry said Saturday.

With the sustained and co-ordinated efforts across the coal sector and the invaluable contribution of all stakeholders, this significant milestone, achieved on March 20, underscores India's growing self-reliance in the energy sector and its commitment to ensuring uninterrupted fuel supply to key industries.

According to the ministry, the sustained coal production level has enabled the country to effectively meet rising energy demands while supporting the power sector in maintaining record-high coal stock levels at coal-based thermal power plants.

"The achievement reflects robust planning, efficient execution, and strengthened coordination across the coal value chain, thereby contributing meaningfully to the nation's economic growth trajectory," the statement further said.

Meanwhile, the combined index of India's eight core infrastructure industries increased by 2.3 per cent in February this year compared to the corresponding figure for the same month of the previous year, according to latest data released by the Commerce and Industry Ministry. Coal production increased by 2.3 per cent in February over the same month of the previous year, while electricity generation rose by 0.5 per cent.

The Coal Ministry said it continues to remain steadfast in its commitment to fostering a stable, transparent, and performance-driven ecosystem.

Through proactive policy interventions, rigorous performance monitoring, and close engagement with stakeholders, the Ministry is ensuring reliable coal availability and seamless operations across sectors.

Amid the West Asia crisis, India's thermal power plants have adequate coal stocks of around 53.41 million tonnes which are adequate for nearly 23 days at the present rate of consumption, and further stocks are also being built up at the pitheads of coal mining companies as a proactive measure to meet any exigency amid the disruption in oil and gas supplies.

Coal India Limited is also taking adequate measures to ensure the supply of coal to all consumers, including small, medium and other consumers.

Kiran Bedi's Vedanta visit inspires women leaders



POST NEWS NETWORK

Jharsuguda, March 21: Vedanta Aluminium, India's largest producer of aluminium, welcomed Kiran Bedi to its mega aluminium plant at Jharsuguda Saturday.

A renowned champion of public reform and social justice, Bedi addressed over 1,000 participants in a special town hall meeting organised in continuation of the company's Women's Day 2026 celebrations. She shared several insights from her decades of frontline public leadership, focusing on how supporting inclusivity and equity efforts could help unlock new avenues for transformation.

Addressing the participants, Bedi said, "Vedanta Limited is a diamond of this country, and the nation needs more institutions that use resources responsibly and drive growth with purpose. Stay committed to learning, lead with empathy, and connect with people by listening and understanding before correcting. A stronger workforce needs more women, who bring a steady mindset, empathy, and the drive to deliver. Do not work for awards. Work with purpose, take ownership, and build a sense of be-

longing. Recognition will follow meaningful work."

Adding to her views, Priya Agarwal Hebbbar, Non-Executive Director, Vedanta Limited and Chairperson, Hindustan Zinc Limited, said, "Today, women make up over 23% of our team at Vedanta. We are also proud to be the first company in India to operate an all-women potline. These milestones reflect our commitment to inclusion and our intent to create meaningful change across the industry. We don't wait for change; we make it a part of how we operate. Our focus is to create equal opportunities for all, ensuring merit leads every decision we undertake at Vedanta."

Kiran Bedi has several achievements to her credit, including the distinction of serving as India's first woman IPS officer, first woman appointed as UN Civilian Police Adviser, and is a former Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry. She is also a recipient of the prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award, bestowed in recognition of her remarkable efforts in establishing better policing practices and undertaking substantial prison reforms in India. Together, these achievements have earned her worldwide acclaim.

TWITTER TAKEOVER

Musk misled shareholders, finds jury

REUTERS

San Francisco, March 21: A US federal jury found Elon Musk liable on Friday for claims he defrauded Twitter shareholders by trying to drive down the social media company's stock price so he could negotiate or back out of a \$44 billion takeover in 2022.

The verdict from a jury in San Francisco federal court came in a closely watched civil trial where Musk, the world's richest person, was accused of falsely claiming on social media that Twitter underreported how many fake and spam accounts, known as bots, were on its platform.

Damages have yet to be calculated but Francis Bottini, a lawyer for the shareholders, estimated they could total about \$2.5 billion.

"Musk's status as the world's richest man is not a free pass," Bottini said in a statement. "If you're able to move markets with your tweets you're responsible for the harm you cause to investors."

In a joint statement, Musk's lawyers at Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan called the verdict "a bump in the road. And we look forward to vindication on appeal."

The civil trial began March 2, and jurors began deliberating Tuesday. Musk has often chosen to battle shareholders in court rather than settle.

This included a 2023 trial in San Francisco over whether he defrauded Tesla shareholders who claimed to suffer losses after he falsely claimed in 2018 to have "funding secured" to take the electric car company private, and litigation in Delaware over his \$139 billion Tesla pay package. Musk won both cases.



Jury finds Musk liable for two statements over Twitter bots

Shareholders' lawyer says damages could reach billions of dollars

Musk plans appeal, lawyers call verdict a bump in the road

Musk ultimately completed his purchase of Twitter in October 2022 and renamed it X.

Twitter shareholders challenged three statements Musk made not long after agreeing in April 2022 to buy Twitter, where he questioned whether the company was overruled with bots.

Jurors found Musk liable for two of the statements.

One said the purchase was "temporarily on hold" pending confirmation that bots represented less than 5% of users. The other said the percentage of bots could be "much" higher than 20%, and the takeover could not go forward unless Twitter's chief executive proved the percentage was less than 5%.

These 200-year-old tea leaves could help scientists protect one of the world's most consumed beverages from the toll of climate change.

Jurors also said the shareholders didn't prove a separate claim that Musk engaged in a

scheme to defraud them. Michael Lifrak, a lawyer for Musk, countered that the billionaire's concern about bots was real, and that speaking out about the problem did not show Musk committed or intended to commit fraud.

The lawsuit covers investors who claimed to sell Twitter shares at prices Musk artificially depressed between May 13 and October 4, 2022.

Musk is separately in talks to settle a US Securities and Exchange Commission civil lawsuit accusing him of waiting too long in 2022 to disclose his initial purchases of Twitter so he could buy more at low prices before investors saw what he was doing.

In February, Musk's rocket and space exploration company SpaceX bought his artificial intelligence company xAI, which housed X. The purchase created the world's most valuable private company, worth about \$1.25 trillion at the time.

Air India to introduce strict cabin crew fitness compliance policy

A cabin crew member will be derostered if he or she is either 'underweight' or 'overweight' and will be required to clear the functional assessment

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 21: Air India is planning to introduce a health and fitness compliance policy for its cabin crew, under which those found underweight, overweight or obese could face derostering and loss of pay.

The compliance assessment will be based on the cabin crew members' Body Mass Index (BMI) with a reading of

18-24.9 defined as 'normal' and accepted as 'desired range' by the airline.

A BMI reading of less than 18 will be considered as 'underweight', though it may be acceptable subject to clearing of medical evaluation and functional assessment, according to the policy accessed by PTI.

A BMI reading in the range of 25-29.9 will be defined as 'overweight' and will be considered acceptable, provided



the cabin crew member clears the functional assessment.

As per the policy, to be effective from May 1, a reading of 30 or above is 'obese' and not an acceptable range.

A cabin crew member will be derostered if he or she is either 'underweight' or 'overweight' and will be required to clear the functional assessment.

In case the member fails to

pass the assessment, then he or she will be placed on loss of pay till the clearance happens, the policy said.

For cabin crew members who are found 'obese', the immediate action will include derostering and loss of pay. Such people will have to achieve the acceptable BMI within a certain number of days.

Loss-making Air India will take corrective actions against the obese cabin crew members for failure to meet the BMI parameters.

Air India has phased out most of its legacy staff in the last four years.

The airline was acquired

by the Tata Group in January 2022.

Introducing the 'Cabin Crew Health and Fitness Compliance Policy', Air India told the cabin crew members that the initial launch aims to promote awareness of maintaining a healthy lifestyle and familiarise them with the process of maintaining an appropriate weight category.

"The current policy, in the interim, serves as a preparatory measure before the policy with enhanced fitness standards is implemented," it said.

The new policy will be applicable to those flying as well as those under training.

Curtains draw on Para Athletics C'ship



Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi along with Minister for Sports & Youth Services Suryabanshi Suraj hands over the trophy to Haryana team during the closing ceremony of the 24th National Para Athletics Championships 2026 held at the Kalinga Stadium, Bhubaneswar, Saturday

Host state Odisha finishes ninth with a total of 17 medals including five gold

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 21: The 24th National Para Athletics Championship reached its grand conclusion Saturday at the Kalinga Stadium here from March 17-21. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi graced the valedictory ceremony, where he presented awards to the winning national para athletes. Haryana topped the medals tally with an impressive collection of 95 medals with rich haul of 39 gold, 31 silver and 25 bronze. Tamil Nadu finished second with a total of 51 medals including 14 gold, 20 silver and 17 bronze while Gujarat finished third with 30 medals comprising 14 gold, 11 silver and five bronze medals. The host state Odisha were ninth with a total of 17 medals

including five gold. As many as 1,460 para athletes representing 28 states as well as teams from the Border Security Force (BSF) and Services Sports Control Board (SSCB) took part in the event which featured 145 medal events. On the final day, Odisha's Suchitra Parida won gold in the Women's Javelin Throw F56 while in the Women's Long Jump T11-T12, Janaki Oram settled for silver. Addressing the gathering, Majhi delivered an inspiring message to the participants, stating that they are not just athletes but winners who have triumphed over the struggles of life. He remarked that by transforming their perceived weaknesses into their greatest strengths, they have become true icons of resilience. He also encouraged all athletes to continue their hard work and maintain their momentum for future competitions, specifically urging them to bring glory to the nation



at the upcoming Asian Para Games and extended special congratulations to the 40-member Odisha contingent for their dedication and spirit. Highlighting the path to excellence, the Chief Minister advised the athletes to follow the footsteps of legendary sporting icons like Olympic medalists Pramod Bhagat and V Ramesh Rao. In a significant announce-



ment, he shared that Odisha's prominence on the global sports map continues to grow, as Bhubaneswar has been selected to host the World Indoor Athletics Championships in 2028. He reaffirmed the state government's commitment to the development of sports through infrastructure expansion, talent identification, and high-quality training. The closing ceremony was attended by several dignitaries, including the Minister for Sports and Youth Services, Suryabanshi Suraj; Secretary of the Sports Department, Sachin R Jadhav; General Secretary of the Paralympic Committee, Jayawant GH; President of Para Athletics, Satyanarayan; and the Chairman of the Para Sports Association of Odisha, Kamalakanta Rath.

DEFENDING CHAMPIONS

Kohli ignites RCB with fiery pep talk

RCB will open their IPL 2026 campaign against Sunrisers Hyderabad March 28 at home



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, March 21: Talismanic batter Virat Kohli Saturday urged his Royal Challengers Bengaluru teammates to "switch on" themselves and not waste even a minute at the training sessions as they gear up for their IPL title defence. Addressing the squad during their first practice session at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium, Kohli underlined the need to maintain the intensity that brought them the title last year.

"We worked really hard over the last two to three seasons to achieve what we did last year, and it's only going to get tougher because other teams are going to come hard at us," Kohli said. RCB will open their IPL 2026 campaign against Sunrisers Hyderabad March 28 at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium. Emphasising urgency from day one, he added, "We don't waste these days. We stay ahead. So, switch on now. Let's not waste even a minute of any session that we are a part of. We must give our 120 per cent for these two and a half months."

RCB added Venkatesh Iyer, Mangesh Yadav, Jordan Cox, Vicky Ostwal and Satvik Deswal to their squad at the auction. Head coach Andy Flower expressed satisfaction with the squad assembled after the auction, saying the franchise had strengthened key areas. "We had an interesting auction and I think we've improved our squad, to be quite frank. We've brought in some great new additions. Integrating them into the RCB way alongside established players led by Virat and Rajat is an exciting part of building this team," Flower said. Highlighting the significance of being reigning champions, Flower said the team would embrace the challenge rather than dwell on past success. Wicketkeeper-batter Jitesh Sharma spoke about the positive atmosphere within the group as new and old members came together. "Everyone was very excited to meet each other. I was excited to get more batting time. I got a chance to meet all the coaches and train again," he said.

We don't waste these days. We stay ahead. So, switch on now. Let's not waste even a minute of any session that we are a part of. We must give our 120 per cent for these two and a half months

Virat Kohli

BCCI announces schedule for India's T20I tour of Ireland

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 21: Reigning world champions India will play two T20 Internationals in Ireland on June 26 and June 28 respectively, the BCCI said Saturday about the games that will precede their white-ball assignment in England. Both match will be held at Belfast, where the Indian team will play for the first time since 2007. "Team India (Senior Men) will travel to Ireland for a two-match T20I series in June 2026. Having toured Ireland three times in the past eight

years (2018, 2022 and 2023). This tour will mark India's return to Belfast for the first time since 2007," BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia said in a statement. India, who host Afghanistan for a one-off Test and a three-match ODI series ending June 20, will travel to England for five T20Is and three ODIs from July 1-19.

1st T20I:	June 26, 7:30 PM IST (Belfast)
2nd T20I:	June 28, 7:30 PM IST (Belfast)

Wimbledon 2026 to debut video reviews

The 'Holy Grail' of tennis joins US & Australian Open to use the VAR tech

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

London, March 21: The All-England Lawn Tennis Club (AELTC) has confirmed Saturday that a new Video Review System (VAR) will be introduced for the first time in the 2026 Wimbledon Championship, which will be held from June 29 to July 12 this year. The prestigious grass court

tournament will use a tennis version of VAR, which will be available for players competing on six courts in the Grand Slam. VAR technology will be available on Centre Court and Court One throughout the Championships and on the other courts, which include No.2 Court, No.3 Court, Court 12, and Court 18, only when they host the men's and women's singles matches.

With this announcement, Wimbledon has become the third Grand Slam after the US Open and the Australian Open to use the VAR technology. VAR will benefit the players in multiple ways, along with maintaining the accuracy of the decisions



made by the on-field umpire. The system allows the participants to challenge a range of controversial decisions, such as those relating to double bounces, foul shots, or hindrance. The US Open was the first big tournament to use the VAR in 2023, and now it has been available on all courts at the nine ATP Masters 1000 tournaments since February 2025. Wimbledon's digital upgrade started last year, when the tournament introduced Electronic Line Calling (ELC), which ended the role played by line judges over the previous 147 years.

Orleans Masters: Shuttlers bow out

Orleans: Indian shuttlers Tanvi Sharma and Isharani Baruah bowed out in the women's singles semifinals after suffering straight-game losses at the Orleans Masters Super 300 badminton tournament here Saturday. Unable to rein in her errors, 17-year-old Tanvi, a World Junior Championships silver medallist, went down 9-21 16-21 in 35 minutes to former world champion and fifth seed Nozomi Okuhara of Japan. Later, 22-year-old Isharani went down 12-21 21-23 to Thailand's Pitchamon Opatniphuth, the 2023 World Junior Championships, bringing curtains down on India's campaign in the \$250,000 event.

McEvoy swims to 50m glory

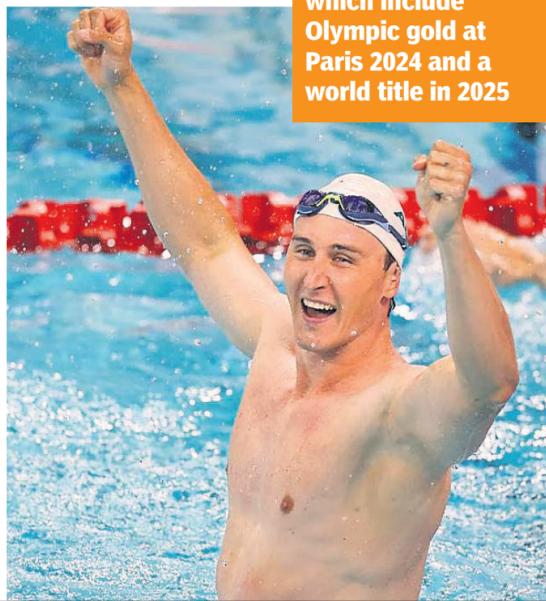
The Olympic champion from Australia took down Cesar Cielo's long-standing 20.91 mark from 2009, winning the 50m freestyle at the China Swimming Open by a huge margin

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Shenzhen (China), March 21: Olympic and world champion swimmer Cameron McEvoy has broken the men's 50-meter freestyle world record which had stood for 17 years. The 31-year-old Australian posted a time of 20.88 seconds on Friday at the China Open in Shenzhen, taking 0.03 second off Brazilian Cesar Cielo's previous mark.

said. "My old PB was 21.06, so maybe 20.99? But doing 20.88 is unreal. It's crazy." Cielo was quick to congratulate McEvoy on social media, tweeting: "Congrats, Cam".

The result adds a world record to his career achievements, which include Olympic gold at Paris 2024 and a world title in 2025



I knew I had a chance to do a PB (personal best). My old PB was 21.06, so maybe 20.99? But doing 20.88 is unreal. It's crazy

Cameron McEvoy | OLYMPIC CHAMPION

Cielo set his world record of 20.91 during swimming's so-called "super suit" era in 2009. Those suits were later banned because they increased buoyancy and reduced drag, resulting in nearly 150 world records falling in 2009 before being prohibited in 2010. "I knew I had a chance to do a PB (personal best)," McEvoy

MIDDLE EAST TURMOIL

World Gymnastics cancels Doha WC



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Geneva, March 21: The artistic gymnastics World Cup scheduled to take place in Doha in April has been canceled "in light of the current situation in the Middle East," the sport's world governing body has said. "World Gymnastics reports that, following an urgent online vote and in light of the current situation in the Middle East, its executive committee has decided to cancel the 2026 edition of the Artistic Gymnastics Apparatus World Cup in Doha, scheduled to take place from April 15 to 18," World Gymnastics said in a statement late on

Friday night. "The event will not be rescheduled," it added. Since the US-Israeli strikes on Iran began, many teams had cancelled their application for the competitions held in the Middle East, reports Xinhua. No penalties will be applied to late applications for the last two Apparatus World Cups in Cairo and Osijek in April, World Gymnastics said. "World Gymnastics expresses its support to all those impacted by recent developments and hopes for a swift return to stability in the Middle East." Furthermore, the World Gymnastics meeting approved

HIT BY WAR

FIFA World Cup 2026: Iran has urged FIFA to shift its 2026 World Cup matches from the USA to Mexico, citing safety concerns and lack of visa security following comments from Donald Trump

AFC Champions League: Multiple West Zone round of 16 games were postponed indefinitely, affecting teams like Al Nassr and Al Hilal

Finalissima: The Finalissima match between Spain and Argentina in Qatar was cancelled

FORMULA ONE & MOTORSPORTS

Bahrain and Saudi Arabian Grands Prix: Races in April were canceled due to security concerns

MotoGP: The Qatar Grand Prix was postponed to November

Test Events: Pirelli's wet tyre test in Bahrain cancelled

CRICKET & OTHER SPORTS

Cricket: Matches in Abu Dhabi, including those involving the English Lions, were affected, with teams facing travel delays

Tennis: Players like Daniil Medvedev and Andrey Rublev faced travel issues traveling from Dubai to the US

Badminton: PV Sindhu was stranded in Dubai, forcing a withdrawal from the All-England Open

several exceptional adjustments to the rules, including the number of highest results to be taken into account for ranking calculations. The decision comes after weeks of uncertainty following the outbreak of hostilities February 28, when the United

States and Israel launched military strikes on Iran, triggering a wider regional conflict that has disrupted travel and raised security risks, reported Xinhua. Several countries in the region closed their airspace in the aftermath of the strikes.