

Ananya in soup

Actor Ananya Panday finds herself under social media scrutiny after a video from a recent award night went viral

LEISURE | P2

Feat for J&K Police

In a major achievement, J&K Police cracks a transnational terror recruitment module operated by the banned Lashkar-e-Taiba

NATIONAL | P8

Key meet amid wars

Foreign ministers from the world's leading Western democracies will meet in France this week amid wars in Iran and Ukraine

INTERNATIONAL | P10

Swimming prodigy

Odisha's Anjali Munda clinches her second consecutive yellow metal in women's 200m IM on second day of the Khelo India Tribal Games

SPORTS | P12

Iran's navy chief killed: Netanyahu

Jerusalem, March 26: Israel Thursday claimed to have eliminated Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Navy chief Alireza Tangsiri, responsible for 'leading the closure of the Strait of Hormuz'.

In a short video message, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that Israel continues to strike Iran "with full force", even as the Islamic Republic and its Lebanese ally Hezbollah launched waves of attacks across the Jewish state, forcing people to scramble for cover.

"Last night, we eliminated the commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' navy. This individual has a great deal of blood on his hands, and he was also responsible for leading the closure of the Strait of Hormuz," Netanyahu said.

"We are continuing to strike, with full force, targets of the Iranian terror regime," he added. He described the operation as "yet another example of the co-operation between us and our ally, the United States, in pursuit of our shared war objectives".

Waves of missile barrages,



Alireza Tangsiri was responsible for 'leading the closure of the Strait of Hormuz'

Nayara hikes petrol by ₹5, diesel by ₹3

New Delhi: Nayara Energy, India's largest private fuel retailer, Thursday raised petrol prices by ₹5 per litre and diesel by ₹3 a litre, passing on part of the recent surge in global oil prices following the war in the Middle East, sources said. Fuel marketing companies in India have been under strain as retail petrol and diesel prices remained frozen despite a nearly 50 per cent surge in international oil prices since February 28, when the US and Israel launched military strikes against Iran, triggering sweeping retaliation from Tehran.

P11

rockets and drone attacks from Iran and Lebanon triggered sirens all across Israel, forcing people to take cover in shelters multiple times already by the afternoon.



SOAKED IN DEVOTION: Devotees pull the Rukuna Rath of Lord Lingaraj in Old Town area of Bhubaneswar on the occasion of Ashokastami, Thursday (Report P4)

Barabati to host India-SL T20 match December 24

CUTTACK: In what would bring joy to cricket lovers across Odisha, the historic Barabati Stadium here is set to host a T20I match between India and Sri Lanka December 24, 2026. BCCI sources said India will host Sri Lanka in December 2026 for a white-ball series comprising three ODIs and as many T20Is. Sri Lanka's India tour will begin with a three-match ODI series starting December 13 in Delhi, followed by matches in Bengaluru and Ahmedabad December 16 and 19, respectively. The teams will then move into the T20I series, beginning with the first match in Rajkot December 22. Cuttack will host the second T20I December 24. The final T20I of the series will be played in Pune December 27.

3-YR EXCISE POLICY WITH DE-ADDICTION CESS OUT

Bhubaneswar, March 26: The state government Thursday unveiled a comprehensive three-year excise policy, introducing its first de-addiction cess on alcohol, raising licence fees, and overhauling the revenue framework.

Introducing the policy in the Assembly, Excise Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan said it will remain in force for three years, from April 1, 2026 to March 31, 2029. Harichandan said the move to a three-year policy is intended to ensure consistency in enforcement and governance while enhancing transparency in the system. The policy will remain in effect until its term ends or until a new policy is introduced by the government.

"One of the most significant features of the policy is the introduction of a 0.5 per cent de-addiction cess on excise duty—a first for the state," he said. This step formally recognises liquor as a harmful product, with the revenue generated earmarked for establishing and operating de-addiction centres across Odisha. The government has also revised the financial structure of excise licensing.

"Application fees for vari-

ous licences will increase by 10 per cent, while licence fees will rise annually by 10-20 per cent. Additionally, excise duty on Indian Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL) and country liquor has been increased," he said.

The new policy replaces the Minimum Guaranteed Quantity (MGQ) system with the Minimum Guaranteed Excise Revenue (MGER) system. This change is expected to safeguard government revenue while reducing pressure on traders to push sales volumes, thereby curbing unethical practices such as forced selling.

The new policy imposes strict restrictions on the expansion of liquor outlets.

"The government has decided not to allow any new 'off' shops in the state. Similarly, no new 'on' shops will be per-

- ### HIGHLIGHTS
- No new 'off' shops in state; no new 'on' shops in rural areas
 - No liquor shops to operate on Grand Road in Puri
 - Licence fees to rise annually by 10-20%
 - Rise in excise duty on IMFL & country liquor

mitted in rural areas," he said, adding that a limited relaxation has been provided for three-star and above hotels and clubs located in industrial zones.

The minister said the policy also clarifies that no liquor shops will operate on the Grand Road near Srimandir in Puri, as a mark of respect for religious and cultural sensitivities. The policy also bans home delivery of liquor across Odisha.

To enhance quality and compliance, out-still (OS) manufacturing units have been directed to modernise their facilities by adopting advanced packaging and quality control systems.

"Compliance with food safety and pollution control standards will be mandatory, with incentives offered to units that complete modernisation within the prescribed timeline," he said.

The government will also implement a track-and-trace system to monitor the movement of extra neutral alcohol (ENA) and track each bottle from production to sale. "CCTV surveillance will be mandatory across all manufacturing units and retail outlets, with real-time monitoring carried out by the Excise Commissioner's office and district authorities," he said.

AP bus fire leaves 14 dead, 22 injured

Rayavaram (Andhra Pradesh), March 26: At least 14 passengers, including a five-month-old infant, were killed Thursday after a private bus collided with a gravel-laden truck, triggering a massive fire here in Markapuram district, officials said.

Among the victims were five women. Most of the deceased were masons and those working in the construction sector. As many as 22 passengers were injured in the blaze, a senior official said. "The toll touched 14 after accounting for the death of a five-month-old infant," a police official said, adding that the infant's father died in the accident while its mother managed to survive. The accident occurred between 5:30 am and 6 am near Rayavaram village on the road leading to Podili when the bus rammed into the truck, colliding with its fuel tank, which sparked a massive inferno.

There were 41 people in the bus at the time of the accident and all the deceased were burnt to death, Home Minister Vangalapudi Anitha said.

Markapuram in-charge SP V Harshavardhan Raju said the bus driver was at fault prima

10 killed in MP mishap

Chhindwara (MP): Ten persons were killed and 31 injured in a head-on collision between a bus returning from a public function attended by Chief Minister Mohan Yadav and a pick-up vehicle in Madhya Pradesh's Chhindwara Thursday evening, officials said. The incident took place at 7 pm near Simaria on Nagpur Road, some 25 kilometres from district headquarters, SP Ajay Pandey said. Chhindwara Collector Harendra Narayan said that 31 persons have been injured as per doctors.

P9

Man gets death for raping, attempting to murder minor

Berhampur, March 26: A POCSO court in Berhampur Thursday awarded death penalty to a 30-year-old man after holding him guilty of raping and attempting to kill a 10-year-old girl in Ganjam district in 2021.

Judge Rohit Lal Panda described the crime as "rarest of rare" and delivered the judgement holding Kesab Nahak guilty after examining 13 witnesses, special public prosecutor (SPP) Siba Prasad Mishra said.

The court also directed the secretary of the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) to provide Rs 5,00,000 as financial assistance to the victim, the SPP said.



Referring to the case diary, the SPP said that the girl was visiting her maternal grandfather's house with her mother when she went missing November 21, 2021. Following an intensive search, she was found in a critical condition on a forest road near the village under Polasara police limits.

"She was initially treated at Polasara hospital before being shifted to the ICU at MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur due to her deteriorating condition. Police were able to record a dying declaration from the minor during her hospitalisation," the SPP said.

Later, police registered a case (417/21), launched an investigation and managed to arrest Nahak two days after the incident.

According to the prosecution, Nahak, a distant relative of the girl, lured her with chocolates and took her to an isolated place where he raped her and shoved a stick into her private part. "The act caused severe internal injuries. When the girl screamed for help, Nahak tried to strangle her to death. She fell unconscious due to the brutal assault but Nahak believed she had died and fled the scene," the SPP said.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Doctor advised a lifestyle change. General saab now mediates for 'peace'.

Oldest dog DNA suggests 15,800 yrs of human companionship

Washington, March 26: The discovery of the oldest ever dog DNA suggests they have been our best friends for roughly 15,800 years—nearly 5,000 years earlier than had previously been thought, new research said.

Despite being ubiquitous in the homes, backyards and hearts of people across the world, surprisingly little is known about where dogs come from. "It's just an interesting mystery," Swedish geneticist Pontus Skoglund of the UK's Francis Crick Institute told reporters. Dogs are most likely a mix of two types of grey wolves, he said. However exactly when dogs diverged from wolves has been difficult to trace, partly be-

cause their ancient bones are tricky to tell apart.

That is why scientists behind two new studies published in the journal Nature Wednesday sequenced the genomes from archaeological remains, shedding light on the elusive origins of our furry friends. The first study revealed that the world's oldest canine DNA was discovered in a piece of a skull in Pinarbasi in what is now Turkey. The female puppy, which was perhaps "a few months old", probably looked like a small wolf when it lived roughly 15,800 years ago, according to study co-author Laurent Frantz of the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich.

Before Wednesday, the oldest-known dog DNA was from 10,900 years ago.



Also breaking that record was genetic evidence the team found in southwest England dating back 14,300 years, which illustrated how early dogs had spread across Europe.

Frantz said scientists could not prove exactly what role these dogs had among humans living during the last Ice Age. "But I think we can assume that they must have played a

role because they would have been expensive to feed," he said. Perhaps the dogs were used for hunting or protection, he speculated. Even if these dogs were not treated the same as pets are today, there was likely still a strong bond, he said, adding that "kids will still have played with puppies".

Another sign of a close relationship was that puppies had been found buried above human graves in Pinarbasi.

For the other study, a large team of researchers compared the genomes of 216 dog and wolf remains from across Europe. This allowed them to chart how dogs evolved on the continent.

Starting around 10,000 years ago, there was a huge migration of people from southwest Asia to

Europe during what is known as the Neolithic agricultural revolution. This mass arrival of farmers resulted in human genetic mixing as people from different areas met and had children. However, this genetic mixing did not happen at the same time with dogs, the researchers were surprised to find.

It seems the hunter-gatherers who had been living in Europe before the farmers arrived had already been keeping dogs.

"Dogs were clearly important to our ancestors, as the first farmers seem to have adopted previous hunter-gatherer dogs into their groups as they moved into Europe," said study co-author Skoglund. This suggests that dogs must have been domesticated well before that point.

leisure



ANNE HATHAWAY VOWS TO STAY AWAY FROM STRESS

Anne Hathaway has revealed she made a conscious decision to stop living as a stressed person. The actor said she realised it was unfair for those around her to feel the impact of her pressure, adding that just like a party host, one should not let stress overshadow the atmosphere

RYAN GOSLING CRITICISES H'WOOD BLAME GAME

Ryan Gosling criticised Hollywood's blame game over declining cinema attendance, saying audiences shouldn't be held responsible for keeping theatres alive. Speaking at the premiere of *Project Hail Mary* in New York, the actor stressed that filmmakers must create movies compelling enough to bring people back to theatres



FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshaSpeaks.com
accuracy • reliability • trust
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181*

ARIES
Today, you may want to express your artistic streak. Hence, you may either decide to paint the walls of your house in vibrant colours, or touch up some old unused furniture in art deco style.

TAURUS
A good day for money and love (you need more?). A quality, professional approach will help you shine out in business today. Be it launching a product or marketing it, you will win yourself hearts, smiles and a bundle of green. Let the leader in you take over during the day and the lover in you return by night, says Ganesha.

GEMINI
A good day for money and love (you need more?). A quality, professional approach will help you shine out in business today. Be it launching a product or marketing it, you will win yourself hearts, smiles and a bundle of green. Let the leader in you take over during the day and the lover in you return by night, says Ganesha.

CANCER
You will ponder over financial matters, says Ganesha. There is a chance of investing in new ventures. Events in the afternoon may enhance your social prestige. People form a high opinion about you and give you respect.

LEO
The last you remember your soul mate was not a cross between Marquis de Sade and a Chinese politician, so it might be a little unnerving for you to come to terms with the authoritarian and dominating side of your partner, says Ganesha. Just remember that feeling offended is not the solution; what is really required is that you thrash out your individual differences for the sake of the larger interests of your family.

VIRGO
Creativity is bubbling inside you, asking to be uncorked. You may be struggling more than enough to tackle challenges thrown at you. Cash benefits will come your way in office. But Ganesha advises you to pay due attention to your health.

LIBRA
Ganesha says you should beware of small and petty issues that may crop up today and make you undergo mental stress. This is the time to meditate or do yoga and focus on improving your mental state of mind. Towards the evening you will get some sad news about a close relative which will trouble you but remember, no state of mind remains forever- after sadness there will be happiness following it.

SCORPIO
Now is the time to hit the right note. As you are loaded with work, show your intelligence and try to win over your superiors and bosses. For all the businessmen, Ganesha advises to delay the bidding on sealed tenders if they are planning to do it today. The day is so hectic that you just want to relax in the evening.

SAGITTARIUS
You juggle between your passion and profession today and try to strike a perfect balance between the two. You are ambitious and will let this know to the world through your work. During the end of the day, you will nurture your talent and passion and feel liberated, says Ganesha.

CAPRICORN
Various issues may perturb you, making you feel like it may not be a very fulfilling day. But at work, fortune will be biased towards you and will bring all the luck you need to excel in the work you may have undertaken, says Ganesha. Incidentally, sentiments may hamper your ability to take rational decisions, while high expectations of the loved ones will burden you with tremendous pressure.

AQUARIUS
Today, you will have a mix bag of struggle and success both. Patience and performance may go through some testing times at work. But, be strong and don't get disheartened as this will not last for long, feels Ganesha. The busy day will have a perfect end with you spending some quality time with your sweetheart.

PISCES
Your emotions are likely to rule you today. Expenses, which will cause you to dip into your savings, are indicated. Evening should see you build up an amazing connection with a special someone, says Ganesha.

Taapsee's creative leap

Mumbai: Taapsee Pannu is steadily expanding her creative journey in the film industry, stepping beyond acting to focus on producing meaningful, content-driven cinema. Known for choosing unconventional roles and backing strong narratives, the actor is now channeling the same conviction into shaping stories behind the camera.

After making her debut as a producer with the 2022 film *Blur*, Pannu has been actively exploring projects that reflect her personal and creative beliefs. She emphasises that her goal as a producer is not simply to make films, but to support stories she genuinely connects with.

"I want to produce the films that I truly believe in," she said, explaining that the biggest challenge lies in finding subjects and filmmakers who share a similar creative wavelength. According to Pannu, discovering the right story and collaborating with the right director are key to building a project that feels authentic and meaningful.

The actor also spoke about how producing brings a completely different level of responsibility compared to acting. While an actor primarily focuses on their own performance and decisions, a producer must bring together the entire team and ensure everyone works towards the same vision. Coordinating creative voices, managing decisions, and keeping the project aligned makes both demanding and rewarding.

Mumbai: Adah Sharma says her approach to choosing films has always been guided by instinct and storytelling rather than star power. The actor, who began her Kannada film journey with Rana Vikrama opposite Puneeth Rajkumar in 2015, is now returning to Kannada cinema with *Ramarasa*, scheduled for release in June 2026.

Speaking about her decision to be part of the film, Adah emphasised that she does not select projects based on the popularity of the cast. Instead, she places her trust in the filmmaker and the story being told. According to her, the director's vision is the most important factor, and she believes in collaborating with creators who are passionate about the project.

"I don't pick films based on the star cast attached to them. I believe that is the director's prerogative. I should trust the director and that he or she is going to make a good film," she said, adding that every project is an opportunity to learn and grow as an actor.



Adah on her film choices

Mumbai: Ananya Panday has found herself under social media scrutiny after a video from a recent award night went viral online. The actor attended the star-studded event alongside several celebrities, including Kiara Advani, Kriti Sanon, Disha Patani, Rakul Preet Singh, Shehnaaz Gill and Arjun Rampal.

During the event, Ananya was seen seated next to Kiara when veteran actor Rakesh Bedi approached them for a brief conversation. In a video now circulating widely on social media, Kiara immediately stood up while greeting the senior actor, a gesture many viewers interpreted as a mark of respect. Ananya, however, continued speaking while remaining seated, which quickly drew criticism online.

Soon after the clip surfaced, several social media users questioned Ananya's etiquette, suggesting she should have stood up while interacting with a senior member of the industry. Many comments called the act disrespectful, with some users writing that basic manners require acknowledging senior artists with such gestures. Others argued that standing up would be a simple courtesy.



Ananya under fire

Mumbai: Ananya Panday has found herself under social media scrutiny after a video from a recent award night went viral online. The actor attended the star-studded event alongside several celebrities, including Kiara Advani, Kriti Sanon, Disha Patani, Rakul Preet Singh, Shehnaaz Gill and Arjun Rampal.

During the event, Ananya was seen seated next to Kiara when veteran actor Rakesh Bedi approached them for a brief conversation. In a video now circulating widely on social media, Kiara immediately stood up while greeting the senior actor, a gesture many viewers interpreted as a mark of respect. Ananya, however, continued speaking while remaining seated, which quickly drew criticism online.

Soon after the clip surfaced, several social media users questioned Ananya's etiquette, suggesting she should have stood up while interacting with a senior member of the industry. Many comments called the act disrespectful, with some users writing that basic manners require acknowledging senior artists with such gestures. Others argued that standing up would be a simple courtesy.



WORLD THEATRE DAY TODAY

Stage emerges as creative hub for new-gen talent



A scene from *Mughal Tamasha* - a traditional folk theatre (File photo)

Bhubaneswar, March 27: The stage has long held the power to tell stories, stir emotions, and shape society. It is no surprise, then, that a growing number of young people are turning to theatre as a means of self-expression and as a stepping stone for their artistic journeys.

On the occasion of World Theatre Day, **Orissa POST** caught up with some prominent voices in the field to understand what continues to draw the youth toward this timeless art form.

Senior actor-director **Abhinav Routray** observed a promising shift. "The younger generation is genuinely committed to theatre. Our acting workshops are witnessing enthusiastic participation, which signals a bright future," he said. He emphasized that theatre goes beyond performance, nurturing essential life skills such as confidence, empathy, and discipline. However, he also expressed concern that Odia theatre is yet to receive the national recognition it deserves.

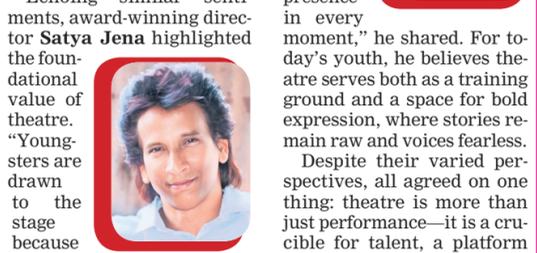
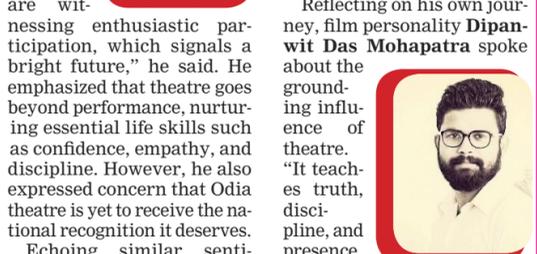
Echoing similar sentiments, award-winning director **Satya Jena** highlighted the foundational value of theatre. "Youngsters are drawn to the stage because it is where the fundamentals of acting are built," he noted. At the same time, he stressed the need for better infrastructure, including more auditoriums, along with sustained government support to help the art form flourish.

Veteran director and actor **Chittaranjan Satpathy** shed light on theatre's versatility. "Theatre communicates through gesture, speech, music, and movement. It is constantly evolving and can never fade away," he said. Dispelling the notion that theatre is declining, he pointed out that performances are now being staged almost daily across Odisha. He also underscored the importance of nurturing young playwrights to expand the reach and relevance of theatre.

Reflecting on his own journey, film personality **Dipankar Das Mohapatra** spoke about the ground-influencing of theatre. "It teaches truth, discipline, and presence in every moment," he shared. For today's youth, he believes theatre serves both as a training ground and a space for bold expression, where stories remain raw and voices fearless.

Despite their varied perspectives, all agreed on one thing: theatre is more than just performance—it is a crucible for talent, a platform for cultural expression, and a guiding light for future storytellers.

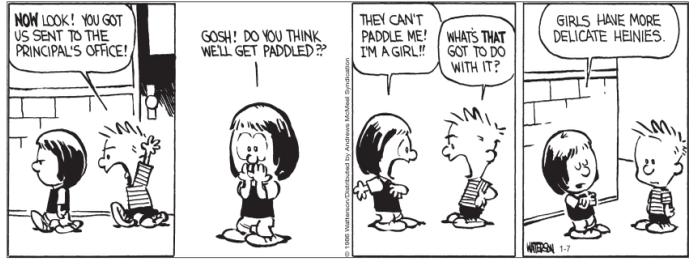
ARINDAM GANGULY, OP



PEANUTS



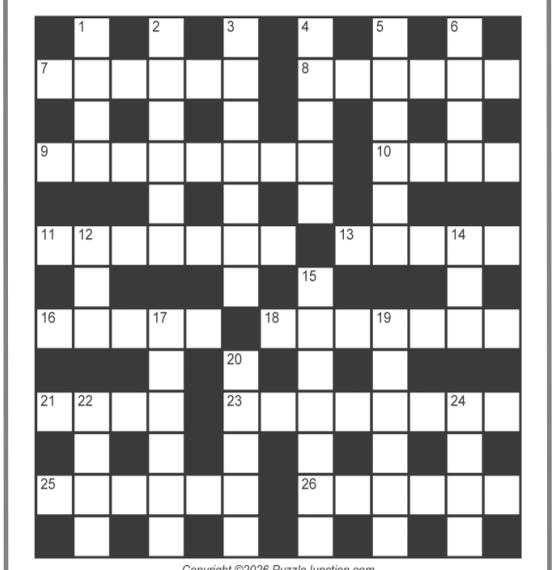
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



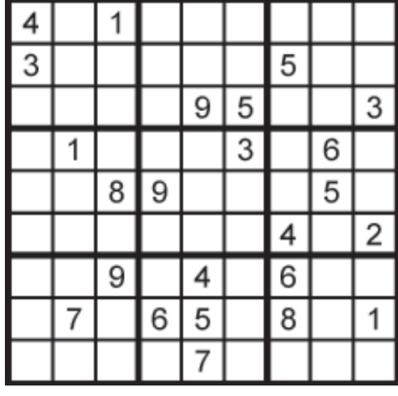
FUN POST CROSSWORD



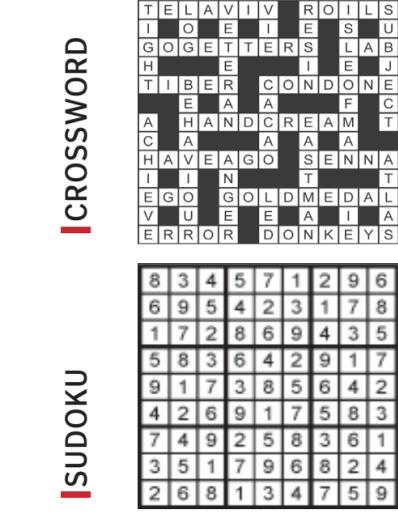
- Across**
- 7 Wild sheep
 - 8 Stickers
 - 9 Kind of device (4-4)
 - 10 Makes a scene?
 - 11 Trick
 - 13 School assignment
 - 16 Mall binge
 - 18 Terrier type
 - 21 Barber's supply
 - 23 Genre
 - 25 Black Forest cake
 - 26 Slacks off (4,2)
- Down**
- 1 "Tosca" tune
 - 2 Kind of fin
 - 3 Motorcycle surgery
 - 4 Hit the books
 - 5 Swamp
 - 6 Picnic pest
 - 12 Little devil
 - 14 French pal
 - 15 In a shrewd manner
 - 17 Outperform
 - 19 Leotards
 - 20 Prepare for surgery
 - 22 Not fully closed
 - 24 Defeat decisively

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



NOR'WESTER AFTERMATH: Commuters navigate a waterlogged street in Bhubaneswar following a hailstorm Thursday (Report P4)

Nearly 5K disaster deaths in 2 yrs: Min

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 26: A total of 4,953 people have lost their lives in different natural disasters in Odisha during the last two years, Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Suresh Pujari told the Assembly Thursday.

The state government is providing ₹50,000 to the family of persons who died in sunstroke, while an ex gratia of ₹4 lakh is provided in case of death due to other disasters, said Pujari in a written reply to a query by Congress MLA Taraprasad Bahinipati. The ex gratia amount is being provided from the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) to the bank account of the beneficiary through direct benefit transfer (DBT), he said.

At present, applications of families of 467 persons who died in natural disasters are under examination to get compensation, he stated.

The government, suo motu, collects required documents from the family of the victims for early disbursement of the ex gratia, he added.



was 17, which increased to 18 in 2025, Jena said in a written reply to a question of BJP MLA Tankadhar Tripathy. The average number of injured persons per day remained 30 during the two years, he said.

The minister said 12,625 people were killed, and 21,576 persons were injured in 25,157 road accidents reported across the state during 2024 and 2025.

Out of the total, 6,142 lost their lives and 10,770 others were injured in 12,375 road accidents that occurred in the year 2024, Jena said.

Din continues over SCB deaths

Meanwhile, the proceedings were disrupted Thursday as the Opposition persisted in its demand for resignation of Health Minister Mukesh Mahaling over the death of 12 patients in a fire at SCH Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack March 16. The protesting Opposition members of both the BJD and the Congress also held a memorial event near the Mahatma Gandhi statue on the Assembly premises, marking the 11th day rituals of the deceased persons. The Opposition MLAs paid floral tributes to placards bearing the names of the 12 patients.

Man kills 80-yr-old father over ₹400

POST NEWS NETWORK

Morada, March 26: A 36-year-old man allegedly beat his octogenarian father to death when the latter refused to give him ₹400 in Mayurbhanj district, police said Thursday.



The incident occurred at Laddiha village under Morada police limits. The deceased was identified as Gobinda Marndi and the accused Madhu Marndi, who was detained by Morada police. "A murder case (125/26) has also been registered in this connection," said a police official.

According to police, Madhu had been demanding money from his father frequently. It was around 9pm Wednesday, when Madhu woke his father up from sleep and asked for ₹400. Poor Gobinda, who used to eke out a living by selling drumstick pods, refused to pay the amount. This infuriated Madhu, who allegedly assaulted him with a bamboo stick, leading to his death.

On being informed, a team from Morada police station and Chitrada outpost reached the spot Thursday and launched an investigation. The body was sent for postmortem and further investigation is on.

CM: Take action against hoarding, black marketing

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 26: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Thursday directed officials to take stringent action against unscrupulous traders creating artificial shortage of cooking gas and other essential commodities.

Majhi reviewed the steps

being taken by the state government to deal with artificial shortage of various commodities amid conflict in the West Asia region.

The meeting discussed in details the measures to ensure uninterrupted supply of petrol, cooking gas and fertilisers.

The meeting revealed an adequate amount of petroleum,

natural gas and other commodities available in the state, the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said in a statement.

The CM instructed the officials to conduct raids across the state and take strong action against traders indulging in such unethical practices, it said.

During the meeting, he also emphasised keeping a sufficient

stock of fertilisers for the Rabi crop season. He advised them to create widespread public awareness at the government level so that the people of the state do not feel anxious about the availability of fertilisers.

Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister KC Patra said there is no scarcity of cooking gas, petrol and diesel in the state.

BJP got highest donations: ADR

92.18% of the total contributions to all the parties comes from the corporates

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 26: Donations to national parties surged by 161 per cent in 2024-25 compared to the previous fiscal, with the ruling BJP accounting for the overwhelming majority, more than ten times the combined total received by all other national parties, according to a report by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR).

The report, released Thursday, said total donations above ₹20,000 declared by the national parties stood at ₹6,648.563 crore from 11,343 contributions in FY25. Of this, the BJP alone received ₹6,074.015 crore from 5,522 donations, followed by the Congress with ₹517.394 crore from 2,501 donations.

The saffron party's declared donations exceeded the combined total of the Congress, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) and the National People's Party (NPEP) for the same period by more

than tenfold, the report pointed out.

The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), meanwhile, declared that it did not receive any donations above ₹20,000, as it has been doing so for the last 19 years.

Overall donations to national parties rose by ₹4,104.285 crore in 2024-25 as compared to 2023-24. BJP's collections alone jumped 171 per cent from ₹2,243.947 crore in the previous fiscal. Donations to the Congress increased by 84 per cent, from ₹281.48 crore in 2023-24 to ₹517.394 crore in 2024-25.

AAP received ₹27.044 crore – a 244% increase – the NPEP got ₹1.943 crore, an increase of 1,313%, the report said.

Corporate donations dominated political funding, accounting for ₹6,128.787 crore, or 92.18 per cent of the total contributions, across 3,244 donations. Individual donors contributed ₹505.66 crore through 7,900 donations, making up 7.61 per cent of the total.

BJP received ₹5,717.167 crore from 2,794 corporate donations, more than 13 times the combined contributions received by all other national parties, which stood at ₹411.62 crore. It also received ₹345.94 crore from 2,627 individual donors.

Congress received ₹383.86 crore through 112 corporate donations and ₹132.39 crore from 2,357 individual contributors during the fiscal year.

Melania presents robot that can speak Indian language

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, March 26: US First Lady Melania Trump was escorted at a global summit at the White House by a black and white humanoid AI robot that spoke in 11 different languages, including Bengali.

Created by robotics company Figure, the humanoid robot was introduced as the "first American-made humanoid guest in the White House" by Trump to a gathering of First Spouses from 45 countries for the inaugural meeting of the Fostering the Future Together global coalition.

The robot, named Figure 3 welcomed the gathering, which included First Ladies from France and Israel Brigitte Macron and Sara Netanyahu respectively, with a wave and "welcome" in 11 different languages.

"Swagatam", the robot said in what was described as 'Bengali' by a White House pool report (though Swagatam is also said in Hindi, Marathi and Malayalam). The robot



also said 'welcome' in English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Arabic, Japanese, Hebrew, Slovene, Ukrainian and Georgian.

The robot is described by the company as an autonomous tool for delegating household tasks. It is covered in mesh fabric and includes cameras in the hands and tactile sensors to help operators see its targets. In promotional videos, Figure 3 can be seen loading a dishwasher, doing laundry, picking up toys and folding clothes.

"Figure 3, thank you for joining me," the First Lady said. "It's fair

to state you are my first American-made humanoid guest in the White House."

In her keynote address, Trump defined three pillars which will shape the next generation: the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to personalise learning, the emergence of humanoid educators as at-home tools for students, and the role of technology and education as a driver for America's economy.

"The future of AI is 'personified' - it will be formed in the shape of humans. Very soon, AI will move from our mobile phones to humanoids that deliver utility," Trump said, describing a shift toward humanoids capable of interacting directly with users in real-world environments.

The 'Fostering the Future Together' global summit brought together policymakers and private-sector leaders as governments increasingly look to AI as both an economic driver and a strategic priority, a White House press statement said.

India's own Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC)

Cash, but Digital!

Transact just like cash

- ✓ CBDC: Digital Rupee issued by RBI
- ✓ Stored in your digital wallet
- ✓ No need to look for exact change
- ✓ Works on all QR codes, including UPI QR
- ✓ Safe way to transact

Download your Digital Rupee App on Google Play OR App Store

Have to pay ₹140.73 Diya Chitale, Indian table tennis player

Download Digital Rupee App

Scan for Digital Rupee FAQs

Harmilan Bains, Indian track athlete

Issued in public interest by भारतीय रिज़र्व बैंक RESERVE BANK OF INDIA www.rbi.org.in

For more information, visit <https://rbikehtahai.rbi.org.in/cbdc>

Official WhatsApp Nos. 99990 41935 / 99309 91935

Participating Banks: Axis Bank • Bank of Baroda • Bank of India • Bank of Maharashtra • Canara Bank • Federal Bank • HDFC Bank • ICI Bank • IDBI Bank • IDFC First Bank • Indian Bank • IndusInd Bank • Karnataka Bank • Kotak Mahindra Bank • Punjab National Bank • State Bank of India • UCO Bank • Union Bank of India • Yes Bank

Participating Non-Banks: Cred • MobiKwik

Thousands pull Rukuna Rath NOR'WESTER LASHES CAPITAL CITY

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 26: The Capital witnessed a sudden spell of severe weather Thursday afternoon as a powerful Nor'wester swept through the region, bringing heavy rain, gusty winds and hail.

Dark clouds quickly enveloped the City, plunging it into near-darkness, followed by intense showers and hail in several areas. The sudden weather shift disrupted normal life, with winds of 30-40 km/h impacting traffic and outdoor activities. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) reported that the storm was triggered by a trough line extending from West Bengal to Chhattisgarh, creating favourable conditions for thunderstorms and rainfall across parts of Odisha.

IIMTF & Home Décor Expo to kick off today

Bhubaneswar: GS Marketing Associates, in collaboration with the Odisha Developers Federation (ODFD), has announced the 19th India International Mega Trade Fair (IIMTF) and Home & Décor Expo 2026, to be held from March 27 to April 4 at the IDCO Exhibition Ground here. The fair will be inaugurated by Housing and Urban Development Minister Krishna Chandra Mahapatra, along with MLA Babu Singh, senior BJP leader Jagannath Pradhan, and BMC Commissioner and BDA Vice Chairman Chanchal Rana. The expo aims to provide a common platform for real estate developers, homebuyers and financial institutions, boosting growth in Odisha's housing sector. Over 40 developers will showcase more than 100 projects featuring modern amenities and contemporary living concepts. ODFD Secretary Umesh Pattnaik said the fair reflects a long-standing commitment to educating buyers and connecting industry stakeholders. Vice-President Suryakanta Nanda emphasised innovation and sustainable urban living. GS Marketing Associates President Amitava Ghosh said the event marks their 28th fair, with participants from five countries and 12 Indian states, offering over 35,000 products.



An upper air cyclonic circulation over south Gangetic West Bengal, adjoining north Odisha, extending up to 1.5 km above mean sea level, continues to persist. IMD has issued a Yellow warning for at least eight districts in the state, cautioning residents about the likelihood of thunderstorms, lightning, and moderate to heavy rainfall. Wind speeds during the storm

may reach up to 50 km/h, posing risks such as tree falls, power outages, and minor structural damage. In Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar thunderstorms with lightning and gusty winds up to 40-50 km/h are likely at isolated places. In Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapara and Sundargarh, thunderstorms with lightning and gusty winds up to 30-40

km/h are expected at isolated locations.

Also, light to moderate rain or thundershowers are also expected at one or two places over districts including Balasore, Jharsuguda, Cuttack, Sambalpur, Koraput, Malkangiri, Bhadrak, Jajpur and Jagatsinghpur. Dry weather is likely to prevail over the remaining districts.

Authorities have advised residents to remain indoors during lightning and strong winds avoid sheltering under trees and exercise caution while travelling. Farmers and outdoor workers have been urged to take preventive steps to minimise potential losses.

The IMD has indicated that rainfall activity may persist in the region till April 2, keeping residents on alert for further weather disturbances.

Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, LoP Naveen Patnaik, and state Congress chief Bhakta Charan Das extend Ashokashtami greetings



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 26: Thousands of devotees took part in the 'Rukuna Rath Yatra', the annual car festival of Lord Lingaraj, here Thursday amid tight security arrangements.

The festival, observed on the occasion of Ashokashtami, is held every year in front of the Lord Lingaraj Temple in the Old Town area.

Braving soaring temperatures, devotees thronged the 11th-century shrine to catch a glimpse of the deity on the chariot.

Following rituals like 'Mangala Alati', 'Abakasha Niti' and 'Sahanamela', the bronze

LAW MINISTER PRITHIVIRAJ HARICHANDAN REVIEWS ARRANGEMENTS, ASSURES SMOOTH DARSHAN AND CHARIOT PULLING

BAHUDA YATRA (RETURN JOURNEY OF THE CHARIOT) SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 30

idols of 'Chandrasekhar' (representative of Lord Lingaraj), Devi Rukuna and Ananta Basudev were taken to the chariot from the main temple in a ceremonial 'Pahandi' procession, accompanied by chanting of hymns, beating of drums and gongs, and blowing of conch shells.

Although the temple administration had scheduled the chariot pulling at 2:30 pm, it commenced around 3:45 pm.

The procession was briefly halted after the chariot rope snapped minutes into the pulling, a priest said.

Law Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan visited the festival and said necessary steps were being taken to ensure smooth public darshan and chariot pulling.

The chariot is being pulled along Ratha Road to the Lord's 'Mausima' abode at Rameswar Temple, covering a distance of about 2.5 km from Lingaraj Temple.

"I feel blessed after having darshan of the Lord and pulling the chariot. It was my first time," said devotee Srikar Kumar Panda.

Rukuna Rath is known as 'analeuta' (turned) as the chariot does not turn during the return journey and is instead pulled from the rear.

The Bahuda Yatra is scheduled for March 30.

A large number of police personnel and officers were deployed for the Rath Yatra, with traffic restrictions imposed along Ratha Road.

Earlier in the day, Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, Leader of Opposition Naveen Patnaik and Congress state president Bhakta Charan Das extended greetings to the people on the auspicious occasion of Ashokashtami.

"Heartfelt greetings and best wishes to all on Ashokashtami and the Rukuna Rath Yatra of Lord Lingaraj. May the blessings of Lord Sri Lingaraj bring happiness, peace and prosperity to all," Majhi wrote on X.

Illegal sawmill worth over ₹14 lakh seized

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 26: The Forest Wing of Odisha Vigilance Thursday busted an illegal sawmill operating without a valid licence in Cuttack district, seizing timber and machinery worth over ₹14 lakh.

Acting on intelligence, a joint team raided Bilasuni village under Niali police limits and seized sawmill equipment along with 25.66 cubic feet of valuable timber estimated at ₹12.95 lakh.



Further searches in the area uncovered illegally hoarded timber in an open field near the village. Authorities seized an additional 51.136 cubic feet of timber, valued at ₹1.12 lakh. In all, the vigilance team confiscated 75.796 cubic feet of timber along with sawmill equipment, with the total value estimated at ₹14.08 lakh.

Sources said the sawmill was operating in violation of forest and environmental laws, threatening protected forest resources. Legal action is being initiated against those involved.

Workshop on combating human trafficking held

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, March 26: A range-level workshop, focusing on the critical themes of women empowerment and human trafficking was inaugurated Thursday by Inspector General of Police, Central Range Satyajit Naik, in presence of the Superintendent of Police, Cuttack. The workshop saw active participation from senior police officers, field functionaries and key stakeholders.

Addressing the gathering, Naik emphasised that women empowerment and human trafficking are deeply interconnected issues with significant social implications. "Women form the backbone of families and the nation, playing a crucial role in social and economic development. Yet, challenges such as inequality, lack of education, violence, and exploitation continue to persist," he said.

Human trafficking remains a grave concern, involving the use of force, fraud, or deception to exploit individuals—particularly women and children—for forced labor, illegal activities or sexual exploitation. It constitutes a severe violation of human dignity and fundamental rights.



Poverty, unemployment, lack of awareness, and misplaced trust in fraudulent agents are among its key drivers, Naik added.

The workshop highlighted the existing legal framework to combat trafficking, including the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act (ITPA), and the POCSO Act. Odisha Police continues its proactive measures such as strengthening Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs), promoting use of emergency helpline 112, operationalising Child Helpline 1098 and conducting sustained awareness programmes across rural and urban areas. Naik stressed that enforce-

ment alone is not sufficient. "Community participation is vital. Empowering women through education, awareness, and financial independence is the most effective deterrent to trafficking. Empowered women are better equipped to protect themselves and their families," Naik stated.

Citizens were urged to support education and aspirations of girls, promote respect and safety for women, remain vigilant, report suspicious activities and actively spread awareness within their communities. "Empowered women are the strongest defense against human trafficking," Naik concluded, urging everyone to unite in the mission.

DGIT Panda to visit City today

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 26: Director General of Income Tax (DGIT) Investigation, for Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Odisha, Bijoy Kumar Panda, will visit the City Friday for the first time after assuming additional charge January 1, 2026.

A senior Indian Revenue Service officer, Panda currently oversees multiple regions, including Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka and Goa, apart from his responsibilities for Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Odisha.

During his visit, he is scheduled to hold a review meeting with officers of the Central Charges and the Investigation Wing in Odisha. The meeting will focus on assessing ongoing probes, improving efficiency, and strengthening enforcement strategies.



Panda will also interact with the Principal Director of Income Tax (Investigation), Bhubaneswar, and other senior officials to discuss key regional priorities.

Odisha emerging as major skill devpt hub: Governor



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 26: Odisha is rapidly emerging as a major skill development hub in the country, noted Governor Haribabu Kambhampati while interacting with a delegation of 14 senior journalists from Varanasi who recently visited World Skill Centre here.

"Vocational training across multiple sectors is helping both educated and semi-educated youth secure employment, particularly in manufacturing, and promoting self-employment opportunities," said Kambhampati.

The delegation from Va-

ranasi paid a courtesy call on Governor at Lok Bhawan Thursday.

The Governor welcomed the visiting media professionals and highlighted Odisha's development journey, rich cultural heritage, and emerging opportunities across sectors. The earlier perception of Odisha as a 'poor' state has changed significantly, Kambhampati noted, and highlighted that the state has abundant coal, iron ore, bauxite and chromite reserves. The presence of major steel and aluminium plants has also generated substantial direct and indirect employment, he said.

NHRC spl monitor visits City AIIMS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 26: Special Monitor for Human Rights Advocacy (Human Rights Education and Gender Equality) from the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), Kanhaiya Tripathi visited AIIMS-Bhubaneswar recently.

During the visit, Tripathi reviewed various initiatives undertaken by the hospital in the areas of human rights education, patient care equity, and gender-sensitive healthcare practices. He also held detailed discussions with the institution's Executive Director Ashutosh Biswas, senior faculty members, administrative officials, and departmental representatives. Tripathi appreciated the national institute's efforts and emphasised the need to integrate human rights principles into routine medical practice. He



highlighted key aspects such as equitable access to healthcare, informed consent, patient dignity, and non-discrimination as essential components of a rights-based healthcare system.

In line with these discussions, the establishment of a dedicated Human Rights Cell was proposed. The cell will function as a nodal body responsible for, addressing patient grievances effectively, and sensitisation programmes, organising training sessions for healthcare professionals, ensuring compliance with NHRC guidelines.

ARTIST CREATES AYODHYA RAM TEMPLE IN CHALK

Intricately crafted miniature model measures around 4 inches in height, 4 inches in length and 3 inches in breadth

MANOJ KUMAR JENA, OP

Bhubaneswar, March 26: A miniature artist from Hatbazar near Gopinathpur in Jatni area of Khurda has drawn attention with a unique creation ahead of Ram Navami. L Ishwar Rao has crafted a detailed miniature model of the Ayodhya Ram Temple using simple materials like chalk pieces.

The intricately designed model measures around 4 inches in height, 4 inches in length and 3



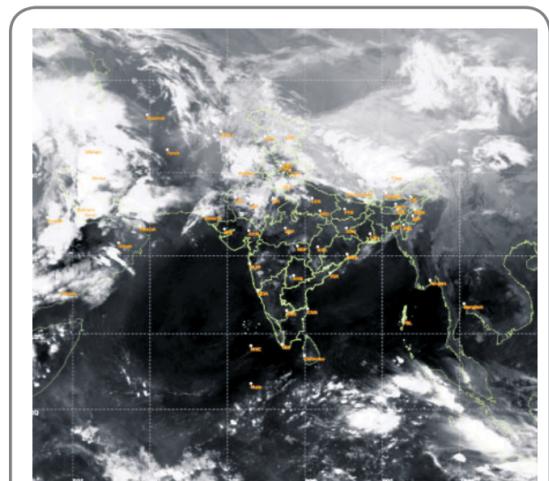
inches in breadth. Rao said the delicate artwork took seven days to complete. He has been continuing the tradition of creating new art pieces every year on the occasion of Ram Navami. "I have a deep passion for creating miniature models of various subjects. Over the years, I have crafted several such pieces, many of which are carefully preserved inside glass bottles.

For this Ram Mandir model, I paid special attention to intricate detailing to capture its essence in a miniature form," said Rao.

Through his artwork, Rao extended warm greetings to people on the auspicious occasion of Ram Navami. He said the creation is not just an artistic expression but also a medium to share devotion and positivity. Offering prayers to Lord Shri Ram, he wished that the peace, harmony and inner joy experienced while chanting the Lord's name resonate in everyone's lives.

His unique creation has drawn praise from locals, who appreciated his dedication, patience, and creativity in the niche field of miniature art.

MARKET WATCH					
CURRENCY		BOURSES		COMMODITIES	
INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION
DOLLAR	94.13 ▲ 0.24	SENSEX	75273.45 ▲ 1205.00	GOLD	₹141,266 ▼ ₹2831
EURO	108.67 ▲ 0.12	NIFTY	23306.45 ▲ 394.05	SILVER	₹222,187 ▼ ₹12,647



WEATHER			
	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	35.2°	34.4°	Light to moderate rain or thunderstorm very likely to occur
Min Temp	23.8°	22.4°	
Humidity	75%	80%	
Rainfall	Trace	Nil	

7 sentenced to life in 2021 murder case

Another accused was acquitted due to lack of evidence

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, March 26: A District and Sessions Court in Sambalpur Thursday sentenced seven persons to life imprisonment in connection with the 2021 murder of a man in Gulamal village under Katarbaga police limits. District and Sessions Judge Prayagn Panigrahi delivered the verdict after examining testimonies of 23 witnesses and key documentary evidence. The convicts were identified as Ashok Kumar Pradhan, Bhojaraj Pradhan, Rukman Pradhan alias Rohit, Gajaraj Pradhan, Bishmadev Pradhan, Ranjit alias Dushmant Bhoi and Bishmajit Bhoi of Pradhanpali village under Katarbaga police limits. The court convicted them under Section 302 of the IPC and imposed a fine of ₹10,000 on each of the accused. In default, they will have to undergo an additional two months jail term. The court also sentenced the convicts to 10 years of rigorous imprisonment under Section 307

and two years under Section 148 of the IPC. Another accused, Biranchi Biswal, was acquitted due to lack of evidence. Government counsel Subhash Chandra Mohanty conducted the prosecution. According to the prosecution, the incident occurred September 16, 2021 around 8pm, when Prakash Pradhan and his friend Ajay Barik were returning from a market after purchasing items for Vishwakarma Puja. The seven accused, acting as per a pre-meditated plan, attacked them with iron rods, sharp weapons and axes, leaving both critically injured. Locals rushed them to VSS Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (VIMSAR), where doctors declared Pradhan dead. Police later recovered the body and sent it for post-mortem. Based on a complaint filed by the deceased's brother Prashant, police registered a case (165/21) under multiple sections of IPC and arrested the accused persons. Following the verdict, the victim's elder brother, Pramod Kumar Pradhan, expressed satisfaction, saying that although his brother cannot be brought back, the judgment has delivered justice to the family.

Villagers oppose land acquisition

POST NEWS NETWORK

Angul, March 26: Residents likely to be displaced by the brownfield expansion project of National Aluminium Company Limited (NALCO) Thursday opposed land acquisition, saying they would not part with their land under the company's policy. A public hearing on rehabilitation and resettlement for the brownfield expansion project was conducted by the district administration at the Smelter Plant Training Centre of NALCO. The venue was heavily guarded, with heavy police deployment. People facing displacement alleged that they were subjected to extensive security checks before being allowed inside. They said metal detectors and explosive detection devices were used, and claimed that they were treated "like terrorists or Maoists" in an alleged attempt to intimidate them. Expressing strong resentment over the arrangements, the affected residents declared the public hearing a failure and reiterated their refusal to give land under the existing NALCO policy. However, the administration maintained that the hearing



was conducted smoothly. Additional District Magistrate (ADM-Revenue) Uday Kumar Mohapatra said the process was orderly and described the public hearing as successful. The public hearing on rehabilitation and resettlement for the proposed expansion of the brownfield project began at 10am under the chairmanship of ADM (Revenue) Mohapatra. Senior officials, including NALCO Executive Director Sachidananda Jena, its Special Land Acquisition Officer Jayajit Dhal and Angul Tehsildar Alok Dehury, were present on the dais. ADM Mohapatra read out the policy framed by NALCO for people likely to lose land. Affected residents then

voiced their concerns, terminating the policy "anti-people" and declaring they would not part with their land under any circumstances. Bibeknanda Rath of Kangu-la mouza said his ancestral land had been acquired by NALCO in 1981-82, but he has yet to receive a job. "Now the company is seeking more land but is backtracking on permanent employment," he said, adding he would not give land again. Devaraj Sahu said he would neither give land to NALCO nor accept compensation or a job. Hari Singh of Kulad mouza, who faces the highest displacement, alleged heavy police deployment as if villagers were "Maoists or terrorists" and accused the company of forcibly grabbing land. He claimed around half of his land was not included in the notification but is now being taken over. Rashmi Ranjan Sahu said officials had earlier told them land classification would not matter for the project. "If all land is treated equally, then employment should also be provided equally to all," he said. Pratap Nath of Bampur village said NALCO had not responded even 45 days after a letter from the District Collector. "If it ignores the administration, how will it listen to common people?" he said. Bibhuti Bhushan Tripathy, president of Nuasahi village, said land acquisition through police intimidation would never succeed. Around 50 affected persons spoke at the public hearing, reiterating their refusal to give land and alleging they were not being given adequate opportunity to present their demands. However, speaking to mediapersons after the meeting, Mohapatra said the hearing was conducted peacefully and successfully. He added that the demands raised would be discussed in the Rehabilitation and Peripheral Development Advisory Committee (RPDAC) meeting.

bly grabbing land. He claimed around half of his land was not included in the notification but is now being taken over. Rashmi Ranjan Sahu said officials had earlier told them land classification would not matter for the project. "If all land is treated equally, then employment should also be provided equally to all," he said. Pratap Nath of Bampur village said NALCO had not responded even 45 days after a letter from the District Collector. "If it ignores the administration, how will it listen to common people?" he said. Bibhuti Bhushan Tripathy, president of Nuasahi village, said land acquisition through police intimidation would never succeed. Around 50 affected persons spoke at the public hearing, reiterating their refusal to give land and alleging they were not being given adequate opportunity to present their demands. However, speaking to mediapersons after the meeting, Mohapatra said the hearing was conducted peacefully and successfully. He added that the demands raised would be discussed in the Rehabilitation and Peripheral Development Advisory Committee (RPDAC) meeting.

Disabled dhaba worker murdered; 2 detained

POST NEWS NETWORK

Khurda, March 26: A disabled person was brutally murdered at a roadside dhaba at Subudhipatana square near Balugaon bypass in Khurda district, police said Thursday. The victim has been identified as 22-year-old Papu Dalbehera from Ekdalia village under Banpur police station. The victim's father, Radhakant Dalbehera, lodged a complaint with Balugaon police Thursday and a murder case (116/26) was registered in this connection. As per reports the dhaba owner and one of his employees have been detained. The motive behind the murder remains unclear. Papu, who had been working at the dhaba for a few months, was differently abled and unable to speak properly. After completing his duties Wednesday night, he went to sleep along with other colleagues. However, his body was found lying in a pool of blood with his throat slit behind the dhaba the next morning. The dhaba owner immediately took Papu to Balugaon hospital, where doctors declared him dead. Family members were informed and reached the hospital. The police seized the body and sent it for post-mortem. Balugaon SDPO Sanjay Pattnayak, IIC Jay Prakash Parida, and a scientific team visited the spot to conduct a thorough investigation.

'Accidental firing' by minor leaves policeman injured

POST NEWS NETWORK

Basudevpur, March 26: A police personnel was injured after a minor reportedly fired at him accidentally during a religious function in Shashubhusuni village under this block in Bhadrak district Wednesday. The injured, identified as Manas Sethi of Chudamani village, is posted at Chudamani Marine police station in the district. The minor, reportedly a relative of a police officer, accidentally pulled the trigger of his service weapon, causing the bullet to hit Sethi's hand while he was attending a feast. The incident triggered panic at the spot after the gunshot was heard and Sethi began bleeding. Sethi was taken to Basudevpur hospital, where he received primary treatment and was later discharged. No case has been registered at the police station as Sethi did not file any written complaint. Chudamani Marine police station IIC Banani Behera said a preliminary inquiry has been initiated. However, allegations have surfaced that police are trying to hush up the matter since both the minor and the injured are linked to the department. The incident reportedly occurred during a Rudrabhishek ritual at a nearby Shiva temple. Locals have demanded a proper investigation into the incident.

Vig scanner on asst engineer



PNN & AGENCIES

locations across Ganjam district Thursday. The operation was conducted under the supervision of three DSPs, seven inspectors, and supporting staff, based on search warrants issued by the Special Judge, Vigilance, Berhampur. During the searches, officials discovered a three-storey building measuring approximately 3,550 sq ft in Berhampur, along with five valuable plots in and around the town. The Vigilance Technical Wing is currently assessing the value of these properties. Cash amounting to ₹18.9 lakh was also seized, including ₹15.13 lakh from the residential house in Berhampur and ₹3.72 lakh from a government quarter in Bhanjanagar. In addition, officials recovered a concrete mixer machine purchased in 2024 for ₹57 lakh, a JCB machine bought in 2025 for ₹37 lakh, one four-wheeler, and three



two-wheelers. Further investigations are underway to ascertain bank deposits, postal savings, and other financial investments. The weight and value of gold ornaments recovered from the residence are also being assessed. Searches are still in progress, and more details are awaited.

Woman burnt to death; hubby held

POST NEWS NETWORK

Deogarh, March 26: Police arrested a man for allegedly burning his wife to death in Deogarh district and produced him before a court Thursday. The incident took place in Mallarabahal village under Kendeigola police limits in Rimal block. The partially charred body of the woman, identified as Laxmi Priya, was found in a paddy field about 300 metres behind her house March 23. Acting on information from villagers, police reached the spot, recovered the body and registered a case (101/26). The body was later identified by the victim's husband, Jashobant Sahu, and the deceased's brother, Muralidhar Sahu. After a complaint was lodged by the victim's brother, police detained Jashobant for questioning. A scientific team assisted in the investigation March 24, and the body was sent to VIMSAR in Burla for post-mortem. After the autopsy, the body was handed over to the family Wednesday. Police Thursday formally arrested the accused husband.

2 held for killing simian, posting photos on Insta

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baliguda, March 26: Two youths were arrested and produced in the court for allegedly killing a monkey and posting photos and videos of the act on social media platform Instagram here in Kandhamal district, police said Thursday. The accused were identified as Manab Malik and Jayadev Malik of Naregaon village under Salaguda panchayat in Baliguda block of Kandhamal district. The incident occurred in the Naregaon area under Baliguda forest range and division. According to officials, the duo killed a langur and captured its infant before uploading photos and videos on Instagram. The post later went viral on social media. Baliguda Forest Range Officer B Subas launched an inquiry. Upon confirming the involvement of the two accused, forest officials arrested them Thursday and produced them in a court.



Basudevpur, March 26: A police personnel was injured after a minor reportedly fired at him accidentally during a religious function in Shashubhusuni village under this block in Bhadrak district Wednesday. The injured, identified as Manas Sethi of Chudamani village, is posted at Chudamani Marine police station in the district. The minor, reportedly a relative of a police officer, accidentally pulled the trigger of his service weapon, causing the bullet to hit Sethi's hand while he was attending a feast. The incident triggered panic at the spot after the gunshot was heard and Sethi began bleeding. Sethi was taken to Basudevpur hospital, where he received primary treatment and was later discharged. No case has been registered at the police station as Sethi did not file any written complaint. Chudamani Marine police station IIC Banani Behera said a preliminary inquiry has been initiated. However, allegations have surfaced that police are trying to hush up the matter since both the minor and the injured are linked to the department. The incident reportedly occurred during a Rudrabhishek ritual at a nearby Shiva temple. Locals have demanded a proper investigation into the incident.

Chhatrapur/Bhanjanagar, March 26: Officials of Odisha Vigilance have uncovered substantial assets allegedly possessed by Assistant Engineer Panchu Behera, currently serving as SDO of Daha Irrigation Sub-Division under Bhanjanagar Irrigation Division. Acting on allegations of disproportionate assets, Vigilance teams carried out simultaneous raids at five

Man awarded life term for rape, murder of sis-in-law

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Berhampur, March 26: A POCSO court in Ganjam district Thursday sentenced a man to life imprisonment for raping and murdering his minor sister-in-law three years ago. Additional District Judge-cum-Judge of the POCSO Court, Pranati Pattnaik, pronounced the verdict after examining the statement of 11 witnesses, said Narayan Panda, Special Public Prosecutor of the court. The court has also directed the District Legal Services Authority to pay ₹8 lakh to the family members of the victim as compensation, he said. The convict has been identified as the brother-in-law of the victim. He raped and murdered her by throttling her in a jungle under Buguda police station area of Ganjam district August 17, 2023, police said. The victim's father had lodged a missing report at Buguda police station August 21. During the investigation, police found the body of the 17-year-old girl in the forest area and arrested the convict August 23.



Thermal coal unloading at Paradip hits new peak

Paradip: The Paradip Port Authority (PPA) has set a new benchmark in operational efficiency by recording its highest ever single-day thermal coal unloading. Team PPA successfully unloaded 50 rakes in a single day, including 43 BOBRN (Bogie Open Bottom Rapid Discharge) and seven BOXN (Bogie Open High Sided) rakes Wednesday. This remarkable achievement underscores the port's commitment to efficiency, seamless coordination, and strong infrastructure capable of handling large cargo volumes within tight timelines. PPA Chairman PL Haranadh commended the team's dedication.

Commando injured in accidental firing

Phulbani: An Odisha Police personnel of the elite Special Operations Group (SOG) engaged in anti-Maoist operations in Kandhamal district was injured in accidental firing while climbing a hill in Daringbadi area, police said Thursday. The injured personnel was identified as 27-year-old Sukant Majhi, a native of Hariapur village of Keonjhar district. The incident took place Wednesday evening during a combing operation. Kandhamal Superintendent of Police Harisha BC said Majhi sustained a bullet injury due to a freak firing incident while on duty. His service rifle accidentally went off and the bullet hit his shoulder while he was climbing a hill in Gajalbad-Kerubadi forest in Daringbadi area, another police officer said.

8-yr-old boy critical after falling into fire

Jaleswar: An eight-year-old boy was critically injured after accidentally falling into a fire at Rangamatia village under Raibania police limits and this block of Balasore district. The injured has been identified as Shubhankar Singh, son of Rabindra Singh. The child is said to be mentally challenged. The incident took place around 9am Thursday when the child's mother, Panchami Singh, was boiling paddy on a traditional cooking stove. After finishing, she had removed the hot pan from the stove. Meanwhile, Shubhankar, who was playing nearby, accidentally fell onto the burning stove. He sustained severe burn injuries on multiple parts of his body. His mother immediately rescued him and rushed him to Hatigarh Community Health Centre. However, due to his critical condition, he was referred to the DHH at Baripada.

Rare ibis birds sighted in Joda



typically seen near water bodies and in relatively cooler habitats. Their presence in an industrial and mining belt like Joda has surprised many. In the past few days, two to three pairs of the birds have been frequently spotted perched atop a telephone tower in the town, especially during early mornings when their calls are clearly audible. They are seen flying towards the nearby Kanpur reservoir during the day and returning to the tower around sunset. The birds are usually identified by their black and reddish beaks. However, the ones spotted in Joda appear to have longer, predominantly black beaks, suggesting possible variation within the species. These migratory birds are known to travel long distances during winter to places like Chilika and other wetlands. The relatively lower temperature in the Joda region is believed to have attracted them. Jena said the birds prefer to stay in pairs and assured that the Forest department has stepped up efforts to ensure their safety.

pecially during early mornings when their calls are clearly audible. They are seen flying towards the nearby Kanpur reservoir during the day and returning to the tower around sunset. The birds are usually identified by their black and reddish beaks. However, the ones spotted in Joda appear to have longer, predominantly black beaks, suggesting possible variation within the species. These migratory birds are known to travel long distances during winter to places like Chilika and other wetlands. The relatively lower temperature in the Joda region is believed to have attracted them. Jena said the birds prefer to stay in pairs and assured that the Forest department has stepped up efforts to ensure their safety.

Electric scooters distributed to 84 disabled persons

Koraput: In a significant step toward empowering differently abled individuals, the Koraput district administration, in collaboration with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) Sunabeda, distributed electric scooters to 84 beneficiaries at a special event held at the Koraput Police Parade Ground. The initiative was carried out under the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme of HAL, aimed at enhancing mobility and promoting self-reliance among persons with disabilities.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Joda, March 26: Rare sightings of ibis birds have been reported in the mining town of Joda in Keonjhar district, drawing attention from locals and forest officials alike. According to forest guard Trinath Jena, the birds, commonly found in parts of India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and the Maldives, are

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender Notice No.SBP-ELECT-2026-T-274
NAME OF WORK: ELECTRICAL WORKS IN CONNECTION WITH "CONSTRUCTION OF A STANDARD RPF POST BUILDING AT BALANGIR AT PLATFORM-1".
Approx. Cost of the Work: ₹ 6,93,435.85, EMD: ₹ 13,900/-, Completion Period of the Work: Six (06) months from the date of issue of LoA.
Tender Closing Date and Time: At 1530 hrs. of 13.04.2026.
No manual offers sent by Post / Courier/ Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.
Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website: www.ireps.gov.in
Note: The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website fifteen (15) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/corrigenda issued for this tender. The tenderers/ bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate and must be registered on IREPS Portal. Only registered tenderer/bidder can participate on e-tendering.
Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (G)/ Sambalpur
PR-1267/Q/25-26

NOTIFICATION

No. SER/P-CKP/EP/Staff and Welfare Inspector/Re-engagement/2026 dated: 25.03.2026
Chakradharpur Division, South Eastern Railway has issued Notification of even no. dated: 25.03.2026 for re-engagement of retired Railway employees for 02 posts of Staff and Welfare Inspector in Personnel department over Chakradharpur Division for 01 year or attaining the age of 65 years or joining of regular candidate for RRB/RRC whichever is earlier, on monthly remuneration basis. Maximum age is 65 years as on 25.03.2026. Applications are invited in offline or online mode. For details please visit <https://ser.indianrailways.gov.in>. Offline application shall be sent to Sr.DPO/DRM office, Chakradharpur, Jharkhand-833102 or Online in gmail-recttckp122@gmail.com on or before last date 10.04.2026.
By Order
Sr. Divisional Personnel Officer/Chakradharpur
South Eastern Railway
We serve with a smile

EAST COAST RAILWAY

PUBLIC NOTICE FOR CLOSURE OF MANNED LEVEL CROSSING GATE BETWEEN SAKHIGOPAL - MALATIPATPUR STATIONS

THE UNDER MENTIONED MANNED LEVEL CROSSING GATE OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION HAS BEEN PROPOSED FOR CLOSURE IN LIEU OF CONSTRUCTION OF LIMITED HEIGHT SUBWAY (LHS) AND WILL BE COMMISSIONED ON DATED 30.03.2026 FOR PUBLIC. ADDITIONAL DISTRICT MAGISTRATE, PURI VIDE LETTER NO. 1948/GI., Dt. 13.07.2012 HAS PERMITTED FOR THE CLOSURE OF SAID MANNED LEVEL CROSSING GATE. PRINCIPAL CHIEF ENGINEER (PCE) SANCTION IS UNDER PROCESS FOR CLOSURE. HENCE, THE USE OF THE UNDER MENTIONED MANNED LEVEL CROSSING GATE FOR PUBLIC WILL BE PROHIBITED AFTER COMMISSIONING OF LIMITED HEIGHT SUBWAY (LHS) ON THE ABOVE SCHEDULED DATE.

Route	Between Station	LC No.	Railway Kilometer	Class (M/U/M)	Year of Census	Train vehicles Unit
D	Sakhigopal - Malatipatpur	KP - 28	487/15-17	"B1" (Malatipatpur)	November - 2024	29665

REASON FOR CLOSURE: CONSTRUCTION OF ROAD LIMITED HEIGHT SUBWAY (LHS) IN LIEU OF L-XING.
PR-1274/Q/25-26 Sr. Divisional Engineer (HQ) / Khurda Road

OFFICE OF THE NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL, KHARIAR ROAD

Mail : nackhrd@rediffmail.com, Phone No. : 06678-221239

INVITATION FOR BIDS

Bid Reference No. - 848/KHRD
Tender Call Notice No.848/24.03.2026

No.13001/807/2526 : Bid documents consisting of specification the schedule of quantities and the set of terms and condition of contract and other necessary document can be seen in the Govt. Website i.e. www.tendersodisha.gov.in

1	Nature of work	: Civil works as mentioned in website
2	Estimated Cost	: As per notice Inviting Tender
3	Period of Completion	: As per DTCN
4	Date and time of availability of the documents in the portal	: 10.00 A.M. 25.03.2026 to 5:30 P.M. 10.04.2026
5	Last date/time for receipt of Bids in the portal	: 10.04.2026 by 5:30 P.M.
6	Offline Submission of Bid	: 10.00 A.M. 13.04.2026 to 5:00 P.M. 13.04.2026
7	Name and address of the Officer inviting Bid	: Executive Officer, Khariar Road NAC, Dist.Nuapada

Further the details can be seen from the "Procurement Portal - www.tendersorissa.gov.in

OIPR-13001/132701/25-26/0003 Sd./- Executive Officer NAC, Khariar Road

The cup has to be left clean and empty for the divine liquor to be poured into it.

SRI AUROBINDO



Double Standards

With his recent speech describing the rules-based international order as a "fiction," Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney made a mainstay of debates across the Global South fashionable in the West. Developing and emerging economies have long criticized the inconsistent implementation of international rules and double standards at the heart of the international order. Now, a Western leader has acknowledged the hypocrisy, too.

Until recently, the Carneys of the world had invested considerable political capital in defending the rules-based order against such accusations. At the Munich Security Conference in February, the Saudi minister of foreign affairs remarked, with relief, that "finally, we are, all of us, being honest with each other" about the broken nature of the old system.

But should we really be rejoicing at this move toward greater honesty? What will come of Western leaders acknowledging how "imperfect" the old order was "even at the best of times," as German Chancellor Friedrich Merz recently put it?

I ask as someone who has called for a more honest conversation about that order's inconsistencies and the legitimate concerns they raised. I hoped that acknowledging the double standards would help reduce them, leading to a more constructive debate about how to strengthen international rules and norms. Yet now I worry that the honesty on display today is not serving either objective.

Instead of ensuring greater consistency or inspiring reforms to make the prevailing system more just and emancipatory, this newfound frankness often seems aimed at opposite ends. It is being used to justify blatant discrepancies, and to depict any work toward more consistent global rules as futile.

Most of those who highlight the old order's shortcomings are not promising to alter their own behavior. They may acknowledge the hypocrisies enshrined in that order, but their reactions to the Trump administration's intervention in Venezuela and the US-Israeli strikes against Iran confirm that nothing much has changed. They remain willing to condone or look past their allies' rule violations.

Aside from Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, few Western leaders have called out the illegality of the US-Israeli attack on Iran. Not even the European Union – a longtime champion of international law – has issued an official condemnation.

In fact, judging by recent official statements, some in the West seem to regard dishonesty about the old order's double standards and moralizing by Europeans and others as two sides of the same problematic coin. For them, being more honest about the old order means no longer chiding other governments for their violations of international rules.

Thus, Merz recently made clear that Germany would not be "lecturing our partners on their military strikes against Iran." But in that case, nothing has changed: the partners Germany is sparing from moralizing lectures are the same partners that Germany has almost always spared from moralizing lectures.

Few who have finally acknowledged the old order's deficits are taking the next step of trying to build something better. Instead, the more common argument is that the old order is basically dead, and not to be mourned. The implication is that Western countries should now focus on the far more limited goal of defending their own strategic interests in a world where power politics dominate, and where international rules no longer command respect.

This was the subtext of European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's recent speech at the EU Ambassadors Conference, where she argued that "Europe can no longer be a custodian for the old-world order, for a world that has gone and will not return." Likewise, Merz believes that the rules-based order "no longer exists." Even Carney, who suggested that "something bigger, better, stronger, more just" could be built on the ruins of the old order, has provided little detail on what this could look like. (He also initially endorsed the US-Israeli strikes on Iran, albeit "with regret.")

Those declaring the old order dead – which is conveniently happening just as its double standards have come to haunt the West – might want to be seen as refreshingly honest brokers. But one can just as easily interpret their statements as abandoning all ambition to shape global rules and principles for the better.

Western leaders now speak in the same "transactional" terms that they once criticized the Global South for using. They, too, have settled on a foreign-policy approach based on national interests, rather than on principles that serve the interests of all. Their goal is not to advance a more just global order, but rather to promote a "realist" stance that frees them from any commitment to defending or strengthening international rules.

Of course, it is reasonable to ask whether "middle powers" can uphold international rules, let alone establish new ones, without the buy-in of a hegemon. But if they completely drop the ambition to do so, the very notion of a rules-based order will indeed be dead. The honesty we have been waiting for will be used to justify inconsistencies or an abdication of leadership. If that is our future, we may miss the "fictional" world we have lost.

The writer is Head of Research and Publications at the Munich Security Conference. ©PROJECT SYNDICATE



Sophie Eisentraut

Of course, it is reasonable to ask whether "middle powers" can uphold international rules, let alone establish new ones, without the buy-in of a hegemon. But if they completely drop the ambition to do so, the very notion of a rules-based order will indeed be dead

FOCUS DEFECTION

THE GREAT POLITICAL MIGRATION

Six weeks can be a very long time in Indian politics. On 10 February, Congress MP Pradyot Bordoloi angrily tweeted against Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma after a controversial video surfaced of Sarma shooting at a man in Muslim attire. "Shame on you HBS. Never before we saw such a fanatical re-invention of a politician who has single-handedly damaged and ruptured the legendary social fabric of Assam," commented the senior Congress leader. On 18 March, Bordoloi was standing next to Sarma, sheepishly grinning as he wore a BJP scarf and cap, welcomed now as a "valued karyakarta" by the same party whose Assam unit in August 2025 had accused him of being "one of the most corrupt, manipulative power-brokers Assam has seen."



Rajdeep Sardesai

AS MANY AS A THIRD OF THE BJP CANDIDATES IN ASSAM ONCE FOUGHT ELECTIONS ON A CONGRESS SYMBOL

The well-spoken Bordoloi has followed a script that is so familiar that it barely surprises anymore. Defections ahead of an election is no longer an aberration; it is the new normal in a political universe where the only 'ism' left is opportunism. Assam's political arc exemplifies this. Sarma, easily the most prominent face of Assam BJP's current leadership once rose through the Congress ranks before switching sides and scripting a new trajectory. The hyper-ambitious Sarma famously claimed that he left the Congress because Rahul Gandhi ill-treated him by offering him biscuits that he was feeding his pet dog. The well-spun storyline couldn't mask the fact that Sarma was desperate to be anointed as CM in waiting. Since then, what began as an individual decision has evolved into a steady pipeline. In constituency after constituency, the BJP's expanding footprint is not just the result of electoral victories—it is built on the quiet, continuous import of Congress leaders. As many as a third of the BJP candidates in Assam once fought elections on a Congress symbol.

Which is why it may be time to ask a provocative question: has "Congress-mukt Bharat" quietly morphed into a "Congress-yukt BJP," not just in Assam but across India? In the 2024 general elections, over a hundred BJP candidates were political defectors, mainly from Congress. Over the past decade, over 200 plus MLAs and MPs have joined the Modi-led BJP with Congress accounting for around 40% of defectors. What we are witnessing, then, is not merely the decline of one party and the rise of another. It is something more layered: the absorption of a political ecosystem. The BJP is no longer just displacing the Congress; it is, in many ways, inheriting it—its leaders, its networks, even parts of its social base.

This raises an uncomfortable question about ideology. For decades, Indian politics was framed around clear—if sometimes overstated—ideological divides. The Congress positioned itself as secular and centrist; the BJP as nationalist with a distinct cultural worldview. Yet, in today's churn, these boundaries appear remarkably fluid. Leaders who once warned against the BJP's Hindutva politics now defend it with equal vigour. Manifestos seem less like commitments and more like costumes—easily changed, rarely binding.

Does this mean ideology is dead? Not quite. But it does mean that ideology has been demoted. Power (and wealth) is now the primary organising principle of politics. In a system where electoral success is increasingly concentrated, the incentives are



The BJP is no longer just displacing the Congress; it is, in many ways, inheriting it—its leaders, its networks, even parts of its social base

obvious. Align with the dominant force and remain relevant, or risk political obsolescence. But this is not just about opportunism; it is about party structures. The asymmetry of power between the ruling party and the Opposition has widened. Access to funding, media visibility, and organisational muscle is heavily skewed. The anti-defection law, meanwhile, has struggled to keep pace with political ingenuity. Designed to prevent instability, it has been repeatedly circumvented through engineered splits and mergers.

Compounding the moral crisis in political behaviour is the organisational decline of the Congress. Once the central pole of Indian politics, it now finds itself unable to retain or regenerate leadership in key states. For many of its leaders, the party no longer offers a credible pathway to power. Defection, in that sense, becomes less a betrayal and more a calculation. The consequences for India's party system are profound. We are moving away from a competitive multi-party framework towards a dominant-party system with porous boundaries. The BJP's expansion is not just electoral; it is absorptive. It is becoming the default destination for political ambition.

For voters, this creates a democratic dilemma. When a representative elected on one party's ticket switches sides, the mandate is effectively transferred without consent. The voter's

choice is diluted, even nullified. And yet, the story is not entirely one of voter helplessness. In many cases, defectors are re-elected, suggesting that voters are willing to prioritise proximity to power over ideological consistency. The promise of development, access, and influence often outweighs concerns about political fidelity. This duality—cynicism on one hand, pragmatism on the other—defines our current moment. So what can be done?

One possible reform is to alter the incentive structure. If an elected representative knows that switching sides will not immediately translate into office, the calculus may change. A rule barring defectors from holding ministerial positions for a fixed period—say, five years—could act as a deterrent. It would not eliminate defections, but it would strip them of their most immediate reward. At the same time, the anti-defection framework needs urgent tightening.

But ultimately, no legal reform can substitute for political renewal. As long as the Opposition remains fragmented and organisationally weak, the incentives for defection will endure. The answer lies as much in rebuilding credible alternatives as in regulating political behaviour. The BJP's rise is undoubtedly a story of political success. But it is also a story of political absorption shaped by a party which once loftily claimed to be a 'party with a difference'.

Post-script: Amongst Indian states, Goa has converted defections into an art form. Ahead of the 2022 state elections, all Congress candidates pledged before a temple, church and mosque that they would never ditch their party once elected. The divine moment was an optical illusion. Elections over, a majority of the MLAs switched to the ruling BJP. As one of them candidly remarked, "I think God will forgive us because even he knows that to serve the people you need to be on the right side of power!"

The writer is a senior journalist and author.

SPECTRUM UNEMPLOYMENT

India's demographic catastrophe



Santosh Kumar Mohapatra

WHILE THE PRIVATE SECTOR IS OFTEN SEEN AS THE PRIMARY DRIVER OF EMPLOYMENT, ITS CAPACITY TO ABSORB THE GROWING WORKFORCE REMAINS LIMITED

India today stands at the precipice of a mammoth crisis: the spectre of youth unemployment looms like a dark cloud over its demographic dividend. With a median age of 28 and one of the youngest populations on Earth, the country has long asserted its demographic dividend as the engine of persistent growth. Yet, the latest evidence tears through this illusion: the dividend is curdling into a demographic catastrophe. Rising youth unemployment, chronic graduate joblessness, and a murky public employment framework together form the contours of a structural crisis of gargantuan proportions.

The latest report from Azim Premji University titled "State of Working India 2026" released on 17 March reveals a widening gap between education and job creation. More young people are entering higher education. But job creation is not keeping pace. Professional education in India has become highly unaffordable, transforming from an opportunity into a major financial burden due to costs rising faster than income. The report noted with dismay that gradu-

ates now form the largest share of unemployed youth between 2004 and 2023, approximately 50 lakh graduates were added every year, while the number of employed graduates rose by only around 28 lakh annually, and out of which only 17 lakh were salaried. India's youth population aged 15 to 29, stands at 36.7 crore by 2023, accounting for a third of the working population. Of these, 26.3 crore is not in education and constitutes a workforce. Among those aged between 20-29, 6.3 crore are graduates and out of which 67% languish without a job. This marks a significant increase from 32% in 2004, highlighting a mounting structural gap between higher education and job creation. Among the youngest graduates, aged 15 to 25, nearly 40% find themselves cast adrift.

The report, analysing data from the government's Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) and the earlier Employment-Unemployment Survey (EUS), finds that graduate youth unemployment has been a persistent problem. It stood at 39.33% in 2023, up from 35.02% in 1983 for those below 25 years of age. The findings

underscore the urgent need to expand adequate salaried employment opportunities to match the aspirations and capabilities of a highly educated workforce. While the private sector is often seen as the primary driver of employment, its capacity to absorb the growing workforce remains limited. Moreover, private sector jobs are frequently less secure and lower in quality compared to the stable, large-scale employment historically provided by the public sector. Yet, public employment in India—and in many developing countries—is often viewed through a narrow fiscal lens. Policymakers, under pressure to manage fiscal deficits, tend to treat reductions in the public-sector wage bill as an easy solution. While such measures may offer short-term fiscal relief, they carry serious long-term consequences.

Contrary to popular perception, countries like India are not overstaffed but significantly understaffed in the public sector. According to the latest Public Enterprises Survey, CPSEs employed over 15.42 lakh persons in 2024-25, compared to around 12.69 lakh in 2020-21—a modest

growth of just 1.61%. However, this increase is largely driven by the addition of over 54,000 casual and contract workers. More concerning is the decline in regular employment. The number of regular employees fell from 8.61 lakh in 2022 to around 7.83 lakh in 2024-25. The number of central government employees has also declined to 3.17 million in 2022-23, the lowest in nearly a decade, continuing a downward trend since 2014.

The truth is stark: India is not overstaffed—it is catastrophically understaffed. Schools without teachers, hospitals without doctors, and inadequate law enforcement represent the lived reality for millions. What emerges is a troubling paradox: a nation rich in educated youth, yet constrained by systemic inertia, policy hesitation, and an economy unable to fully utilise its human capital. A country cannot aspire to become developed while leaving its youth unemployed or underemployed. What young people seek is not precarious work, but dignified employment.

The writer is an Odisha-based economist and columnist.

WISDOM CORNER

Accept the things to which fate binds you, and love the people with whom fate brings you together, but do so with all your heart.

MARCUS AURELIUS

Take the attitude of a student, never be too big to ask questions, never know too much to learn something new.

OG MANDINO

Acceptance looks like a passive state, but in reality it brings something entirely new into this world. That peace, a subtle energy vibration, is consciousness.

ECKHART TOLLE

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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

Racial discrimination

Sir, Former India leg-spinner Laxman Sivaramakrishnan has alleged that "colour discrimination" and racial bias exist within the BCCI, leading to his retirement from the board's commentary panel recently. Sivaramakrishnan claimed that for over two decades he was overlooked for key roles, such as toss duties and post-match presentations, even while newer commentators were given opportunities. His retirement has sparked intense debate in the cricketing fraternity and warrants a much-needed conversation about diversity and inclusivity in the sport. While it is essential to approach such claims with caution, the history of racism and discrimination prevailing in sports cannot be ignored. If proven, this would be a significant blow to the BCCI's reputation and could have far-reaching consequences. It would not only affect the individuals involved but also the broader cricket community and its fans. The BCCI must take this issue seriously and conduct a thorough investigation.

Ranganthan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

Alarming report

Sir, The report stating that India is the sixth most polluted country in the world is deeply alarming and demands urgent attention. According to the World Air Quality Report 2025, India's average PM2.5 level is far above the WHO safe limit, posing serious health risks. Even more concerning is that several Indian cities rank among the world's most polluted, reflecting systemic failure in environmental governance. Vehicular emissions, industrial pollution, construction dust, and crop burning continue unchecked. This is not merely an environmental issue but a public health emergency. Authorities must enforce stricter regulations, promote clean energy, and enhance monitoring.

Sidhartha Kar Mohapatra, BARIPADA

Myth of progress

Sir, The 2023 survey claiming "zero" manual scavengers is a bureaucratic hallucination. Despite the 2013 ban, official data reveals over 620 deaths since 2017—a staggering toll of state apathy. We celebrate "Viksit Bharat" while forcing marginalized communities into toxic septic tanks without gear. This isn't just a labour issue; it's a modern-day execution of the caste system. With 92-97% of workers belonging to SC/ST/OBC groups, the government's failure to mechanize is a choice, not a constraint.

Vijaykumar HK, RAICHUR

Six Naxalites surrender in Chhattisgarh in two days

Kanker: Six Naxalites have surrendered in Chhattisgarh's Kanker district in last two days, a senior official said Thursday. Five Maoist cadres from the Rajnandgaon-Kanker border division and one from military company number 5 turned themselves in before the police and decided to join the mainstream over the past two days, Kanker Superintendent of Police Nikhil Rakecha said. The surrendered cadres were identified as Area Committee Members (ACM) Mangesh Podyami, Ganesh V K, Mangti Jurri, Hidme Markam alias Sunita, Rajee, and PPCM (platoon party committee member) Swaroopa Usendi from PLGA military company number 5, he said. They handed over three weapons, including one Self-Loading Rifle (SLR) and two .303 rifles, to the police, he said. Based on the information they provided, efforts are underway to establish contact with other active cadres in the region and encourage them to give up violence and join the mainstream, he said.

After outrage, demolished statues of martyrs reinstated in Shahjahanpur

Shahjahanpur (UP): Statues of freedom fighters that were demolished in Shahjahanpur district have been reinstated within 24 hours, following directions from Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, officials said Thursday. The Congress party has demanded a probe into the incident. Municipal Commissioner Dr Vipin Kumar Mishra Thursday told PTI that statues of Thakur Roshan Singh, Ashfaqulla Khan and Pandit Ram Prasad Bismil at the Town Hall tri-junction have been reinstated with the efforts of the municipal corporation team. He assured that the statues have been properly installed, and the remaining work, including the construction of sheds and beautification, will be completed within a week. Superintendent of Police Rajesh Dwivedi said a case has already been registered against a Lucknow-based firm, Fly Infratech, on the complaint of the municipal corporation's chief engineer in connection with the demolition of the statues Tuesday.

 AXIS Bank Ltd A.C.Market, 4 th Floor, 1, Shakespeare Sarani, Kolkata- 700071							Branch Name	Customer Name	Loan A/c No.	Amount Outstanding	Date of Demand Notice	Gross Weight Grams	Net Weight Grams
Public Notice for. Auction Of Pledged assets being Gold Ornaments							MAHADEVSARAI CMAHA OR	JAGABANDHU AICHA	XXXXXXXXXX1803	94580.72	9/Feb/26	11.170	11.000
The Borrowers, in specific and the public in general are here buy notified that public auction of the gold ornaments pledge in the below accounts is proposed to be conducted by the Axis Bank at the below mentioned Branch.							MAHADEVSARAI CMAHA OR	DHIREN BARIK	XXXXXXXXXX4737	60277.00	10/Dec/25	8.400	8.150
That the below mentioned Borrowers has availed the credit facility from the Axis Bank Limited against the pledge of gold ornaments ("Gold Loan Facility") in favour of the Bank towards the security. The Demand notices were issued to the Borrowers/Guarantors calling up the Borrowers/Guarantors to pay their outstanding amount towards the Gold loan facility availed. As the Borrowers/Guarantors have failed to repay the outstanding loan amount, the bank is constrained to invoke the pledge and proposed to conduct an auction sale of pledged gold ornaments more particularly described in schedule of property hereunder on 27-04-2026 at 11:00 AM on "As In Where Is", "As Is What Is", "Whatever There Is" and "No Recourse Basis". Auction will be held at							MAHADEVSARAI CMAHA OR	DEEPAK KUMAR SETHI	XXXXXXXXXX5260	51080.00	9/Feb/26	8.510	8.000
Details of Borrowers and outstanding amount							NAYAGARH [OR]	JOGESWARA LENKA	XXXXXXXXXX0514	2968033.00	19/Dec/25	381.900	378.700
BRANCH NAME	Customer Name	Loan A/c No.	Amount Outstanding	Date of Demand Notice	Gross Weight Grams	Net Weight Grams	NAYAGARH [OR]	KANHU CHARAN NAYAK	XXXXXXXXXX6609	824060.00	9/Feb/26	109.700	108.100
ASIKA GNJ OR	SUNIL KUMAR POLLEYI	XXXXXXXXXX4117	812741.00	12/Dec/25	167.300	154.800	NAYAGARH [OR]	PRATIK PRANAYA PATRA	XXXXXXXXXX9622	287940.00	27/Jul/25	61.300	59.500
ASIKA GNJ OR	GEETANJALI MAHAPATRA	XXXXXXXXXX6748	572568.00	9/Feb/26	83.200	82.000	NAYAGARH [OR]	SANJAY KUMAR BEHERA	XXXXXXXXXX0487	185161.00	31/Jul/25	35.100	33.300
ASIKA GNJ OR	ROJALIN NAHAK	XXXXXXXXXX6527	269142.15	23/Feb/26	43.900	43.300	NAYAGARH [OR]	DURYODHAN PATRA	XXXXXXXXXX7077	91687.00	6/Nov/25	15.600	15.100
ASIKA GNJ OR	SITARAM MOHINI	XXXXXXXXXX7801	143000.00	24/Feb/26	37.900	37.300	NAYAGARH [OR]	ANUSUYA SWAIN	XXXXXXXXXX5094	52616.02	10/Dec/25	12.000	11.700
ASIKA GNJ OR	GANGADHAR BEHERA	XXXXXXXXXX1223	122818.00	1/Nov/25	58.500	54.700	PHULBANI [OR]	DHEERENDRA NATH PATRA	XXXXXXXXXX0636	1563247.00	16/Nov/25	255.500	242.900
BALASORE [OR]	SUDAM MAHARNA	XXXXXXXXXX2573	977717.00	5/Jan/25	176.600	174.400	PHULBANI [OR]	PUSPARSH KUMAR NAYAK	XXXXXXXXXX5473	172942.00	23/Feb/26	37.300	35.500
BALASORE [OR]	BIDUT LATA PANDA	XXXXXXXXXX8323	878880.00	19/Dec/25	112.000	109.250	PHULBANI [OR]	SUBHASMITA DIGAL	XXXXXXXXXX5249	97048.00	9/Feb/26	13.300	11.300
BALASORE [OR]	KALAPANA PANIGRAHI	XXXXXXXXXX2584	61782.00	10/Dec/25	9.800	9.600	PHULBANI [OR]	KALPANA DIGAL	XXXXXXXXXX2667	64395.00	17/Oct/25	12.900	10.000
BERHAMPURGANJAM [OR]	BHRUGU KUMAR PRADHAN	XXXXXXXXXX7167	834113.26	10/Jan/26	121.700	113.500	PHULBANI [OR]	SANJIT DALABEHERA	XXXXXXXXXX5637	27971.75	21/Jul/25	11.700	9.000
BERHAMPURGANJAM [OR]	RAMAKRUSHNA CHOUDHURY	XXXXXXXXXX2737	160486.12	9/Feb/26	23.900	23.300	POLASARA OR	SUSHANT KUMAR PRADHAN	XXXXXXXXXX8452	707109.00	12/Feb/26	142.000	135.000
BERHAMPURGANJAM [OR]	DAYANIDHI GOUDA	XXXXXXXXXX9391	137687.30	27/Oct/25	25.500	24.000	POLASARA OR	ASISH PRADHAN	XXXXXXXXXX1167	414932.76	31/Jul/25	74.400	66.500
BERHAMPURGANJAM [OR]	RAMAKRUSHNA CHOUDHURY	XXXXXXXXXX2349	104283.00	9/Feb/26	16.000	15.500	POLASARA OR	ARUNA PRADHAN	XXXXXXXXXX2934	397167.00	10/Jan/26	61.400	59.050
BERHAMPURGANJAM [OR]	SANTOSINI GOUDA	XXXXXXXXXX1136	88000.00	6/Nov/25	18.400	15.800	POLASARA OR	KRUSHNA PRADHAN	XXXXXXXXXX6164	342685.00	12/Feb/26	65.300	60.000
BERHAMPURGANJAM [OR]	GOUTAM BARIK	XXXXXXXXXX6384	128933.00	8/May/24	26.800	25.300	POLASARA OR	BAHANKUMAR DAS	XXXXXXXXXX0309	181903.65	27/Sep/25	60.000	56.500
BERHAMPURGANJAM [OR]	JATESWAR GOUDA	XXXXXXXXXX1923	76262.83	16/Jun/25	12.000	11.500	POLASARA OR	MANOJ KUMAR BISOYI	XXXXXXXXXX4476	137212.24	16/May/25	30.900	28.500
BERHAMPURGANJAM [OR]	RAJASHREE MUDULI	XXXXXXXXXX5407	66600.00	23/Jan/26	8.600	8.100	POLASARA OR	SUMATI SWAIN	XXXXXXXXXX9904	90133.00	10/Dec/25	32.700	27.000
BERHAMPURGANJAM [OR]	SATYA NARAYAN PATTNAYAK	XXXXXXXXXX3986	54325.00	9/Feb/26	7.700	7.100	POLASARA OR	ANIL KUMAR BISHOYI	XXXXXXXXXX1698	87048.00	10/Dec/25	15.000	13.000
BERHAMPURGANJAM [OR]	DAKOJ OMPRAKASH ACHARY	XXXXXXXXXX5544	51930.00	16/Jun/25	10.600	10.200	POLASARA OR	AJIT KUMAR JENA	XXXXXXXXXX2798	78629.87	17/Oct/25	20.700	16.000
BERHAMPURGANJAM [OR]	RASMITA SABAT	XXXXXXXXXX8177	25386.48	21/Jul/25	15.800	15.300	POLASARA OR	SUDAM GOUDA	XXXXXXXXXX2193	62326.75	10/Dec/25	14.800	13.000
BERHAMPURGANJAM [OR]	SUSHAMA PRADHAN	XXXXXXXXXX0004	59824.00	20/Nov/24	14.000	13.100	POLASARA OR	JANMEJAY BISWAL	XXXXXXXXXX4464	46485.33	16/May/25	10.100	9.500
BERHAMPURGANJAM [OR]	S PURSOTTAM REDDY	XXXXXXXXXX3109	50811.00	3/Apr/25	10.000	9.200	POLASARA OR	BHARTI BEHERA	XXXXXXXXXX2508	38471.47	31/Jul/25	6.200	6.000
BHADRAK [OR]	SADASIVA MISHRA	XXXXXXXXXX1735	1340993.61	27/Jul/25	241.000	237.500	PURUSOTTAMPUR OR	PRAMILA MALIK	XXXXXXXXXX4693	1000000.00	24/Feb/26	203.900	193.100
BHADRAK [OR]	BHAJAN ROUT	XXXXXXXXXX7777	524278.00	9/Feb/26	66.600	64.900	PURUSOTTAMPUR OR	BRUNDABAN GOUDA	XXXXXXXXXX9290	902345.27	9/Feb/26	153.400	143.200
BHADRAK [OR]	MANASH RANJAN MOHANTY	XXXXXXXXXX4160	480691.00	23/Jan/26	76.000	58.500	PURUSOTTAMPUR OR	BIKASH GOUDA	XXXXXXXXXX8191	403924.00	12/Dec/25	77.000	67.200
BHADRAK [OR]	RASHMIRANJAN PRADHAN	XXXXXXXXXX9733	451711.00	16/Feb/26	77.700	75.900	PURUSOTTAMPUR OR	LIZA RANI SAHU	XXXXXXXXXX3801	309906.00	27/Jan/26	74.600	63.300
BHADRAK [OR]	SUMIT BARIK	XXXXXXXXXX3023	99190.00	9/Feb/26	12.500	12.000	PURUSOTTAMPUR OR	BADAKULU KAMARAJU PATRA	XXXXXXXXXX4318	297381.00	27/Oct/25	48.000	45.400
BHADRAK [OR]	SUDHIR KUMAR PANIGRAHI	XXXXXXXXXX6252	44299.16	10/Dec/25	7.300	6.900	PURUSOTTAMPUR OR	SACCHINDRA RAY	XXXXXXXXXX9658	244008.54	9/Feb/26	51.500	46.600
BHUBANESHWAR [OR]	AMIT KUMAR DAS	XXXXXXXXXX6259	414611.00	10/Dec/25	67.400	65.000	PURUSOTTAMPUR OR	RABINDRA KUMAR GHADAI	XXXXXXXXXX3406	325578.00	30/Mar/25	67.000	61.500
BHUBANESHWAR [OR]	RADHA KRUSHNA PARIDA	XXXXXXXXXX2661	319411.00	16/Nov/25	62.900	60.300	PURUSOTTAMPUR OR	BISAPNES SWAIN	XXXXXXXXXX3738	216230.00	6/Nov/25	43.100	40.800
BHUBANESHWAR [OR]	AYUSHI JENA	XXXXXXXXXX5015	259393.00	10/Dec/25	42.700	41.600	PURUSOTTAMPUR OR	SIWAPNA MAHARANA	XXXXXXXXXX5663	167305.00	27/Jan/26	40.600	33.900
BHUBANESHWAR [OR]	TRILOCHAN PUSTY	XXXXXXXXXX8652	200452.89	27/Oct/25	40.400	39.200	PURUSOTTAMPUR OR	MANASI KUMARI NAYAK	XXXXXXXXXX8571	141548.00	12/Dec/25	37.500	35.500
BHUBANESHWAR [OR]	AYUSHI JENA	XXXXXXXXXX4590	192616.00	10/Dec/25	37.800	36.900	PURUSOTTAMPUR OR	KESHABA DAS	XXXXXXXXXX6321	109798.00	9/Feb/26	13.800	13.200
BHUBANESHWAR [OR]	AYUSHI JENA	XXXXXXXXXX0243	121999.10	19/Dec/25	22.700	21.600	PURUSOTTAMPUR OR	BISIKESAN SWAIN	XXXXXXXXXX2287	109922.00	6/Nov/25	18.400	18.000
BHUBANESHWAR [OR]	JAGABANDHU BISOYI	XXXXXXXXXX0004	94119.00	9/Feb/26	17.100	12.700	PURUSOTTAMPUR OR	SUMITRA SAHU	XXXXXXXXXX3145	84243.00	16/Nov/25	15.200	13.700
CHANDIKHOLE [OR]	AJIT KUMAR BISWAL	XXXXXXXXXX7653	907081.00	23/Feb/26	153.500	145.800	PURUSOTTAMPUR OR	SUNIL KUMAR POLLEYI	XXXXXXXXXX6758	97676.84	16/Jun/25	29.000	27.500
CHANDIKHOLE [OR]	DEBENDRA SAMAL	XXXXXXXXXX3091	725588.10	10/Jan/26	97.900	94.800	PURUSOTTAMPUR OR	BALARAM MAHARANA	XXXXXXXXXX3840	84799.00	19/Dec/25	25.900	23.500
CHANDIKHOLE [OR]	AJIT KUMAR BISWAL	XXXXXXXXXX0438	698213.54	10/Jan/26	112.400	111.700	PURUSOTTAMPUR OR	DEEPAK PRADHAN	XXXXXXXXXX2699	70000.50	27/Sep/25	14.200	13.000
CHANDIKHOLE [OR]	SUBRAT KUMAR DALAI	XXXXXXXXXX3572	531892.00	10/Jan/26	103.200	100.800	PURUSOTTAMPUR OR	ORI DAS	XXXXXXXXXX0170	71858.00	27/Oct/25	16.500	15.000
CHANDIKHOLE [OR]	ASHUTOSH BISWAL	XXXXXXXXXX2370	201260.00	23/Jan/26	30.000	29.600	PURUSOTTAMPUR OR	KRUSHNA CHANDRA PRADHAN	XXXXXXXXXX6440	66937.85	10/Jan/26	15.000	14.200
CHANDIKHOLE [OR]	HEMANT KUMAR PRADHAN	XXXXXXXXXX3720	58429.25	17/Oct/25	25.100	24.900	PURUSOTTAMPUR OR	LIZA RAULA	XXXXXXXXXX9923	64016.00	10/Dec/25	9.000	8.800
CHANDIKHOLE [OR]	SHRIKANTA SAHOO	XXXXXXXXXX6696	78516.00	23/Jan/26	10.200	9.700	PURUSOTTAMPUR OR	SANGRAM PRADHAN	XXXXXXXXXX2371	55682.00	10/Jan/26	7.500	6.900
CHANDIKHOLE [OR]	KANHU CHARAN BEHERA	XXXXXXXXXX2740	53068.00	24/Mar/25	12.800	10.000	PURUSOTTAMPUR OR	KESHABA DAS	XXXXXXXXXX8858	53000.00	9/Feb/26	8.300	8.000
CHANDIKHOLE [OR]	DEBENDRA SAMAL	XXXXXXXXXX5385	49144.00	10/Jan/26	7.300	7.200	SAILO JAR OR	MANORAMA SAHOO	XXXXXXXXXX8394	473299.00	16/Jun/25	91.500	89.000
CHANDIKHOLE [OR]	BABITA SENAPATI	XXXXXXXXXX7488	29067.00	17/Oct/25	97.900	94.800	SAILO JAR OR	SIBA SAHOO	XXXXXXXXXX7953	287757.00	16/Jun/25	50.300	49.400
COLLEGE SQUARE, CUTTACK [OR]	BASANTI PRADHAN	XXXXXXXXXX7182	1579174.54	9/Feb/26	260.400	218.600	SAILO JAR OR	CHANDAN KUMAR SAHOO	XXXXXXXXXX6916	239314.00	24/Mar/25	41.000	40.600
CUTTACK [OR]	BISWAJIT MALIK	XXXXXXXXXX4745	600371.00	9/Feb/26	74.400	72.200	SAILO JAR OR	PUJARINI SAHOO	XXXXXXXXXX6899	152981.00	31/Jul/25	41.100	40.600
CUTTACK [OR]	RAKHI SAHOO	XXXXXXXXXX9039	446432.52	12/Feb/26	60.400	55.900	SAILO JAR OR	RASHMI REKHA SAHOO	XXXXXXXXXX2786	190000.00	31/Jul/25	33.800	33.300
CUTTACK [OR]	MONALISHA SAHOO	XXXXXXXXXX4796	419390.00	16/Feb/26	61.800	53.900	SAILO JAR OR	MANORAMA SAHOO	XXXXXXXXXX3480	186732.00	16/Jun/25	37.800	37.000
CUTTACK [OR]	TAPASWINI SETHI	XXXXXXXXXX6157	280455.30	9/Feb/26	39.200	36.800	SAILO JAR OR	PUJARINI SAHOO	XXXXXXXXXX0324	188913.00	31/Jul/25	32.300	31.700
GUNUPUR [OR]	CHANDRASEKHAR SAHU	XXXXXXXXXX4262	392751.28	26/Feb/26	69.500	61.500	SAILO JAR OR	SUDHANSU SUKLA	XXXXXXXXXX2857	188989.00	9/Feb/26	28.000	27.900
GUNUPUR [OR]	LIPI SABAR	XXXXXXXXXX1570	126453.00	17/Oct/25	22.700	21.100	SAILO JAR OR	CHANDAN KUMAR SAHOO	XXXXXXXXXX7546	164838.00	24/Mar/25	28.300	28.000
GUNUPUR [OR]	JAGANNATH PRASAD BHUKTA	XXXXXXXXXX1518	77085.00	12/Feb/26	16.500	16.000	SAILO JAR OR	ANIL PARIDA	XXXXXXXXXX1966	68684.00	9/Feb/26	10.300	10.200
GUNUPUR [OR]	SANTOSH KUMAR MAHANKUD	XXXXXXXXXX1908	52015.00	17/Oct/25	7.900	7.500	SAILO JAR OR	DHAR PARIDA	XXXXXXXXXX5056	39792.90	9/Feb/26	6.900	6.600
HINJILICUT OR	RAJENDRA KUMAR MAHAPATRA	XXXXXXXXXX4822	830812.00	10/Jan/26	130.000	123.100	SAILO JAR OR	ANIL PARIDA	XXXXXXXXXX7082	3432274.48	12/Feb/26	637.600	554.900
HINJILICUT OR	SRIANKA MAHANTY	XXXXXXXXXX1872	309924.00	31/Jul/25	57.400	52.900	SAKHIPARA SKP OR	PINKY SINGH	XXXXXXXXXX8086	2540848.84	12/Feb/26	446.300	426.600
HINJILICUT OR	BABU JENA	XXXXXXXXXX3126	262776.00	16/Feb/26	44.100	40.700	SAMBALPUR [OR]	PHAKIR MOHAN MERLI	XXXXXXXXXX2919	1034209.00	10/Jan/26	201.690	171.100
HINJILICUT OR	D KABITA	XXXXXXXXXX0027	198439.00	19/Dec/25	56.700	50.700	SAMBALPUR [OR]	MAMATA SARMA	XXXXXXXXXX5154	657967.00	28/Aug/24	153.500	137.900
HINJILICUT OR	KUMARI DAS	XXXXXXXXXX3563	100060.00	16/Jun/25	24.100	19.800	SAMBALPUR [OR]	JAYANANDA PARIDA	XXXXXXXXXX8630	60590.00	20/Nov/24	13.600	13.000
JAGATSINGHPUR,BHUB													



I have just received your letter on 26th March 2026. Opposition parties have already written to you on 24th March 2026, suggesting that an all-party meeting be held after April 29th, 2026, to discuss the implementation of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023

MALLIKARJUN KHARGE | CONGRESS CHIEF

NO REELS DURING CLASS HOURS

The Delhi government has directed all schools to ensure that students, teachers and staff do not create reels or short videos during school hours, emphasising that academic work, discipline or dignity of institutions should not be hampered by such activities



of the day uote

The role of the AQ Khan network has been well documented and publicly acknowledged by the then President Musharraf himself. Mercilessly bombed hospitals and civilian facilities in Afghanistan and waged war against its own citizens and religious minorities in different provinces, including Baluchistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and other provinces

JAIRAM RAMESH | CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY IN-CHARGE COMMUNICATIONS

Not allowing criticism is not right in a democratic system

PINARAVI VIJAYAN | KERALA CM

For the past 35 years, Nitish Kumar has put himself on a pedestal, while lambasting others for nepotism and projecting himself as someone who lived by the ideals of socialism. But he can no longer claim the high ground

PRASHANT KISHOR | JANSURAJ PARTY FOUNDER

SHORT TAKES

Teen stabbed to death; three minors arrested

New Delhi: Three juveniles have been apprehended for the murder of a 16-year-old boy, who was stabbed to death near his home in Delhi's Dayalpur area for allegedly bullying one of the accused, police said Thursday. The victim's mother claimed that the attackers were known to her son, luring him outside before assaulting him. "He was called out by three to four boys. As soon as he stepped outside, they first hugged him and then stabbed him multiple times," she told PTI. According to the police, the incident occurred Wednesday night when a few people called the teenager out of his house. Shortly afterwards, his family members found him lying unconscious nearby and rushed him to Jag Pravesh Chandra (JPC) Hospital, where doctors declared him brought dead.

Man shot dead following argument

Kolkata: Four people were arrested after a youth was shot dead and his friend was critically injured in a firing in the Patuli area here past midnight, a police official said Thursday. According to the police, a search is on for the other accused in the incident. Rahul Dey (35) was found lying in a pool of blood around 12:30 am on the roof of a residential building in the East Phulbagan locality. His friend, Jeet Mukherjee, who owns a flat there, was also found lying by his side in an injured state. Both were rushed to a local hospital, where Dey was declared dead on arrival, while Mukherjee was admitted in a critical condition, the police official said.

Over 150 fall sick after wedding meal invillage

Sehore: More than 150 people fell ill after eating a wedding meal in Madhya Pradesh's Sehore district with food poisoning suspected to be the cause, officials said Thursday. All of those admitted to local hospitals were out of danger, they said. Around 1,200 people were present for the wedding meal at Babadiya-Noabad village, about 25 km from Sehore town, Wednesday night, local sources said. Many of them later complained of stomach pain, vomiting and diarrhoea, and were taken to the Ichhawar health centre around midnight. Local officials alerted the district health department and a medical team was rushed to Ichhawar.



A woman fills bags with potatoes, salvaged from debris after a portion of a cold storage collapsed Monday, in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh

PTI PHOTO

WEST ASIA CONFLICT

PM to interact with CMs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 26: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Friday will interact with the chief ministers of all states, barring those which are going to polls, and review their preparedness and plans in the wake of the West Asia conflict, sources said.

The initiative is aimed at ensuring synergy of efforts in the spirit of 'Team India', the sources said.

This is the first time that the prime minister will hold a meeting with the chief ministers on the West Asia conflict which started February 28 with the attack by the US-Israel on Iran. The Persian nation has also retaliated by firing on its Gulf neighbours and Israel.

"The prime minister will interact with the CMs tomorrow evening through video conferencing on the West Asia conflict to review preparedness and plans of states. The meeting will focus on ensuring synergy of efforts in the spirit of 'Team India,'" the sources said.

The chief ministers of election-bound states will not be part of this meeting due to the Model Code of Conduct (MCC).

The Cabinet Secretariat will hold a separate meeting with the chief secretaries of poll-bound Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Assam, Kerala and the Union Territory of Puducherry.

While making a statement in the Lok Sabha Monday, the prime minister said that the difficult global conditions caused by the West Asia conflict are likely to persist for a long time and called upon the nation to remain prepared and united,



Bullets: Prime Minister Modi will meet with chief ministers to discuss the impact of the West Asia conflict on Indian states. The meeting aims to review states' preparedness and ensure coordinated efforts in response to the conflict. Chief ministers of states undergoing elections will not participate due to the Model Code of Conduct. The Cabinet Secretariat will hold a separate meeting with chief secretaries of poll-bound states.

just as it had stood together during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Modi also drew the attention of the House to the internal security dimension of the crisis,

India among 5 nations allowed Hormuz passage

Tehran/New Delhi: Iran allowed India and a number of other "friendly nations" including China and Russia to use the Strait of Hormuz for commercial shipping, Iranian Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi has said. Global oil and gas prices have surged after Iran virtually blocked the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow shipping lane between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, that handles roughly 20 per cent of global oil and LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas). West Asia has been a major source of India's energy procurement.

warning that certain elements attempt to exploit such situations. He said all security agencies have been placed on alert and that security across all domains, coastal, border, cyber and strategic installations is being further strengthened.

"Whether it is coastal security, border security, cyber security or strategic installations, the security of all is being reinforced," he had said.

Urging patience, restraint and vigilance, and cautioning against those who may seek to exploit the situation by spreading falsehoods, engaging in black-marketing or hoarding, Modi appealed to all state governments to ensure strict monitoring and swift action against such elements.

Expressing his abiding faith in the collective resolve of the nation, the prime minister, in his speech in the Lok Sabha, also said that when every government and every citizen of this country walk together, "we can challenge every challenge, this is our identity, and this is our strength".

Addressing a media event later on the same day, Modi said challenges have continued to mount one after another even after the COVID-19 pandemic and there has not been a single year that has not tested India and Indians.

Abu Dhabi: Indian among two killed by missile debris

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, March 26: At least two persons, including an Indian, were killed and three others injured Thursday when debris of missiles intercepted by the UAE's air defence system fell on a street in Abu Dhabi, local media reported.

The second person killed in the incident is a Pakistani national, while the three injured also include an Indian, Abu Dhabi Media Office reported.

UAE's air defences are responding to incoming missile and drone threats from Iran at regular intervals, according to the Ministry of Defence of the United Arab Emirates.

"Abu Dhabi authorities have responded to an incident involving falling debris in Sweihan street, following the successful interception of a ballistic missile by air defence systems," Abu Dhabi Media Office posted on social media.

"The incident has resulted in the deaths of two individuals of Pakistani and Indian nationality, and in injuries ranging from serious to moderate sustained by three individuals of Emirati, Jordanian and Indian nationality," it added.

The total number of deaths has risen to 11 after the latest incident in Abu Dhabi, Gulf News reported. The UAE air defences systems on 26th March 2026 engaged 15 ballistic missiles and 11 UAVs launched from Iran, the Ministry of Defence said in a social media post Thursday.

Since the start of the blatant Iranian attacks, UAE air defences have engaged 372 ballistic missiles, 15 cruise missiles

ASSEMBLY POLLS

Illicit inducements over ₹400cr seized

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 26: Illicit inducements worth over ₹408 crore meant to influence voters in four states and a Union territory have been seized in the past month, the Election Commission said Thursday.

While Assembly elections and by-elections were announced March 15, the Electronic Seizure Management System (ESMS) was activated February 26, it said.

Since its activation, over ₹408.82-crore worth of illicit inducements, including ₹17.44 crore in cash, liquor worth ₹37.68 crore (16.3 lakh litres), drugs worth ₹167.38 crore, precious metals worth ₹23 crore and other freebies worth over ₹163.30 crore, have been seized by multiple enforcement agencies, the EC said.

Besides, 70,944 complaints were lodged using the cVigil application between March 15 and 25.

Of these, 70,831 have been disposed of and 67,899 complaints (95.8 per cent) were resolved within 100 minutes, it said.

cVIGIL is a mobile application developed by the EC to enable citizens to report model code of conduct violations during elections.

Assembly elections will be held in West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Kerala next month.

A complaint redressal system has been set up, including a call centre number, 1950, on which complaints can be lodged by any member of the public or political party, with the district election officer or returning officer concerned.

Govt dismisses LPG shortage rumours

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 26: India has about 60 days of oil stock cover and has arranged one full month of LPG supply, the government said Thursday, adding that there is no shortage of petrol, diesel, or LPG, calling reports of shortages as a "deliberate misinformation campaign" aimed at triggering panic buying.

Amid reports of panic buying and long queues at petrol pumps and LPG distributors the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, for the first time since the war in West Asia broke out, released stock details of crude oil, fuels and LPG as it rushed to calm nerves.

Parallely, state-owned oil marketing companies also said there is no shortage of petrol, diesel or liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and supplies remain stable. In a statement, the ministry said all petrol pumps across the country are adequately stocked and operating normally, with no rationing of petrol or diesel.

With some petrol pumps, especially in smaller towns, finding difficulty in lifting fuel after oil companies put them on cash-and-carry, the ministry said steps have been taken to increase credit to petrol pumps to over three days from earlier allowed one day in order to ensure that there is no shortage of petrol and diesel at any pump due to working capital issues of pump owners.

"There is no shortage of petrol, diesel, or LPG anywhere in the country," it said, emphasising that the country's petroleum and LPG supply situation is "fully secure and under control."

Stating that all retail fuel outlets have enough supplies, the ministry called upon citizens not to be "misled by a deliberately mischievous, coordinated campaign of misinformation that is being carried out to spread unjustified panic."

CIK busts LeT terror recruitment module

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, March 26: The counter intelligence wing of Jammu and Kashmir Police Thursday carried out raids at multiple locations in the valley in connection with a UAPA case and cracked a transnational terror recruitment module operated by the banned Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) outfit, officials said.

The Counter Intelligence Kashmir (CIK) conducted extensive searches across three districts of Srinagar, Ganderbal, and Shopian, leading to the busting of the module operating in coordination with handlers from across the border and in connivance with a network based in Bangladesh, they said.

The searches were carried out at 10 locations in the Kashmir Valley in pursuance of search warrants issued by the court of special judge designated under the NIA Act, Srinagar,

in connection with case FIR No. 01/2026 under various sections of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act registered at CIK police station, the officials said.

During the course of the investigation, it has emerged that the module is being handled by a LeT terrorist, Shabir Ahmad Lone, they said.

Lone originally hails from Kangan area in Ganderbal district of central Kashmir, and operates under multiple aliases including Raju and Zafar Saddique, they added.

In 'Daura-e-Aam', the cadres of the terror outfit are given basic training in small arms and grenade-throwing for 21 days which is followed by a three-month specialised training known as 'Daura-e-Khas' in which they are taught handling of AK rifles, light machine guns, rocket launchers, and making of improvised explosive devices.

Dowry deaths severe blot on society: SC

A bench of justices JB Pardiwala and Vijay Bishnoi made the observation while cancelling a man's bail in a dowry death case saying the order passed by the Patna High Court releasing the accused on bail is wholly unsustainable

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 26: Observing that dowry deaths are a severe blot on the society, the Supreme Court has said that despite legal prohibitions, this practice continues to result in the unnatural death of thousands of women.

A bench of justices JB Pardiwala and Vijay Bishnoi made the observation while cancelling a man's bail in a dowry death case saying the order



passed by the Patna High Court releasing the accused on bail is wholly unsustainable.

In a very serious crime like dowry death, the high court should have been very careful in exercising its discretion, it said.

"Dowry deaths are indeed a profound disgrace and a major social evil representing a severe violation of human rights and dignity. Despite the legal prohibitions, this practice continues to result in the unnatural deaths of thousands of women, often through murder or driven to suicide because



of greed-driven demands for money or valuables from the groom's family. Dowry deaths are a severe blot on society," the bench said. The top court said the high court in its order has not discussed anything and all that weighed with the high court was that the accused was in judicial custody and only two witnesses had been examined till date.

"The high court lost sight of many important aspects of the matter, more particularly the post-mortem report indicating number of injuries on the

body of the deceased, and the presumption of commission of offence," the bench said.

The counsel appearing for the accused submitted that the case is one of suicide. According to the counsel, the deceased was not in a stable state of mind and she is said to have jumped from the sixth floor of a building.

The apex court noted that the deceased was married to the accused for one and a half years.

The woman was found dead on September 1, 2024, at her matrimonial home in suspicious circumstances with external and internal injuries all over her body. The cause of death assigned in the post-mortem report is hemorrhage and shock due to head injury.

"We are of the view that the impugned order deserves to be set aside. The bail granted by the high court should be cancelled and the respondent No.2 - accused should be directed to surrender before the jail authorities. We order accordingly," the bench said.



I had told you to keep cow-dung cakes, firewood and charcoal stoves ready... but you did not heed my advice. As for us, we have already procured two traditional earthen stoves for our home, because everyone is bound to face difficulties regarding cooking gas

AKHILESH YADAV | SP PRESIDENT

FNTA BILL INTRODUCED IN NAGALAND ASSEMBLY

Deputy Chief Minister Yanthungo Patton Thursday introduced a Bill in the Assembly to set up the Frontier Nagaland Territorial Authority, an interim administrative body for the eastern districts



of the day quote

Delhiites are feeling cheated after voting for them (BJP)

In the last five years, we cleared 1.5 lakh bighas of land, but our target for the next five years will be to free five lakh bighas of encroached government land

If people keep gathering outside petrol pumps based on rumours, it will unnecessarily create problems where none exist

POST OF THE DAY

When you're lined up in petrol pump queues. When you can't find LPG cylinder for days. When your PG/hostel shuts down due to gas shortage. Remember, you're going through this because of someone's fatherland.

10 dead in bus-pickup collision

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chhindwara, March 26: Ten persons were killed and 31 injured, including three to four critically, in a head-on collision between a bus returning from a public function attended by the chief minister and a pick-up vehicle in Madhya Pradesh's Chhindwara Thursday evening, officials said.

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav expressed grief over the incident and announced compensation of Rs 4 lakh each for the kin of the deceased and Rs 1 lakh for those injured. Treatment of all injured persons would be provided free of cost, the CM announced.

The incident took place at 7pm near Simaria on Nagpur Road, some 25 kilometres from district headquarters, Superintendent of Police Ajay Pandey told PTI.

"Six men, three women and a child were killed in the accident," he added.

Chhindwara Collector Harendra Narayan told PTI that 31 persons have been injured as per doctors.

"Of the injured, three to four are critical. One of them has been rushed to a hospital in Nagpur in neighbouring Maharashtra for advanced treatment," Narayan informed.

The 10 deceased comprise eight passengers of the bus as well as the driver and cleaner of the pick-up vehicle, Narayan told reporters later.

The bus was carrying more



Chief Minister Mohan Yadav expressed grief over the incident and announced compensation of Rs 4 lakh each for the kin of the deceased and Rs 1 lakh for those injured

than 40 passengers at the time of the accident, Kotwali station house officer Ashish Kumar added.

The injured were taken to the district hospital and other medical facilities in the vicinity in ambulances and other

vehicles, officials said. The bus was returning from a public function at the police ground in Chhindwara city where CM Yadav laid foundation stones and inaugurated 105 projects costing Rs 506 crore. The accident took place around 7pm some 22 kilometres away from the venue of the function, which ended at 5:45pm, officials said.

"I came to know about the accident from social media, following which I rushed to the post mortem centre, where the body of my cousin Daulat Parkara was brought. He was one of the victims of the accident," local resident Sunil Pawar told reporters.

In a post on X, CM Yadav



announced compensation details and said the accident was heart-rending.

"I pray to the Almighty to grant peace to the departed souls and wish speedy recovery to the injured," he stated.

Officials have been directed to ensure proper treatment of the injured and to send teams of doctors from Jabalpur to Chhindwara and Nagpur, the CM said in his message.

Yadav also directed Chhindwara guardian minister Rakesh Singh to alter his schedule and reach the district.

A control room has been set up in the health department in Bhopal to monitor treatment of the injured, he added.

Census officer putting offensive question will face punishment: Order

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 26: An officer who intentionally puts "any offensive or improper question" during the Census 2027 shall face a punishment with imprisonment which may extend to three years upon conviction, the latest circular issued by the Registrar General of India said.

In a note circulated to all states, Registrar General & Census Commissioner Mritunjay Kumar Narayan listed the penalties prescribed under Section 11 of the Census Act, 1948, which range from a Rs 1,000 penalty to three years' imprisonment, or both, upon conviction under certain categories.

The order underlines a punishment of up to three years' imprisonment upon conviction for any census officer who "intentionally puts any offensive or improper question" or knowingly makes "any false return" or, without the previous sanction of the central government or the state government, discloses any information which was received during the census.

The officer who "neglects to use reasonable diligence" in performing any duty during the census, disobeys any order or hinders or obstructs another



person in performing any such duty shall also face the same punishment, if convicted.

"Any sorter, compiler or other member of the census staff who removes, secretes, damages or destroys any census documents or deals with any census document in a manner likely to falsify or impair the tabulation of census results" shall also be liable for imprisonment upon conviction, it said.

The Union Cabinet has approved Rs 11,718 crore for conducting the Census of India, 2027, which would include the caste enumeration for the first time.

The 16th Census since Independence will be a fully digital exercise and will offer citizens the option of self-enumeration.

The decadal exercise, scheduled for 2021, was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic across the country.

Ram Navami marked by processions, prayers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 26: Decked up with colourful flowers and lights, temples across the country resonated with prayers while the streets came alive with vibrant processions as Ram Navami was celebrated with religious fervour Thursday.

Special prayers and community feasts were organised in several states, with devotees thronging temples since early morning amid strong security arrangements put in place by authorities to prevent any untoward incident.



In different parts of the country, elaborate processions - referred to as shobha yatra - were taken out with devotees chanting 'Jai Shri Ram', carrying saffron flags and participating in cultural performances on the occasion to celebrate the birth anniversary of Lord Ram.

In Uttar Pradesh's Ayodhya, considered to be the birthplace of Lord Ram, the main celebration will be held Friday, with over a lakh devotees expected at

the Ram Janmabhoomi temple. Temple trust member Anil Mishra told PTI that the main attraction will be the Surya Tilak ceremony, during which sunrises will illuminate the forehead of Lord Ram's idol at noon.

He said big screens have been installed across the city to broadcast the rituals and ceremonies associated with Ram Navami. Security and surveillance have been beefed up ahead of the Friday festivities, while the state government has announced a two-day holiday (Thursday and Friday) for the festival.

Temples in the twin holy towns of Varanasi and Mathura, as well as other cities, have been decked up.

In a display of communal harmony in Jammu and Kashmir's Srinagar, Muslims joined Hindus at the Raghunath Mandir, which hosted its first Ram Navami puja in 36 years.

The century-old temple in the Habba Kadal area of the city came alive with prayers despite ongoing renovation work, drawing devotees from within and outside Jammu and Kashmir.

Special prayers were held at various temples in the city, including the Shankaracharya temple, to celebrate Ram Navami. Tourists and security forces joined the small local Hindu population in the festivities.



People dressed as Hindu idols gather at the banks of the Brahmaputra river on the occasion of 'Ashoka Ashtami' festival, in Guwahati, Assam

Professor proposes to student, she beats him with slipper

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, March 26: A professor at a medical college near here was allegedly thrashed by students after he proposed to a female student in a classroom, with videos of the incident going viral on social media, police said Thursday.

He has been booked on charges of sexual harassment, they said.

The incident, which occurred March 23 at a medical college in Nelamangala taluk on the outskirts of Bengaluru, came to light after videos of the proposal surfaced online, police said.

The clips, which have since gone viral, drew sharp criticism.

In one of the videos, the accused professor is heard proposing to the student, claiming that she had confessed her "feelings" to him. The student denied the claim and objected to his proposal.

The situation later escalated on campus, with videos showing the agitated student confronting the professor. She was seen hitting him with slippers, while other students joined in, allegedly assaulting and abusing him.

Based on a complaint filed by the college principal on Thursday, a case has been registered at the Nelamangala Rural Police Station against the accused under Sections 74 (assault or criminal force against a woman with intent to outrage her modesty), 75(1) (sexual harassment), and 329(3) (criminal trespass) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, a senior police officer said.

According to the FIR, the complainant stated that the accused, an assistant professor in the Microbiology Department, had been behaving inappropriately on the college premises and sexually harassing female students.

Students had earlier submitted complaints seeking protection, following which the college issued a notice to the professor, directing him to appear for an inquiry and restraining him from entering the campus during the process, it said.

However, on March 23, the accused allegedly entered the college premises in violation of the directive and forcibly held the hand of a female student, behaving in an obscene and inappropriate manner, the FIR stated.

NAXAL DEADLINE

Centre prepares blueprint post March 31

The movement began on the bedrock of social injustice, economic inequality and the system's failure to redress the grievances of indigenous tribals and villagers residing in remote forest areas with the 'red insurgents' unsuccessfully declaring to create a corridor from Pashupati in Nepal to Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh wedging a "liberated" territory along India's eastern flank

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 26: Security forces deployed in the anti-Naxal operations grid have launched a mega operation to neutralise the remaining armed Maoist cadres with less than a week remaining until the national deadline of March 31 to end left wing extremism in the country.

Official sources told PTI that the Centre is also preparing an "operations and development" blueprint which is expected to include an announcement

for withdrawal of about five Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) battalions from these regions and the launch of multiple welfare schemes.

About three to four CoBRA units of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) are being moved from Chhattisgarh to Jharkhand to undertake a special operation in the Saranda forests of West Singhbhum district, they said.

Similarly, the sources said that teams from CRPF, BSF and Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) are being "re-located"



in Chhattisgarh's Bastar area with the specific aim of engaging armed Maoist cadres in a gunbattle or forcing their surrender. The sources indicated that a cross-border operation involving Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Telangana and Odisha is also in the works.

Security forces are still tracking about 130-150 armed cadres, two central committee members of the outlawed CPI (Maoist) and some other divi-

sional-rank operatives.

Misir Besra alias Bhaskar is stated to be based in Jharkhand and CoBRA teams are searching for him and his associates. Rammanna, also known as Ganapathi or Laxman Rao is reportedly in touch with Telangana Police and may surrender by March 31, according to officials.

Another officer said that about three battalions of the Border Security Force (BSF), along with a sector office head-

ed by a DIG-rank officer, are expected to withdraw from Koraput district and adjoining areas of Odisha.

Some CAPF battalions from Chhattisgarh will also be withdrawn. An announcement in this context is expected March 31. The state police and the Chhattisgarh DRG will take over the CAPF camps, the second officer added.

Chhattisgarh Home Minister and Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma declared in Jagdalpur on Wednesday that nearly 96 per cent of Bastar's vast geographical area is now free from Naxal influence.

Sources said the CAPFs and state police forces have also been asked to undertake a joint "de-mining" exercise to look for hidden Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and bombs in Naxal violence-affected regions.

This demining and sanitisation exercise will gain momentum starting next month.

international



Xi understood that it's very important for the president to be here throughout the region right now. He understood, obviously, the request to postpone and accept it, which is why we have a meeting
KAROLINE LEAVITT | WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY, US

TRUMP TO VISIT CHINA IN MAY

US President Donald Trump will travel to China May 14 and 15 for a rescheduled summit with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping, the White House has announced. Trump, who was earlier scheduled to travel to Beijing by the end of this month, postponed his trip due to the war in Iran



of the day quote

We remain open, we are in contact with the Americans, and we are counting on holding the next round of talks as soon as circumstances permit
DIMITRY PESKOV | KREMLIN SPOKESMAN

It's hard to get Mexican doctors and specialists to go out to many rural areas where we need medical specialists, and the Cubans are willing to work there
CLAUDIA SHEINBAUM | PRESIDENT, MEXICO

From the beginning on, we have not been consulted before. Nobody asked us before. It's not our war, and therefore we don't want to get sucked into that war
BORIS PISTORIUS | DEFENCE MINISTER, GERMANY

SHORT TAKES

Sri Lanka start talks to buy Russian oil

Colombo: Sri Lanka and Russia began talks here Thursday aimed at buying Russian oil to strengthen bilateral energy cooperation, authorities said. The talks were headed by the visiting Russian Deputy Energy Minister Roman Marshavin, the Russian Embassy said. The officials of the state oil entity were hopeful that Sri Lanka would be able to buy refined petroleum from Russia. Earlier, the Sri Lankan government said talks would be held with India on oil purchases in view of the volatile situation in West Asia due to US military action. The talks are to be continued between the Russian deputy energy minister and President Anura Kumara Dissanayake to focus on strengthening collaboration between Sri Lanka and Russia, including potential partnerships in fuel supply, energy security and long-term cooperation.

Naval drone strike damages tanker

Istanbul: A Turkish-operated oil tanker that had departed from Russia was struck by a naval drone Thursday as it approached the Black Sea entrance to the Bosphorus Strait, Turkish officials said. All 27 Turkish crew members of the Altura were unharmed in the attack, which occurred early Thursday and caused damage to the bridge and engine room. Transport Minister Abdulkadir Uraloglu said the tanker was subjected to an "attack by an unmanned sea vessel," without saying whether Ukraine was suspected to be behind the attack.

NK, Belarus leaders sign friendship treaty

Seoul: Belarus' President Alexander Lukashenko and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un held talks in North Korea's capital Thursday and signed a friendship and cooperation treaty. Lukashenko, who was in Pyongyang on a two-day official visit, hailed the document as "fundamental," and said that relations between the two countries are "entering a new stage," according to his press service. "Yes, we didn't have close cooperation, largely due to our own fault. But I am sincerely pleased to note that cooperation has now significantly intensified," Lukashenko said. "In today's reality of a global transformation, when the global powers openly ignore and violate international law, independent countries need to cooperate more closely, consolidate efforts aimed at protecting their sovereignty and improving the well-being of our citizens," he said.

Iran sees US peace plan as 'one-sided'

REUTERS

Dubai/Washington, March 26: A US proposal for ending nearly four weeks of fighting is "one-sided and unfair", a senior Iranian official told Reuters Thursday, while US President Donald Trump said Iran must make a deal or face a continued onslaught.

The Iranian official said the proposal, conveyed to Tehran by Pakistan, "was reviewed in detail Wednesday night by senior Iranian officials and the representative of Iran's Supreme Leader".

It lacked the minimum requirements for success and served only US and Israeli interests, the official said, while stressing that diplomacy had not ended despite the lack for now of a realistic plan for peace talks.

Trump described the Iranians as "great negotiators" but added that he was not sure he was "willing to make a deal with them to end the war".

Iran has launched strikes against Israel, U.S. bases and Gulf states as well as effectively blocking Middle East fuel exports via the Strait of Hormuz since the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran February 28.

"They now have the chance, that is Iran, to permanently abandon their nuclear ambitions and to join a new path forward," Trump said during a Cabinet meeting at the White House. "We'll see if they want to do it. If they don't, we're their worst nightmare. In the meantime, we'll just keep blowing them away." Oil jumped to \$105 a barrel Thursday and stock markets fell on renewed pessimism over ceasefire prospects as global plastics, technology, retail and tourism struggled with the impact.

STRAIT OF HORMUZ A CRUCIAL ISSUE

Trump suggested Thursday that Iran let 10 oil tankers transit the Strait of Hormuz as a goodwill gesture in negotiations, including some Pakistan-flagged vessels, elaborating on what he had described as a "present" from Iran.

The president, who is expected to send thousands of troops to the Middle East, driving expectations of a ground invasion, also said taking control of Iran's oil was an option but gave no further details. A Thai oil tanker has passed through the strait following diplomatic coordination with Iran, and Malaysia said its vessels were also being allowed to transit in a sign that restrictions were loosening for some countries. Iran would be receptive to any request from Spain related to the strait, its embassy in Madrid said, in the first such offer to an EU state.

US Special Envoy Steve Witkoff confirmed that the US had sent "15-point action list" as basis for negotiations to end the war. Pakistan's foreign minister said "indirect talks" between the US and Iran were taking place through messages relayed by Islamabad, with other states including Turkey and Egypt also



- Iranian official stresses that diplomacy has not ended
- Trump says he's not sure US is willing to make a deal
- Impact of conflict spreads as businesses grapple with disruption
- Oil prices resume climb, stock markets retreat as ceasefire optimism fades

supporting mediation efforts. Any talks, were they to happen, would likely prove very difficult given the positions laid out by both sides.

According to sources and reports, the 15-point proposal includes demands ranging from dismantling Iran's nuclear programme and curbing its missiles to effectively handing over control of the strait.

Iran has hardened its stance since the war began, demanding guarantees against future military action, compensation for losses, and formal control of the strait, Iranian sources say.

It also told intermediaries that Lebanon must be included in any ceasefire deal, regional sources said.

Trump has not identified who the US is negotiating with in Iran, with many high-ranking officials among the thousands of people killed in the war across the Middle East.

Israel removed Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi and Parliamentary Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf from its hit list after Pakistan urged Washington to press Israel not to target them, a Pakistani source with knowledge of the discussions told Reuters. An Israeli military spokesperson declined to comment.

Iran launched multiple waves of missiles at Israel, striking Tel Aviv, Haifa and other areas Thursday, including a Palestinian town in central Israel.



Palestinian boys, displaced during the two-year Israeli offensive, play on the wreckage of a car at a tent camp sheltering displaced families, in Nuseirat, central Gaza Strip

G7 meets amid Ukraine, Iran wars with US uncertainty

REUTERS

Vaux-De-Cernay, France, March 26: Foreign ministers from the world's leading Western democracies meet in France this week against the backdrop of wars in Iran and Ukraine, economic uncertainty, and mounting unease over an increasingly unpredictable US foreign policy.

The two-day gathering at the restored 12th-century Abbaye des Vaux-de-Cernay, about 40 km (25 miles) southwest of Paris, brings together ministers from the G7 - Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the US - alongside the European Union.

The grouping, which first met as six in nearby Rambouillet 50 years ago, traditionally approached its core economic and geopolitical challenges with a broad consensus.

That cohesion has frayed since Donald Trump returned to the US presidency in 2025.

US SEEN AS DESTABILISING ELEMENT

Allies and adversaries alike have spent the past year scrambling to respond to abrupt US policy shifts, from tariffs to Ukraine, and now the Middle East conflict, which European diplomats and officials say lacks clear objectives or an exit strategy. France's army chief Wednesday bemoaned Washington's unpredictability, saying it was impacting allies' interests and security.

"The US attitude is an element of destabilisation of the international system for all players, not only for members of the G7, but also for China, (and) for many, many countries in the world," said Thomas Gomart, director of the Paris-based French Institute of International Relations.



ALLIES SEEK IRAN CLARITY FROM RUBIO

A top priority for Washington's partners will be a debriefing from US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who will attend the meeting's second day Friday.

Ships queue up at Asian ports

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Singapore, March 26: With the Strait of Hormuz almost closed amid the ongoing war in the Gulf region, merchant vessels, including oil tankers, have started to queue up at ports across Asia while operators wait for clarity, a media report said Thursday.

Sourcing data that showed longer queues and delays at major Asian ports, including at the richest city-state, The Straits Times pointed out that more vessels carrying Gulf-bound cargoes could seek anchorage in Singapore and Malaysia's Tanjung Pelepas and Klang ports in the coming weeks, if the crisis drags on.

Starting February 28, the US and Israel launched joint strikes against Iran, which in turn, retaliated, spreading the war to the entire Gulf region. The Strait of Hormuz is a strategically important choke point for the world's energy supplies.

The strait, a narrow shipping lane that connects the Persian Gulf with the Indian Ocean, remains effectively closed, bringing to a near halt the transit of hundreds of vessels per day, including container, dry bulk and liquid cargo ships.



While a trickle of ships has made its way in or out of the Gulf so far this month, a growing number of vessels bound for Gulf ports have chosen to anchor, mostly at transshipment ports like Singapore, fearing for the safety of their crew and assets, according to the Singapore broadsheet.

It takes about five to seven weeks for ships to travel from the Gulf region to Singapore, depending on the size and type of vessel, and vice versa.

Portcast, a Singapore-based supply-chain intelligence platform, said that as the shipping disruption situation evolves and vessels reroute to avoid uncertainty, the effects are showing up at ports across Asia in the form of longer queues, slower berth access, and more delays.

Yemen's Houthis ready to join Iran war if needed, raising new shipping risk



REUTERS

Aden/Geneva, March 26:

Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi movement, whose attacks on the Red Sea caused international shipping and trade chaos during the Gaza war, stands ready to strike the key waterway again in solidarity with Tehran, one Houthi leader told Reuters, a move that would deepen a global oil and economic crisis brought on by the Middle East war.

If the Houthis open a new front in the conflict, one obvious target would be the Bab al-Mandab Strait off the coast of Yemen, a key shipping chokepoint and narrow passageway that controls sea traffic towards the Suez Canal after Iran effectively shut the critical Strait of Hormuz.

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

"We stand fully militarily ready with all options. As for

other details having to do with determining zero hour they are left to leadership and we are monitoring and following up with the developments and will know when is the suitable time to move," said the Houthi leader, who requested anonymity due to the sensitivity of the topic.

"Until now Iran is doing well and is defeating the enemy every day and the battle is going in its direction. If anything contrary to this happens then we can assess."

Houthis have track record of disrupting international shipping

Iran-aligned group ready should need arise to join war, leader says

Bab al-Mandab is a key choke point

OPENING A NEW FRONT?

Some diplomats and analysts say the Houthis are awaiting an opportune moment to enter the conflict, in coordination with Iran, in order to exert maximum pressure.

The effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz to Gulf Arab hydrocarbon exports and a shift to heavy reliance on the Red Sea might provide such an opportunity.

Iran could open a new front in the Bab al-Mandab Strait if attacks are carried out on Iranian territory or its islands, Iran's semi-official Tasnim cited an unnamed Iranian military source as saying Wednesday.

24 killed as bus plunges into river in Bangladesh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhaka, March 26: At least 24 people were killed and several others remain missing after a bus plunged into a river in Bangladesh while attempting to board a transport ferry, officials said Thursday.

The accident occurred in the southwestern district of Rajbari at the Dauladia terminal when the bus fell into the Padma River at about 5.15 pm Wednesday, officials said.

They estimate that the Dhaka-bound bus was carrying around 40 passengers, including several children, most of whom were returning to the capital after their Eid holidays.

According to local fire service officials, 24 bodies have



been recovered. Twenty-two bodies were recovered from inside the bus, including 11 women, six men and five children.

"(Salvage vessel) Hamza retrieved the bus with its cranes," fire service official Sohail Rana told reporters at the scene.

He added that the divers earlier recovered bodies of two

women in their late 50s or early 60s and found the others as the bus was salvaged at around Wednesday midnight after six hours of efforts amid rough weather.

Fire service and coastguard divers continued their search for the missing people with military and police assistance, according to Rana.

According to Rajbari district administration officials, Prime Minister Tarique Rahman called them for updates on the salvage campaign and ordered an investigation into the accident.

Police and witnesses earlier said about 11 passengers managed to swim ashore or were rescued, but most others remained missing.

Trump administration frays G7 relationship

US allies seek clarity from Rubio on Iran operations

European officials to emphasise support for Ukraine

Officials said allies are hoping to get greater clarity on the US and Israeli military operations against Iran and on whether any meaningful diplomatic channel exists to end the conflict.

Talks will also focus on the Strait of Hormuz, which Iran has effectively closed, choking about a fifth of global oil supplies.

Ministers from Brazil, India, South Korea and Saudi Arabia, all key economic heavyweights whose alignment is pivotal on global se-

curity, energy, and diplomatic crises, will also attend.

NO BAD DEAL FOR UKRAINE

Negotiations to end Russia's war in Ukraine have stalled, and European officials fear that the US - which has led negotiation efforts and pursued a rapprochement with Moscow - could push Kyiv into an unfavourable peace deal ahead of US midterm elections in November.

European officials said they would stress to Rubio that such an outcome would be unacceptable, arguing instead for tougher sanctions on Russia and immediate efforts to prepare Ukraine for another winter of war. These should include safeguarding its energy sector, repeatedly targeted by Russian attacks, as well as continuing military support for Kyiv, they said.



The world order and multilateral system we used to know has irrevocably changed. We will not get it back ... We must look to the future
NGOZI OKONJO-IWEALA | DIRECTOR-GENERAL, WTO

UPI DOMINANT PAYMENT METHOD

UPI has emerged as the dominant payment method among lenders, driving 91.89 per cent of transactions on the platform, far ahead of net banking, IMPS, and debit cards, a report said. Female lenders deployed an average of Rs 2.5 lakh, more than four times higher than the average amount lent by men, according to the P2P Lending Trends Report 2025 released by LenDenClub, an RBI-registered peer-to-peer (P2P) lending platform



of the day quote

Today, 1 lakh towers of BSNL are on the ground ... radiating 4G signal on our own Atmanirbhar stack. The basis on which we are now looking to expand that network. So, 98,000 towers to be exact are pretty much done. We are trying to expand that to another 50,000- 60,000 towers
JYOTIRADITYA SCINDIA | UNION TELECOM MINISTER

Although global headwinds continue to loom large and can potentially impact completion timelines, demand side outlook for 2026 remains positive at this juncture
ARPIT MEHROTRA | MD, OFFICE SERVICES, INDIA, COLLIERIES

The oil shock has brought energy security back into sharp focus for every Indian, and rising fuel prices are a clear reminder of why we must accelerate our journey towards energy independence
BHAVISH AGGARWAL | CHAIRMAN AND MD, OLA ELECTRIC

Nayara Energy hikes petrol, diesel prices

State-owned fuel retailers, who control about 90% of the market, continue to keep rates on freeze



New Delhi, March 26: Nayara Energy, India's largest private fuel retailer, Thursday raised petrol prices by Rs 5 per litre and diesel by Rs 3 a litre, passing on part of the recent surge in global oil prices following the war in the Middle East, sources said.

Fuel marketing companies in India have been under strain as retail petrol and diesel prices remained frozen despite a nearly 50 per cent surge in international oil prices since February 28, when the United States and Israel launched military strikes against Iran, triggering sweeping retaliation from Tehran.

Nayara Energy, which operates 6,967 of India's 102,075 petrol pumps, has decided to pass on part of the increase in input costs to consumers, two sources with direct knowledge of the matter said.

Petrol at Nayara pumps now costs Rs 100.71 a litre and diesel costs Rs 91.31 per litre. Without giving out the quantum of increase in prices, the company, in a statement, said the ongoing disruption in crude oil supplies has created unprecedented challenges in the industry, impacting several aspects of fuel distribution and availability.

"We assure our customers that we are fully focused on meeting India's energy needs by maintaining a consistent supply of high-quality fuels," it said, adding its petrol pumps continue to operate normally with no interruptions in services.

"Further, our refinery turnaround has been meticulously planned and we remain fully equipped to ensure that there will be no shortfall in fuel supplies during this period," it said.

"Nayara Energy is committed to being the nation's energy partner and prioritizes operational

International oil prices touched \$119 per barrel earlier this month on intensifying Iran war, before pulling back to around \$100 a barrel

stability and uninterrupted service for our customers.

Jio-bp, the fuel retailing joint venture of Reliance Industries and BP Plc that owns 2,185 outlets, has, however, so far not raised prices despite incurring heavy losses on sale of petrol and diesel.

State-owned fuel retailers, who control about 90 per cent of the market, continue to keep rates on freeze.

Sources said while Nayara, majority-owned by Russia's Rosneft, hiked petrol price by Rs 5 per litre and diesel by Rs 3, the effective rate increase differs from state to state depending on the incidence on local taxes like VAT. In some places, the increase is as high as Rs 5.30 per litre for petrol.

"Private fuel retailers in India receive no government compensation to offset losses from holding back price increases, unlike state-owned firms that are supported for acting as "good corporate citizens", sources said, adding that mounting losses have left them with little choice but to raise retail prices.

Retail petrol and diesel prices have been frozen since April 2022, with state-run Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Pe-

Niche strategy powers biz expansion: Rajesh

Rajesh Gupta is the Managing Partner of Gupta Distributors, a premier regional retail chain in Odisha. With a distinguished 54-year career in the consumer durables sector, he possesses unparalleled expertise in both White and Brown Goods. Under his leadership, the enterprise has expanded to 37 stores, specialising in electronics, home appliances, and furniture. A seasoned veteran of the industry, Gupta has successfully navigated decades of market shifts, establishing a legacy of trust and excellence across the region. Excerpts...



RAJESH GUPTA
 MANAGING PARTNER, GUPTA DISTRIBUTORS

What has been the key to sustaining and expanding Gupta Distributors since its inception in 1972?

We have successfully sustained and expanded our business since 1972 due to several key factors. Our strong focus on customer satisfaction, along with offering top-quality branded products and excellent service, has helped us build a loyal customer base. Over the years, we have established ourselves as a trusted name in the electronics market by providing a wide and reliable range of products.

What strategies have helped you successfully scale to 36+ branches across Odisha?

Our success and expansion to over 36 branches across Odisha can be attributed to a combination of key strategies. We have consistently followed a customer-centric approach, supported by strategic expansion, strong networks and partnerships, adaptability to

market changes, and a dedicated team. Additionally, our growth is reinforced by effective market research and localized marketing efforts, enabling us to better understand regional demands and strengthen our presence across diverse markets.

What are the biggest challenges currently facing the retail industry, and how is Gupta Distributors adapting to overcome them?

We face challenges such as shrinking margins due to rising costs, intense competition, and delayed retailer payments affecting cash flow. To address these, we are expanding our store network across rural and urban areas, improving customer experience through better pricing and personalised services, adopting digital platforms to meet changing preferences, and strengthening supplier relationships with an efficient logistics team for timely delivery and competitive pricing.

Are you investing in digital transformation, such as online sales platforms or omnichannel retailing?

We are actively investing in digital transformation by embracing online sales and omnichannel retailing. We have already launched an online platform for customers in Odisha, offering competitive pricing and attractive deals. This initiative helps us cater to the growing demand for online shopping, especially after

Covid-19. By integrating our digital and offline channels, we aim to provide a seamless customer experience, stay competitive, and expand our reach in an evolving retail market.

What is your long-term expansion vision — deeper penetration within Odisha or entry into new markets?

Our long-term expansion vision is focused on deeper penetration within Odisha, particularly in the southern and western regions. We currently operate 37 stores across the state and aim to open 50 more in the future, catering to both urban and rural markets.

What inspired you to venture into this line of business, and what advice would you offer to aspiring entrepreneurs looking to enter this field?

We ventured into this business by identifying the growing demand for electronics and home appliances in Odisha. Our focus on customer satisfaction, offering top-brand products, and delivering excellent service has been key to our success.

For aspiring entrepreneurs, my advice is to identify a niche with strong growth potential, build reliable relationships with manufacturers and retailers, prioritise customer satisfaction through quality service and competitive pricing, and remain adaptable to changing market trends and consumer preferences.

SHORT TAKES

AM/NS India CEO Dilip set to retire

New Delhi: ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel (AM/NS) India on Thursday announced that CEO Dilip Oommen will retire June 30 after 22 years with the company, including seven years as CEO. Oommen, 68, will remain involved as a board member of AM/NS India and take on the role of Vice-Chairman of ArcelorMittal India Private Ltd, the steel maker said in a statement. Amit Harlalka, the company's current CFO, has been appointed as the new CEO effective July 1. Harlalka joined AM/NS India in December 2019 as Deputy Director, Finance, became CFO in January 2023, and has previously held finance roles across ArcelorMittal operations in Mexico, Zenica, and Luxembourg.

Samsung leads tablet market

New Delhi: India tablet PC market grew by 2 per cent year-on-year in 2025 with Samsung leading the supplies in the segment while Apple and Acer recording dip in shipments, a Counterpoint Research report said Thursday. Samsung's tablet PC supplies in India market grew by 15 per cent year-over-year which led to the company clocking 31 per cent market share in 2025 compared to 27 per cent it registered in 2024. Apple followed Samsung with 20 per cent share in 2025 despite a decline of 2 per cent on YoY basis. Lenovo clocked 15 per cent market share with 24 per cent growth in supplies, Xiaomi 11 per cent with 74 per cent jump in shipments while Acer supplies declined by 50 per cent leading to market share plummeting to 10 per cent in 2025 from 21 per cent in 2024.

SUMMER SCHEDULE

Airlines to operate 10% fewer flights

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 26: Indian airlines are set to operate a little over 23,000 weekly domestic flights during the summer schedule starting from March 29, which is 10 per cent less than the services flown during the same period a year ago.

Aviation watchdog DGCA has published the domestic flights summer schedule, which is from March 29 to October 24, for nine scheduled airlines.

A senior DGCA official Thursday told PTI that the airlines would be operating around 10 per cent fewer flights in 2026 summer schedule compared to the previous summer schedule.

During the 2025 summer

schedule, there were 25,610 weekly flights and this time, a 10 per cent reduction would mean the number of services will come down by 2,561. Accordingly, the total count will be about 23,049 weekly flights, as per an analysis.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has put out the airline-wise domestic summer schedule for 2026 on its website but has not provided a consolidated figure and comparison with the previous summer schedule or the ongoing winter schedule.

The nine airlines that are to operate flights during the 2026 summer schedule are Air India, Air India Express, IndiGo, Akasa Air, SpiceJet, Alliance Air, FLY91, Star Air and IndiaOne Air.

Chandi Bhandar expands footprint in Angul

POST NEWS NETWORK

Angul, March 26: Chandi Bhandar, Odisha's largest and most trusted silver jewellery brand, announces the grand opening of its second store in Angul at Gandhi Marg Square Thursday.

Marking a significant milestone in its glittering 12-year journey, this launch is the brand's 27th store in the state, further strengthening its legacy of redefining silver craftsmanship and setting new standards in purity and design. Following the success of its Amalapada Lane 2 store, this expansion marks a natural next step, as Chandi Bhandar continues to lead the silver jewellery industry.

Strategically located in the heart of Angul, the new store spans an impressive 2000 sq ft, offering a thoughtfully curated ambience with graceful layouts



and captivating displays. Designed to reflect modern luxury blended with timeless tradition, the store showcases silver artistry at its finest delivering an immersive and inspiring shopping experience.

To celebrate this grand opening, the Angul store presents an exquisite selection of sterling silver jewellery for every occasion. From 92.5% pure silver utensils to premium jewellery, the store

offers an extensive range for women, men, and kids.

For women, the collection features zircon-studded necklaces, bangles, earrings, rings, bracelets, and anklets perfect for both festive celebrations and everyday elegance. The Amogh Collection for men showcases bold yet refined bracelets, rings, cufflinks, and chains, while a charming range for kids offers playful yet pre-

mium silver designs. As a special launch offer, Chandi Bhandar is offering up to 50% off on making charges from April 4 to 19, making it the perfect time to discover the brand's signature silver creations.

"We are proud to launch our 27th store in Angul, a city that has shown us immense love. With this being our second store here, it reflects the strong trust of our customers. On Akshaya Tritiya, this marks a beautiful new beginning for us," said Lipsa Hans, founder of Chandi Bhandar.

As part of its continued expansion, Chandi Bhandar will mark the opening of its 28th store in Bargarh, further strengthening its presence in Odisha, while its pan-India vision will come alive with the launch of its first two stores in Raipur marking its debut beyond the state.

Iran war erases global growth upgrade, fans inflation: OECD

REUTERS

Paris, March 26: The escalating conflict in the Middle East has knocked the global economy off a stronger growth path, the OECD warned Thursday, as a near-halt in energy shipments through the Strait of Hormuz threatens to push inflation sharply higher.

The Paris-based Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development said the global economy had been on course for stronger-than-expected growth before the war in Iran erupted, but that prospect has now all but disappeared. Global GDP growth is now

projected to ease from 3.3% last year to 2.9% in 2026 before edging up to 3.0% in 2027, as an energy price surge and the unpredictable nature of the conflict offset tailwinds from strong technology-related investment, lower effective tariff rates and momentum carried over from 2025.

The projections in the OECD's interim Economic Outlook are conditional on a technical assumption that energy market disruption moderates over time, with oil, gas and fertiliser prices declining gradually from mid-2026 onwards.

The 2026 projection is unchanged from the OECD's December forecast, but pre-



liminary indications since then had suggested global GDP growth could have been upwardly revised by around 0.3 percentage points in 2026

had the conflict not escalated — a revision that has been entirely erased by the impact

- OECD forecasts global GDP growth at 2.9% in 2026, 3.0% in 2027
- G20 inflation projected 1.2 pts higher in 2026, reaching 4.0%
- US growth to moderate from 2.0% in 2026 to 1.7% in 2027
- Euro area growth cut to 0.8% in 2026 due to high energy costs

of the fighting. There's a high level of uncertainty around the duration and the magnitude of the current conflict in the Middle East and that means that this outlook is subject to significant downside risks that could result in lower growth and higher inflation
MATHIAS CORMANN | CHIEF, OECD

With energy prices now soaring, G20 inflation is projected to be 1.2 percentage points higher than previously expected in 2026 at 4.0%, before easing to 2.7% in 2027. In an adverse

scenario where energy prices peak higher and stay elevated longer, global growth would be 0.5 percentage points lower by the second year of the shock and inflation would be 0.9 percentage points higher, the OECD said.

The OECD urged central banks to remain vigilant and called on governments to ensure any support measures for households were well-targeted and time-limited.

MIDDLE EAST CRISIS

Fertiliser production to dip 10-15%: Crisis

Mumbai: India's annual domestic output of urea and complex fertilisers is likely to decline by 10-15 per cent due to supply chain disruptions caused by the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, a Crisis Ratings report said Thursday. "The ongoing issues in the Middle East could disrupt the fertiliser supply chain at a crucial time for the kharif season. Disruption in LNG and ammonia supplies continuing for about three months could cut domestic urea and complex fertiliser production by 10-15 per cent," Crisis Ratings Director Anand Kulkarni said. However, he said the impact on production will be cushioned to some extent by the recent government directive allocating 70 per cent of gas to urea manufacturers. He added that the fertiliser inventory of around three months, along with expected imports from alternative sources, will mitigate the risk of immediate supply shortages.

BCCI unveils blockbuster season

Guwahati among the five venues for Border-Gavaskar Test, 'Ro-Ko' likely to feature in 9 home ODIs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 26: Having hosted a Test match against South Africa in late November, Guwahati's Barsapara Stadium is once again among the five venues that will host the marquee series between India and Australia for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, the BCCI announced Thursday.

The Indian board released the calendar for senior men's team's home season which will comprise five Tests, nine ODIs and eight T20Is. The ODI matches will certainly have a premium attached to it with the legendary white ball duo of Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma expected to feature in all of them.

The series will start with the opening Test in Nagpur from January 21 followed by Chennai (January 29-February 2) with the third Test in Guwahati from February 11 to 15 after a eight-day gap. The fourth Test in Ranchi will be played between February 19-23 while the final Test in Ahmedabad will commence from February 27.

Among the five venues, as per rotation, Nagpur (last hosted Test in vs Australia 2023), Chennai (last hosted Test vs Bangladesh in 2024), Ranchi (last hosted Test vs England in 2024) have all got their due games. Ahmedabad hosted a Test match against the West Indies in October, 2025.

However, it wasn't clear as to how Guwahati, which hosted India's last home Test series (vs South Africa in November 2025) again features in rotation while Mumbai and Kolkata are not part of the marquee series. It is not known whether Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) or Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) didn't want to host a Test versus Australia.

While the Australia Test series is the main attraction during the home season, India



will also play host to West Indies, Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe. In fact, Zimbabwe will be playing in India in a bilateral series for the first time since 2002 when Sourav Ganguly was leading India.

The season will comprise 22 international matches in 17 cities with the West Indies tour of India, starting September 27, 2026.

The tour will feature a three-match ODI series followed by a five-match T20I series.

The ODIs will be played in Trivandrum (September 27), Guwahati (September 30) and New Chandigarh (October 3), before the action shifts to the T20Is, which will be hosted

across Lucknow (Oct 6), Ranchi (Oct 9), Indore (Oct 11), Hyderabad (Oct 14) and Bangalore (Oct 17).

India will then host Sri Lanka in December 2026 for a white-ball series comprising three ODIs and as many T20Is. The ODI leg will be played in Delhi (December 13), Bangalore (Dec 16) and Ahmedabad (Dec 19) while Rajkot (Dec 22), Cuttack (Dec 24) and Pune (Dec 27) will host the T20Is.

At the start of the new year, Zimbabwe will tour India for a three-match ODI series in January 2027. The matches will be held in Kolkata (Jan 3), Hyderabad (Jan 6) and Mumbai (Jan 9).

Full schedule of India's home international matches for 2026-27

West Indies Tour of India (2026)

1st ODI	September 27	Greenfield International Stadium, Trivandrum
2nd ODI	September 30	Barsapara Cricket Stadium (ACA Stadium), Guwahati
3rd ODI	October 3	PCA New Cricket Stadium, New Chandigarh
1st T20I	October 6	Bharat Ratna Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ekana Cricket Stadium, Lucknow
2nd T20I	October 9	Jharkhand State Cricket Association (JSCA) International Cricket Stadium, Ranchi
3rd T20I	October 11	Holkar Cricket Stadium Indore
4th T20I	October 14	Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium, Hyderabad
5th T20I	October 17	M Chinnaswamy Stadium, Bangalore

Sri Lanka Tour of India (2026)

1st ODI	December 13	Arun Jaitley Stadium, Delhi
2nd ODI	December 16	M Chinnaswamy Stadium, Bangalore
3rd ODI	December 19	Narendra Modi Stadium, Ahmedabad
1st T20I	December 22	Niranjan Shah Stadium, Rajkot
2nd T20I	December 24	Barabati Stadium, Cuttack
3rd T20I	December 27	Maharashtra Cricket Association (MCA) International Stadium, Pune

Zimbabwe Tour of India (2027)

1st ODI	January 3	Eden Gardens, Kolkata
2nd ODI	January 6	Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium, Hyderabad
3rd ODI	January 9	Wankhede Stadium, Mumbai

Australia Tour of India (2027)

1st Test	January 21-25	Vidarbha Cricket Association Stadium, Nagpur
2nd Test	January 29-February 2	MA Chidambaram Stadium, Chennai
3rd Test	February 11-15	Barsapara Cricket Stadium (ACA Stadium), Guwahati
4th Test	February 19-23	Jharkhand State Cricket Association (JSCA) International Cricket Stadium, Ranchi
5th Test	February 27-March 3	Narendra Modi Stadium, Ahmedabad

IPL 2026

Second phase to start from April 13 to May 24

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 26: The second phase of the IPL 2026 will begin April 13 and conclude May 24, the BCCI announced Thursday while releasing the full fixtures of the league phase.

The first phase runs from March 28 to April 12, with defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Sunrisers Hyderabad facing off in the league opener at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium Saturday. The final is slated for May 31 in Bangalore.

"The remainder of the league stage, comprising 50 matches, will be played from April 13 to May 24, across 12 venues in India," BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia said in a statement.

"Matches in the second phase will be held in Bangalore, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Delhi, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Lucknow, Jaipur, Dharamshala, Raipur and New Chandigarh," he added.

"As the tournament enters a crucial phase, teams will compete across venues for a place in the playoffs, with the race expected to intensify through the latter half of the league stage." The action resumes April



13 with Sunrisers Hyderabad taking on Rajasthan Royals in Hyderabad, setting the tone for an exciting run of fixtures.

The second phase will feature eight double-headers.

Punjab Kings will play their home matches in New Chandigarh and Dharamshala, including three games at the latter venue during this phase.

Rajasthan Royals will host four home games in Jaipur, while Royal Challengers Bengaluru will play three home matches in Bangalore and two in Raipur. The venues for the playoffs will be announced at a later date.

FIXTURES

1. March 28	Royal Challengers Bengaluru v Sunrisers Hyderabad (Bangalore, 19:30 IST)
2. March 29	Mumbai Indians v Kolkata Knight Riders (Mumbai, 19:30 IST)
3. March 30	Rajasthan Royals v Chennai Super Kings (Guwahati, 19:30 IST)
4. March 31	Punjab Kings v Gujarat Titans (New Chandigarh, 19:30 IST)
5. April 1	Lucknow Super Giants v Delhi Capitals (Lucknow, 19:30 IST)
6. April 2	Kolkata Knight Riders v Sunrisers Hyderabad (Kolkata, 19:30 IST)
7. April 3	Chennai Super Kings v Punjab Kings (Chennai, 19:30 IST)
8. April 4	Delhi Capitals v Mumbai Indians (Delhi, 15:30 IST)
9. April 4	Gujarat Titans v Rajasthan Royals (Ahmedabad, 19:30 IST)
10. April 5	Sunrisers Hyderabad v Lucknow Super Giants (Hyderabad, 15:30 IST)
11. April 5	Royal Challengers Bengaluru v Chennai Super Kings (Bangalore, 19:30 IST)
12. April 6	Kolkata Knight Riders v Punjab Kings (Kolkata, 19:30 IST)
13. April 7	Rajasthan Royals v Mumbai Indians (Guwahati, 19:30 IST)
14. April 8	Delhi Capitals v Gujarat Titans (Delhi, 19:30 IST)
15. April 9	Kolkata Knight Riders v Lucknow Super Giants (Kolkata, 19:30 IST)
16. April 10	Rajasthan Royals v Royal Challengers Bengaluru (Guwahati, 19:30 IST)
17. April 11	Punjab Kings v Sunrisers Hyderabad (New Chandigarh, 15:30 IST)
18. April 11	Chennai Super Kings v Delhi Capitals (Chennai, 19:30 IST)
19. April 12	Lucknow Super Giants v Gujarat Titans (Lucknow, 15:30 IST)
20. April 12	Mumbai Indians v Royal Challengers Bengaluru (Mumbai, 19:30 IST)
21. April 13	Sunrisers Hyderabad v Rajasthan Royals (Hyderabad, 19:30 IST)
22. April 14	Chennai Super Kings v Kolkata Knight Riders (Chennai, 19:30 IST)
23. April 15	Royal Challengers Bengaluru v Lucknow Super Giants (Bangalore, 19:30 IST)
24. April 16	Mumbai Indians v Punjab Kings (Mumbai, 19:30 IST)
25. April 17	Gujarat Titans v Kolkata Knight Riders (Ahmedabad, 19:30 IST)
26. April 18	Royal Challengers Bengaluru v Delhi Capitals (Bangalore, 15:30 IST)
27. April 18	Sunrisers Hyderabad v Chennai Super Kings (Hyderabad, 19:30 IST)
28. April 19	Kolkata Knight Riders v Rajasthan Royals (Kolkata, 15:30 IST)
29. April 19	Punjab Kings v Lucknow Super Giants (New Chandigarh, 19:30 IST)
30. April 20	Gujarat Titans v Mumbai Indians (Ahmedabad, 19:30 IST)
31. April 21	Sunrisers Hyderabad v Delhi Capitals (Hyderabad, 19:30 IST)
32. April 22	Lucknow Super Giants v Rajasthan Royals (Lucknow, 19:30 IST)
33. April 23	Mumbai Indians v Chennai Super Kings (Mumbai, 19:30 IST)
34. April 24	Royal Challengers Bengaluru v Gujarat Titans (Bangalore, 19:30 IST)
35. April 25	Delhi Capitals v Punjab Kings (Delhi, 15:30 IST)
36. April 25	Rajasthan Royals v Sunrisers Hyderabad (Jaipur, 19:30 IST)
37. April 26	Gujarat Titans v Chennai Super Kings (Ahmedabad, 15:30 IST)
38. April 26	Lucknow Super Giants v Kolkata Knight Riders (Lucknow, 19:30 IST)
39. April 27	Delhi Capitals v Royal Challengers Bengaluru (Delhi, 19:30 IST)
40. April 28	Punjab Kings v Rajasthan Royals (New Chandigarh, 19:30 IST)
41. April 29	Mumbai Indians v Sunrisers Hyderabad (Mumbai, 19:30 IST)
42. April 30	Gujarat Titans v Royal Challengers Bengaluru (Ahmedabad, 19:30 IST)
43. May 1	Rajasthan Royals v Delhi Capitals (Jaipur, 19:30 IST)
44. May 2	Chennai Super Kings v Mumbai Indians (Chennai, 19:30 IST)
45. May 3	Sunrisers Hyderabad v Kolkata Knight Riders (Hyderabad, 15:30 IST)
46. May 3	Gujarat Titans v Punjab Kings (Ahmedabad, 19:30 IST)
47. May 4	Mumbai Indians v Lucknow Super Giants (Mumbai, 19:30 IST)
48. May 5	Delhi Capitals v Chennai Super Kings (Delhi, 19:30 IST)
49. May 6	Sunrisers Hyderabad v Punjab Kings (Hyderabad, 19:30 IST)
50. May 7	Lucknow Super Giants v Royal Challengers Bengaluru (Lucknow, 19:30 IST)
51. May 8	Delhi Capitals v Kolkata Knight Riders (Delhi, 19:30 IST)
52. May 9	Rajasthan Royals v Gujarat Titans (Jaipur, 19:30 IST)
53. May 10	Chennai Super Kings v Lucknow Super Giants (Chennai, 15:30 IST)
54. May 10	Royal Challengers Bengaluru v Mumbai Indians (Bangalore, 19:30 IST)
55. May 11	Punjab Kings v Delhi Capitals (Dharamshala, 19:30 IST)
56. May 12	Gujarat Titans v Sunrisers Hyderabad (Ahmedabad, 19:30 IST)
57. May 13	Royal Challengers Bengaluru v Kolkata Knight Riders (Raipur, 19:30 IST)
58. May 14	Punjab Kings v Mumbai Indians (Dharamshala, 19:30 IST)
59. May 15	Lucknow Super Giants v Chennai Super Kings (Lucknow, 19:30 IST)
60. May 16	Kolkata Knight Riders v Gujarat Titans (Kolkata, 19:30 IST)
61. May 17	Punjab Kings v Royal Challengers Bengaluru (Dharamshala, 15:30 IST)
62. May 17	Delhi Capitals v Rajasthan Royals (Delhi, 19:30 IST)
63. May 18	Chennai Super Kings v Sunrisers Hyderabad (Chennai, 19:30 IST)
64. May 19	Rajasthan Royals v Lucknow Super Giants (Jaipur, 19:30 IST)
65. May 20	Kolkata Knight Riders v Mumbai Indians (Kolkata, 19:30 IST)
66. May 21	Chennai Super Kings v Gujarat Titans (Chennai, 19:30 IST)
67. May 22	Sunrisers Hyderabad v Royal Challengers Bengaluru (Hyderabad, 19:30 IST)
68. May 23	Lucknow Super Giants v Punjab Kings (Lucknow, 19:30 IST)
69. May 24	Mumbai Indians v Rajasthan Royals (Mumbai, 15:30 IST)
70. May 24	Kolkata Knight Riders v Delhi Capitals (Kolkata, 19:30 IST)

SWIMMING DOMINANCE AT KHELO INDIA TRIBAL GAMES

Odisha's Anjali bags golden hat-trick

The state stands second on medal standings with five gold, one silver, and eight bronze medals

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Raipur, March 26: Swimmer Manikanta L single-handedly kept Karnataka at the top of the medals table as he grabbed three more gold medals Thursday to take his individual gold tally to five while Odisha's Anjali Munda completed a hat-trick of gold medals in the swimming competition on the second day of the Khelo India Tribal Games (KITG) 2026 in Raipur Thursday.

There was also a reason for hosts Chhattisgarh to rejoice as local hope Anushka Bhagat added a second silver to her tally by finishing second in the women's 200m individual medley race. Anushka had won



the 100m breaststroke silver Wednesday.

At the end of Day 2, Karnataka topped the medals chart with eight gold, three silver, and one bronze, while Odisha were close second with five gold medals, one silver, and eight bronze medals. Assam are third with five medals (two gold), while Chhattisgarh are lying sixth with three medals (two silvers and a bronze).

Odisha won all three gold medals on offer in women's

swimming events, with Anjali adding two. Anjali Munda, who had won the 200m freestyle gold Wednesday, first clinched the women's 200m IM gold with a time of 2:53.82s, with Chhattisgarh's Anushka Bhagat winning the silver with a time of 2:59.33s. The bronze medal went to Anjali Mallick of Odisha (3:06.13s).

Anjali then added the 100m backstroke crown to her tally with a time of 1:19.98s, with Karnataka's Nidhi S taking the silver medal with a time of

1:26.18s.

Though Anjali did not represent her state in the 4x100 relay, the quartet of Ritika Minz, Krushna Nayak, Rupali Hembram, and Subhasmita Baipai clocked a time of 5:06.12s to beat Gujarat (5:54.37s) and Karnataka (6:29.69s) for the gold medal.

Odisha's fourth gold medal of the day came from the weightlifting hall, where former Asian Championships gold medallist Jhilli Dalabehera took the top spot against Kiuchangliu Gangmei of Manipur due to her lower body weight after both players had lifted an identical aggregate of 160kg.

In the weightlifting arena, Monikha dominated the women's 48kg event by lifting 57kg in snatch and 75kg in Clean & Jerk to clinch the gold medal with a total of 132 kg. Deepa Rani Mallick of Odisha (120kg) and Alaaska Aleena of Andaman and Nicobar Islands (116kg) bagged the silver and bronze, respectively.

NEW IOC POLICY

Transgender women athletes banned from Olympic events

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Geneva, March 26: Transgender women athletes are now excluded from women's events at the Olympics after the IOC agreed to a new eligibility policy Thursday which aligns with US President Donald Trump's executive order on sports ahead of the 2028 Los Angeles Games.

"Eligibility for any female category event at the Olympic Games or any other IOC event, including individual and team sports, is now limited to biological females," the International Olympic Committee said, to be determined by a mandatory gene test once in an athlete's career.

It is unclear how many, if any, transgender women are competing at an Olympic level. No woman who transitioned from being born male competed at the 2024 Paris Summer

Games, though weightlifter Laurel Hubbard did at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021 without winning a medal.

The eligibility policy that will apply from the LA Olympics in July 2028 "protects fairness, safety and integrity in the female category," the IOC said.

After an executive board meeting, the International Olympic Committee published a 10-page policy document which also restricts female athletes such as two-time Olympic champion runner Caster Semenya with medical conditions known as differences in sex development, or DSD.

Female eligibility was a strong theme in a seven-candidate IOC election last year - held after a furor around women's boxing in Paris - when Coventry's main rivals pledged a stronger policy to leading on the issue.

Racing teenage prodigy finishes stellar WSK stint as highest-ranked female, the best Indian driver

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Franciacorta (Italy), March 26: Indian racing prodigy Atiq Mir capped off a stellar stint in the WSK Super Masters with a commendable eighth place finish out of 53 drivers in the final of Round 5, ending her campaign in the premier karting series as the highest-ranked female.

Making a big voluntary switch from the mini (age 8-12) to junior category (12-14) at the start of 2026, the 11-year-old demonstrated her special talent all through the five-round series.

Racing in the OK-NJ class,

the first Indian to be supported by Formula 1 Academy, Atiq collected one podium, two fastest laps, eight top-6 finishes and a sizzling P2 finish in one of the qualifying sessions over the course of the WSK championship and European leg of the COTFA series. Besides being the highest-ranked female in the WSK series, she was also the best Indian driver.

The racer from Jammu and Kashmir had her fair share of bad luck along the way that robbed her of more podium finishes. In her final weekend of the series, Atiq set the seventh fastest time in qualifying which was just a 10th of a second away from P3, highlighting the fierce competition.

In the heat races, she finished P5, P4 and P5, showing remarkable speed and consistency against the best drivers in the world.

Atiq was ranked sixth out of 53 drivers and started P3

I'm so grateful that I got the opportunity to drive in such prestigious series. I have been karting non-stop for the last 8 weeks at a very high level and have been able to adjust and adapt to so many firsts

ATIQA MIR

for the pre-final. She made a remarkable start to move to second spot but going into Turn 4 she was pushed off the track by a driver, denying her a front row start for the finals.

She was 13th on the grid for the final but charged through the field to be P7 at one stage before finishing a creditable 8th.

The race weekend reaffirmed Atiq's status as the leading driver in the world of karting who can go up against the best and even beat them.

She had made her OK-NJ debut in at La Conca Round in January. At only 11 years of age, Atiq was amongst the youngest and least experienced

driver at Franciacorta showed that Atiq had come of age as she put together a clean weekend with top 5 finishes in all heats.

er in Italian conditions.

Despite the challenges, she showed her raw speed, out-qualifying the likes of Mercedes Junior Nicolo Perico.

The last round at Franciacorta showed that Atiq had come of age as she put together a clean weekend with top 5 finishes in all heats.

