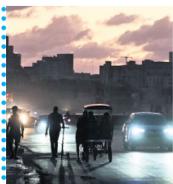




Trouble mounts

A group of 10 lawyers approaches the Centre seeking deportation of actor Nora Fatehi from India

LEISURE | P2



Power restoration

Cuba begins restoring its energy system after a nationwide grid collapse left millions without power

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Bitcoin slump

As the West Asia conflict escalates, Bitcoin tanks to \$68,241 per coin as the overall crypto market declines further Sunday

BUSINESS | P11



Odisha's para legend

Paralympic champion Pramod Bhagat secures two gold medals and one silver at Spanish Para Badminton International

SPORTS | P12

Prativa Panda new SCB Dean, JC Choudhury Suptd

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 22: Nearly a week after at least 12 patients lost their lives in a major fire at the Trauma Care ICU of SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack, the state government Sunday effected a major reshuffle by appointing Prativa Panda as the Dean and Principal of the medical college and Jyotish Chandra Choudhury as the Superintendent of the premier healthcare facility.

According to an order issued by the Health & Family Welfare department, Lucy Das, currently serving as Dean and Principal of SCB Medical College, has been posted against the vacant post of Professor in the Cardiothoracic and Vascular Surgery (CTVS) department of MCH. She has also been allowed to work in Obstetrics and Gynaecology department there.

Prativa Panda, Dean and Principal of Pandit Raghunath Murmu Medical College, has been appointed the new Dean and Principal of SCBMCH.

Meanwhile, Nirmal Chandra Mohapatra, Professor and HoD of Orthopaedics department at SCB, has been named the Dean and Principal of Pandit Raghunath Murmu Medical College, Baripada.

The notification further stated that Jyotish Chandra Choudhury, Professor and HoD of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology at SCBMCH, has been appointed the Superintendent of SCB Medical College and Hospital.

Similarly, Satyajit Ray, Professor of Orthopaedics department at Government Medical College and Hospital, Sundargarh has been transferred and posted at SCBMCH, in the same capacity. Tapas Kumar Panigrahi, Associate Professor of Orthopaedics at Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati Medical College and Hospital, who was on deputation to SCBMCH, has been transferred and posted as Associate Professor of Orthopaedics at Sundargarh Government Medical College and Hospital.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I'll be home late, honey. The airline has just realised we're all in the wrong aircraft!

CAR TEST-DRIVE FRAUD IN CITY; TWO ARRESTED

MANOJ JENA, OP

Bhubaneswar, March 22: The Chandrasekharpur police Sunday arrested two youths who allegedly stole cars from owners by taking them for test drives under the pretext of purchasing them.

The accused have been identified as Ashrajit Kumar, 25, of Bihar, and Harsh Kumar, 26, of Jharkhand.

According to police, the duo operated a car test-drive racket by contacting people looking to sell their vehicles through various online platforms. They would first establish contact with the owners, gain their trust, and express interest in buying the vehicles. During the process, they would take the cars out for a test drive and then flee with them.

Kuldeep Das, a resident of Chandrasekharpur area, is among the recent victims. He had posted an advertisement to sell his car on OLX when he was targeted by the accused. After losing his car to the fraudsters, he lodged a complaint with the police, who launched an investigation and traced the suspects to the Panikoili area in Jajpur district, where they were apprehended.

"We have seized two vehicles from their possession—one sedan and one SUV. The accused have been forwarded to court. They were involved in similar thefts across multiple states," said Chandrasekharpur IIC Girish Chandra Maharana.

The 'Little India' that came under attack from Iran

Israel's Dimona, often referred to as 'Little India' for its sizeable Indian-origin population, is situated less than 20 km from one of the key sites of Israel's nuclear arsenal. A series of Iranian missile strikes on southern Israel has left widespread destructions and dozens injured, with the town of Dimona among the worst hit. As per Indian embassy in Tel Aviv, the main waves of immigration into Israel from India took place in 1950s and 1960s. The majority is from Maharashtra (Bene Israelis) who settled in Dimona in 1955 followed by Kerala (Cochini Jews) and Kolkata (Baghdadi Jews) during 1950-60 and 1948-70, respectively.

In recent years, some Indian Jews from Mizoram and Mani-



pur (Bnei Menache) have also been immigrating to Israel. Dimona reflects Indian heritage, culture and cuisine with the smell of 'jalebis' and 'chaat' wafting through this small city where 30 per cent are of Indian origin.

Dimona holds strategic and cultural significance. It is home to Israel's nuclear research facility and has long been known as 'Little India' due to its large Indian-origin Jewish community. The town reflects this heritage through Indian shops,

widespread use of Marathi, and enduring cultural ties to India. Indian shops are spread across the town, and Marathi can be heard everywhere, with 7,500 strong Indian community making up for some 30 per cent of the town's population. Cricket is popular in the town, and the younger generation is very familiar with local Indian snacks like 'sonpapdi', 'gulab jamun', 'papri chaat', 'bhel-puri', which several shops sell.

Significantly, at least 47 people were injured after a missile carrying a heavy warhead struck a community building in a residential area of Dimona Saturday. The blast damaged surrounding homes, ignited fires, and triggered panic among residents rush-

ing for shelter. Among the injured was a 12-year-old boy in serious condition after being hit by shrapnel. Dozens of others sustained minor injuries or suffered trauma in the chaos that followed. Emergency responders described scenes of "extensive damage and chaos," as videos circulating online showed large fireballs, burning buildings, and debris scattered across streets. Craters left by the impact further underscored the scale of the destruction.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called it a "very difficult evening" and said he had spoken with the mayor of Arad, assuring full government support for affected communities.



TROUBLED WATERS: Pyxis Pioneer, a vessel which left Port of Nederland in Texas, brought 16,714 tonne Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), at New Mangalore Port in Karnataka, Sunday PFI PHOTO

CM unveils, lays stones for ₹2,612cr water projects

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 22: In a bid to reinforce the government's commitment to water security and sustainable development, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi inaugurated and laid the foundation stones for multiple water resource projects worth around ₹2,612 crore, marking the World Water Day Sunday.

Majhi inaugurated the state-level Water Day celebrations at Lok Seva Bhavan Convention Centre here Sunday. Foundation stones were laid for 17 projects worth around ₹2,292 crore, while 124 projects valued at nearly ₹320 crore were launched. Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister emphasised that water security is essential for building a prosperous and developed Odisha and urged people to conserve every drop.

The projects largely cover Sambalpur, Ganjam, Jharsuguda, Keonjhar and Malkangiri districts, according to sources. "Even a single drop of water is precious for many people across

the world. We must take a pledge not to waste water and spread this message to every household," he said. He also stressed the importance of educating children about water conservation, calling them "future water warriors."

He described the Centre's Jal Jeevan Mission as a transformative initiative and reaffirmed the state's commitment to providing safe piped drinking water to every household. He added that no farmland in Odisha would suffer due to water scarcity and that efficient water management would be prioritised to strengthen the rural economy.

Highlighting gender equality in water governance, Majhi said women and self-help groups are being engaged as 'Jal Sathi' partners. He noted that efforts are underway to eliminate gender disparity in water management while enhancing access to water services for all sections of society.

Majhi also outlined irrigation goals, stating that crop intensity in the state is targeted to reach 220 per cent by 2036 and 250 per cent by 2047. Through various irrigation schemes, additional irrigation facilities have already been provided to around 2.2 lakh hectares of land.

7 killed in Qatar helicopter crash

REUTERS

Cairo, March 22: Seven people have been killed in a helicopter crash in Qatar's territorial waters, Qatar and Turkey said Sunday.

The Qatari and Turkish defence ministries said the helicopter had crashed after suffering a technical malfunction, which the Qatari ministry said was during "routine duty".

Four of those killed were Qatari armed forces personnel, one was from the Qatar-Turkey joint forces and two were technicians, the Turkish and Qatari defence ministries said.

"Military cooperation and coordination activities between the Republic of Turkey and the State of Qatar continue uninterrupted within the framework of existing agreements and plans," the Turkish defence ministry said.



US, Iran trade threats over energy targets

REUTERS

Tel Aviv/Jerusalem/Washington, March 22: US President Donald Trump and Iran threatened to escalate their war by attacking energy facilities in the Gulf, a potential widening of hostilities that could deepen a regional crisis and add to concerns in global markets.

Air raid sirens sounded across Israel from the early hours of Sunday, warning of incoming missiles from Iran, after scores of people were hurt overnight in two separate attacks in the southern Israeli towns of Arad and Dimona.

The Israeli military said hours later that it was striking Tehran in response. Trump Saturday threatened to obliterate Iran's power plants if Tehran did not fully reopen the Strait of Hormuz within 48 hours, suggesting a significant escalation barely a day after he talked about "winding down" the war, now in its fourth week.

Iran said Sunday it would attack US infrastructure, including energy facilities in the Gulf, if Trump carried out his threat, which he made as U.S. Marines and heavy landing craft contin-

Melanistic tiger hide seized; 5 detained

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, March 22: Forest officials Sunday seized a melanistic tiger hide from Kuliana area under Baripada forest division in Mayurbhanj district and detained five persons, authorities said.

The detainees, all reportedly from Kuliana area, are being questioned. Officials suspect the involvement of more persons and have launched a broader investigation. Baripada DFO Gobind Biswal, however, said detailed information will be shared during a press briefing after the investigation progresses.

Field Director of Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR) and Regional Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) Prakash Chand Gogineni is personally monitoring the probe.

The breakthrough came when forest officials raided a location in Kuliana area Sunday morning when a deal to sell a tiger hide was underway, officials said.

During the operation, three suspects fled the scene, while five others were apprehended by the forest personnel.

Authorities said an investigation is in progress to determine the origin of the tiger hide and identify the intended buyer.



ued to head to the region. Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohd Baqer Qalibaf wrote on X that critical infrastructure and energy facilities in the Middle East could be "irreversibly destroyed" should Iranian power plants be attacked.

Iranian attacks have effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow choke point that carries around a fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas supplies, causing the worst oil crisis since the 1970s. Its near-closure sent European gas prices surging as much as 35% last week.

Meanwhile, apart from firing a missile at Dimona in Israel, Iran also fired two ballistic missiles with a range of 4,000 km (2,500 miles) at the US-British Indian Ocean military base at Diego Garcia, said Israeli military chief Eyal Zamir.

leisure



PATTINSON'S REVELATION ABOUT MICHAEL JACKSON

Actor Robert Pattinson has shared that he once got in trouble for lying that his dad was Michael Jackson. As a schoolboy, the star played a song by the late King of Pop and fibbed to his classmates that it was his dad Richard singing.

GWYNETH PALTROW SAYS SHE IS PRODUCT OF NEPOTISM

Hollywood actress Gwyneth Paltrow doesn't shy away from accepting the fact that she is a product of nepotism. For the unversed, the 'Marty Supreme' actress is the daughter of fellow actress Blythe Danner and film producer and director Bruce Paltrow.



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ARIES
 If you are involved in monetary matters, today you will find yourself weighing the benefits. A loan that you have applied for may be sanctioned. Look at a range of choices, says Ganesha, and you will end up feeling very happy about it.

TAURUS
 Your unflinching punctuality, your insistence on following time schedules is due to be noticed and appreciated today. Your colleagues and superiors will be singing praises as soon as you arrive for work. If you are in an artistic or a creative profession, such as designing, journalism, multi media, you have a remarkably eventful and gratifying day ahead.

GEMINI
 You will feel blue and out of sorts today. You will feel that you are all alone in the world, emotionally. Your repressed desires and your philosophical streak will come to the fore today and will influence your dark mood, says Ganesha.

CANCER
 You are most likely to appear edgy and hypercritical to others, says Ganesha. Remain your typical poised self. Try not to be harsh to others, if you wish to save your relationships and sustain a reputable image. Avoid clashes with your superiors and colleagues. Take a deep breath the moment you feel you are losing the grip on your emotions, and then this too shall pass!

LEO
 Most of your time will be spent at the work place. You will excel in all your tasks today. Professional relationships will be marked by co-operation. You will have cordial relations with your colleagues. It is an auspicious and progressive day for business, says Ganesha.

VIRGO
 Confidently take on the challenges that in all likelihood will test your business abilities, especially the ones that are related to your investments and monetary matters. You will most probably come up with novel ideas to solve long-pending issues, and Ganesha says that this will be very effective.

LIBRA
 Lights, camera, and action! Be prepared as the limelight is focused on you on this very motivating and inspiring day, enabling you to attract excellent public praise. Today is an encouraging day to set in motion innovative projects, especially for those who desire to be their own masters and embark upon fulfilling self-financed ideas.

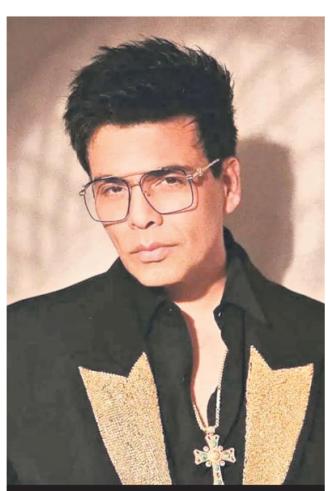
SCORPIO
 You are most likely to resent the dominating and overbearing nature of your partner today. Patience will probably go to the dumps in this case then. But Ganesha advises you to sit together and resolve all personality clashes and quarrels in view of the larger scheme of things.

SAGITTARIUS
 As Ganesha foresees, you will be religiously inclined today. Listening to soft, instrumental music will soothe your nerves. You also feel like going back to school days and dig into detective and suspense stories of Nancy Drew or Hardy Boys. It was fun being kid, isn't it?

CAPRICORN
 Though less, you will get money from your investments and other resources. Don't ignore pending projects; complete them at the earliest so that you will have clear picture about your requirements and responsibilities, advises Ganesha. Once you are done with them, you will enjoy happy times with your friends and family in the evening.

AQUARIUS
 A productive day, as you will receive unrestrained support from your bosses and colleagues. Your creativity will reach its zenith and the resulting work will augment your reputation. The day will seem complete when you spend quality time with your family in the evening, says Ganesha.

PISCES
 Happiness shared is double the joy; sorrows shared are half the burden. Your family is the foundation of your success, and it is to them you will turn to in times of failure as well. With their support, getting back to the top of the game will take no time, says Ganesha.



KJo battles extreme FOMO

Mumbai: Bollywood multi-hyphenate Karan Johar is having a major FOMO. The filmmaker-producer took to the Stories section of his Instagram Sunday, and shared a note saying that he is missing watching 'Dhurandhar: The Revenge' in cinemas.

KJo shared that he is currently shooting for a project at a remote location with no access to cinema. He wrote, "I am filming in a location that has no access to a cinema and am suffering from FOMO".

"DHURANDILAR FOMO, I can't wait to watch it and am so proud of so many members of our fraternity who are coming out and supporting and loving the film... it's so heartening to see the united love for an INDIAN FILM! @adityadharfilms @officialjostudios @ranveersingh (sic)", he added.

'Dhurandhar: The Revenge', directed by Aditya Dhar and headlined by Ranveer Singh, has emerged as one of the biggest box-office juggernauts in recent Indian cinema. The response has been overwhelmingly strong across markets. The film registered high occupancy rates, multiple sold-out shows, and strong traction in dubbed versions, indicating pan-India appeal.

Nora faces deportation

Mumbai: Actress Nora Fatehi has been in the news after her latest track 'SarkeChunar' sparked a controversy and was eventually banned. The Hindi version of this song from the Kannada film 'KD Devil' was criticised over its alleged 'double-meaning' lyrics.

The situation has escalated further now, with a group of ten lawyers reportedly approaching the Ministry of Home Affairs, demanding cancellation of Nora's work permit and her deportation from India.

As per reports, the complaint has also been forwarded to several key authorities, including the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, the Central Board of Film Certification, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, and the National Commission for Women, underscoring the seriousness of the issue.

In their petition, the lawyers have alleged that the song is obscene, sexually suggestive, and offensive to public morality as well as the dignity of women. They further argued that Nora has misused her privilege to work in India by associating with such content. Referring to provisions under the Foreigners Act, 1946, they stated that the government holds the authority to act against foreign nationals whose actions may disrupt public decency or order.

They also cited the Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920, along with other legal provision.



Pari reveals about her 'crush'

Mumbai: Actress Parijat Chaudhary has revealed that she has a crush on her co-actor. Yes, in her latest post, the 'Kesari' actress admitted that she has a crush on the latest actor she is working with.

However, Parijat's crush is none other than her politician husband, Raghav Chadha.

On Sunday, she took to the Stories section of her official Instagram account and shared a photo of a vanity van with the name "Raghav Chadha" on the door. The text read, "Some-

times you can have a crush on your co-star(sic)", followed by a kissy face emoji.

While it is not clear what Parijat and Raghav are shooting for, it would be exciting to see the two sharing the screen yet again.

Before this, the couple graced an entertaining episode of "The Great Indian Kapil Show", in July last year.

The 'Saina' actress loves to shower her husband with praises and admiration on social media whenever she gets a chance. **IANS**



Raveena's insecurities

Mumbai: Actress Raveena Tandon opened up about facing insecurities in her career and her approach towards dealing with classroom politics in her latest social media post.

She took to her Instagram Stories and shared the screen-

shot of an article by a publication that alleged that Karisma Kapoor would send people to spy on Raveena's costumes during the shoot of "Andaz Apna Apna".

According to the article, costume designer Ashley Rebello recalled that Karisma

would send members from her team to check what Raveena was wearing in the movie.

Reacting to the statement, Raveena said that she has not been one of those actresses who would get insecure from her contemporaries and has also never been interested in

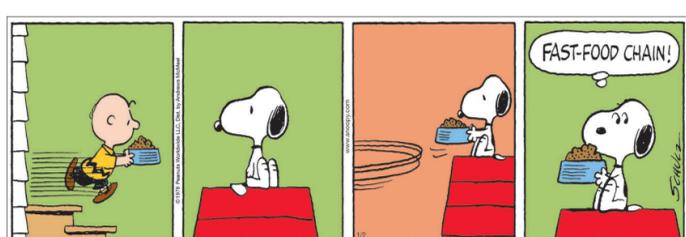
classroom politics. She stressed that she has always been happy in her own space and feels that God has blessed her with a lot.

Raveena further stated that she never felt the need to disrespect anyone.

At the end of the post, Raveena signed off by expressing her love for designer Ashley Rebello.

"Love you always @ashley_rebello", she concluded. **IANS**

PEANUTS



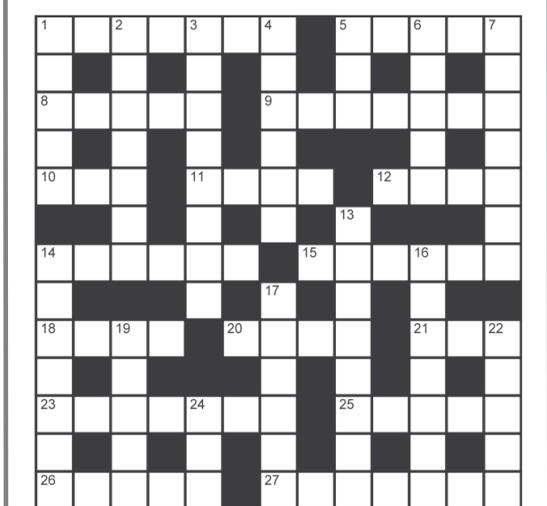
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



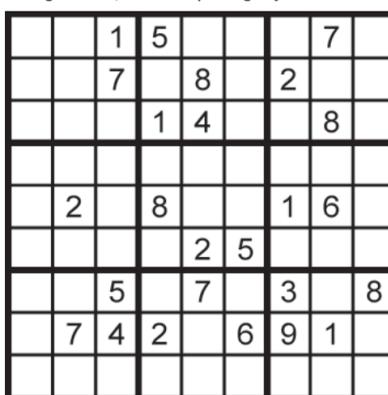
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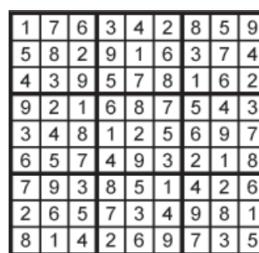
- Across**
- 1 ___ of Panama
 - 5 Picture holder
 - 8 Sachet scent
 - 9 Tout
 - 10 Like some smiles
 - 11 Gossip tidbit
 - 12 Crow
 - 14 World-wide
 - 15 Loathes
 - 18 Apothecary's weight
 - 20 Motel employee
 - 21 It comes with a charge
 - 23 TV show unit
 - 25 Obliterate
 - 26 Fry quickly
 - 27 On a horse
- Down**
- 1 Certain relative (2-3)
 - 2 Fox hunting cry (5-2)
 - 3 Short plaid coat
 - 4 Gun dog
 - 5 Coxcomb
 - 6 Fragrant oil
 - 7 Tees off
 - 13 Following orders
 - 14 Diana or Hera, e.g.
 - 16 Japanese art of folding paper
 - 17 Recording device
 - 19 Gallic goodbye
 - 22 Family girl
 - 24 Pindar work

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

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WEST ASIA FALLOUT

Foreign investors dump ₹88,180 crore in March

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 22: Foreign investors have withdrawn ₹88,180 crore (about USD 9.6 billion) from Indian equities so far this month, amid escalating tensions in West Asia, a weakening rupee, and concerns over the impact of elevated crude oil prices on India's economic growth and corporate earnings. The sharp sell-off follows a strong rebound in February, when foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) pumped in ₹22,615 crore, the highest monthly inflow in 17 months, according to NSDL data.

With the latest withdrawals, total FPI outflows have crossed the ₹1 lakh crore-mark so far in 2026.

In March (till March 20), FPIs have remained net sellers on every trading day, offloading equities worth ₹88,180 crore in the cash market. However, the outflow is still lower than the record monthly exodus of ₹94,017 crore seen in October 2024.

Market participants attributed the sustained selling pressure to global macroeconomic headwinds and heightened geopolitical uncertainty.

Vaquerjaved Khan, Senior Fundamental Analyst at Angel One, said the primary trigger has been the sharp escalation in Middle East tensions, with fears of prolonged conflict and potential disruption to the Strait of Hormuz pushing Brent crude above USD 100, fuelling a classic risk-off move.

He added that the trend has been exacerbated by the rupee hovering near ₹92 against the US dollar, elevated US bond yields, profit-booking after the

February inflows, and mixed Q4 earnings outlook indicating margin pressures in key sectors. Himanshu Srivastava, Principal Manager Research at Morningstar Investment Research India, said the rising US Treasury yields as another key driver.

Higher yields have improved the relative attractiveness of dollar-denominated assets, prompting capital to move away from emerging markets like India. This shift is typically accompanied by a stronger dollar and tighter global liquidity, further dampening sentiment towards emerging market equities.

Echoing similar concerns, V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Investments, said the conflict in West Asia has intensified FPI selling. He noted that weakness in global equity markets, continued rupee depreciation and worries over the impact of high crude prices on India's growth and earnings have all weighed on investor sentiment.

Sectorally, financial services bore the brunt of the selling, with FPIs offloading shares worth ₹31,831 crore during the fortnight ended March 15.

Looking ahead, analysts expect the near-term outlook to remain cautious.

Khan said continued volatility in oil prices or further escalation in geopolitical tensions could sustain outflows. However, any signs of de-escalation, strong support from domestic institutional investors (DIIs), or positive earnings surprises may help stabilise markets and trigger selective buying.

Four held in college student's rape, murder

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kamakhyanager, March 22: Police arrested four persons including the prime accused in connection with the abduction, rape and murder of a minor girl, a Plus II first-year student here in Dhenkanal district, police said Sunday.

The police have recovered a car, three mobile phones, a bag and blood-stained scarf from the accused. According to police, the student had gone to appear for the first-year examination March 18, and was expected to return home by 2pm. However, she never returned. The girl's body was found in a forest near



Student went missing after appearing for +2 exam March 18; body recovered from forest near Saruali panchayat office next morning

Prime accused Gangadhar Patra alias Jaga allegedly abducted her in a car to Palligram forest and raped her, leaving her in critical condition

Saruali panchayat office the next morning. Probe revealed that the prime accused, identified as Gangadhar Patra alias Jaga of Jilal-Santrapur village, arrived in a car and forcibly took her to a nearby Palligram

forest area, where he allegedly raped her following which her health condition turned critical. Jaga brought the girl back to Kamakhyanager town fearing complications as her health deteriorated. Near Mahima mutt,

he sought help from a cousin, Chandan Naik, 26, of Sanaindipur, and arranged new clothes and sanitary napkins for the victim before taking her back to the forest. Soon after reaching the forest, the girl's condition further deteriorated and she died.

Police said Jaga later sought help from his uncle, Rasananda Naik and another cousin Madan Mohan Patra who helped him transport the body by car before dumping it in a forest near Saruali village.

Jaga was arrested Saturday, while three others were also taken into custody later. Cases were registered under relevant sections of BNS and POCSO Act.

PM Modi hailed for longest-ever term



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 22: Top Union ministers Sunday lauded Prime Minister Narendra Modi for completing 8,931 days in public office—first as Gujarat chief minister and now as PM—calling it a testament to his unwavering commitment to nation-first governance and elevating India's global stature.

Home Minister Amit Shah noted that Modi has surpassed the 8,930-day record of former Sikkim chief minister Pawan Kumar Chamling to become India's longest-serving head of government, adding that his decades of 'seva' (service) have defined a distinct era.

Other Union ministers, including Rajnath Singh, JP Nadda, Piyush Goyal, Ashwini Vaishnaw, and BJP chief Nitin Nabin, also hailed the PM, saying the "Modi era" has set new benchmarks in development.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi is now the longest-serving head of a government in India. Pure devotion to the nation and its people defines Modi ji," Defence Minister Singh said.

"Today, he has surpassed the 8,930-day record of former Sikkim chief minister Pawan Kumar Chamling, achieving a historic milestone. With 8,931 days in public office as head of government, this moment reflects his deep commitment to nation-first governance, integrity in action, and tireless service to every citizen. Heartiest congratulations to Modi Ji on this remarkable achievement," he said.



FACEOFF: Police use water cannons to disperse protesters attempting to breach barricades and gherao Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann's residence during a joint stir over the alleged abetment of suicide case against former minister Laljit Singh Bhullar in Chandigarh, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

ATTENTION DEFICIT Over 50% countries banned phones in schools

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 22: More than half of the countries have banned phones in schools amid mounting concerns about declining attention in classrooms and cyberbullying, according to the UNSECO's Global Education Monitoring (GEM) team.

The team found that girls are twice as likely as boys to suffer from eating disorders exacerbated by social media usage.

Facebook's own research revealed that 32 per cent of teenage girls felt worse about their bodies after using Instagram. The report noted alarming trends related to TikTok's algorithm, which targets teenagers with body image content every 39 seconds and promotes content related to eating disorders every eight minutes.

Recent global monitoring shows that 114 education systems now have a national ban



on mobile phones in schools, representing 58 per cent of countries worldwide. The expansion has been rapid. Less than one in four countries (24 per cent) had bans in June 2023, when it was first monitored in the 2023 GEM Report. By early 2025, this had risen to 40 per cent, and by March 2026, that share is almost 20 percentage points higher," a senior member of GEM told PTI.

The growth reflects mounting concerns about declining attention in classrooms, cyberbullying, and the broader influence of digital environments on children. But the global picture is more nuanced than a simple shift toward prohibition," the official added.

Several countries have introduced national bans since late 2025, continuing the upward trend. Recent additions

include Bolivia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Georgia, the Maldives and Malta.

France is one of the countries where the debate continues to evolve. It introduced one of the most widely cited early bans on mobile phones in schools, prohibiting their use in primary and lower secondary education. According to the GEM report, policymakers are now examining whether further regulation is needed. A legislative proposal currently under consideration in the French Parliament aims to establish more specific rules governing smartphone use in schools.

"In many cases, bans apply during the school day or inside classrooms, with some systems allowing phones only for educational purposes, specific groups of pupils (such as those with disabilities or illness), or requiring them to be switched off and stored away. At the same

time, not all governments are opting for outright bans. Some countries have recently adopted national regulations requiring schools to develop policies restricting phone use, without imposing a strict nationwide prohibition," the report said.

Comoros, Colombia, Estonia, Lithuania, Iceland, Peru, Indonesia, Serbia, Poland and the Philippines are among such countries, the report noted. The approach reflects a shift toward delegating responsibility to schools and school leaders while still acknowledging the need to control phone use, it said.

Debates at a sub-national level take place elsewhere as governments try to balance national direction with school-level autonomy.

In countries where education systems are decentralised, restrictions are often introduced first at regional or local levels.

1 killed, 6 injured as ropeway trolley crashes in Chhattisgarh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mahasamund (Chhattisgarh), March 22: A woman was killed and six other persons were injured when a ropeway trolley crashed while descending from a hilltop temple in Chhattisgarh's Mahasamund district Sunday, officials said.

The accident occurred shortly after 10am when the trolley's cable snapped as it was bringing down seven passengers from the hilltop, Bagbahra Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Namita Markole said.

Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai expressed grief over the incident and ordered a detailed investigation into it.

The trolley plunged from a height of 200 to 300 feet, as per officials.

The ropeway service is commonly used by devotees to

reach near the temple, located on the hilltop at an elevation of about 1,100 feet. Visitors can also access the shrine by climbing nearly 900 steps.

The SDM said the victims had arrived there to offer prayers at the Khallari Mata temple, located on a hill at Khallari (Bhimkhoj) village in the Bagbahra tehsil, during the ongoing nine-day Navratri festival. A woman, identified as Ayushi Satkar (28) from Raipur, died on the spot, while six others, including her husband Rishabh Dhavre (29) and another minor relative Chhayansh Dhavre (16), sustained injuries, she said.

The other injured persons have been identified as Govind Swami (47), Namita Swami (48), and minors Kushmita Swami (10) and Manshvi Godaria (12), the official said.

SCBMCH FIRE TRAGEDY AFTERMATH

Zero tolerance for safety lapses: Min

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 22: Declaring 'zero tolerance' approach for fire safety negligence, Health Minister Mukesh Mahaling ordered strict enforcement of fire safety norms across all government hospitals in the wake of recent deadly blaze at SCB Medical College and Hospital (SCBMCH), Cuttack.

The direction came during a high-level review meeting held at Lok Seva Bhawan here Sunday, days after a devastating fire at SCBMCH Trauma Care ICU, claimed the lives of at least 12 patients.

At the meeting, minister directed officials to carry out strict, time-bound fire safety audits in all medical colleges, district headquarters hospitals, and healthcare centres across the state.

"There should be no compromise on patient safety," Mahaling said, warning that any negligence in maintaining fire safety standards would invite



strict action.

Mahaling emphasised regular inspections, continuous monitoring, and accountability at every level. Officials were instructed to ensure that all fire-fighting equipment remains fully functional and that mock drills are conducted regularly to handle emergencies effectively.

The minister also stressed the need for swift and coordinated response mechanisms and called for closer coordi-

nation with the Works department and Fire Services to address infrastructure gaps.

Reiterating that patient safety remains the state government's top priority, Mahaling urged heightened vigilance across healthcare institutions in the coming days.

The meeting was attended by Health Secretary Aswathy S, Special Secretary Bijay Mahapatra, senior officials from the department, chief district medical officers, and heads of

medical colleges, who joined virtually.

The fire, which broke out in the early hours of March 16, triggered panic in the hospital premises as critically ill patients were evacuated. While several were rescued, some died inside the ICU, and others succumbed during evacuation, with many victims reportedly died due to suffocation caused by dense smoke.

Preliminary findings have pointed to a suspected electrical short circuit, while probe reports flagged serious lapses, including delayed response and non-functional safety systems, intensifying concerns over hospital preparedness.

The state government had announced a judicial commission to probe the incident. Meanwhile, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi had suspended four officials for dereliction of duty, two days after the incident. The suspended officials include three from fire services and one assistant executive engineer of SCB sub-division.

Achieving inclusive growth requires collective effort: Guv

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 22: Odisha stands at an important stage in its developmental journey. Achieving inclusive and sustainable growth requires collective effort and active participation of enlightened citizens, thinkers and professionals, Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati said, while addressing the annual convention of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) Alumni Association here Sunday.

Odisha, backed by its rich cultural heritage and growing aspirations, is making steady progress in education, infrastructure, technology and social welfare sectors, he said, urging members of the alumni community to contribute actively to the state's development.

The governor said their engagement, through knowledge-sharing, support to educational initiatives, promotion of research and participation in policy discussions can be transformative. "Your engagement can help create opportunities, inspire young minds and address



contemporary challenges with innovative solutions," he said.

The convention was held at Veterinary College of Science and Animal Husbandry, under Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT). First Lady Jayshree Kambhampati was also present on the occasion.

Describing the gathering as a celebration of shared memories and intellectual legacy, he lauded JNU for fostering critical thinking, openness of ideas and a deep sense of social responsibility, adding that these qualities have remained the hallmark of the institution over the decades. Highlighting the achieve-

ments of JNU alumni across diverse fields such as academia, civil services, public policy, science, media, literature and diplomacy, he said their contributions reflect both personal excellence and a commitment to larger societal goals.

OUAT VC Pravat Kumar Roul, and Odisha Chief Information Commissioner Manoj Kumar Parida also addressed the occasion. JNU Alumni Association president Sangram Keshari Mohapatra delivered the welcome address, while general secretary Manas Ranjan Nanda proposed vote of thanks. The governor also released a souvenir on the occasion.

Two held for cylinder theft



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 22: Amidst ongoing LPG cylinder crisis, Police arrested two persons for stealing gas cylinders from a house in Nayapalli area, officials said Sunday.

The arrested persons have been identified as Rutubir Diga (24) of Panangia village under Tikabali police station from Kandhamal and Chagul Sandil (20) from Jajpur, both residents in Nayapalli area. The theft took place around 4 am March 17 at the residence of Pruthu Singh, located at N-3, Plot No 52, IRC Village. On the basis of a written complaint lodged by Singh, Nayapalli police case registered a case under relevant sections of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

Unidentified miscreants had allegedly stolen two filled LPG cylinders from Singh's home. CCTV footage from a neighbouring house indicated involvement of two or more persons in the incident.

Acting on a tip off, cops conducted a raid near CRP Square and held both the accused. The police later found the stolen gas cylinders in their possession. The duo failed to produce any valid documents for the seized cylinders and later confessed the theft act, police said. The accused were forwarded to the court Sunday.

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit before Executive Magistrate, Kakatpur on dtd.31.10.2022 and published in the Orissa Gazette on dtd.19.06.2007, I have changed my name from Kuna Chandra Swain to Kunal Swain. Henceforth I shall be known as Kunal Swain for all purposes. Kunal Swain, Sorabha, Gop, Puri.

LOST

I, Avilipsha Tripathy, D/o Manoj Tripathy, Cuttack, have lost my original B.Tech Certificate, while travelling from Mansinghpata to Buxi Bazar on 18.03.2026. If anyone found, please contact Mob 9902977555.

NHRC special monitor visits ICAR-CIWA

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 22: Special monitor for Human Rights Advocacy (Human Rights Education and Gender Equality) at National Human Rights Commission, Kanhaiya Tripathi, visited ICAR-Central Institute for Women in Agriculture (ICAR-CIWA) here recently to review the institute's efforts in women empowerment and integration of human rights perspectives in agricultural development.

Welcoming the delegation, ICAR-CIWA Director Mridula Devi highlighted the institute's significant contributions to gender-responsive research

and its initiatives aimed at strengthening the role of women in agri-food systems.

During his interaction with scientists and staff, Tripathi commended ICAR-CIWA's pioneering work in enhancing livelihood opportunities for women and mainstreaming gender concerns in agricultural research and extension. He encouraged collaborative research and recommended publishing high-impact studies integrating human rights dimensions with women's empowerment in agriculture.

He also stressed the importance of showcasing the institute's achievements on global platforms for wider recognition and replication.

Kalabhoomi celebrates 8th Foundation Day



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 22: Odisha Crafts Museum— Kalabhoomi celebrated its 8th Foundation Day here Sunday with 'Kalabhoomi Utsav'. On the occasion, entry fee to the museum was completely waived off for visitors.

The day marked with cultural performances - Sitar and Tabla recitals, Odissi and Sambalpuri folk dances. Handicrafts Director Nivedita Prusty, Textiles and Handlooms Director Suresh Kumar Upadhyay, and SIDAC member secretary

Chinmayi Biswal, along with other senior officials of the department joined the occasion.

At the event, various developmental milestones of the museum, starting from its foundation stone laying to the present day, were highlighted. A collective effort was sought to establish the institution's identity on the global stage. Museum's CEO Saswati Sahu offered vote of thanks. A large number of visitors participated in the Kalabhoomi festivities to experience the beautifully curated environment and artworks, reflecting the rich heri-

itage of Odisha's handlooms and handicrafts, while enjoying the state's cultural expression.

Established to showcase the extraordinary craftsmanship of state's artisans, 'Kalabhoomi' features dedicated galleries for terracotta, paintings, stone carving, and metal crafts.

Over the past 2,922 days, from March 22, 2018 to the present day, Kalabhoomi has welcomed students, curators, researchers, anthropologists, and museum enthusiasts from across the world. Created and transformed by the artisans and weavers of our state, this institution has evolved into a premier center for education and cultural exchange. Furthermore, on the occasion of the recent 20th Grand Toshali Mela, more than 1,000 terracotta artisans participated to create a world record.

The terracotta artworks draw significant attention from visitors. Kalabhoomi has proven that the preservation of tradition is the true hallmark of progress.

OES OBSERVES WORLD WATER DAY

Water & gender are closely interconnected: Experts

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 22: Water and gender are closely interconnected, particularly in developing and under developed regions, where women and girls often bear the primary responsibility for collecting water for household use, experts viewed during the observance of World Water Day, jointly organised by Orissa Environmental Society (OES) and Vikash Residential School, Kantabada here on the theme 'Water and Gender'.

The task frequently involves travelling long distances, consuming significant time and energy, which can lead to girls missing school and women having fewer opportunities for paid work or community participation, expressed the participants.

Limited access to safe water also affects health and hygiene, disproportionately impacting women. Inadequate water supply makes menstrual hygiene



management difficult, leading to discomfort, stigma and reduced mobility. Unsafe water sources further increase the risk of waterborne diseases, with women often managing these challenges as caregivers within families. Gender inequality is also reinforced when women, despite being the primary users and managers of household water, have little say in water management decisions and infrastructure planning, they said.

The programme, held under the chairmanship of school principal Vijay Kumar, featured

management difficult, leading to discomfort, stigma and reduced mobility. Unsafe water sources further increase the risk of waterborne diseases, with women often managing these challenges as caregivers within families. Gender inequality is also reinforced when women, despite being the primary users and managers of household water, have little say in water management decisions and infrastructure planning, they said.

OES working president Jayakrushna Panigrahi as the chief guest. Speaking at the event, Panigrahi stressed that addressing water and gender issues requires inclusive approaches that ensure equal participation of women in decision-making, improved access to nearby clean water sources, and education on hygiene and sanitation. He also highlighted the UN-Water campaign message, 'Where water flows, equality grows'.

School chairman V Srinivas urged students to act as vigilant stewards of nature to conserve

water and protect the environment. Outfit secretary Manoranjan Mishra delivered the introductory address, outlining the significance of the theme, while joint secretary Surabhi Jain presented on rainwater harvesting and the basic calculations involved.

Among others, Bijay Ketan Patnaik, Lala A K Singh, Sandeep N Kundu, Padmaja Suryaprabha Sahu and Soumyaranjan Nayak also shared their opinions, emphasising that empowering women in water governance promotes gender equality and leads to more sustainable and effective water management systems.

Ramesh Chandra Panda and Parshuram Panda conducted a quiz on water-related issues for students, and winners were awarded prizes. Programme coordinator V Rabindra Nath proposed the vote of thanks. More than 400 students and OES members attended the event.

BJD to ensure six suspended MLAs' disqualification

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 22: Opposition BJD Sunday said the party is ready to go for a legal battle to ensure that its six MLAs, who have been suspended for allegedly voting in favour of the BJP in the recent Rajya Sabha polls, are disqualified from the Assembly.

Addressing a press conference here, BJD spokesperson Lenin Mohanty said the party was "mentally prepared to carry this battle till the last point".

"If required, the BJD is ready to take the matter to the Supreme Court and ensure that they are disqualified from the House," he said.

Mohanty's comment comes a day after the BJD had 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).

BJD senior vice-president Debi Prasad Mishra said that its political affairs committee took serious note of the six MLAs, who "not only voted against the party decision in the Rajya Sabha elections, but also made public statements against the party leadership".

"According to the BJD constitution, any member who publicly makes a statement against the leadership and opposes a collective decision is as good as self-resigning from the party. The six MLAs are likely to lose their membership in the House because they violated the party constitution," he said.

National conclave maps future pharma ecosystem



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 22: Dadhichi College of Pharmacy organised Pharma Anveshan 2026, a national-level academia-industry conclave, with support from Pharmacy Council of India (PCI), New Delhi at Institution of Engineers (India) Odisha State Centre here, Sunday.

The conclave was based on the theme 'Future Pharma Ecosystem: Fostering Synergy among Academia, Industry, Research, Regulatory and Practice'. The programme brought together leading experts to discuss collaboration and innovation in India's pharmaceutical sector.

The event was graced by PCI VP Jashubhai Hirabhai Chaudhari, Odisha State Drugs Controller Mamina Patnaik, PCI executive member Dharmendra Singh, PCI ERC chairman Deependra Singh, PCI central council member Nilamadhab Dash, institute chairman Manoj Kumar Dash and others.

Pharma Anveshan-2026 emerged as a key platform bringing together researchers, academicians, policy-makers and industry professionals to deliberate on innovation, regulatory challenges, research advancements, and strategies for sustainable development in the pharmaceutical landscape.

WEATHER			
	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	33.2°	31.6°	Light to Moderate rain or thunderstorm
Min Temp	22.0°	19.4°	
Humidity	76%	80%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	

Tutor arrested for Karanjia minor girl's chilling murder

The former tutor of the deceased Class VIII girl had developed an obsession towards her and sought revenge after being reprimanded and humiliated by her kin

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada/Karanjia, March 22: Police in Mayurbhanj district have cracked the murder of a Class VIII girl whose body was recovered from plastic sacks Saturday and arrested her former tuition teacher who reportedly confessed to the crime.

The accused was identified as Trilochan Mahakud, a data entry operator at the Karanjia Block Education Office and a private tutor. He was detained and later formally arrested after sustained interrogation, police said.

In this regard, a murder case (111/26) has been registered at Karanjia police station March 20 under Sections 137(2) and 103(1) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

During a press conference held Sunday, police said the investigation involved multiple teams, including a scientific team and a dog squad, and assistance from the Forest department, as the body was found near a bamboo grove in



a secluded forested area. Evidence collected from the scene and technical inputs, including data from a smartwatch and other digital clues, helped establish the sequence of events. Several items have been seized as exhibits in the case, forming crucial evidence linking the accused to the crime.

Investigators revealed that Mahakud had earlier tutored the victim and had developed an obsession towards her. The girl's family had reportedly confronted and reprimanded him over his behaviour, which led to humiliation and resentment.

Driven by revenge and frustration, the accused allegedly planned the crime. He called the girl Karan, on the pretext

of a discussion and took her on a scooter to a deserted location. An argument broke out between the two, which escalated. In a fit of rage, he allegedly strangled the girl with his hands, rendering her unconscious, and then used a belt to kill her, police said.

To conceal the crime and destroy evidence, he reportedly packed the body in two plastic sacks, covering the head and legs separately, and dumped it near a bamboo thicket.

Following technical analysis, field investigation and interrogation, police zeroed in on Mahakud, who later confessed to the crime.

He is scheduled to be produced before a court Monday. Police said further investigation is underway.

Officials, including SDPO Naba Charan Naik and IIC Mrutyunjaya Pradhan, briefed the media on the case.

The accused is married and has two children, police said describing the crime as a "fallout of one-sided obsession and revenge".

Villagers panicked after leopard video goes viral

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Berhampur, March 22: Panic gripped villagers in Patrapur block of Ganjam district after a video of a suspected leopard sitting atop a nearby hill went viral on social media.

Forest officials, however, said they did not find any pug mark or receive any report of cattle being lifted by the big cat in the area when they conducted an inquiry Sunday.

Camera traps have been set up to identify the animal the villagers were talking about.

A group of children reportedly

sighted the animal sitting on the hilltop near Sunakhala village, while they were playing close to the area Saturday afternoon. They made a video of it, which went viral on social media, the officials said.

"After getting the information, our team rushed to the spot to conduct an inquiry," said Sunny Khokhar, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Berhampur.

During the inquiry, the team did not find pug marks of the leopard in the area. There was also no complaint of cattle lifting, he said.



Still, the Forest department kept a strict vigil in the area and alerted villagers not to tease the animal, if found again, he said. Forest officials said they have installed two camera

traps in the area to identify the wild animal and its movement. More camera traps are planned to be installed there.

"We have urged the villagers not to panic and to be vigilant about the movement of the animal. If they notice the big cat or any other wild animal, they should immediately inform the Forest department," said Manoj Kumar Patra, forest range officer, Samantipalli.

Forest officials have also advised the villagers not to spread rumours without verifying facts about the presence of the wild animals.

Tight security along border ahead of Bengal polls



POST NEWS NETWORK

Jaleswar, March 22: Security has been intensified along the Odisha-West Bengal border in Balasore district to ensure peaceful conduct of the upcoming Assembly elections in neighbouring West Bengal.

Odisha Police has set up a special checkpoint near the Laxmannath toll plaza on National Highway 60, close to Jaleswar, to curb illegal activities and cross-border smuggling.

Vehicle checks have been tightened, with all four-wheelers travelling from Odisha to West Bengal undergoing thorough inspection. Police are stopping and searching suspicious vehicles in particular.

The primary objective of the drive is to prevent the illegal move-

ment of cash, liquor and other contraband during the election period. At the checkpoint, a sub-inspector, two Odisha State Armed Police (OSAP) personnel and a woman police personnel have been deployed to monitor vehicle movement and maintain security.

Officials said the measures aim to curb the movement of illegal goods and anti-social elements through the border area.

The intensified checks have created a sense of alertness among drivers of unauthorised vehicles plying on the highway. Authorities are expected to further expand the inspection process in the coming days.

Officials said the measures aim to curb the movement of illegal goods and anti-social elements through the border area.

MAN ARRESTED FOR RAPE OF 9-YR-OLD GIRL IN DELHI

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur/Bari, March 22: Police have arrested a man from Jajpur district for allegedly raping a 9-year-old girl in the Sangam Vihar area of South Delhi.

The accused, identified as Bijay Jena of Kekarada village under Balibili panchayat of Ramchandrapur police limits, was apprehended by Sangam Vihar police following a complaint filed by the survivor's father. Jena has been booked under Section 65(2) and 351(3) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and relevant sections of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

Police confirmed that the victim has undergone a medical examination. Jena was produced in court Saturday

and remains in custody as the investigation continues.

According to police, the survivor lives with her parents in a rented house in Sangam Vihar. The incident allegedly occurred while the girl's mother was busy with some chores and the minor was sitting on the building's stairs. Investigators said Jena, who is the younger brother of the landlord, lured the girl into his room and raped her.

The accused reportedly recorded a video of the act on his mobile phone and threatened to kill the girl's parents if she disclosed the incident.

The matter came to light March 19 after the girl's father discovered the video. When questioned, the victim recounted the ordeal to her father, leading to the formal police complaint.

Bhitarkanika houses 8 kingfisher species



POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, March 22: In encouraging news for environmentalists and bird enthusiasts, presence of eight species of kingfishers has been recorded in Bhitarkanika National Park, making it a significant habitat for the bird group.

India is home to 12 species of kingfishers, of which eight are found in Odisha. All these species have been observed within the 672 sq km expanse of Bhitarkanika.

According to the Forest department, a census conducted in August 2025 recorded a total of 1,30,796 birds in the national park during the monsoon season. The number of kingfishers increased by 37 compared with 2024 figures.

Despite their small size, kingfishers are known for their swift hunting skills. They can often be seen diving from mangrove branches into the water to catch prey before returning to their perches—an activity that continues to fascinate vis-

itors in the park.

"While one or two species of kingfishers are commonly seen across different parts of Odisha, Bhitarkanika uniquely hosts as many as eight species," ornithologist Pramod Kumar Dhal said.

The species recorded in the park include the black-capped kingfisher, swift hunting kingfisher, white-throated kingfisher, pied kingfisher, common kingfisher, collared kingfisher, brown-winged kingfisher and blue-eared kingfisher.

Among these, the collared kingfisher and brown-winged kingfisher are rarely seen outside Bhitarkanika. However, their population remains sparse. Notably, the blue-eared kingfisher was not sighted during the latest census.

Kingfishers primarily feed on fish, prawns and crabs, along with small insects and aquatic larvae found in rivers and coastal waters. Characterised by large heads, long beaks and short legs, these birds prefer perching on branches rather than walking on the ground.

Their activity is most noticeable between November and February. They are often spotted waiting for prey on low-hanging branches of mangrove trees near water channels.

Experts note that kingfishers are capable of carrying prey heavier than their own body weight. However, their population is gradually declining due to multiple factors.

Pollution from industrial discharge and shrimp farming is cited as a major threat to their survival. In addition, habitat loss, shrinking forest cover and reduced water levels in rivers and canals are affecting their population growth, Dhal said.

Police said the accused later used the explicit material to blackmail the student, prompting her to approach authorities. A case (40/26) has been registered in this regard at Gurandi police station.

While the main accused remains absconding, police have arrested two of his associates, identified as Chinmaya Kumar Pradhan and Ayush Kumar Singh from Rayagada district.

The victim, a native of West Bengal, had been staying at her uncle's residence in Gajapati district while pursuing her studies.

Investigations revealed that the three accused allegedly lured the student to a shop near the institution under some pretext, where they reportedly mixed an intoxicating substance with a cold drink and made her consume it. They then took her to another location, where the main accused allegedly assaulted her while the other two recorded videos of her in a compromised state.

The videos were subsequently used to blackmail the victim, police said. Gurandi police station OIC Basant Sethi confirmed the arrests, adding that two mobile phones have been seized from the accused. Efforts are underway to trace the absconding main accused. Further investigation is ongoing, he said.

1,500 cough syrup bottles seized; 3 held

DUNGURIPALI: Police in Subarnapur district seized 1,500 bottles of cough syrup from a private bus early Sunday and arrested three persons in connection with the case. The seizure was made by Rampur police during a patrol at around 5am on the Rampur-Binika road near a women's college, following a tip-off. The bus was travelling from Bhubaneswar to Dungguripali

when it was stopped on suspicion. During a search of the vehicle, police recovered several boxes containing cough syrup bottles. The three accused, allegedly involved in transporting the consignment, were detained and taken to the police station. They have been identified as Umesh Sahu, 24, of Gaisilet in Bargarh district; Ambid Naik, 23, of Barpalipada in Bolangir district; and Ashish Barge, 23. The bottles were counted in the presence of Rohit Bag, additional tehsildar of Rampur, who acted as magistrate. Rampur police station OIC Dolamani Naik said the accused were produced in court and remanded to judicial custody after their bail pleas were rejected. Further investigation is underway, police said.

Gun factory run by ultras busted

PHULBANI: Security forces unearthed a country-made gun factory allegedly run by Maoists in Kandhamal district during an operation, police said Sunday. The BSF personnel stationed at Balliguda in the district unearthed the gun manufacturing unit while engaged in a combing operation in Panaspadar village under Bamuniagaon police station limit in the district Saturday, said Shubham Bhosale, sub-divisional police officer (SDPO), Balliguda. According to the police, the BSF personnel seized some finished country-made single-barrel guns, barrels, cutters and other gun manufacturing parts from the site. Combing operation in Daringbadi, Kotagarh, Tumudibandha, Bamuniagaon and other police station areas in Kandhamal district was intensified since last week to apprehend hardcore Maoist Sukru and his associates, who belong to the KKBN (Kandhamal-Kalahandi-Boudh-Nayagarh) group, the police said. Security personnel from SOG, BSF, CRPF and other forces were pressed into the anti-Maoist operation in an organised manner in an effort to achieve the target to eliminate Maoists by the end of this month, they said.

Monkey attack causes fatal fall

ATHAGARH: In a freak mishap, a 61-year-old woman died after falling from the roof of her house during a monkey attack in Rajnagar village under Athagarh police limits in Cuttack district Sunday. The deceased was identified as Sulochana Sahu, wife of Abhiram Sahu in the same village. According to reports, Sulochana had gone to the rooftop in the afternoon and was attacked by a monkey. In an attempt to escape, she lost balance and fell off the roof, sustaining critical injuries. Family members rushed her to Athagarh sub-divisional hospital, where doctors declared her dead. Monkey menace has been on the rise in areas under Athagarh Sadar forest range, with six to seven people reportedly being injured in similar attacks in recent days. Locals have demanded immediate action from authorities to capture the simians and prevent further incidents.

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SELECTIVE OUTRAGE



As the Security Council resolution itself notes, Article 51 of the UN Charter recognizes every country's right to self-defense against armed attack. If Iran's actions are to be judged against that principle, so too must those of the US and Israel

the world's attention, threats to destabilize the global economy do. The consequences of this calculus could be far-reaching. As oil prices surge above \$100 a barrel, the Global South – home to most of the world's population – risks becoming collateral damage once again. Some of the increase reflects speculative responses to uncertainty, but real supply disruptions are already evident, particularly across Asia. In India and other countries, cooking-gas shortages are hitting the poor, while disruptions to fertilizer supplies threaten crop yields, and rising energy costs squeeze small enterprises and vulnerable households.

Such human costs seem to carry little weight with the US and Israeli leaders who launched this war. But the resulting economic disruption is already exacting a heavy toll, which helps explain why US President Donald Trump is so eager to declare victory and bring the conflict to a swift end.

He is likely to be disappointed, as the other parties show little willingness to stop. Iran's regime views the war as an existential threat that cannot be resolved through a temporary ceasefire, while Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu understands that a prolonged state of war is the best way to ensure his political survival and delay his ongoing corruption trial.

The result is a humanitarian disaster for Iran and its neighbours. As that crisis reverberates through the global economy, it also risks unleashing a wave of instability that hits the developing world the hardest.

For Gulf countries long reliant on US protection, this crisis should serve as a wake-up call. To paraphrase a remark often attributed to Henry Kissinger, it may be dangerous to be America's enemy, but it can be fatal to be its friend.

The writer is Professor of Economics at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

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Few United Nations Security Council resolutions have been as one-sided as its recent condemnation of Iran's "egregious attacks" on regional neighbours such as Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Leaving little room for interpretation, it describes those attacks as "a breach of international law and a serious threat to international peace and security."

That may be true, but the resolution, sponsored by 135 countries, omits the context in which those attacks occurred. Before being attacked, Iran had repeatedly warned that US and Israeli strikes would not go unanswered.

The resolution does not acknowledge those warnings. Nor does it address the assassination of Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, along with much of his family and the country's senior leadership, or the indiscriminate bombing of civilian infrastructure and densely populated residential areas by the United States and Israel. Strikingly, it does not even mention the bombing of a girls' school in Minab – reportedly carried out by the US – that killed at least 175 people, most of them children, on the war's first day.

These omissions are not incidental; they are aimed at framing Iran's actions as unprovoked acts of aggression. International law, however, does not operate in a vacuum. As the Security Council resolution itself notes, Article 51 of the UN Charter recognizes every country's right to self-defense against armed attack. If Iran's actions are to be judged against that principle, so too must those of the US and Israel.

To be sure, the Iranian regime has a long record of crushing dissent. In January, its security forces killed an estimated 30,000 protesters and imprisoned thousands more. In theory, the "responsibility

to protect" principle, intended to prevent mass atrocities by oppressive regimes, could be invoked to justify intervention against the Islamic Republic. But the indiscriminate bombing of civilians and the destruction of essential infrastructure do not qualify as protection. They are, instead, forms of collective punishment.

Recent history offers a stark warning: regime-change wars deliver nothing but immense human suffering. From Afghanistan and Iraq to Libya and Syria, American interventions have brought widespread destruction of lives and livelihoods, and the emergence of failed states controlled by rival warlords, or – as in Afghanistan – the return of the very regime that the US sought to overthrow.

Much like those earlier conflicts, this war is defined by an obvious power imbalance. Iran lacks the conventional and nuclear capabilities of the US and Israel, and much of its defensive capacity has already been severely degraded by airstrikes. It is therefore hardly surprising that the regime would seek to defend itself by targeting US interests across the region. Attacks on US bases, along with strikes on energy

facilities and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, are among the few means of self-defense available to it.

Why, then, did the Security Council resolution receive such broad support, especially when there has been no equivalent response to the ongoing genocide in Gaza? Why the sudden outrage at what is, in many ways, a predictable consequence of a profoundly unequal war? As Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez put it, "You can't support those who set the world on fire and then blame the smoke caused by the fire."

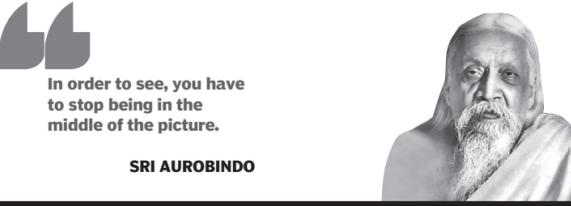
The answer lies in the resolution itself, which warns of the "adverse impact" of regional instability on international trade and energy security. At its core, the outrage is less moral or legal than practical: the global economy needs an uninterrupted flow of hydrocarbons. The resolution is also about protecting the privileged status of the Gulf's financial powerhouses, which offer tax havens, secrecy jurisdictions, and legal exemptions to international investors, even as they deny migrant workers basic rights.

Iran's leadership understands that while humanitarian catastrophes rarely command



Jayati Ghosh

FOR GULF COUNTRIES LONG RELIANT ON US PROTECTION, THIS CRISIS SHOULD SERVE AS A WAKE-UP CALL



In order to see, you have to stop being in the middle of the picture.

SRI AUROBINDO

US To Blame

The world is reeling under unprecedented fuel and gas crisis. Prevailing situation is creating panic in domestic kitchens, restaurants, hostels, petrol bunks, gas stations and threatening to cripple world economy while worse is yet to come. All this because of a thoughtless, one-sided and hegemonic war against Iran begun by US President Donald Trump and Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Their personal arrogance, lack of foresight and poor planning are causing tremendous hardships across the globe. Strategists have long held that an attack on Iran could lead to a retaliatory closure of the strategic Strait of Hormuz by Tehran. This narrow waterway sees 20 per cent of global oil and gas production pass through it. The White House's apparent failure to factor in this obvious tit-for-tat counter-strategy by Iran since the outbreak of the war on 28 February, even though there was no imminent threat, is the most surprising. Both the US and Israeli intelligence have got egg on their faces because they had absolutely no idea what Iran was prepared for.

It is only when the situation spiraled out of control that Trump made an appeal on 14 March to countries including the UK, France, Italy, Japan and also China to assist the US in ensuring freedom of navigation in the strait. Even in this endeavour the US President betrayed muddled thinking since once he said he wanted them to bail him out of the mess and then asserted he did not need them at all. His final salvo against these age-old and time-tested allies was couched in the most undiplomatic language as he called them "cowards". The mistrust with which the European allies greeted Trump's frantic appeal was only natural and perfectly justified. It is clearly understood by all that participating in this exercise would risk dragging these countries into a war that was not of their making. India, sadly, has fallen into a neat trap by supporting Israel just before the commencement of hostilities. Now when India is 'condemning' attacks on critical infrastructure in the Middle East, it is unclear whether we mean Iran or all the other countries Tehran is hitting out with waves of rockets and drones. The unfortunate allies of the US, including Israel, are now clueless as to what on earth is Iran capable of doing to their fancy countries and their well cultivated images of being the safest countries for the global rich and powerful.

In fact, Netanyahu and Trump have brought death and destruction to Asia in particular and economic havoc on the whole world by launching an ill-conceived, ill-planned and unnecessary war on Iran. Twenty-three days after their first strikes, Iran is yet to be vanquished as per US-Israeli calculations. Far from being the loser, Iran continues to fire an unending barrage of missiles and drones at Israel and neighbouring Persian Gulf countries hosting US bases. To make matters worse, Iran has closed the Strait of Hormuz and kept launching retaliatory strikes on oil and gas facilities in the Gulf countries. This has escalated energy prices threatening the global economy. Oil prices are not known to increase incrementally but double and quadruple.

There is no denying the fact that Trump alone is responsible for the rebuff of his European allies to get drawn into the war by strengthening his hands. He has antagonized them through his hot-headed actions of punitive tariffs and expressing his desire to reestablish ties with Moscow at Ukraine's expense, not to mention threats to annex Greenland. He did not even approach or consult them beforehand regarding the decisions on launching war against Iran. He had done the same thing during the US-Israeli offensive in June 2025 targeting Iran's nuclear programme, which Washington claimed, without evidence, had been destroyed. Trump and Netanyahu must deal with the economic and geopolitical consequences that they created and dumped on the world at large.

The unimaginable transatlantic rift is all the more to be pitied since Washington and the main European capitals have long been on the same page on Iran's nuclear programme, the regime's ballistic missile capabilities and its use of militias loyal to Tehran, including Hezbollah. At the same time, they all were equally horrified by the ruthless crackdown on the most recent Iranian uprising against the disastrous strategic choices of the regime. At that point itself the Iranian regime virtually lost whatever little global legitimacy it had enjoyed. But the war launched by the US and Israel has placed European defenders of democratic principles in a fix. Quite rightly they declined to take part in it and thus avoided responsibility for a potentially prolonged chaos in Iran but more so in the region.

Trump must now bear the consequences. The continuation of his aggressive and unrestrained unilateralism can be checkmated – to the infinite relief and benefit of the world – by the Europeans. For this they need to achieve their military sovereignty and should not place their arsenal at the disposal of Trump to satisfy his whims, caprices and greed for power.

WISDOM CORNER

Be as a bird perched on a frail branch that she feels bending beneath her, still she sings away all the same, knowing she has wings. **VICTOR HUGO**

The ultimate tragedy is not the oppression and cruelty by the bad people but the silence over that by the good people. **MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.**

Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do only a little. **EDMUND BURKE**

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1849:** At the Battle of Novara, during the first Italian War of Independence, outnumbered Austrian troops under Field Marshal Joseph Radetzky destroyed the poorly trained Italian troops of Charles Albert, king of Sardinia-Piedmont.
- 1857:** American inventor Elisha Otis installed the first commercial elevator, in a department store in New York City.
- 1882:** German mathematician Emmy Noether, whose innovations in higher algebra made her the most creative abstract algebraist of modern times, was born.
- 1910:** Japanese director Akira Kurosawa—who won worldwide acclaim with subtle, brilliantly composed films, such as *Rashomon* (1950), that combined Japanese historic themes with a Western sense of action and drama—was born.
- 1933:** The German Reichstag, dominated by the Nazi Party and German National People's Party, voted to pass the Enabling Act, thereby assuring Nazi primacy, in a process that began with the Reichstag fire about a month prior.
- 1956:** Pakistan becomes the world's first Islamic republic. The Dominion of Pakistan also included the area of modern-day Bangladesh or East Pakistan, which seceded in 1971.

SPECTRUM **ECONOMY**

West Asia war leaves India in tight spot

Severely singed by Iranian missiles across West Asia, India may have to go for drastic changes in the Union Budget by the monsoon session as prices soar, gas crisis derails households and businesses, FPI outflows near a record and the rupee has a mighty fall.

The cost of shipping has gone up by 300 to 400%. Iran's targeting of Gulf states has sharpened Delhi's concerns. India's equities in the Arab world - diaspora, remittances, energy, trade and institutional ties - are far deeper. India has been vocal about the "damage and destruction" there. The blasting of Qatar gas facilities impacts India critically. So does US-Israeli attack on Iran's crucial petroleum island Kharg and preparations for Marine assaults. European nations like Germany, Norway and others are withdrawing their support to the war. US President Donald Trump has lambasted UK for not bidding his orders. The retreat of US ships Abraham Lincoln and Gerald Ford have added to the criticality. Iran's missiles are

hitting critical US establishments hurting its companies like Exxon and others.

India is likely to call for a revision of the Rs 5-lakh crore budget allocations as financial and economics dynamics change despite India safely keeping off the shadow of the war. A redraw through a supplementary budget in the monsoon session could be more than a reality. Sectors like energy and defence may gain, while aviation, paints, and oil marketing companies face pressure.

The government might resort to more borrowings as also tighten the belt for development and welfare allocations. The present borrowings are of about Rs 17 lakh crore. Interest rates for commercial borrowing are also rising, making repayments expensive. The government has, meanwhile, announced a Rs 1000-crore war chest to meet the rising shipping and insurance expenses across the world. The impact still is uncharted.

The present Union Budget is to be formally passed by Parliament in a few days. Imports

have been falling during the last two years. The customs duty collections witnessed a notable decline, dropping approximately 7% year-on-year between April and November 2025 to around Rs 1,429 billion compared to the same period in 2024.

The war is likely to impact imports of edible oil, fertiliser, pulses, gas, pharma raw materials and other products. The higher premium for shipping insurance has jolted traders.

India's economic links with West Asia run deep: the region accounts for 17% of India's exports, supplies 55% of its crude oil and generates 38% of its remittances, according to Jefferies, a brokerage firm. The fallout for India could show up in four places: energy, remittances, its Gulf diaspora and the loss of strategic Iranian port, Chabahar.

Gulf tensions have triggered a shipping crisis, with major carriers imposing war surcharges of up to \$3,000 per container—even on cargo already at sea—causing a 300-400% spike in freight costs. Indian exporters, especially small firms, are hardest hit

as flat charges often exceed cargo value. Shipments remain stranded at Gulf ports, with no legal or regulatory relief due to force majeure protections and insurance gaps. Perishables risk spoilage, threatening farm prices, while payment delays could spark RBI compliance issues and working capital stress.

Despite rhetoric on India-Iran ties, relations have long been constrained by Iran's global isolation, pushing India to deepen engagement with key Gulf states—making regional instability a far greater concern for Delhi. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's reluctance to criticise Israel during his recent visit, just days before the strikes, risks eroding India's perceived neutrality, something Iran is unlikely to overlook.

The coming days may have more trouble and increased financial rigours for India, including further job and production losses. It's a difficult situation and the country has to chart out a new course during such turbulence. **INFA**



Shivaji Sarkar

THE COMING DAYS MAY HAVE MORE TROUBLE AND INCREASED FINANCIAL RIGOURS FOR INDIA

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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

Strategic miscalculation

Sir, This refers to "Conflict now out of Trump's control," **Orissa POST**, March 22. The conduct of US President Donald Trump in the ongoing conflict with Iran reflects a troubling lack of strategic clarity and coherence. Expectations that decapitating Iran's leadership would precipitate swift regime change have proven misplaced, as Tehran has demonstrated notable resilience against the United States-Israeli offensive. Each escalation appears to invite counterproductive backlash, undermining Washington's objectives. Donald Trump's contradictory messaging—claiming success while simultaneously deploying additional military assets—betrays policy inconsistency. His criticism of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) allies for refusing deeper involvement in the war further isolates the US diplomatically. Moreover, reports of dissent within the Trump administration, including the resignation of counterterrorism official Joe Kent, signal internal unease over the war's direction. Rather than decisive leadership, the approach appears reactive and fragmented, raising serious concerns about escalation risks and the absence of a viable exit strategy.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

End judicial stagnation

Sir, Honourable Justice BV Nagarathna's call for a reforms commission is a vital indictment of our individually rational but systemically catastrophic legal culture. With pendency exceeding 50 million cases the status quo thrives on perverse incentives lawyers profit from adjournments while bureaucrats hedge risks through endless appeals. This creates a 2 per cent to 3 per cent drag on India's GDP growth. We cannot solve a systemic backlog with mere procedural tweaks. What we need is a radical realignment of stakes. The proposed commission must mandate strict per case timelines and fiscal penalties for frivolous government appeals. Unless we pivot from a culture of prolonged proceedings to one of accountable adjudication the right to speedy justice will remain a constitutional myth.

Vijaykumar HK, RAICHUR

Child bride breaks free, lights up path for others

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jodhpur, March 22: A woman here reclaimed her life through a court battle breaking a decade-long union that was solemnised when she was just 12, paving the way for others like her who lost their childhood to a regressive custom.

On Thursday, Judge Varun Talwar of Family Court annulled the marriage of Khushboo (name changed), observing that child marriage undermines both the present and future of children and called for a collective societal action to eliminate it.

The marriage, solemnised in 2016 when Khushboo was about 12 years old, was declared void under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006.

Belonging to the Bishnoi community, Khushboo recalled



being a schoolgoer and having little understanding of what was happening around her as community elders took the lead in arranging the marriage.

Decisions, she said, were largely driven by customs, leaving her parents with limited say. It was only as she grew older that the implications of the marriage became clear to her; that she had been bound

in a relationship she neither chose nor fully comprehended.

The turning point came a few years later, when pressure from her in-laws to begin conjugal life bore down on her.

Distressed yet determined not to continue in the union, she approached the police and was subsequently connected with social activist Kriti Bharti of Sarathi Trust.

"They initially hesitated, but seeing my resolve and convinced by my elder sister, who herself had been married as a child, they agreed," Khushboo said. With Bharti's assistance, Khushboo filed a petition in the family court around 18 months ago, seeking annulment.

During the hearings, she presented documents establishing her age at the time of marriage, maintaining that the union had been conducted without her consent. Her in-laws claimed that the marriage had taken place after both parties were adults, but lost the case.

Bharti said getting the groom's side to agree to annulment was far from easy.

"Who would so easily want to relinquish their right to the bride. It is engraved in customs as well as ego, and taking such cases in hands means humili-

ation and abuse," the activist said. Khushboo's case sheds light on the role of certain customs that perpetuate child marriage, a blight that persists despite legal curbs.

The ceremony, Bharti said, was linked to a ritual called mauser (Mrityubhoj), which takes place following a death in the family. A part of the ritual is marrying off multiple children in a communal gathering.

Activists say such occasions often prioritise tradition over legality, with families fearing social boycott if they resist.

Meanwhile, Khushboo, who had dropped out after class 7, has resumed her studies and is preparing for her secondary examinations through open schooling. "It is also my elder sister's wish that I complete my education and become self-reliant," she said.

Rajasthan dog-bite cases rise 2X in '25



Data reveals that the majority of incidents occurred in urban areas, while rural figures remained comparatively low

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Rajasthan, March 22: Dog-bite cases in Rajasthan witnessed a sharp rise in 2025, nearly doubling from the previous year, with children accounting for a significant share of victims, according to official data. Jaipur emerged as the worst-affected district.

An RTI application revealed that the state reported more than 460 cases in 2024, which rose to over 900 in 2025, indicating a steep increase. Jaipur recorded the highest numbers both years, with cases surging from 307 in 2024 to 633 in 2025.

"Notably, incidents involving children also saw a sharp rise. Jaipur reported 45 child victims in 2024, which increased to 65 in 2025, the highest among all districts," RTI

RAJASTHAN REPORTS MORE THAN 460 CASES IN 2024, WHICH ROSE TO OVER 900 IN 2025, INDICATING A STEEP INCREASE

JAIPUR RECORDED THE HIGHEST NUMBERS BOTH YEARS, WITH CASES SURGING FROM 307 IN 2024 TO 633 IN 2025

applicant Chandra Shekhar Gaur said.

Among other districts, Khairthal-Tijara recorded four child victims in 2024, rising to nine in 2025, while Kota reported a significant jump from nine child victims in 2024 to 16 in 2025, making it one of the worst-affected districts for children after Jaipur.

Bikaner reported six child cases in 2024 and two in 2025, while Pali recorded no child cases in 2024 but two in 2025.

Khairthal-Tijara (55 cases), Pali (46 cases), Kota (45 cases) and Bhilwara (33 cases) reported the highest number of cases in 2025 after Jaipur.

Maharashtra water model gets global recognition

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Washington, March 22: India's water governance reforms, particularly in Maharashtra, could play a pivotal role in shaping how the world feeds 10 billion people sustainably, the World Bank said recently, highlighting the state's regulatory model as a global example.

In a new report, the World Bank added that smarter management of water in agriculture is essential to meeting future food demand while generating millions of jobs, and that India's policy innovations offer lessons for water-stressed regions.

"The way we manage water for food will have profound implications for jobs, livelihoods, and economic growth," Paschal Donohoe, Managing Director and Chief Knowledge Officer of the World Bank, said.

"By making smarter choices about where crops are grown, how water is allocated, and how trade supports food security, we can strengthen resilience, expand opportunity, and safeguard the resources which we all rely on."

The report, Nourish and Flourish: Water Solutions to Feed 10 Billion People on a Livable Planet, flags growing imbalances in global water use, with regions like South Asia facing overextraction even as other parts of the world underutilise available resources.

The World Bank applauded Maharashtra's efforts in this regard.

"India's Maharashtra Water Resources Regulatory Authority is one of the few regulators that sets bulk water tariffs for irrigation in addition to domestic and industrial water tariffs," it said.

The report says such regulatory frameworks are critical to improving efficiency, ensuring cost recovery, and attracting investment into irrigation systems.



"Current water use in agriculture can sustainably feed less than half the world's population. Demand will rise sharply by 2050."

The World Bank says expanding irrigation within sustainable limits could create about 245 million long-term jobs, adding that most of these jobs will be in developing countries.

"When investments in infrastructure and natural resources, business-enabling policies, and private capital mobilisation come together, the impact can be greater than the sum of its parts," said Guangzhe Chen, Vice President for Planet at the World Bank Group.

"By linking global evidence with country realities, this framework can help policymakers navigate trade-offs and adapt food production to today's water and climate realities - delivering food, jobs, and resilience together."

The report proposes a framework linking water, food production, and trade. It helps countries decide whether to expand irrigation, use water more efficiently, or rely on imports.

For India, the stakes are high. Parts of South Asia are already overusing water. This threatens future farm output and food security.

The report calls for stronger institutions, better pricing of water, and greater private sector participation to improve efficiency.

It notes that farmers are willing to invest when supported by access to finance, technology, and markets.

Flamingo habitats drop as wetlands turn toxic

Flamingos depend on algae and microorganisms that thrive in balanced conditions. As water quality deteriorates, the food chain collapses, turning feeding grounds into stressed habitats

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



These wetlands were our pride. Today, they are being destroyed in full view

REKHA SANKHALA | SAVE FLAMINGOS AND MANGROVES FORUM

natural tidal flushing.

"Put simply, all four indicators tell the same story-the water is not moving as it should in a healthy intertidal wetland," Kumar said, pointing to blocked or restricted tidal flow.

Instead of being regularly flushed, the wetlands are turning into stagnant, polluted basins.

Activists squarely blame government failure.

The City And Industrial Development Corporation (CIDCO) is "largely responsible for what has happened," Climate activist Nandakumar Pawar said, adding that regulators such as the Maharashtra Coastal Zone Management Authority and the forest department have "simply looked the other way".

The wetlands, he warned, are a public asset being destroyed in plain sight.

Flamingos depend on algae and microorganisms that thrive in balanced conditions.

As water quality deteriorates, the food chain collapses, turning feeding grounds into stressed habitats.

While flamingos have adapted to degraded sites in the past, their absence now suggests the system may have crossed a critical threshold.

"These wetlands were our pride. Today, they are being destroyed in full view," said Rekha Sankhala of Save Flamingos and Mangroves Forum, urging authorities to treat the situation as a public health emergency.

Calling for accountability, Sandeep Sareen of Navi Mumbai Environment Preservation Society (NMEPS) said the lab results expose "toxic waters" driven by unchecked development. "CIDCO's apathy - putting concrete over conservation - is destroying these wetlands despite court orders," he said, warning that flamingos are "the canary in our ecosystem's coal mine."

"CIDCO's deliberate neglect in a time of climate crisis has put groundwater and biodiversity at risk, and we urge immediate government intervention to save these wetlands," activist Pamela Cheema said.

RAJASTHAN TO INCORPORATE LOCAL DIALECTS INTO CLASSROOM TEACHING

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur, March 22: Rajasthan has launched a multilingual education initiative in government schools to make learning more engaging by incorporating local dialects into classroom teaching, officials said.

To bridge the gap between home and school language, the project will teach students to use commonly spoken local words, such as 'ladu', 'rotlo' and 'moto bapo' instead of the standard Hindi terms, Shweta Phagediya, Director, Rajasthan State Council of Educational

Research and Training (RSCERT), said.

The programme will initially be implemented in 11 districts before being expanded across the state in phases, she said. The officials said surveys conducted across districts identified more than 30 dialects, with 'Wagdi' and 'Mewari' among the most widely spoken by the students.

The initiative, supported by UNICEF and other organisations, has already been piloted in select schools in Durgapur and Sirohi districts, where the use of local languages improved student interest and comprehension, the officials said.



Dark smoke billows out after a fire broke out at a building in Turbhe Sector 21 area, Navi Mumbai, Sunday

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA, DEPARTMENT OF P.R & D.W.
INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)
Identification No. GONDIA BLOCK-02/2025-26
E-mail address:- ori-gandia@nic.in

Sl. No.	Name of Works	Approx. Value of work. (Rs. in lakhs)	Class of Contractor	Bid Security (Rs.)	Cost of documents (Non-refundable)	Period of Completion
1	Construction of Office building with Market Complex of GPLF in Letheka, GP	24.54	'C' or 'D'	24546.00	6000.00	Eight Calendar Months
2	Construction of Administrative Building at Pingua Degree College, Pingua	25.97	'C' or 'D'	25976.00	6000.00	Eight Calendar Months
3	Development of Infrastructure at Kapilash Mahavidyalaya, Gondia	23.60	'C' or 'D'	23606.00	6000.00	Eight Calendar Months
4	Infrastructure Development of Sridhara Swamy Mahavidyalaya Sadangji	24.49	'C' or 'D'	24493.00	6000.00	Eight Calendar Months
5	Construction of Office Building with Market Complex of GPLF in Poruhakhoja GP	24.59	'C' or 'D'	24591.00	6000.00	Eight Calendar Months

For detailed information, please visit the website <https://dhenkanal.odisha.gov.in>
OIPR-19001/19418/1/25-26/0001

OFFICE OF THE NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL, KARANJIA
DIST-MAYURBHANJ
Email ID - karanjia.hud@ori.nic.in
No.570/NAC, Date : 13.03.2026
"e" Procurement Notice
BID Identification No. NAC-KJA-08/2025-26
No.13001/749/2526 : Bid Documents consisting of Work, Estimated Cost, Cost of Tender Paper, EMD and time of completion, Class of contractors and the set of terms and conditions of contract and other necessary documents can be seen in Govt. website i.e. www.tendersorissa.gov.in

- Name of the Work : Civil Construction works as mentioned in website
- No. of works : As per DTCN
- Estimated Cost : As per DTCN
- Class of Contractor : As per DTCN
- Period of Completion : As per DTCN
- Date & Time of availability of Bid document in the portal : Dt.16.03.2026 to 25.03.2026 up to 3.00 P.M.
- Last date/Time for receipt of bids in the portal : Dt.25.03.2026 at 3.00 P.M.
- Submission of Bid documents, (Tender Paper Cost, EMD, Affidavit) & others documents as per DTCN dropping on the Office Tender BOX Otherwise tender will be rejected
- Date & time of opening of Technical Bid : Dt.30.03.2026 at 11.30 P.M. documents
- Date & time of Opening of Financial bid : After technical Evaluation documents
- Name and address of the Officer : Executive Officer, Karanjia N.A.C. inviting Bid

The authority reserves right to reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason thereof. Further details can be seen from the procurement portal i.e. www.tendersorissa.gov.in
Sd./ Executive Officer
Karanjia N.A.C.
OIPR-13001/13119/1/25-26/0002

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No.1001/72/2526
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (AGRI.)
SOIL CONSERVATION, NORTHERN ZONE,
AT/PO-BURLA, SAMBALPUR-768017
email : enpsc.sambalpur@gmail.com
Notice No. - 622 Dt.17.03.2026
NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement
Identification No. 11/DSC&WD / NZ / 2025-26 Dt.17.03.2026

- Nature of Work : Construction of new-Residential Building
- Nos. of work : 01 No.
- Tendered amount in Rs : Rs.21,86,903/-
- Period of Completion : 180 days
- Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal : From 10.00 Hrs. of 25.03.2026 to 17.30 Hrs. of 07.04.2026
- Last date/time of receipt of original documents in the tender box at the office of the undersigned : Before 17.30 Hrs. of 15.04.2026
- Date & Time of opening of bids : 11.00 Hrs. of 18.04.2026 onwards
- Name and Address of the officer inviting bid : Executive Engineer (Agril.), Soil Conservation, Northern Zone, Sambalpur, At/Po-Burla, Near Planetarium Chowk, Pin-768017

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in
Sd./ Executive Engineer (Agril.)
Soil Conservation, NZ, Sambalpur
OIPR-1001/1481/1/25-26/0016

OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL:GUNUPUR
e-Procurement Notice
Tender Reference No. GUN-MUN-80/2025-26
Letter No.1076, Dt.20.03.2026

01. Total Nos. of Works	: Two (02) nos. of Civil Works
02. Approximate Estimated Cost (Excluding GST 18%)	: Rs. 72,65,990/- to Rs. 75,85,042/-
03. Period of Completion	: Six (06) Months
04. Date & Time of availability of Bid document in the Portal	: 11.00 Hrs. of Dt.23.03.2026 to 17.00 Hrs. of Dtd.07.04.2026 for Online Bidding
05. Last date/Time for receipt of bids in the Portal	: 17.00 Hrs. of Dtd.07.04.2026
06. Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bids	: Executive Officer, Gunupur Municipality
07. Date of Opening of Bids	: 11.00 Hrs. on Dtd.08.04.2026
08. Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement Portal	: www.tendersodisha.gov.in
09. Further Addendum/ Corrigendum if any will be hosted in the above website.	

Sd./ Executive Officer
Gunupur Municipality
OIPR-13001/13104/1/25-26/0015



Heartfelt greetings of Bihar Day to all the people of Bihar residing in the country and abroad
DROUPADI MURMU | PRESIDENT

15 DEER KILLED BY STRAY DOGS

As many as 15 deer were killed after a pack of stray dogs attacked them inside an enclosure at an animal rescue centre in Chhattisgarh's Surguja district, officials said Sunday



Official's suicide: Oppn holds joint protest against AAP govt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, March 22: Police detained top Opposition leader and used water cannons to disperse protesters as they tried to force their way through barricades here Sunday to 'gherao' Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann's residence during a joint stir to demand the arrest of former minister

Laljit Singh Bhullar, accused of abetting the suicide of a state warehousing corporation official. Gagandeep Singh Randhawa, the district manager of Punjab State Warehousing Corporation in Amritsar, allegedly ended his life by consuming poison early Saturday, and a video appeared in which he purportedly claimed harassment by Bhullar, who resigned as minister later in the

day at the direction of Mann amid the row.

The police Saturday night booked Bhullar, his father Sukhdev Singh Bhullar, and personal assistant Dilbag Singh under sections 108 (abetment of suicide), 351 (3) (criminal intimidation) and 3 (5) (common intention) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), Congress and the BJP had announced that they will jointly 'gherao' (lay siege to) CM Mann's residence to press their demand for the arrest of Bhullar. Leader of Opposition in the Punjab Assembly, Partap Singh Bajwa, Punjab Congress chief Amrinder Singh Raja Warring, Punjab BJP chief Sunil Jakhar, along with SAD leaders Bikram Singh Majithia and Daljit Singh Cheema were among those who took part in the protest.

of the day quote

Amid the ongoing wars in the world, the Indian government has made arrangements and ensured that common people don't have to face any impact. If we look at the situation in neighbouring countries like Pakistan and Sri Lanka, they have closed their offices and schools

DEVENDRA FADNAVIS | MAHARASHTRA CM

The need of the hour is to work diligently to achieve the missionary objectives of security, respect and identity for the bahujan, and achieve electoral success. Whenever and wherever BSP has strengthened, Dalits, tribals, OBCs and minority communities have benefitted immensely

MAYAWATI | BSP CHIEF

An issue was raised with regard to the functioning of the collegium. I won't say that the collegium system is a foolproof system. There can't be a perfect system. Every system has its advantages and disadvantages. But after working for so many years, I find that the collegium system, at least for the time being, is the best suited for our country

JUSTICE B R GAVAI | EX-CJ



Participants take part in the 'Fit India Sundays on Cycle' event at Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium, in New Delhi

PTI PHOTO

CCS reviews situation arising due to West Asia escalation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 22: The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) Sunday reviewed the situation arising out of the conflict in West Asia and carried out a detailed assessment on the availability of critical needs of the common people, including food, energy and fuel security.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who chaired the meeting, directed that a group of ministers and secretaries be created to work dedicatedly in a whole-of-government approach to deal with the effects of the West Asia conflict, said an official statement issued after the CCS meeting.

The Prime Minister said the conflict is an evolving situation and the entire world is affected in some form. In such a situation, he said, all efforts must be made to safeguard the citizens from the impact of this conflict.

Modi instructed that all arms of government should work together to ensure the least inconvenience to the citizens. Medium and long-term measures to ensure the continued availability of essential things were discussed in detail at the meeting.

"The ongoing conflict in West Asia will have significant short, medium and long-term impact on the global economy and its effect on India was assessed and counter-measures, both immediate and long-term, were discussed," the statement said.

The CCS, which is the highest decision-making body on security and strategic matters of the country, carried out a detailed assessment of the availability of critical needs of the common man, including food, energy and fuel security.

The expected impact and measures taken to address it across sectors like agriculture, fertilisers, food security, petroleum, power, MSMEs,



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exporters, shipping, trade, finance, supply chains and all affected sectors were discussed, the statement said. The overall macro-economic scenario in the country and further measures to be taken were also discussed.

"Chaired a meeting of the CCS to review the mitigating measures in the wake of the ongoing conflict in West Asia," Modi said in a post on X.

He said the meeting saw extensive discussions on short, medium and long-term measures, including ensuring continued availability of fertilisers for farmers, diversifying import sources for key sectors, promoting exports to new destinations and more. "We are committed to safeguarding our citizens from the impact of the conflict," he said. The impact on farmers

and their requirement for fertiliser for the kharif season was assessed at the CCS meeting.

The measures taken in the last few years to maintain adequate stocks of fertilisers will ensure timely availability and food security. Alternative sources of fertilisers were also discussed to ensure continued availability in the future.

It was also determined that an adequate supply of coal stocks at all power plants would ensure no shortage of electricity in India. Several measures were discussed to diversify the sources of imports required by chemicals, pharmaceuticals, petrochemicals and other industrial sectors.

Similarly, new export destinations to promote Indian goods will be developed in the near future, the statement said. Cabinet Secretary T V Somanathan gave a detailed presentation on the global situation and mitigating measures taken so far and being planned by all concerned ministries and departments of the government of India.

Several measures proposed by different ministries will be prepared and implemented in the coming days after consultation with all stakeholders.

The PM also asked for proper coordination with state governments to ensure no black marketing and hoarding of important commodities.

TN polls: DMK ally exits alliance

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, March 22: Ahead of the April 23 Tamil Nadu Assembly polls, Tamilaga Vazhuvirmalai Katchi Sunday announced quitting the DMK-led SPA, with its founder T Velmurugan objecting to the ruling party's "big brother" attitude.

The decision was taken also following his party being "ignored." Velmurugan, incumbent MLA from Panruti (Cuddalore dt) Assembly segment, told reporters here.

"We were told during seat-sharing negotiations that we will be allotted one seat for the Assembly polls. We have been raising a set of demands, including regarding social justice. We were told when other parties are not asking for any demands, why you are making such demands," Velmurugan said. On his further course of action, he said that his organisation would not join the NDA in Tamil Nadu and indicated that he was talking to some parties over forming an alliance.

Further, "we have been mak-

ing charter of demands to the negotiation panel (of the DMK). I have been informing that there was not any problem on allocation of seats but immediately take steps to fulfil these demands," he said.

Recalling that he has been speaking about the same demands in the legislative assembly for several years, Velmurugan alleged that "the DMK-led government did not care about them." During seat-sharing negotiations, Velmurugan claimed, the approach of the election panel of the DMK was like a "big brother". "We were told that when political parties including Congress, Communists, and MDMK did not place any such demands, as a legislator and the representative of a small party, they did not deem it fit for us to give such demands and ask them to be fulfilled."

He accused some officials of complaining to Chief Minister MK Stalin and his ministers that he is constantly "giving trouble" to the government, Velmurugan alleged.

Former JD (U) leader KC Tyagi joins RLD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 22: Former JD(U) leader KC Tyagi Sunday joined the Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD), saying there is no difference between the two parties as both follow the ideals of former prime minister Chaudhary Charan Singh and socialist leader Ram Manohar Lohia.

Tyagi said he has come to the party not to become an MLA or an MP but to see RLD chief "Jayant Chaudhary becoming like (his grandfather) Chaudhary Charan Singh".

He vowed to carry forward the vision and ideals of Charan Singh during his stint in the RLD, which, like the JD(U), is an ally of the BJP and a constituent of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). The veteran socialist leader joined the RLD along with his supporters in the presence of the party president and Union minister Jayant Chaudhary at an event here. Tyagi had Tuesday announced his exit from the JD(U), without citing any reason. He was associated with the JD(U) since it came into existence in October 2003 with the merger of the Samata Party and the Janata Dal.

SHORT TAKES

Six killed in two separate mishaps

Bangalore: Six people, including three women were killed in two separate road accidents on Bengaluru outskirts late March 21, police said Sunday. Three women, reportedly on a spiritual journey to Kashi, were killed when the tempo traveller they were heading toward the airport was hit by a speeding truck near Devanahalli, they said. According to police, 12 people from Tiptur in Tumakuru district were on their way to the airport to catch a flight for Kashi. The accident occurred when the speeding truck hit the tempo traveller that was attempting to take the correct service road near the Rani Cross.

Hosp lift death: Cops probe safety lapses

Kolkata: Investigators probing a man's death after he got trapped in an R G Kar Hospital lift are looking into possible safety lapses and human error, even as records show the elevator had cleared a routine inspection recently, a police officer said Sunday. The sleuths are examining multiple angles, including whether there were lapses in adherence to safety protocols, any delay in informing the lift maintenance agency and if anyone had accessed the elevator's machine room at the time of the Friday incident. "Even though initial records suggest the lift had passed an inspection earlier this month, we are examining whether there were any lapses in maintenance, monitoring, or response that could have contributed to the accident," the officer said.

4 dead as motorbike falls off bridge in MP

Mandla (MP): Four men died after their motorcycle plunged off a dilapidated bridge in Madhya Pradesh's Mandla district, police said Sunday. The accident occurred near Bhainswahi village at around 8 pm Saturday, Bijadandi Police Station House Officer (SHO) Anita Kudape said. The four men were travelling from Paudi to Bhainswahi village when their motorcycle hit a pothole on the bridge.

BJP candidate booked over 'Hindu MLA' remark

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thrissur (Kerala), March 22: Senior BJP leader and the party candidate in Guruvayur, B Gopalakrishnan was booked Sunday for his alleged communal remark in a campaign video related to the upcoming Assembly polls, police said.

The case was registered based on a complaint of the Returning officer in the Guruvayur constituency.

The leader was booked under BNS Section 192 and Section 125 of the Representation of the People Act, they said. BNS Section 192 refers to wantonly giving provocation with intent to cause riot while Section 125 of the Representation of the

The leader was booked under BNS Section 192 and Section 125 of the Representation of the People Act

BNS Section 192 refers to wantonly giving provocation with intent to cause riot while Section 125 of the Representation of the People Act refers to promoting enmity between classes in connection with election

People Act refers to promoting enmity between classes in connection with election.

Sources said the complaint was lodged and the case has been registered following the intervention of the Election

Commission. Directions have been given to the cyber cell of the police to remove the video having the objectionable remarks, they added.

The development came amidst a raging political row in the poll-bound Kerala over the alleged remarks made by Gopalakrishnan with the ruling CPI(M) and opposition Congress approaching the Election Commission seeking action against him. Congress-affiliated student outfit Kerala Students' Union (KSU) also moved the High Court and lodged a police complaint demanding stern action against the purported remark, which allegedly had communal overtones.

Bhabanipur: From Cong's base to Mamata's fortress

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, March 22: In the constantly shifting landscape of West Bengal politics, few constituencies carry the historical weight and symbolism of Bhabanipur - a seat whose electoral journey mirrors the state's transformation from Congress dominance to the rise of the TMC.

Today regarded as Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's political fortress, Bhabanipur was not always synonymous with the TMC. For decades after Independence, the seat in south Kolkata was a Congress bastion and the home turf of some of the state's most influential political figures.

Former Chief Minister Siddhartha Shankar Ray contested and won from the seat both as a Congress candidate and later as an Independent. Other Congress stalwarts such as Mira Dutta Gupta and Rathin

Talukdar also represented the constituency, cementing Bhabanipur's reputation as one of the party's key urban strongholds.

For years, the constituency remained firmly within the Congress orbit, with the Left breaching it only briefly in 1969 when the seat was rechristened as Kalighat constituency. CPI(M) leader Sadhan Gupta, who became India's first visually impaired parliamentarian in 1953, won the seat during the second United Front government of the Bangla Congress and the CPI(M).

Bhabanipur's political journey took an unusual turn in 1972 when the constituency disappeared from the electoral map following delimitation. For nearly four decades, the seat existed only in political memory. When it was revived in the 2011 delimitation exercise, West Bengal pol-



itics itself was undergoing a dramatic churn. That year marked the end of the Left Front's 34-year rule and the beginning of the Mamata Banerjee era.

The newly reconstituted Bhabanipur constituency quickly became intertwined with the rise of the TMC. In the

first election held there in 2011, Banerjee fielded her close aide Subrata Bakshi.

Bakshi won comfortably, securing over 64 per cent of the votes and defeating CPI(M)'s Narayan Jain by nearly 50,000 votes, establishing Bhabanipur as a stronghold of the newly as-

Today regarded as Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's political fortress, Bhabanipur was not always synonymous with the TMC

For decades after Independence, the seat in south Kolkata was a Congress bastion and the home turf of some of the state's most influential political figures

endant TMC.

Soon afterwards, Bakshi vacated the seat, allowing Banerjee - sworn in as chief minister after the TMC's landslide victory - to enter the assembly through a by-election that effectively became her electoral coronation as an MLA.

Banerjee secured nearly 77 per cent of the votes and defeated CPI(M)'s Nandini Mukherjee by over 54,000 votes, firmly anchoring her political base in

Bhabanipur. Since then, the constituency has not slipped from the TMC's grasp.

Over the years, Bhabanipur has witnessed several high-profile contests involving heavy-weight candidates from across parties, but the outcome has remained unchanged.

In the 2016 assembly elections, the Left and Congress forged an alliance and fielded senior Congress leader Deepa Dasmunsi against Banerjee in a contest framed as a "battle between Didi and Boudi".

Despite the symbolism, Banerjee won comfortably with 65,520 votes against Dasmunsi's 40,219. BJP candidate Chandra Kumar Bose, a member of the Netaji family, finished third with around 26,000 votes. Five years later, in the 2021 assembly election, Banerjee shifted to Nandigram to challenge her former aide Suvendu Adhikari.



“
The AAP government is working tirelessly for the welfare of people, whereas the rival parties have always sought a share in the successful ventures during their days in power
”
BHAGWANT MANN | PUNJAB CM

J'KHAND'S TOP FOREST OFFICER BATS FOR ADOPTING GREEN TECH

Jharkhand's Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Head of Forest Force Sanjeev Kumar Sunday emphasised the urgent need to balance development with sustainability, and called for widespread adoption of green technology to reduce environmental damage



of the day quote

We are in a new situation in the world today. If the biomass of our 600 million metric tonnes is converted into energy, we can become a net energy exporter. Despite challenges in hydrogen energy, India can reach a global leadership position in that sector
DHARMENDRA PRADHAN | UNION EDUCATION MINISTER

Within 45 days from now Rs 9,000 crore in Rythu Bharosa funds will be credited to 70 lakh farmers
REVAANTH REDDY | TELANGANA CM

You had voted for change in Nandigram, but this autocratic TMC regime was not changed. Now let's hope your voting for the BJP in Nandigram will pave the way for dislodging the appeasement-friendly Mamata Banerjee government in the state
SUVENDU ADHIKARI | LEADER OF THE OPPN

POST OF THE DAY

Having paid over RS 1 crore in direct taxes over the years, yet if I lose my job:
@investing_t20

- No unemployment benefit
- No income protection
- No social security
- We copied taxation from developed countries. Why not copy taxpayer protection! Should lifetime taxpayers above a threshold be rewarded with a basic social security in India?

SHORT TAKES

WB: BLO dies of heart attack

Kolkata: A 54-year-old booth-level officer in West Bengal's Malda district died of a heart attack, with his family alleging that excessive work pressure related to the SIR exercise in the state caused his death. The BLO, identified as Utpal Thakur, suffered a heart attack at around 10.30 pm Saturday and later died, one of his family members said. He was serving as a BLO at booth number 93 in Nadapara under the Chandrapara Gram Panchayat in Chanchal-II block, Election Commission sources said. Thakur was a para-teacher at a school.

Delhi Assembly Budget Session begins today

New Delhi: Delhi Assembly's Budget Session will commence with a 'kheer' ceremony Monday, with the Opposition AAP threatening to boycott the session. Chief Minister Rekha Gupta will attend the 'kheer' ceremony and table table Delhi's Economic Survey report in the House, officials said. The ruling BJP's MLA Shikha Rai will table a Censure Motion in the House against opposition parties that recently brought a No-confidence Motion against the Lok Sabha Speaker.

Three killed in road accident

Jaipur: Three persons, including a couple, were killed after a speeding pickup vehicle collided with their motorcycle on a national highway in Rajasthan's Pratappgarh district Sunday, police said. The accident occurred near Kachotiya village on Chittorgarh-Banswara National Highway 56 when the motorcycle carrying three persons was hit by a pickup loaded with chickens, officials said.

SC seeks plan to curb overcrowding in jails

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 22: The Supreme Court has directed all the states and Union territories to furnish updated details relating to jails, including the sanctioned capacity of each prison and steps taken to check overcrowding, by May 18.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta also asked the states and UTs to provide details about the number of women's prisons within their jurisdictions and the facilities available in them, including the measures taken to ensure education and overall welfare of children living with the female inmates.

The bench noted that senior advocate Gaurav Agrawal, who is assisting the top court as an amicus curiae in a suo motu matter concerning inhuman conditions in jails, has drawn its attention to the fact that the statistics placed on record by the states and UTs pertain to 2023.

The bench said that, having regard to the nature of issues involved and the necessity of an informed adjudicatory exercise, the availability of updated contemporaneous data was indispensable for the effective consideration of the proceedings.

"Accordingly, we deem it appropriate to direct all the states and Union territories to place on record updated and comprehensive statistics relating to all



THE BENCH DIRECTED THE STATES AND UTs TO FURNISH COMPLETE PARTICULARS INDICATING THE SANCTIONED CAPACITY OF EACH PRISON AND THE TOTAL NUMBER OF PRISONERS LODGED AS MARCH 1, 2026, ALONG WITH JAIL-WISE DETAILS REFLECTING THE EXTENT OF OCCUPANCY

THE APEX COURT SAID THE STATES AND UTs WOULD FILE COMPREHENSIVE AFFIDAVITS, DULY SWORN BY THE HOME SECRETARY, PROVIDING THE REQUISITE DETAILS BY MAY 18

(including educational and medical facilities), sanctioned strength of prison staff, existing vacancies, steps taken to fill them, along with all ancillary aspects relating to prison administration.

The apex court said the states and UTs to furnish complete particulars indicating the sanctioned capacity of each prison and the total number of prisoners lodged as March 1, 2026, along with jail-wise details reflecting the extent of occupancy.

The apex court said the states and UTs to file comprehensive affidavits, duly sworn by the home secretary, providing the requisite details by May 18.

It said the top court registry would forward copies of the affidavits received from the states and UTs to the amicus, who would prepare a comprehensive note detailing the statistics and information provided by them.

prisons situated within their respective jurisdictions," the bench said in its order passed March 17.

It said the data shall include jail-wise capacity of each prison, total number of prisoners, percentage of overcrowding in each jail, steps proposed to address overcrowding, details of women's jails, facilities provided to women prisoners and children accompanying them

Oppn targets CEC with seven-point chargesheet

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 22: The notices moved by the Opposition MPs in Parliament seeking the removal of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar have accused him of "acting under the thumb of the executive", besides blaming him for "mass disenfranchisement" through the SIR exercise, and raising questions on his appointment.

The notices submitted in the two Houses of Parliament March 12 list seven charges against the chief election commissioner (CEC) as grounds of "proved misbehavior", calling for his removal.

The Opposition MPs, 130 in the Lok Sabha and 63 in the Rajya Sabha, have also sought a motion to remove the CEC.

Asked about the notices, Trinamool Congress Rajya Sabha leader Derek O'Brien said they are waiting for action on them.

"If the notices are not taken up by the Union government, doubts will be raised about a tacit understanding between the executive and the CEC," said O'Brien.

The notices termed maintaining a level playing field "the

heart and soul of electoral democracy", and part of the basic structure of the Constitution.

Among the charges of "proved misbehavior", the Opposition accused the CEC of "failure to maintain independence and constitutional fidelity", and acting under the "thumb of the executive".

The Opposition's charges include the process of Kumar's appointment as the CEC, his "partisan" press conference August 17, 2025, targeting Rahul Gandhi, "discriminatory treatment" of Opposition and ruling party members, "obstruction" of investigations, refusal to provide "transparency tools", and the execution of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise "in alignment with the ruling party's political objectives".

"The ECI's stance on the citizenship verification aspect of the SIR, i.e., ascertaining the citizenship status of voters through electoral roll revision, is in direct alignment with the Union home minister's stated position that an NRC (National Register of Citizens) exercise would be conducted across India."



Children walk through a mustard field, at Pampore in Pulwama, Jammu and Kashmir

Govt directs faster processing of city gas projects

THE PETROLEUM AND EXPLOSIVES SAFETY ORGANISATION HAS INSTRUCTED ITS OFFICES TO DISPOSE OF CITY GAS DISTRIBUTION APPLICATIONS WITHIN 10 DAYS, AIMING TO ACCELERATE THE ROLLOUT OF PIPED NATURAL GAS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 22: The government has stepped up efforts to streamline gas distribution and ease supply pressures, directing faster processing of city gas projects while increasing allocations of commercial LPG to key sectors amid a challenging geopolitical environment.

The Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation (PESO) has instructed its offices to dispose of City Gas Distribution (CGD) applications within 10 days, aiming to accelerate the rollout of piped natural gas (PNG), an official statement said.

Commercial LPG consumers in major cities and urban areas have also been advised to shift



to PNG as part of a broader strategy to reduce dependence on liquefied petroleum gas.

Domestic LPG supply remains stable, with no reported dry-outs at distributorships and normal delivery patterns

side, the government has progressively increased LPG allocations.

After restoring 20 per cent supply earlier, an additional 10 per cent allocation linked to PNG expansion reforms was announced March 18. A further 20 per cent allocation cleared March 21, taking the total commercial LPG supply to 50 per cent.

The latest increase prioritises sectors such as restaurants, dhabas, hotels, industrial canteens, food processing units, dairy operations, community kitchens, and subsidised food outlets run by state governments and local bodies, the statement said, adding that provision has also been made for 5 kg cylinders for migrant

workers.

Around 20 states and Union Territories have implemented the revised allocation guidelines, while public sector oil marketing companies are supplying commercial LPG in the remaining regions. In the past eight days, about 15,440 tonnes of LPG have been lifted by commercial entities.

Educational institutions and hospitals continue to receive priority, accounting for nearly half of the total commercial LPG allocation. Despite global uncertainties affecting supply, the government indicated that domestic availability remains under control while efforts continue to transition urban consumers toward PNG.

Manipur CM, Kuki Zo Council hold first talks



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Imphal, March 22: Manipur Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh Sunday said his meeting with a Kuki Zo Council delegation was a "good beginning" at restoring peace in the state and rebuilding trust between Meiteis and Kukis.

A day after holding the closed-door meeting with the delegation in Guwahati, he told reporters here that "the talk between the Kuki Zo Council (KZC) and the state government for the first time in nearly three years is a really good thing".

"The talks will proceed," the chief minister said. More than 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups since May 2023. The KZC, in a statement

Sunday, said the meeting commenced at 7 pm on Saturday and lasted around 1 hour and 45 minutes. The interaction was largely an ice-breaking session, it said.

Addressing the media on Sunday, the chief minister said, "In Manipur's situation, the most saddening part is that internally displaced persons (IDPs) are unable to return to their native homes."

"What is of utmost importance for their return is to rebuild the trust between the two communities. How long can guarding the population in some places? What is required is for the communities to forget the conflict and rebuild trust," Singh said.

Informing the reporters that the issue of IDPs of both sides returning to their places featured in the talks, the chief minister added that "at least we need to have a good beginning".

MANIPUR CM VIEWS MEETING WITH KUKI ZO COUNCIL AS A POSITIVE STEP TOWARDS RESTORING PEACE AND REBUILDING TRUST AFTER ETHNIC VIOLENCE
THE PRIMARY FOCUS IS ON ENABLING INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS TO RETURN HOME BY REBUILDING TRUST BETWEEN MEITEI AND KUKI COMMUNITIES

EC tightens vigil in WB ahead of polls

KOLKATA: Senior police officials began visiting police stations across West Bengal from Sunday as the Election Commission stepped up monitoring Assembly poll preparedness and security arrangements in the state, officers said. During these visits, officers-in-charge at police stations were briefed on measures imperative for ensuring free and fair polling, with a strong focus on maintaining law and order and preventing any form of electoral malpractice. In line with directives from the poll panel, police commissioners and superintendents of police have started conducting ground-level reviews, an official in the West Bengal Chief Electoral Officer's office said. "The focus is on building confidence among voters and strict enforcement of measures to curb any attempt at malpractice, including booth capturing or intimidation," the official added. As part of this exercise, Kolkata Police Commissioner Ajay Nand visited Bhargar police station and held meetings with officers from the division, briefing them on the Election Commission's guidelines. "Every officer has been briefed. Electors should be able to cast their vote without fear. That is the main objective," Nand said. He said multiple confidence-building and preventive measures were being undertaken.



We urge the public to consume electricity and fuel mindfully and limit energy consumption to a minimum

NALINDA JAYATISSA | MEMBER OF THE PARL. OF SL

SL HIKES FUEL PRICES BY 25%

The Sri Lankan government Sunday raised fuel prices by around 25 per cent, the second such increase in a week amid the West Asia conflict. The step comes in the backdrop of the joint US-Israel strikes against Iran and the retaliation by the Islamic nation that has spread to the entire Gulf region. It has led to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a strategically important choke point for the world's energy supplies



of the day quote

Racism is not a relic of the past. It's a living structure. It's very tangible for many of us. We feel and we sense the urgency, especially in these political times

MICHAELA MOUA | EUROPEAN UNION'S ANTI-RACISM COORDINATOR

There needs to be an immediate cessation of what he described as US-Israeli aggression to end the war and wider regional conflict

MASOUD PEZESHKIAN | IRAN'S PRESIDENT

The most important thing is to understand how ready the Russian side is to move toward a real end to the war and whether they are prepared to do so honestly and decently

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY | UKRAINIAN PRESIDENT

SHORT TAKES

Restrictive orders continue in Nepal

Kathmandu: Restrictive orders were re-imposed Sunday in southern Nepal's Kapilvastu district that had witnessed a clash between two communities turn violent. As the situation remained tense, the District Administration Office, Kapilvastu re-imposed the restrictive orders in parts of Maharajgunj Municipality in the district. According to Janardan Gautam, Chief District Officer of Kapilvastu, the step was taken as per the decision of the district security committee.

Vietnam's Communist Party wins 97% of seats

Manila: Vietnam's Communist Party won nearly 97% of the 500 seats in the National Assembly, according to results released by the parliament March 22, confirming its overwhelming dominance after a vote in which almost all candidates were fielded by the ruling party. The party's 482-seat haul was roughly in line with the number it held in the outgoing parliament.

Detained national in Iran released: Japan

Tokyo: Japan's Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi said Sunday that one of two Japanese nationals detained in Iran has been released and will be returning to Japan. Motegi, speaking on a Fuji Television talk show, said the person had been detained since last year and was released Wednesday. He said another Japanese national who was arrested earlier this year is still in custody. Motegi said the release came after his repeated demands to Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and that he is "working to win an early release" of the other detainee while communicating with his family and other concerned parties.

Slovenians vote

Ljubljana: Slovenians voted Sunday in a parliamentary election pitting incumbent liberal Prime Minister Robert Golob against right-wing populist Janez Jansa, with neither looking set to win a majority in a vote that could be decided by smaller coalition partners. More than 362,000 people, or 21.38% of the electorate, had cast their votes by 11 a.m. (1000 GMT), slightly more than the 21% in the 2022 poll which recorded an historic turnout of 71%, said Slovenia's election commission, which is expected to announce preliminary results after 8.30 p.m. local time.

US-Israel fighting for entire world: Netanyahu

NETANYAHU WAS VISITING THE SOUTHERN ISRAELI CITY OF ARAD WHICH FACED IRANIAN MISSILE STRIKES SATURDAY EVENING WHEN HE SAID HIS COUNTRY AND THE US ARE FIGHTING TOGETHER ON BEHALF OF EVERYONE

AGENCIES

Jerusalem, March 22: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu Sunday said the recent missile attacks on Diego Garcia shows that Iran has the capacity to reach deep into Europe and poses danger to the entire world.

Netanyahu was visiting the southern Israeli city of Arad which faced Iranian missile strikes Saturday evening when he also said his country and the US are fighting together on behalf of everyone.

"If you want proof that Iran endangers the entire world, the last 48 hours have given it. In the last 48 hours, Iran targeted a civilian area. They're using that as a mass murder weapon."

"Luckily, no one was killed, but that's due to luck, not their intention. Their intention is to murder civilians," Netanyahu said. Pointing out that Iran fired an intercontinental ballistic missile on Diego Garcia, Netanyahu said, "That's 4,000 kilometres. I've been warning all the time. They now have the capacity to reach deep into Europe. They already have fired on European countries - Cyprus. They are putting ev-

eryone in their sights."

For the past two decades, Israel has been referring to the Iranian ballistic missile programme, arguing that such weapons with nuclear capabilities would pose a grave threat not only to itself but also to Europe.

Iran fired missiles at the UK-US air base on the island of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean on Saturday.

The Israeli prime minister also drew attention to the Iran's attack on Jerusalem right next to the holy sites of the three monotheistic faiths, the Western Wall, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Al Aqsa Mosque and said, "By dint of a miracle, again, no one was hurt."

A fragment from a ballistic missile fired by Iran fell quite close to the Al Aqsa mosque and the Western Wall on Friday. It was a second such attack during the recent escalation when the old city of Jerusalem, home to the three holy sites of the three faiths, was impacted.

In an earlier attack, debris from the intercepted missile fell quite close to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, leaving marks of destruction on some nearby



NATO chief downplays Trump's rift with alliance

Dubai: Mark Rutte, NATO's secretary-general, acknowledged Sunday that Trump has been angry at other countries over his push to get allies more involved in reopening the Strait of Hormuz. But Rutte stressed during an interview with Fox News that more than 20 countries now are "coming together to implement his vision" to ensure the shipping channel can function. Rutte, who said he spoke with Trump several times this week, said it was "crucial" that the US was taking military action in Iran since its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes posed an "existential" threat to the world.

buildings. Netanyahu also said Iran is stopping the maritime international route, energy route and "trying to blackmail the entire world."

"What more proof do you need that this regime that threatens the entire world has to be stopped? Israel and the United States are working to-

gether for the entire world," he claimed.

Calling upon the international community to come together in the fight against Iran, the Israeli leader said he is happy to see some of them beginning to move in that direction, but claimed that more is needed.

"(US) President Trump's call

to have the international community confront this terrorist, fanatic regime of zealots, that is a call not only for the security of America and the security of Israel, it's for the security of the entire world. And it's time for them to act," he asserted.

Responding to questions from reporters, Netanyahu said that Israel is responding to these attacks "with great force" but not targeting Iranian civilians.

"We've defined two clear goals. One is to completely break their nuclear programme, their missile programme and their capacity to produce the components for both of these programmes. We're well on our way in achieving it," the Israeli premier claimed.

"We've also set a goal of creating conditions for the Iranian people to overthrow this tyranny that has tormented them and made life miserable, and is making life miserable for the entire world. And I hope we achieve that too," he reiterated.

The missile strike in Arad Saturday evening left 115 people injured with nine of them in serious condition, rescue services said.

Zelenskyy urges allies to keep up pressure on Russia



REUTERS

Kyiv, March 22: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy Sunday urged allies to keep up sanctions pressure on Russia ahead of a second day of talks between Ukrainian and US delegations on ways to end the four-year-old war, triggered by Russia's full-scale invasion, opens new tab of Ukraine.

Russian representatives were not present at the latest talks, which opened in Florida Saturday. They were originally expected to attend the negotiations, which were due to take place in Abu Dhabi.

The US team is led by special envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, President Donald Trump's son-in-law.

Zelenskyy, who said Saturday talks should continue if there was to be an agreement, Sunday called for tougher action against Russia's so-called shadow fleet and for Moscow to be denied oil revenues.

"Revenues give Russia a sense of impunity and the ability to continue the war. That is why pressure must contin-

ue and sanctions must work," Zelenskyy said on X.

"Russia's shadow fleet must not feel safe in European waters or anywhere else. Tankers that serve the war budget can and must be stopped and blocked, not just let go," he added.

The French Navy seized an oil tanker in the Western Mediterranean last week that President Emmanuel Macron said was part of Russia's shadow fleet, a network of vessels used to export oil despite Western sanctions.

The shadow fleet, which has grown following Western sanctions on Russia aimed at curbing Moscow's oil revenues, has helped to keep Russian oil exports flowing.

PEACE WON THROUGH WAR

Elements of the peace plan being promoted by the US include a presidential election in Ukraine, alongside territorial concessions.

Zelenskyy, whose term has already expired, is under renewed pressure from Trump to hold a vote as Washington pushes Kyiv towards a peace deal.

Ukrainian law bars wartime elections, but Zelenskyy has said Ukraine would be ready to hold democratic elections if the US secured a two-month ceasefire to allow time to prepare infrastructure and put security guarantees in place.



The Soyuz-2.1a rocket booster with Progress MS-33 cargo ship which will deliver cargo to the International Space Station lifts off from the launch pad at the Russian leased Baikonur cosmodrome, Kazakhstan

Cuba begins to restore power after third nationwide collapse

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Havana, March 22: Cuba began restoring its energy system Sunday, a day after a nationwide collapse of the entire grid left millions of people in the dark for the third time this month.

Some 72,000 customers in the capital, among them five hospitals, had electricity again early Sunday, according to a report from the state-run Electric Union and the Ministry of Energy and Mines, but it's only a fraction of Havana's total pop-



ulation of approximately 2 million. In Havana and provinces such as western Matanzas and eastern Holguin, local power microsystems were set up to supply the most vital centres. Residents in some areas of the capital told The Associated Press that power returned

during the early morning hours.

Cuba is currently facing an unprecedented energy crisis.

Its aging grid has drastically eroded in recent years, but the government has also blamed the outages on a US energy blockade, after President Donald Trump in January warned of tariffs on any country that sells or provides oil to Cuba.

His administration is demanding that Cuba release political prisoners and move toward political and economic liberalisation in return for a lifting of sanctions.

Africa's solar growth hit as China trims subsidies

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Nairobi, March 22: China's decision to end value-added tax rebates on solar panel exports and phase out incentives for making battery storage equipment could push up the cost of solar installations in Africa, which relies heavily on imported Chinese technology.

The changes, expected to take effect April 1 for solar panels and beginning next year for batteries, may complicate efforts to expand renewable energy to close vast electricity gaps across Africa, though experts say the impact likely will be manageable.

"We are likely to see solar panel prices increase in Africa because most of the inputs come from China," said Wan-

gari Muchiri, an energy analyst focused on Africa's clean energy sector. "Removing the rebate will add to existing costs, especially when you consider shipping, logistics, and other import fees."

Africa already pays significantly more for solar equipment than other regions because of transport costs, smaller import volumes and tariffs.

China's policy change reflects broader shifts after fierce competition among Chinese manufacturers pushed solar module prices to as little as \$0.07 per watt in 2025, from \$0.25 in 2022. That helped drive global adoption of solar energy, but left many companies with heavy losses.

Some Chinese companies built VAT rebates into their



China's policy change reflects broader shifts after fierce competition among Chinese manufacturers pushed solar module prices to as little as \$0.07 per watt in 2025, from \$0.25 in 2022

That helped drive global adoption of solar energy, but left many companies with heavy losses

export pricing, effectively transferring those subsidies to their overseas buyers. But Beijing has cut back on those payments as it reins in overcapacity and shifts toward more advanced technologies.

Rather than a sharp price shock, the loss of such rebates will likely gradually raise prices, setting a firmer global price floor.

"The changes are significant, but not catastrophic,"

said John van Zuylen, CEO of the Africa Solar Industry Association.

Even with modest price increases, solar is expected to remain competitive across much of the continent since it's the cheapest source of energy in Africa, Muchiri said.

Battery storage, critical for providing electricity after sunset, may face a bigger challenge as incentives are phased out through 2027. Higher costs may affect smaller users the most, van Zuylen said.

Basil Abia, co-founder of the Nigerian energy research firm Truva Intelligence, said that "batteries have historically been expensive, and many solar installations in Africa were built without them."

"Only recently have we

Paris, Marseille in focus as French vote in local polls runoffs

REUTERS

Paris/Marseille, March 22: French voters went to the polls Sunday to elect mayors in Paris, Marseille and more than 1,500 other cities and towns, in a test of the far right's strength and the resilience of mainstream parties ahead of next year's presidential election.

Heading nearly 35,000 municipalities - from major cities to villages with only a few dozen residents - mayors are France's most trusted elected officials.

Many won enough votes to be elected in the first round last Sunday, but tight races in France's biggest cities are going to runoff elections.

One of the key ballots is in Marseille, the country's second-biggest city, where the second round pits the far-right National Rally (RN) against the incumbent Socialist mayor.

A close race is also likely in Paris, where opinion polls show victory for either the conservatives or the left is within their margins of error.

Voting started at 8 a.m. (0700 GMT) and ends between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m. Results will trickle in through the evening.

The level of participation at midday was 20.3%, about 1% more than the first round a week earlier, the Interior Ministry said.

The anti-immigration, euro-sceptic RN has so far struggled to make meaningful gains in municipal elections.

250 yrs of US Independence

Donald Trump set to feature on gold coin

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, March 22: US President Donald Trump is all set to feature on a gold coin to commemorate the nation's 250th anniversary, amid questions over the legality of the move.

The 24-karat gold coin, portraying Trump leaning on the Resolute desk with clenched fists, will be only the second time a living president has featured on a coin.

Earlier, Calvin Coolidge, the 30th US President had featured on a commemorative coin alongside George Washington that were minted in 1926 to celebrate 150 years of the US Independence.

The US Commission on Fine Arts, at its meeting March 19, approved the design of the commemorative gold coin, which will be minted once the final dimensions are decided.

"As we approach our 250th birthday, we are thrilled to prepare coins that represent the enduring spirit of our country and democracy, and there is no profile more emblematic for the front of such coins than that of our serving President, Donald J Trump," US Treasurer Brandon Beach said in a statement to FOX Business.

US Federal law states that no living president can appear on US currency.

started seeing more systems combining solar with battery storage," Abia said.

He said that even without rebates, solar modules remain relatively affordable. Through 2024 and early 2025, module prices fell sharply from around \$0.25 per watt in previous years to as low as \$0.07 per watt.

Demand for solar, which now supplies 3% of power generation in Africa, is expected to continue growing as storage improves reliability. Meanwhile, the heavy dependence on Chinese equipment is drawing attention to limited local manufacturing capacity.

"The VAT removal will slow, but not reverse Africa's clean energy transition," Abia said.



“In the three weeks since the conflict started, we have had to cancel around 2,500 flights to the region. As of today, we can operate only around 30 per cent of our normal Middle East schedule because airports and/or airspace are closed, or are assessed to be beyond our safety threshold
CAMPBELL WILSON | CHIEF, AIR INDIA

19 CRITICAL MINERAL BLOCKS ON OFFER

The government will launch the seventh tranche of auctions for critical and strategic minerals Monday, putting 19 blocks on sale across several states. The development assumes significance as the government aims to bolster India's self-reliance in clean energy, advanced technologies, fertilisers and strategic sectors amid global supply chain disruptions



of the day **QUOTE**

Now with the Middle East entangled in a war and oil prices having started increasing, we as an ethanol industry are ready to offer ethanol more than 20 per cent which will reduce proportionally the import of crude



BHARATI BALAJI | DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL, AIDA

There was a significant drop in thermal coal import (on y-o-y basis), amid high inventory available in the domestic market. With the seaborne prices showing an uptick, imports are likely to remain subdued in the near-term



VINAYA VARMA | MD & CEO, MJUNCTION

We are now the number seven brand in the country in terms of volumes (behind Kia India). We want to outpace the market



ASHISH GUPTA | BRAND DIRECTOR, SKODA

WEST ASIA TENSIONS CHOKE GAS SUPPLIES

UREA PLANTS AT HALF CAPACITY

India is among the world's largest consumers of urea, and a sustained domestic shortfall could affect fertiliser availability ahead of the upcoming kharif sowing season

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 22: India's urea plants are running at half capacity after force majeure declarations disrupted LNG flows through the Strait of Hormuz amid escalating West Asia tensions, industry sources said Sunday.

Petronet LNG Ltd, which operates India's largest liquefied natural gas receiving terminal, declared force majeure after upstream suppliers cited their inability to deliver contracted volumes amid disruptions to cargoes transiting the Strait, sources said.

The move triggered supply curtailments by state-owned gas distributors GAIL (India) Ltd, Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOC) and Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL), which supply gas under RasGas contracts to fertiliser units across the country.

"Gas supplies have been curtailed to approximately 60-65 per cent of normal levels," a senior industry official told PTI, adding that when scheduled plant turnarounds over the past six months were factored in, effective supply at some units had fallen below 50 per cent.

Urea output at affected plants has consequently dropped by around 50 per cent. Paradoxically, energy consumption at



As of March 19, India has a total urea stock of 61.14 lakh tonne, higher than 55.22 lakh tonne in the year-ago period

these facilities had climbed by as much as 40 per cent as large ammonia-urea trains running at reduced loads suffer

a sharp deterioration in thermal efficiency, according to plant officials.

"Plants of this scale are not designed to ramp up and down at will," one plant operations manager said. "Operating under

these conditions means you are burning more energy to produce less fertiliser, and that is a direct financial hit."

The situation has been compounded by what fertiliser company officials described as a breakdown in operational coordination. Following Ras Laffan LNG Company's force majeure invocation, gas consumption mandates have at times been communicated to fertiliser units late at night, leaving plant managers scrambling to make abrupt load adjustments.

"Sudden load variations of this nature are not practically feasible for large train-based ammonia-urea plants," another industry source said. "They risk equipment failures, plant tripping and, most critically, safety risks to operating personnel."

Several plants, sources said, were compelled to overdraw gas allocations momentarily to keep operations within safe parameters.

A further complication emerged on the pricing front. GAIL informed fertiliser companies by letter dated March 15 that long-term RLNG quantities would henceforth be invoiced at multiple price points, including contract price, GAIL Pooled Price and Gazette Pooled Price, effective March 1, 2026.

The pooled price, sources noted, is provisional and subject to retrospective reconciliation under applicable government guidelines, introducing an additional layer of financial uncertainty for producers already absorbing production losses.

Indian cos facing shipment delays, key raw material shortages: CII

Indian companies are facing disruptions ranging from shipment delays to shortages of key raw materials due to the ongoing West Asia conflict, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) said Sunday, highlighting growing stress across sectors dependent on global trade flows. In a statement, CII Director General Chandrajit Banerjee said firms are already seeing "downstream effects" as the conflict disrupts key maritime routes and tightens global supply chains. "Indian companies are experiencing downstream effects, from shipment delays to constraints in key energy inputs, as well as emerging shortages in essential raw materials and intermediates across several sectors that rely heavily on timely cross-border flows," he said. The industry body noted that disruptions have also placed pressure on energy markets and trade, affecting both imports and exports, with ripple-effects being felt across manufacturing and other industries. "The conflict in the Middle East has disrupted critical maritime routes and placed pressure on global supply chains, energy markets, and both imports and exports," Banerjee stated. Despite emerging challenges, CII underscored that India is better placed than in the past to absorb external shocks. The industry lobby observed that the challenge is significant but so is India's capacity to respond proactively, securing all its interests.

MARKET OUTLOOK

Conflict, crude oil prices to steer D-St



week is expected to remain data-sensitive amid ongoing global uncertainties. Developments in the West Asia conflict and movements in crude oil prices will continue to act as key external drivers and are likely to dictate the near-term market trend. "On the domestic front, investors will closely monitor HSBC Flash PMI data for manufacturing, services, and composite segments, which will provide an early indication of business activity trends," Ajit Mishra -- SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said. Foreign investors have pulled out Rs 88,180 crore (about USD 9.6 billion) from Indian equities so far this month, weighed down by escalating tensions in West Asia, a weakening rupee and concerns over the impact of elevated crude oil prices on India's growth and corporate earnings.

NEW DELHI: Developments related to the ongoing conflict in West Asia and its impact on crude oil prices will continue to rule investors' sentiment in a holiday-shortened week ahead, analysts said. Besides, trends in global markets, trading activity of foreign investors and rupee-dollar movement would also drive momentum in equities. Stock markets would remain closed on Thursday for Shri Ram Navami. "This

Gold, silver likely to see mild recovery

NEW DELHI: Precious metal prices are likely to consolidate with a mild recovery bias next week after a sharp correction, though the upside may remain capped amid elevated interest rates and a firm US dollar, analysts said. Investors will track key macro-economic data, including provisional manufacturing and services PMI readings from the US, UK and Japan, along with consumer sentiment and jobless claims for direction. Traders will also closely monitor oil price movement for further cues, they added. "In the week ahead, gold price may see some consolidation and slight recovery before prices make their next move either side," Pranav Mer, Vice President, EBG - Commodity & Currency Research, JM Financial Services Ltd, said. In the domestic market, precious metal prices witnessed steep losses last week. On the Multi Commodity Exchange, silver tumbled by Rs 32,663, or 12.59 per cent, to settle at Rs 2.26 lakh per kilogram, while gold dropped by Rs 13,974, or 8.82 per cent, to close at Rs 1.44 lakh per 10 grams. Mer said the correction in gold prices continued through last week, with domestic prices falling below Rs 1.45 lakh per 10 grams, reflecting a sharp decline of around 9-9.5 per cent.



HDFC BANK BIGGEST LAGGARD

LAST WEEK, THE BSE BENCHMARK SENSEX DIPPED 30.96 POINTS, OR 0.04 PER CENT, AND THE NSE NIFTY SLIPPED 36.6 POINTS, OR 0.15 PER CENT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 22: The combined market valuation of five of the top-10 most-valued firms eroded by Rs 1 lakh crore last week, with HDFC Bank taking the biggest hit.

"Markets ended the week on a largely flat note with a negative bias, reflecting underlying caution among participants. The tone remained positive during the first three sessions; however, a sharp decline on Thursday erased the gains, followed by a volatile final session," Ajit Mishra, SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

While HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Bajaj Finance and Hindustan Unilever were the laggards, Reliance Industries, Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India, Infosys, and Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) emerged as the winners.

The combined market valuation of the five firms eroded by Rs 1,02,771.87 crore.

Mcap of five of top-10 firms erodes by ₹1L-cr



HDFC Bank's valuation tumbled Rs 56,124.48 crore to Rs 12,01,267.28 crore.

The market valuation of Hindustan Unilever dropped Rs 18,009.62 crore to Rs 4,89,631.32 crore. Bajaj Finance lost Rs 15,338.42 crore to Rs 5,16,715.12 crore.

The market capitalisation (mcap) of TCS declined Rs 7,127.63 crore to Rs 8,64,940 crore and that of ICICI Bank edged lower by Rs 6,171.72 crore to Rs 8,91,673.06 crore.

However, the valuation Reliance Industries jumped Rs

45,942.75 crore to Rs 19,14,235.92 crore. The mcap of Bharti Airtel surged Rs 24,462.03 crore to Rs 10,52,893.75 crore and that of State Bank of India climbed Rs 10,707.52 crore to Rs 9,76,968.57 crore.

The market valuation of LIC edged higher by Rs 2,624.88 crore to Rs 4,91,610.45 crore and Infosys added Rs 2,473.79 crore taking its mcap to Rs 5,08,789.37 crore.

Reliance Industries remained the most-valued firm, followed by HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India, ICICI Bank, TCS, Bajaj Finance, Infosys, LIC and Hindustan Unilever Ltd.

SBI pensioners raise long pending issues

CUTTACK: The General Meeting of the State Bank of India Pensioners' Association, Bhubaneswar Circle, was held at Shaheed Bhawan in Cuttack Sunday, under the chairmanship of its president, Ganesh Chandra Mishra. The meeting was inaugurated by the chief guest, SBI Bhubaneswar Circle General Manager Kaushal Kishore Singh. Among the distinguished guests present were circle development officer Shamdin Dorjee Lama, State Bank Officers' Association general secretary Amitabh Das, and State Bank Employees' Association vice president Nirmal Chandra Panda. In his opening address, general secretary Upendra Kumar Dash highlighted various issues faced by pensioners, expressing concern over the indifferent attitude of the Indian Banks' Association and the central government towards the long-pending demands of retired SBI employees and officers.

The association reiterated that key pension-related issues have remained unresolved for years, including the revision of basic pension in line with pay revisions and the reduction of the commutation restoration period from 15 years to 10 years. During the meeting, election officer Krushna Chandra Raut, a retired chief general manager of SBI, announced the newly elected office bearers. Ganesh Chandra Mishra and his team were re-elected unanimously.

AI adoption: Indian firms lead global peers, but lag in expertise

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 22: Indian enterprises are outpacing their global counterparts in terms of large-scale adoption of Artificial Intelligence, with most organisations expecting to increase their AI spending next year, according to a report by Deloitte.

However, this rapid deployment contrasts with a significant capability gap, as India reports lower levels of specialist AI expertise compared to the global average.

The 'State of AI in the Enterprise' report for 2026 revealed that Indian firms are advancing past trials to lead global peers in large-scale AI adoption across key functions.

"... At-scale deployment is strongest in Product Development (62 per cent), Strategy and Operations (56 per cent), Marketing & Sales (55 per cent) and Supply Chain (48 per cent), signalling that AI is increasingly embedded into functions that drive growth, efficiency, and competitive advantage.

"40 per cent of Indian respondents report significant or full usage, compared with a global average of approximately 28 per cent, indicating that Indian organisations are not only piloting AI, but are increasingly operationalising it to unlock near-term productivity and business outcomes," Deloitte said.

The State of AI Insights from India is part of Deloitte's



global State of AI in the Enterprise survey. The India edition captures responses from over 200 business and

technology leaders.

The report noted that 94 per cent of Indian organisations expect their AI budgets to in-

crease over the next year. Despite the aggressive rollout, there is a significant capability gap. Deloitte observed that only 0 to 4 per cent of Indian companies possess a high level of AI expertise, lagging behind the global average of 2

to 8 per cent. The report lists regulatory and compliance demands as the leading obstacle for AI integration (39 per cent), followed by resistance to change (34 per cent).

Organisations report relatively lower pressure from cost (12 per cent) and infrastructure (5 per cent) constraints, indicating that governance readiness and operating-model change are the more immediate limiting factors for scale.

Even with these obstacles, Indian organisations expect tangible near-term value from AI. Nearly all respondents anticipate productivity improvements, with 97 per cent expecting productivity to increase.

SPANISH PARA BADMINTON INTERNATIONAL

Pramod's dominance continues



This tournament was a true test of patience and resilience. The singles final was very intense, and I had to dig deep after losing the second set. I'm happy with the way I stayed composed in crucial moments. Winning two golds here gives me great confidence moving forward

PRAMOD BHAGAT

final, defeating Korea's Cho Nandan 21-16, 21-17 to secure gold in convincing fashion.

"I felt in control throughout the match and was able to execute my game plan well. This gold reflects the hard work I've been putting in, and I'm motivated to build on this momentum in the upcoming tournaments," Kadam said.

India's strong showing extended across multiple categories. Nitesh secured silver and Jagdish Dilli won bronze in men's singles SL3.

Neeraj claimed bronze in women's singles SL3.

In men's doubles SL3-SU5, Deep Ranjan Bisoyee and Kuldeep Mahkul earned bronze.

In mixed doubles SL3-SU5, pairs of Shivam Yadav & Neeraj and Nitesh Kumar & Thulasimathi Murugesan both secured bronze medals. Ruthick Ragupathi (silver) and Shivam Yadav (bronze) delivered strong performances in men's singles SU5.

In Women's Singles SU5, Manisha Ramdass clinched gold while Thulasimathi Murugesan secured silver.

Jatin Azad and Shivam Yadav won bronze in men's doubles SU5, and Manisha Patel added another bronze in Women's Singles SH6.

Bhagat produced a thrilling performance in the men's singles SL3, overcoming compatriot Nitesh Kumar 21-17, 10-21, 21-18 in the final that lasted 51 minutes.

He continued his golden run in the mixed doubles SL3-SU5, partnering with Manisha Ramdass.

The Indian duo staged a remarkable comeback after losing the opening set to defeat Brazil's Rogerio Junior Xavier de Oliveira and Edwarda De Oliveira Dias 13-21, 21-12, 21-19.

Bhagat also secured a silver medal in men's doubles SL3-

SU5 alongside Sukant Kadam, finishing runners-up to fellow Indians Nitesh Kumar and Ruthick Ragupathi 19-21, 14-21 in the final.

"This tournament was a true test of patience and resilience. The singles final was very intense, and I had to dig deep after losing the second set," Bhagat said in a release.

"I'm happy with the way I stayed composed in crucial moments. Winning two golds here gives me great confidence moving forward."

Sukant also emerged victor in the men's singles SL4

Odisha's paralympic champion bags double gold, silver as India impress overseas

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Vitoria (Spain), March 22: Paralympic champion Pramod Bhagat secured two gold medals and one silver as India delivered an exceptional performance at the Spanish Para Badminton International 2026-II here Sunday.

WEST ASIA CONFLICT

Women's Candidates: Humpy withdraws

New Delhi: Indian Grandmaster Koneru Humpy Sunday decided to withdraw from the FIDE Women's Candidates Tournament, citing concerns over her personal safety despite assurances from the organisers in the wake of the ongoing West Asia conflict. The Candidates, which will decide the challengers for the world championship crowns currently held by D Gukesh (men) and Ju Wenjun (women), is scheduled to begin in Paphos, Cyprus March 28. The former world champion said the decision, though difficult, was necessary given the prevailing circumstances. "After deep reflection, I have taken the difficult decision to withdraw from the FIDE Women's Candidates Tournament," Humpy said in a statement on X. "No event, no matter how important, can come before personal safety and well-being. Despite the assurances provided, I do not feel fully secure under the current circumstances. "This is a painful but necessary decision, and I stand by it." Humpy's withdrawal comes as a setback for India, as she was among the leading contenders in the tournament that determines the challenger for the women's world championship title.

New Delhi: In yet another blow to Pakistan Super League, Sri Lanka captain and all-rounder Dasun Shanaka is set to join Rajasthan Royals as a replacement for the injured Sam Curran in the upcoming Indian Premier League. The move will make Shanaka the latest player to switch from the PSL to the IPL after Zimbabwe pacer Blessing Muzarabani pulled out of his contract with Islamabad United to join Kolkata Knight Riders as a replacement for Mustafizur Rahman. "Dasun's signing is pending owing to his paperwork in the PSL, which is a formality. He is likely to join the squad in Guwahati," a team source told PTI. RR will begin their campaign against Chennai Super Kings in Guwahati, their home venue in the first phase of the IPL schedule that has been announced so far.

ANOTHER BLOW TO PSL

Shanaka to join RR as Curran's replacement

New Delhi: In yet another blow to Pakistan Super League, Sri Lanka captain and all-rounder Dasun Shanaka is set to join Rajasthan Royals as a replacement for the injured Sam Curran in the upcoming Indian Premier League. The move will make Shanaka the latest player to switch from the PSL to the IPL after Zimbabwe pacer Blessing Muzarabani pulled out of his contract with Islamabad United to join Kolkata Knight Riders as a replacement for Mustafizur Rahman. "Dasun's signing is pending owing to his paperwork in the PSL, which is a formality. He is likely to join the squad in Guwahati," a team source told PTI. RR will begin their campaign against Chennai Super Kings in Guwahati, their home venue in the first phase of the IPL schedule that has been announced so far.

MIAMI OPENER

Sinner equals Djoko's record

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Miami, March 22: World No 2 Jannik Sinner raced past Damir Dzumhur 6-3, 6-3 in the Miami Open first-round match at the Hard Rock Stadium.

After lifting his maiden trophy for 2026 at Indian Wells, the Italian is bidding to become the first man to complete the coveted 'Sunshine Double' since Roger Federer in 2017.

In his Miami opening win, Sinner dropped just eight points behind his delivery in the match. Now on a 12-match winning streak at ATP Masters 1000 events following his title runs at the Paris Masters in November and in Indian Wells, Sinner has tied Novak Djokovic's record for the most consecutive sets won at that level (24), according to ATP Stats.

He will have the chance to move clear of the Serbian great by winning the opening set of his third-round encounter against 30th seed Corentin Moutet, who defeated Tomas Machac 6-0, 1-6, 6-4.



Sinner is chasing his second title in Miami, where he triumphed in 2024. The Italian has no ATP Rankings points to defend in South Florida, giving him the opportunity to build further momentum in his battle with Carlos Alcaraz for World No 1.

The event saw legends like Hussey, Hayden, Bravo and Raina reunite with current players such as captain Rituraj Gaikwad, MS Dhoni (who got

CSK's past meets present in 'Roar 2026'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, March 22: Five-time champions Chennai Super Kings (CSK) brought together former stars and current squad members at the MA Chidambaram Stadium Sunday for 'Roar 2026' event ahead of the 19th edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL) starting March 28.

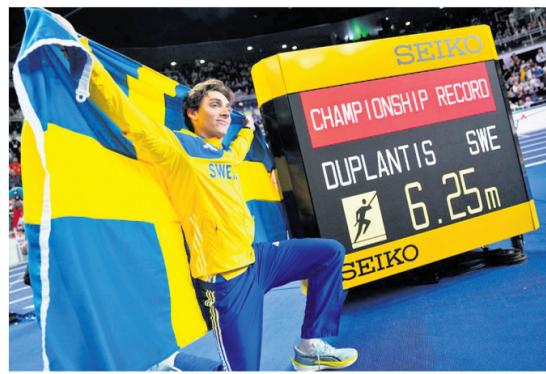
Ex-CSK batter S Badrinath shared a photo on X showing himself, Ambati Rayudu, Matthew Hayden, Muttiah Muralitharan, Parthiv Patel, Suresh Raina, Dwayne Bravo, Harbhajan Singh, Joginder Sharma, Murali Vijay and Lakshmiipathy Balaji posing with the franchise's five IPL trophies and in their previous CSK days jerseys. "O(ldie)G squad," wrote Badrinath in the post.

The event saw legends like Hussey, Hayden, Bravo and Raina reunite with current players such as captain Rituraj Gaikwad, MS Dhoni (who got

WORLD INDOOR CHAMPIONSHIPS

Duplantis extends golden reign

Pole vault legend wins his fourth consecutive world indoor championships with a tournament record vault of 6.25 meters



AGENCIES

Torun (Poland), March 22: Armand Duplantis won another pole vault world title after he was pushed all the way by Greece's Emmanouil Karalis.

Duplantis won his fourth consecutive world indoor championships with a tournament record vault of 6.25 meters, a 10 centimeter improvement on his winning height a year ago in Nanjing.

The pair left behind the field at 6.05.

Duplantis cleared his first attempts at 6.10, 6.15 and then 6.25, when he wobbled the bar.

Karalis passed at 6.10 and 6.15, and missed his attempts at 6.25, finishing runner-up for a second straight year.

Duplantis put away his pole, foregoing attempts at 6.32 to break his world record of 6.31 that he set last week at the Swedish meeting named after him, the Mondo Classic.

Karalis was runner-up at 6.05 and Australia's Kurtis Marschall third with a person-

I am proud to have come through for the win. Today, it was about the battle. It was a tough competition and that is why I didn't go for a world record

ARMAND DUPLANTIS

the previous high set in 2012 by Ashton Eaton of the US Hammer was the world indoor champion in 2024 and runner-up last year.

Also, Zaynab Dosso of Italy won the women's 60-meter final - Olympic 100 champion Julien Alfred was third - Christopher Morales Williams of Canada and Lurdes Gloria Manuel of the Czech Republic won the men's and women's 400, and Josh Kerr of Britain the men's 3,000 six months after tearing his calf in the world outdoor 1,500 final in Tokyo.

Kerr regains supremacy

Britain's Josh Kerr regained the 3,000 metres title at the World Indoor Championships in Poland Saturday, taking Britain's first medal of the tournament as he surged past American Cole Hocker and France's Yann Schrub in the final metres to win in 7:35.56. Kerr, who was beaten by Hocker in the 1,500m at the Paris Olympics, was racing for only the second time since a calf injury suffered during his world 1,500m title defence in Tokyo last September. He stayed patient early on in fifth before moving into third with two laps remaining as he tracked Ethiopia's Addisu Yihune and Getnet Wale. He hit the front at the bell to force the pace, and although Schrub and Hocker closed late, neither could reel him in. "This race didn't go the way I wanted it to go, but racing is all about dealing with the situations you are put in," said Kerr, who won the 3,000m title two years ago in Glasgow. "I shouldn't worry much about the mistakes in the race, although there were a lot of them today. I thought I would be at the top of the sport for a long time, but after missing a couple of opportunities that I wanted, I am really going to enjoy this gold."



PREMIER LEAGUE

Liverpool, Chelsea slump to bruising defeats



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Liverpool, March 22: A 10th Premier League loss of the campaign for Liverpool.

A fourth straight defeat in 10 days for Chelsea.

These are bruising times for two of the biggest-spending powerhouse clubs in English soccer.

Forget about challenging for the Premier League title, at this rate they are struggling to even qualify for the Champions League. Liverpool's feeble title defense unraveled further Saturday in a 2-1 loss at Brighton that extended the stuttering de-

fending champion's winless run in the league to three matches.

Danny Welbeck scored both for Brighton at Amex Stadium, either side of Milos Kerkez's equalizer for Liverpool in its latest disjointed display under manager Arne Slot.

A few hours later, Chelsea was dispatched by Everton 3-0, completing a miserable week in which the team was also bundled out of the Champions League by Paris Saint-Germain in a chastening 8-2 aggregate loss. Liverpool is hanging onto fifth spot in the league - a point and a place ahead of Chelsea. The Premier League is highly

likely to again have five qualification spots for next season's Champions League but even that might not be enough for these two underperforming giants.

'It's not good enough'

Liverpool has taken just one point from its last three league games and is a remarkable 21 points behind first-placed Arsenal with seven games left of the campaign.

The Reds became the first team since Chelsea in the 2017-18 season to lose 10 matches in a title defence.

"It's not good enough, no matter how many excuses I come

up with," said Slot, whose position is coming under scrutiny less than a year after leading Liverpool to a record-tying 20th English top-flight title.

Among those excuses might be Liverpool's injury problems, which worsened when striker Hugo Ekitike hobbled off in the eighth minute with a dead leg. Slot did say after the match, however, that it wasn't serious.

Everton joins CL race

Watch out Liverpool and Chelsea, Everton is coming for your place in the top five.

Beto scored twice and Iliman Ndiaye curled a shot into the top corner for the third as Everton outfought Chelsea, which delivered a performance lacking in energy after its recent Champions League exertions.

Chelsea manager Liam Rosenior said it was his team's most disappointing performance since he took charge in January.

Everton was in eighth place - behind Brentford, which drew 0-0 at Leeds, on goal difference - and they were only three points behind Liverpool and two behind Chelsea. Next-to-last Burnley slipped closer to relegation by squandering the lead and losing at Fulham 3-1.

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RAFT chess tournament draws 201 players



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 22: The First RAFT All India Open and Age Group Rapid Chess Tournament 2026 was organised by the Rotary Club of Bhubaneswar Heritage in association with RAIE Foundation Trust (RAFT) at Royal College here Sunday.

The tournament was inaugurated by Rotarian Bishnu Mohan Mohanty, Chairman of Royal College, along with Tournament Director and Founder of RAIE Foundation Trust (RAFT), Rotarian Dr Raman Agrawalla, who marked the opening with the ceremonial first move on the chessboard.

A total of 201 players participated in the tournament, competing for cash prizes

worth Rs 57,000 along with the Krishna Kumar Mahabir Prasad Agarwal Memorial Trophies. In the Open category, the top three winners received trophies and cash prizes of Rs 7,000, Rs 6,000, and Rs 5,000 respectively.

More than 80 trophies and medals were also awarded to the top ten players in each under-16 age category.

The tournament was conducted by FIDE Arbiter Abhisekh Acharya and directed by Dr Raman Agrawalla in his capacity as Tournament Director and Managing Trustee of RAIE Foundation Trust.

Participants and parents appreciated the efforts of the Rotary Club of Bhubaneswar Heritage and RAFT for successfully organising the event.