

Sam's perspective

Actor Samantha Ruth Prabhu opens up about gender bias in the film industry

LEISURE | P2

Nature's Fury

Severe flooding, landslide and thunderstorms in parts of Afghanistan leave 17 people dead and 26 injured

INTERNATIONAL | P10

Tough week ahead

War in West Asia, its impact on crude oil prices, and global trends would continue to be key drivers for domestic equities

BUSINESS | P11

Teenager rules F1

Italian 19-year-old Kimi Antonelli of Mercedes wins his second consecutive Formula 1 race, taking Sunday's Japanese Grand Prix

SPORTS | P12

Bengali actor Rahul Banerjee drowns in sea during shoot

PNN & AGENCIES

Kolkata/Balasure, March 29: Popular Bengali actor Rahul Arunoday Banerjee died Sunday after drowning in the sea at Talsari beach in Balasure district of Odisha, film industry sources said.

He was 43, and left behind his 13-year-old son and actor-wife Priyanka Sarkar. He had gone to the beach, located near Digha in West Bengal's Purba Medinipur district, for shooting a Bengali soap titled 'Bhole Baba Par Karega', his co-actor Diganta Bagchi said.

"After today's shoot, he went alone to the water but somehow got entangled in something under the water... The exact circumstances are not clear. Suddenly, people, including crew members, were shouting that Rahul was drowning and we pulled him out of the water. We rushed him to Digha hospital, where doctors declared him brought dead," Bagchi said.

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said, "I am shocked to hear the news that the distinguished, young, and popular actor Rahul Arunoday Banerjee is suddenly no longer among us."

Govt relaxes kerosene rules

New Delhi: The Union government said Sunday it is relaxing petroleum safety and licensing rules to allow faster distribution of kerosene to households, as the Iran war disrupts energy supplies worldwide. The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas said in an official notification that the measures would enable the ad-hoc distribution of kerosene to households for cooking and lighting in 21 states and Union Territories.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



We are Vishwaguru and not a 'dalal'

Nurse held hostage, raped repeatedly by SocMed friend

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Gurugram, March 29: A 25-year-old nurse from Punjab was allegedly held hostage and raped multiple times by a truck driver for several days in a village in Haryana's Nuh district, police said Sunday.

The nurse alleged that the accused pressured her to convert to Islam by promising to marry her. When she refused, he threatened to kill and make her objectionable video viral on social media, they added.

The victim somehow escaped Saturday night and went to the Ferozpur Jhirka city police station, where, after registering an FIR, police arrested the accused truck driver, Zaheer, 20, SHO Kuldeep Singh said.

The accused, a resident of



UPPING THE ANTE: Demonstrators holding up their banners, march across the Memorial Bridge during a 'No Kings' protest in Washington DC

US weighs ground move; Iran 'ready'

REUTERS

Islamabad/Dubai, March 29: Iran said it is ready to respond to a US ground attack, accusing Washington Sunday of preparing a land assault even as it sought negotiations and as regional powers held talks in Pakistan to try to end the fighting.

The foreign ministers of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Egypt have started discussions in Islamabad on ways to halt the month-long US-Israeli war on Iran, which has killed thousands of people and caused the biggest-ever disruption to global energy supplies.

Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf accused the US of sending messages about possible negotiations while secretly planning to send in its ground forces, adding that Iran was ready to respond if US troops deployed.

"As long as the Americans seek Iran's surrender, our response is that we will never ac-



- Pakistan hosts talks with Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Egypt on ending Iran war
- Iranian Parliament Speaker warns US against ground attack
- First contingent of US Marines arrives in Middle East
- Houthi attacks on Israel heighten risks to commercial shipping

cept humiliation," he said in a message to the nation.

The war, launched February 28 with US and Israeli strikes on Iran, has spread across the Middle East, with

Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi is launching Saturday their first attacks on Israel since the start of the conflict.

The strikes point to a potential new threat to global shipping, already hit by the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz, previously a conduit for about a fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas supplies.

Washington has dispatched thousands of Marines to the Middle East, with the first of two contingents arriving Friday aboard an amphibious assault ship, the US military has said.

"The Washington Post" quoted US officials as saying the Pentagon is preparing for weeks of ground operations in Iran, possibly involving raids by Special Operations and conventional infantry troops.

Whether President Donald Trump would approve plans for deploying ground troops remained uncertain, the newspaper said.

Reuters has reported that the Pentagon has considered military options that could include ground forces.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio has said the US could achieve its aims without ground troops but was deploying forces to the region to give Trump "maximum" flexibility.

Meanwhile, Pakistan was hosting Sunday's talks a day after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif spoke to Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian.

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar held separate one-on-one meetings in Islamabad Sunday with his Turkish and Egyptian counterparts ahead of the four-way consultations.

In parallel, military-level contacts are also underway, with Pakistan's army chief Asim Munir in regular contact with US Vice President JD Vance.

"Islamabad will soon hold talks between US and Iran," Dar remarked.

UTP dies in Puri jail; family cries murder

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, March 29: The suspicious death of an undertrial prisoner (UTP) at the District Jail in Bangar under Ramachandi police limits here has sparked controversy as his family members termed it as 'murder in custody following 'unspeakable torture'.

The deceased, identified as Dipti Ranjan Swain, 28, of Sakhigopal, was found hanging inside a prison toilet at approximately around 12 at noon Sunday. Prison staffers reportedly rushed him to the jail hospital and subsequently to the District Headquarters Hospital (DHH), where doctors declared him brought dead.

Terming it as suicide, Jail Superintendent Sanjay Verma said, "The inmate used a rope to hang himself inside the toilet. The entire sequence of events has been captured on CCTV."

However, the family has vehemently rejected this version. Dipti's mother Kalika Swain revealed that her son had spoken to his sister at 10:30am, just 90 minutes before the incident, and appeared to be in good spirits, discussing his upcoming bail hearing April 18.

"He was completely healthy and hopeful about his release. Why would he kill himself two hours after talking to us?" a family member questioned during a protest at the hospital.

The DHH remained tense after Dipti's family members staged a protest against the jail authorities demanding stringent action against those responsible for his death.

Worth mentioning that Dipti had been lodged in the jail for the last three years as an undertrial in connection with a rape case following the last Panchayat elections.

Marble waste site lures visitors despite risks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kishangarh (Rajasthan), March 29: Endless white plains glowing under the sun, no pine trees, no chill in the air, yet the scenery looks straight out of a winter postcard. Many confuse it for Bolivia's Salt Flats, snow-clad Gulmarg or even scenic Switzerland. The dumping site, where over 700 tankers carrying around 22 lakh litres of marble slurry are emptied every day, attracts at least 5,000 visitors on a daily basis, with the footfall going up to 20,000 on weekends and holidays. Environmentalists and health experts, however, have flagged it as not just a health hazard but also a pollution hotspot.

This picturesque location, which has become a popular reel destination, is Asia's larg-

est marble waste dumping yard in Kishangarh in Ajmer district of arid Rajasthan.

Due to its pristine white appearance, the dumping yard, spread over 350 acres, has also become a popular destination for pre-wedding and commercial shoots.

However, scientific studies conducted by Central University of Rajasthan have flagged it as a 'toxic tourist destination', documenting the health and ecological impacts of this unregulated dumping. The concerns also reached the National Green Tribunal (NGT), which set up a joint committee including members from state and central pollution control boards.

"Despite its scale and impact, the dumping yard is being operated in rampant violation of basic environmental safeguards.

SCENIC BUT UNSAFE



There is no engineered liner system, no decanting wells, no dust suppression mechanisms, no monitoring of air or groundwater, and no protective green belt.

"These failures have led to severe contamination of groundwater, degradation of

agricultural land and high levels of fugitive dust pollution, thereby endangering public health," Laxmi Kant Sharma, Environmental Science professor at Central University of Rajasthan, told PTI.

Sharma noted that the uni-

versity's studies have found that the toxic contamination of water sources in the vicinity is reflected in total dissolved solid escalating 10 times above the safe limit in a 6-km radius of the dumping site.

"The concentration of lead silicate in soil and nitrate and fluoride concentrations in water were found several times higher than normal levels, indicating extreme contamination. Our study also found that the concentration of PM2.5 exceeds the limit of ambient air quality standards of PM2.5," he said.

"Since the waste particles are smaller than 75 micrometres, they can spread far and wide, making the soil infertile. Several people may be suffering from silicosis. The government needs to take immediate action to prevent the situation from getting out of hand," he added.

leisure



GARFIELD ADMITS DOOMSCROLLING

Andrew Garfield admitted he's no different from others when it comes to doomscrolling. Speaking at the London premiere of *The Magic Faraway Tree*, the 42-year-old actor revealed he even uses "creeper accounts" to browse social media, adding that platforms tap into human addictive responses and he isn't immune

BAILEY FEELS MOTHERHOOD CHANGED HER ARTISTRY

Halle Bailey says motherhood has transformed her artistry and deepened her emotions. The 25-year-old singer-actress shared that becoming a mother opened "a whole new portal of love," inspiring her creatively as a writer and artist. Bailey added that the experience has changed her perspective on life and made everything better for her



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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

ARIES
You are enthusiastic about mixing with people today, and you will feel like combining business and leisure. You will be encouraged to take part in group activities as you have the ability to work and have fun at the same time. Ganesha says that as a matter of fact you may emerge wiser from others' ideas.

TAURUS
This day you will be prone to be stubborn and uncompromising in your business and professional dealings and thereby inviting unnecessary problems. Ganesha urges you to guard against this tendency and conduct yourself cordially and amiably with your colleagues and clients. The day will turn out well for executives and administrators. Do not fret too much about the work in hand.

GEMINI
You need to break free from the shackles of your daily routine. Trying to finish all your tasks as per your schedule will give rise to unnecessary worry. To manage your time creatively is the best way to beat the stress. Talking to your elders is a good way to calm your shot nerves, says Ganesha.

CANCER
You will be involved in a team effort and associated with work like inspection and examination. You will base your opinions on your friends' choices. So select good friends, says Ganesha. You will spend time with close circle.

LEO
Your decisions today will be not only be correct, but also resolute and steadfast. Your health will be fine. At the work-place, things ought to proceed as usual. However, you will concentrate more on work today. In personal relationships, some minor arguments could crop up. Take care not to let them blow up into major confrontations, says Ganesha.

VIRGO
An unusual dose of creativity will motivate you to make a trip to some exotic place and mingle with new people. You will have some experiences that will enrich you mentally and emotionally. But don't unpack yet, there may be another adventure on the cards. Ganesha says you will be very flexible and adaptable today.

LIBRA
Ganesha says you will be getting good news from abroad, which will make you happy. Those of you who are searching for jobs will get good news coming your way. Ganesha says that you should not expect too much or you would feel dejected and disappointed when it is not met.

SCORPIO
Today, you are like a balloon that may burst any time. You may vent out all the sweet and bitter experiences and feel much lighter. Or it may have adverse effects on your health, says Ganesha. You prefer to stay in your cocoon, in the warmth of your near and dear ones.

SAGITTARIUS
Determined and dedicated, that's what you are when it comes to work. Well, this may even find you amidst heaps of files and loads of work. No wonder you become a workaholic. You are likely to enjoy during the latter half of the day. Have a fun-filled evening!

CAPRICORN
You firmly believe in the concept of 'health is wealth'. You have maintained a very good health so far and it will not be an issue today, also. Successful completion of current projects seem to be a distant target, however, you will finish them off. Your boss may get upset with you for not completing the work on time. You will put monetary issues on the back burner for the day, says Ganesha.

AQUARIUS
You are close to your family, and now is the time to enjoy the company of your loved ones at home. You will take them out for shopping, go with them on picnics and pamper them in every possible way, says Ganesha. Not that you made them feel special with a selfish motive, but your show of affection will work wonders for you.

PISCES
Ganesha asks you not to undertake any new project or business venture due to the alignment of the planets being unfavorable. You will do well in tasks that do not require too much creativity and innovation. Do not take sides when you are not required to and it may have heavy consequences in future.

SAMANTHA ON GENDER BIAS

HYDERABAD: Samantha Ruth Prabhu recently spoke candidly about gender bias in the film industry, highlighting how women often have to work twice as hard to gain recognition and respect. Speaking at an event, the actor shared a powerful perspective on the challenges women face in professional spaces.

Samantha explained that the industry frequently pushes women to constantly prove themselves. She noted that many of these struggles become so normalised that women begin to internalise them. According to her, women often adjust their schedules, opinions and ambitions just to ensure the comfort of others

around them, rarely acknowledging these compromises as sacrifices.

The actor also pointed out how societal conditioning shapes behaviour, mentioning that women tend to apologise far more often than men in similar situations. Through her message, Samantha urged women to recognise their worth and confidently occupy the space they have earned. She emphasised that ambition should never be seen as a flaw and that accepting credit for one's work is not arrogance but honesty.

Looking ahead, Samantha shared her hope for a more inclusive film industry. She dreams of a time when stories led by women are simply called stories, and when female characters are portrayed as complex and fully human, rather than being defined only by their relationship to male protagonists. AGENCIES



NATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL - DAY III



Artists of Natyabhumi of Tripura presented Bengali play *Anukul Atahpar* on the third evening of the 5-day Purva Ranga at Rabindra Mandap, Bhubaneswar, Sunday. Written by Sanjoy Kar, the play was directed by Chandrasnata Kar. The event is being organised by Department of Odia Language, Literature & Culture, Govt. of Odisha, Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi in collaboration with Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre (Kolkata), Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India.



Twinkle's admiration for Gen Z

It was on the sets of *national Khiladi* in 1999 where she and Akshay reportedly fell in love, before tying the knot January 17, 2001. Daughter of India's first superstar Rajesh Khanna and actor Dimple Kapadia, Twinkle, is a mother to Aarav aged 22, who belongs to Gen Z, and Nitara aged, who is a part of the Gen Alpha. The author and interior designer was last seen on television with *Too Much with Kajol and Twinkle*, co-hosted with actress Kajol, which received mixed reviews for its hosting style.

MUMBAI: Actor-turned-author Twinkle Khanna recently shared her admiration for Gen Z, highlighting their clarity and forward-thinking mindset. The former actress who was present at a fashion event, while interacting with the media, said, "I love their energy. And I feel that we keep saying things randomly about Gen Z, but they have a drive, they have an idea, they have a vision of the world which is so different and fresh from ours that it's worth listening to what they have to say."

Talking about her professional front, Twinkle made her Bollywood debut with *Barsaat* in 1995 was one of the most favourite stars of the younger generation of audiences back then.

In Bollywood, she was last seen in *Love Ke Liye Kuch Bhi Karega* 2001.

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MUMBAI: Actress Kubbra Sait opened up about the unrealistic body standards in the age of social media during an exclusive conversation with this news agency.

She said that instead of blaming the medium, one should question the reason behind the insecurity.

Kubbra was asked, "Social media has created immense pressure on actors, especially regarding body standards. Do you think this pressure is becoming dangerous?"

She said, "I think we often blame the medium for our insecurities. But the real question is; why are we insecure in the first place? If you believe in yourself, no platform can make you feel insecure. I personally

choose not to alter my appearance beyond basic fitness, that's my choice. But if someone else chooses differently, that's their decision."

Kubbra slams unrealistic body standards

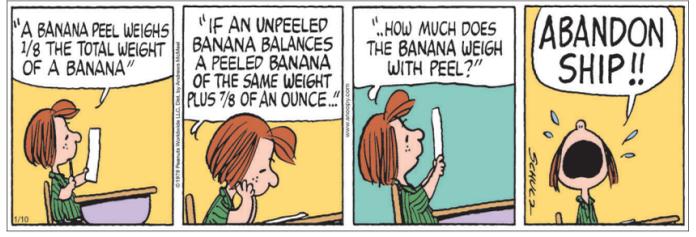
"We need to stop judging others and focus on our own lives. Security or insecurity comes from within, not from social media", Kubbra went on to add.

During the interaction, Kubbra also reflected on her journey.

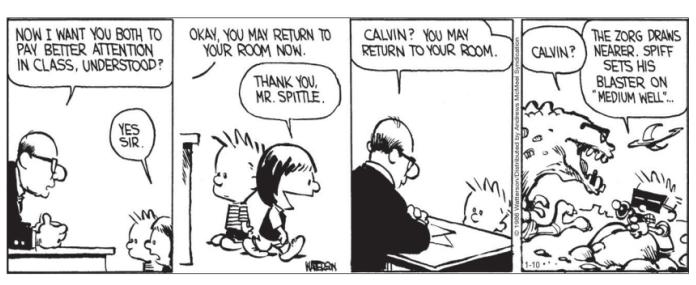
When asked, "Since 2010, you've played so many roles, how have you evolved as an actor?" she said that everything begins with opportunity.

Kubbra shared, "When you get a chance, it's important not to lose it, because that's where your growth lies. For me, consistency, discipline and excitement have been constant. There was always this clarity within me, 'mujhe yeh karna hi hai.'"

PEANUTS



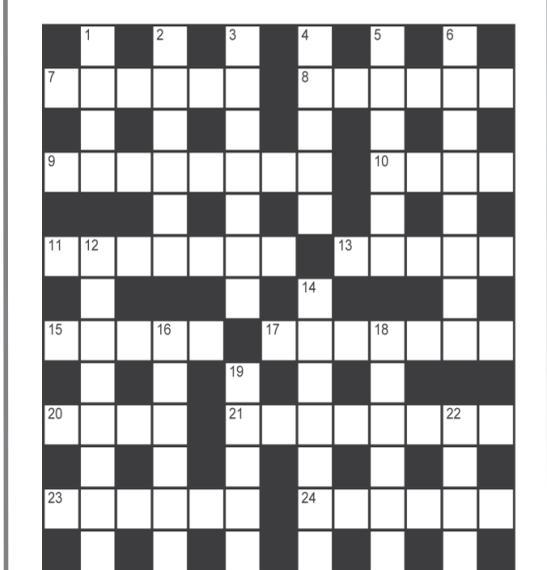
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



FUN POST CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Unmask
 - 8 Tropical
 - 9 Links group, maybe
 - 10 Glimpse
 - 11 Deceive
 - 13 Mountain lions
 - 15 Act like a freeloader
 - 17 Heyerdahl's conveyance (3,4)
 - 20 Verdi heroine
 - 21 Thrives
 - 23 Motley fool
 - 24 Chinese tea
 - 3 Loser (4-3)
 - 4 Toys with tails
 - 5 Capital of Alaska
 - 6 Kit bag
 - 12 Worships
 - 14 Kind of cocktail
 - 16 Maps
 - 18 Overtum
 - 19 Bizet work
 - 22 Litter member
- Down**
- 1 Stepson of Claudius
 - 2 Auto mover

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.

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

SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

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

SUDOKU

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

27 Maoists killed, 77 laid arms since Jan '25: DGP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 29: Odisha DGP YB Khurania Sunday said 77 Maoists have surrendered before police in the state between January 2025 and March this year.

Speaking to reporters during his visit to Kandhamal district, Khurania said 23 Maoists from the state had also surrendered before police in neighbouring Chhattisgarh during the period.

He further said 27 Maoists have been killed in exchanges of fire with security forces in the state since January 2025.

"Of these, 17 Maoists were killed during a joint operation by Odisha and Chhattisgarh police in the bordering areas of Nuapada (Odisha) and Gari-

aband (Chhattisgarh) districts January 25, 2025," he said.

At present, only a small group of Maoists is active in the bordering regions of Kandhamal, Rayagada and Nuapada districts, the DGP said.

"We are making all efforts and continuing operations to nab them," he added.

Khurania appealed to the Maoists to shun the path of violence and surrender to join the mainstream. "Otherwise, they will have to face security forces," he said. He added that the state government has a good surrender and rehabilitation policy for Maoists.

"I expect the remaining Maoists to surrender before the police. Otherwise, security forces will take appropriate action," the DGP warned.



FLORAL SPECTACLE: Visitors admire tulips in full bloom at the Tulip Research Centre in Kokernag, Anantnag district of Jammu and Kashmir, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

WEST ASIA CONFLICT

₹1.14L-crore FPI outflow in March

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 29: Foreign investors have pulled out ₹1.14 lakh crore (about USD 12.3 billion) from domestic equities in March, marking the worst monthly outflow, driven by escalating tensions in West Asia, a weakening rupee, and concerns over the impact of elevated crude oil prices on India's growth.

With one trading session still remaining in the month, the outflows could extend further. The previous record for the highest monthly exodus stood at ₹94,017 crore in October 2024.

With the latest withdrawals, total foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) outflow has reached ₹1.27 lakh crore so far in 2026, according to NSDL data.

As per the data, FPIs have remained persistent sellers throughout March, offloading equities worth ₹1,13,380 crore in the cash market till March 27.



The sharp sell-off follows a strong rebound in February, when foreign FPIs pumped in ₹22,615 crore, the highest monthly inflow in 17 months.

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

VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Investments, said the weakness in global equity markets following the war in West Asia, the steady depreciation of the rupee, fears of decline in remittances from the Gulf region and concerns surrounding the impact of high crude prices on India's growth and corporate earnings contributed to the sustained selling by FPIs.

Additionally, the selling has been driven by a combination of elevated US bond yields and tightening global liquidity, which have improved the relative attractiveness of developed market fixed income, Himanshu Srivastava, Principal - Manager Research at Morningstar Investment Research India, said. While Indian market valuations have corrected alongside the recent market decline, they continue to remain relatively elevated compared to several emerging market peers, which may still be prompting selective profit booking and reallocation, he added. Moreover, FPIs were sellers in other emerging markets, too, like Taiwan and South Korea. There is a risk-off trend in equity markets globally after the war broke out in West Asia.

Kitchens go cold as LPG crisis deepens in Capital



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 29: A prolonged Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) supply disruption has intensified across Bhubaneswar, leaving households scrambling for fuel, eateries rationing usage, and residents staging protests. While the government insists there is no actual shortage, a growing mismatch between cylinder bookings and deliveries has triggered allegations of black marketing and hoarding.

Frustration boiled over in localities such as Sundarpada, where residents carrying empty cylinders blocked roads Saturday, demanding immediate supply. Many claimed they received delivery confirmations without receiving the cylinders. "I booked my cylinder March 6. A week later, I got a

message saying it was delivered, but nothing reached me," said Ashok Pati, a resident adding, "When I visited the agency, they said it was a mistake and they had no stock. I've been waiting nearly a month."

Another consumer, Sujata Swain, questioned discrepancies in the system. "The subsidy was credited to my account, but the gas never came," she said. Students and office-goers have also been affected. One young consumer said he skipped college to queue at a depot from 4am. "They keep saying supply is coming, but the line hasn't moved for hours," he added.

The shortage has also disrupted Bhubaneswar's food landscape, particularly in busy commercial areas like Saheed Nagar. Restaurants report severe cuts in supply, forcing them to modify menus and

limit operating hours. S Krishnan, managing partner of a restaurant said, operations have been hit hard. "We need seven to eight commercial cylinders daily, but we're getting only two. We've stopped tandoor items and restricted dosa preparation to limited hours," he explained.

The financial toll is mounting. General Manager of Oberai Bakers and Café Chitta Pragnan Mohanty said, "We are incurring estimated losses of ₹60,000 to ₹70,000 per day across our outlets due to the shortage."

Despite widespread complaints, the state government insists LPG reserves are sufficient. Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Krushna Chandra Patra said the situation is under control, attributing disruptions to global supply challenges and panic booking.

"There is sufficient reserve, and there is no need for panic buying," the minister said, adding that authorities are prioritising domestic consumers while meeting around 50 per cent of commercial demand. Amid rising allegations of diversion, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi has ordered a statewide crackdown. Officials said more than 100 raids have been conducted, leading to the seizure of nearly 1,500 cylinders.

Two held for illegal LPG decanting in City

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 29: Two persons were arrested in connection with an illegal LPG decanting operation that had led to an explosion and subsequent fire March 21, leaving one person critically injured near Ananda Van in Kalinga Nagar under Bharatpur Police Station limits here, police informed Sunday.

According to reports, illegal decanting of LPG from a standard 14-kg domestic cylinder to smaller cylinders was being carried out without safety measures when a sudden explosion triggered a fire.

One person sustained severe burn injuries and was immediately shifted to Hi-Tech Medical College and Hospital for treatment. Fire services personnel rushed to the spot and brought the blaze under control, preventing further damage.

During investigation, police found that the main accused, Bibhu Prasad Bhuyan (37), had rented the shop under the guise of running an electrical repair unit and was illegally operating the LPG decanting business. The injured person was engaged at his shop.

Another accused Sukanta Behera (37) allegedly supplied LPG cylinders illegally from a local gas agency, facilitating the operation.

Both accused were arrested near Aiginia Market and later forwarded to court. Further investigation is underway, police added.

Patra quits panel over remarks on Biju Babu

Outrageous, false and irresponsible insinuations made against Biju Patnaik, a towering freedom fighter, visionary leader and son of the soil whose contribution to the nation is beyond question, says Patra

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 29: Senior Biju Janata Dal (BJD) leader and Rajya Sabha MP Sasmit Patra has tendered his resignation from Parliamentary Standing Committee on Communications and IT, chaired by BJP leader Nishikant Dubey, over an alleged disrespectful statement made by Dubey against Biju Patnaik recently.

In a letter addressed to Rajya Sabha Chairman Saturday, Patra earlier wrote, "In protest, and as a matter of principle, I am resigning from the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Communications and IT under the Chairmanship of Nishikant Dubey. I cannot, in good conscience, continue to serve under someone who makes disrespectful remarks about Late Shri Biju Patnaik, as he did today in a public statement."

The BJD leader also urged the chairman to accept his resignation from the said committee and forward it to the Lok Sabha Speaker, as the committee is under the Lok Sabha.

Taking to his X handle, Patra expressed deep shock and anguish over the BJP leader's statement and described the remarks as "outrageous, false and irresponsible insinuations made against Biju Patnaik, a



towering freedom fighter, visionary leader and son of the soil whose contribution to the nation is beyond question."

"Such attempts to distort history and malign a revered leader for political narratives are unacceptable and condemnable," added Patra.

Meanwhile, several other BJD leaders also raised serious objections to the remarks made by Dubey against Patnaik.

Notably, March 27, while speaking to media persons Dubey claimed that Jawaharlal Nehru fought the 1962 war with China with American support and in collaboration with CIA agents, while Biju Patnaik, then the Chief Minister of Odisha, acted as a link between the US government, the CIA, and Nehru.

MANN KI BAAT

Sambalpur lady farmer wins PM's heart

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 29: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday lauded Odisha fish farmer Sujata Bhuyan, who transformed her endeavour into a thriving business.

Addressing his monthly radio broadcast 'Mann Ki Baat', Modi said Sujata of Odisha's Sambalpur district was a homemaker, but she wanted to do something new and further help her family.

So, a few years ago, she started fish farming in the Hirakud reservoir, Modi said.

The early days were not easy for her. Numerous challenges, such as weather changes, arranging food for the fish and balancing household responsibilities were there, but her spirit remained unwavering, he said.

"Within just two or three years, she transformed her en-

deavour into a thriving business. Today, her success has become a new ray of hope for the women of the community," the Prime Minister said.

"Our fishermen brothers and sisters are not just warriors of the sea; they are also a strong foundation of a self-reliant India. Battling the waves of the sea even before dawn, they set out to strengthen their families and the country's economy," he further said.

Modi said the lives of hard-working fishermen are being made easier in many ways today. Whether it's port development or insurance for fishermen, many such initiatives are proving extremely helpful.

The weather patterns greatly impact their activities at sea. Keeping this in mind, they are being fully supported through technology, he pointed out.

"I am extremely happy that such efforts are not only en-



riching our fisheries sector; it is also instilling the spirit to innovate. Today, ever-new innovations are taking place in the fields of fisheries and seaweed, and our fishermen are becoming self-reliant," added the PM.

"I am feeling very happy as our PM praised me and my work. I have started fish farming in 2022 and now earning ₹7 to 8 lakh per annum," Bhuyan

said. She thanked Modi for recognising her effort and the Odisha government for its support.

During the radio programme, Modi also mentioned Prakash Rath from Odisha's Kendrapara for expressing his views on ways to advance women-led development.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi too extended his gratitude to the PM for mentioning the success story of Bhuyan and Rath in his 'Mann Ki Baat' programme.

"This is a matter of pride for the entire people of Odisha," Majhi wrote on X.

"Bhuyan has achieved remarkable success by cultivating fish through 'Cage Culture' in Hirakud reservoir by utilising the 'Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana' (PMMSY). Today, she has set an example for others by producing about 25 to 30 metric tonne of fish and earning ₹8 to 10 lakh,

annually," he said.

This inspiring journey of Sujata, who has become a self-reliant entrepreneur from a housewife, will definitely encourage other women of the state to become self-reliant, the CM said.

Majhi congratulated and extended best wishes to Sujata for her continuous efforts and success.

About 12 lakh youth have participated in the Central government's 'My Bharat Budget Quest' competition. However, Om Prakash Rath's thoughts and analysis presented through his essay on 'Women-led Development' impressed the Prime Minister, the CM said.

"The appreciation of Om Prakash Rath's essay shows the intellectual capacity of the young talent of our state. I extend my heartfelt greetings and congratulations to him for this success," he wrote on the social media platform.

Narla MLA alleges misbehaviour during police' visit; seeks justice



PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 29: BJD MLA from Narla Manorama Mohanty has alleged police misbehaved with her daughter when they visited her official residence in Kalahandi district, in connection with a case registered against her husband. According to an official, a case lodged March 15 at Narla police station, following a written complaint by tehsildar Bibhu Prasad Singh, alleges Mohanty's husband, who is also Narla block chairman, of threatening him. According to the tehsildar's complaint, Durga Prasad Mohanty had been interfering in various government works and creating obstacles. When the tehsildar opposed the interference, Prasad allegedly threat-

ened him over the phone with dire consequences. In his complaint, the tehsildar stated that such behaviour by a public representative towards a government official raises serious concerns about the safety and security of government employees. Based on the complaint, a case was registered at Narla police station March 15, under PS Case No. 72/26. Police have invoked Sections 296, 221, 224, 351(2) and 351(3) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. Prasad has reportedly been absconding since the case was registered. Police visited the MLA's residence to serve a notice, but he was not present, the officer added. Speaking to reporters, the MLA alleged that a team of male police officers entered her residence while neither she nor her husband was at home. "My daughter and maid, both women, were there when police forcefully entered my house without any prior intimidation. Police officers misbehaved with my daughter," she alleged. "If something had happened to my daughter, who would have been responsible? I leave it to the Chief Minister and Assembly Speaker to make the necessary decision to give justice to me, a woman MLA," she added. Earlier in the day, BJD youth wing president Chinmaya Sahu alleged that the ruling BJP has indulged in 'political vendetta' against the party MLA and her family as she did not agree to vote in favour of their candidate in the recently concluded Rajya Sabha election. On the other hand, BJP spokesperson Anil Biswal said, "A life-threatening allegation has been leveled against Narla MLA's husband. Police should be allowed to do their duty." If the MLA feels it is a 'politically motivated' action, she should move court, Biswal said.



TEMP INTENSIFIES: A person quenches thirst from a water tanker at Lower PMG in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

OP PHOTO

BAR ASSOCIATION ELECTIONS

CM highlights role of lawyers in delivering justice

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 29: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Sunday extended heartfelt congratulations to the newly elected members of various Bar Associations across the state following the elections conducted by Odisha State Bar Council (OSBC). In a message, the CM conveyed his best wishes to all those who emerged victorious, highlighting the crucial role played by the legal fraternity in strengthening the democratic framework. Majhi stated that the judiciary remains one of the most



important pillars of democracy, and lawyers act as the primary drivers in ensuring justice reaches the common people. He expressed confidence that the newly elected representatives

would work with integrity and commitment for the advancement of the legal community. "Under your leadership, the progress of the legal fraternity will be further strengthened, and efforts will continue to deliver justice to the common people," the CM said. He also emphasised that a strong and responsible Bar plays a vital role in upholding the rule of law and ensuring fair access to justice. Majhi hoped that the elected members would collaborate effectively and contribute positively to the state's judicial ecosystem. The elections, conducted un-

der the supervision of the OSBC, saw participation from lawyers across multiple districts, with newly elected office-bearers expected to assume responsibilities in the coming days. Elections to the Bhubaneswar Bar Association (BBA) for 2026-27 term concluded Saturday, with Ashok Kumar Chhotray elected president and Suman Routray as secretary. Susanta Dash was elected vice-president, Hiten Nayak as treasurer, while Sangeeta Pattnaik and Jyotirmayee Panda were elected joint secretary and assistant secretary, respectively.

Vig sleuths nab RI for accepting ₹30k bribe

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, March 29: In a significant anti-corruption crackdown, Vigilance sleuths Sunday apprehended a Revenue Inspector in Cuttack, while allegedly accepting a bribe of Rs 30,000 from a landowner to submit a favourable report in a mutation case. The accused has been identified as Rajaram Bandra, serving as Revenue Inspector (RI) of Mangarajpur, under Tangi-Choudwar Tahasil. According to information, the complainant had applied seeking conversion of his Patita land into homestead land as per guidelines of the Revenue and Disaster Management department. However, Bandra allegedly demanded Rs 30,000 to furnish a favourable report in the mutation case and reportedly asked the complainant to visit his office March 29 with the bribe amount. He also allegedly threatened that the report would not be processed without payment. Left with no alternative, the landowner approached Vigilance authorities, who laid a trap. The team caught Bandra in his office while accepting the bribe and seized the entire tainted amount of Rs 30,000 from his possession. Following the arrest, simultaneous searches are being conducted at two other locations linked to the accused to probe disproportionate assets (DA) angle. A case has been registered at Cuttack Vigilance Police Station (Case No. 13/2026) under Section 7 of the Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Act, 2018. Investigation into the matter is underway.

ODISHA KHADI FAIR 2026 CONCLUDES Khadi, village industries can drive rural prosperity: Mallik



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 23: Speaking at the closing ceremony of seven-day 'Odisha Khadi Fair 2026', which concluded on a successful note here Sunday, MSME Minister Gokulananda Mallik noted that khadi and village industries have immense potential to drive rural prosperity. Mallik also highlighted the vital role of khadi and village industries in strengthening rural livelihoods and economic growth, and urged citizens to incorporate khadi into their daily lives. The minister also appealed people to wear khadi garments at least once a week to support the sector. Mallik stressed the need to adopt digital marketing strategies to expand the reach of khadi products and encouraged artisans and weavers to focus on innovative designs to attract younger generations. As

part of the initiative, awareness on e-commerce was created among artisans, and around 50 artisan and weaver groups were on boarded onto the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) platform. MSME department Commissioner-cum-Secretary Rashmita Panda delivered the welcome address, while Khadi and Village Industries Board Secretary Sanjay Kumar Mishra proposed vote of thanks. The event was attended by board member and former minister Devendra Nath Mansingh, along with Arundhati Devi, among other dignitaries. This year, the event featured a total of 75 stalls with participation from artisans and weavers not only from Odisha but also from Telangana, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh. The event recorded an impressive business turnover of approximately Rs 1.2 crore.

BMC steps up to revive Bindusagar

BHUBANESWAR: In a significant step towards urban water restoration, Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) has undertaken scientific treatment and cleaning of the historic Bindusagar Lake, near Lingaraj Temple. As part of the initiative, unused boats from City Centre and Nicco Park, earlier lying idle under Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA), have been made operational and deployed for desludging activities in the lake. The cleaning drive is being carried out under the supervision of BMC's drainage division. With technical support from experts of the Indian Institute of Chemical Technology (IICT), a scientific water treatment process has been implemented alongside sludge removal. The initiative aims to maintain optimal water quality and ensure year-round cleanliness of the lake under the Swachh Survekshan programme. Spread over 22 acres, Bindusagar Lake had been facing severe water quality deterioration due to increased biological load, algal growth, and anthropogenic activities. Recognising the urgency, BMC took over the rejuvenation work and initiated restoration with advanced technology. To maintain water circulation, four pumps have been installed to facilitate continuous movement.

Governor calls for value-based education in shaping society

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 29: Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati Sunday emphasised the vital role of value-based education in shaping a peaceful and progressive society, urging teachers to nurture character alongside knowledge in students. Addressing the inauguration of the value education programme for teachers at the Ramakrishna Mission's Vivekananda Hall here, the governor quoted Swami Vivekananda's words, stated that education is not merely the accumulation of information but manifestation of inner perfection, strength and character. Extending his greetings to the participants, Kambhampati lauded Ramakrishna Mission for its longstanding contributions to education, social service, and spiritual awakening. Inspired by the ideals of Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda, the governor said, "The mission has consistently promoted a balanced system of education



that integrates intellectual, moral, and spiritual growth." Highlighting India's rich civilisational ethos, the governor noted that traditional education systems emphasised values such as truth, righteousness, peace, love and non-violence. "These are not merely ideals but principles to be practised in everyday life," he said. Referring to the current global scenario marked by conflicts and instability, he emphasised the need to promote understanding, tolerance, and dialogue. He stressed that teachers play a pivotal role as mentors and nation-builders, shaping young minds through both

guidance and example. The governor called upon teachers to guide at least one student towards becoming fearless in thought, compassionate in action, and committed to the service of humanity, asserting that even a single transformed individual can contribute significantly to societal change. He also said that values should not just be taught from books, but lived and experienced in daily life. Encouraging teachers to keep improving themselves, he added that institutions should create an environment that promotes ethics, social responsibility, and a spirit of service.

LOK ADHIKARA SAMABESH

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 29: Lok Adhikara Samabesh, organised by Lok Shakti Abhiyan, National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM), and Centre for Climate Justice marked the culmination of the 'Loka Adhikara Yatra' at Lower PMG here Sunday. On the occasion, a manifesto proposing an alternative, people-centric development model was released. Leaders at the convention appealed the state government, political parties and various sections of the society to deliberate on this alternative policy framework. The manifesto outlines several major demands, including publication of a white paper on the status of natural resources in the state, ban on indiscriminate mining and protection of bauxite reserves, no new coal mining or thermal power projects, promotion of small and medium industries based on agriculture and forest produce, legal guarantee for fair prices

Alternative development manifesto released

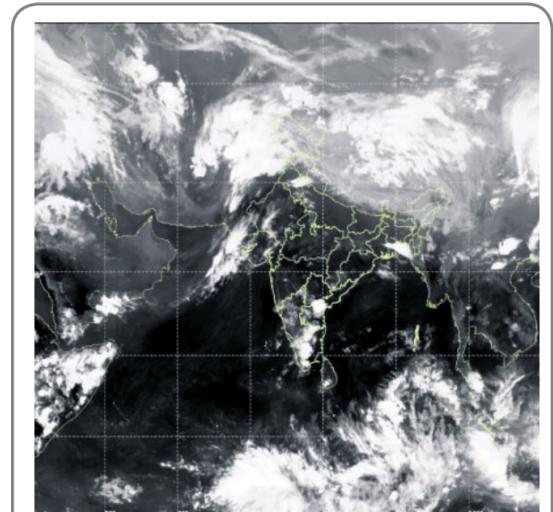


to farmers, end to forced land acquisition, protection of democratic movements from state repression, implementation of forest rights for tribal and traditional forest dwellers, land distribution to landless farmers, improved rural employment, education, and health-care systems, strong measures to control pollution and protect rivers and formation of constitutional bodies for justice to displaced people. The conference witnessed participation of thousands of people, activists across the state. The gathering strongly

opposed the exploitation of natural resources in the name of development and accused corporate entities of looting the state's resources. Leaders at the convention declared that the struggle to protect nature, environment, land, and livelihoods of people will continue. They emphasised that indiscriminate extraction of natural resources is destroying ecosystems, livelihoods, and pushing the state toward resource depletion. The meeting, coordinated by NAPM Odisha convener Narendra Mohanty, was addressed by

prominent environmentalist Prafulla Samantara, farmer leader Lingaraj, Gandhi Peace Foundation representative Biswajit, and social activist Kalyan Anand, among others. Speakers highlighted that people's movements are essential to protect land, water, forests, and natural resources. They described the yatra and the convention as a milestone in strengthening grassroots resistance and democratic struggles. Several intellectuals, activists, political leaders, and representatives of people's

movements expressed solidarity with the manifesto. They stressed the urgent need to safeguard constitutional rights and ensure sustainable development. Leaders from various grassroots movements shared their struggles against mining, industrial expansion, and displacement, calling for broader public support to protect the environment and livelihoods. Activists who have been fighting for environmental protection despite facing legal challenges and imprisonment were also felicitated at the event. The convention also featured cultural performances, including awareness songs by activist groups, reinforcing the message of resistance and environmental protection. The convention concluded with a strong call for a sustained, united struggle to protect natural resources, democratic rights, and livelihoods, while advocating for a more just and sustainable development model in Odisha.



WEATHER			
	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	35.9°	35.6°	Light to Moderate rain or thunderstorm very likely to occur at one or two places
Min Temp	26.0°	24.0°	
Humidity	81%	81%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	

Admin backs down amid mass protest against coal transit



Over 7,000 men and women from Kosala village, along with residents of more than 25 nearby villages in the coal belt, have been protesting transport of mineral through the village

POST NEWS NETWORK

Chhendipada, March 29: The district administration in Angul was forced to step back in the face of a large public protest against coal transportation through Kosala village under Chhendipada police limits.

Villagers have been staging a continuous roadside sit-in along the state highway for more than 23 days, opposing the movement of coal-laden trucks through their area. Sub-Collector Mayadhar Behera, Chhendipada tehsildar and senior police officials, along with more than 20 inspectors, reached the protest site and held discussions with residents late Saturday night. However, the talks failed to reach any resolution.

According to reports, more than 70 coal-laden trucks from the Naini coal mine have been stranded due to the protest since March 5. The company had planned to transport the coal from Chhendipada to Angul via Kosala village, triggering strong opposition

from locals. Villagers have been protesting day and night, demanding protection of their land and environment.

A meeting chaired by the District Collector last Wednesday to resolve the issue also ended without a breakthrough. Despite fresh efforts by the administration to resume transportation, villagers intensified their agitation after learning about the move.

Over 7,000 men and women from the village, along with residents of more than 25 nearby villages in the coal belt, have joined the protest. Around 1am Saturday, officials, including the Sub-Collector, three magistrates, two additional SPs, over 20 inspectors and 10 platoons of police force, reached the site for negotiations.

Villagers firmly stated that no coal trucks would be allowed to pass through the village until a new bypass road is constructed. Faced with the united stand of the protesters and their resolve to protect their land, the administration backed down.

The development has further strengthened unity among the villagers. Former Chhendipada MLA Sushant Kumar Behera, Maa Mati Jana Abhiyan convenor Sasmita Behera, Kosala village committee president Krutartha Dehury, secretary Siddharth Shankar Sahu, sarpanch Udit Pradhan, and members of over 25 village committees, including youth groups, participated in the agitation.

After Ganjam, tomato glut hits Bargarh farmers hard

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bargarh, March 29: After Ganjam, a severe glut in tomato production has pushed farmers in Bargarh district into distress, with many forced to abandon crops midway due to unremunerative prices.

The crisis has emerged across several vegetable-growing pockets, mirroring the challenges often seen in paddy procurement. Farmers say they are unable to recover even the basic cost of production, prompting them to leave a significant portion of their harvest uncollected in the fields.



The situation is particularly acute in areas under Gaisilet and Ambabhona blocks, including Ganiapali, Malamunda,

Chatipali, Keremeli, Jadaganja, Jugibandhali, Talpali, Janakeda, Buromunda and Gauren-munda, as well as Bara, Bad-dhara, Ruchida and Narangpur.

In Baddhara village, farmers Ramesh Behera and Suryakanta Behera have abandoned their tomato crops due to poor market demand. Similarly, Rabi Garia of Ghens under Tileimal panchayat, who cultivated tomatoes on 30 decimals of leased land, has left nearly half of his produce unharvested.

Farmers attribute the crisis to extremely low prices offered by traders, ranging from ₹2 to ₹3 per kilogram, making it fi-

nancially unviable to harvest and transport the produce.

The lack of adequate cold storage facilities in the district has further compounded the problem. Without proper storage infrastructure, farmers are unable to preserve their produce and are forced into distress sales or crop abandonment.

Ramesh Mohapatra, adviser to a joint farmers' organisation has urged the government to establish sufficient cold storage units in every block of the district to prevent such recurring losses and safeguard farmers' interests.

Kandhamal man held in Delhi narcotics case

PNN & AGENCIES

Phulbani, March 29: Delhi Police has arrested a 28-year-old man from Kandhamal district for allegedly supplying drugs to an interstate narcotics network, officials said Sunday.



The accused, identified as Aakash Kumar Dugal of Kandhamal, was tracked across forested areas and multiple locations in the state before being taken into custody. He was brought to New Delhi March 28 and formally arrested in connection with a case registered at Kalyanpuri police station.

Police said the arrest followed the investigation of an earlier case in which two alleged drug suppliers, Akbar and Firoz Khan from Ghaziabad, were arrested March 12. Officers seized more than 21.7 kilograms of cannabis and 46 grams of smack from them.

During interrogation, Khan allegedly told police that the contraband had been sourced from Dugal. Based on this information, police launched a search operation and later apprehended him from Kandhamal district.

Further investigation is underway, police said.

2 arrested for hostel warden's murder

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baisinga, March 29: Police in Mayurbhanj district have arrested two suspects and recreated the crime scene in the brutal killing of a hostel warden, officials said Sunday.

The accused, identified as Sanyasi Jena, 19, and his brother Shukadeb Jena, 21, were produced in court after the reconstruction exercise. A minor, who allegedly assisted the accused, has been presented before the Juvenile Justice Board in Baripada, Additional Superintendent of Police Ajay Barik said.

Police seized two knives, a plastic pipe, two mobile phones, a motorcycle, a motorcycle and cash amounting to ₹28,823 from

the accused, officials said at a press briefing held at Baisinga police station.

The incident occurred near Kalama March 21 at around 9pm, when hostel warden Sanyasi Das and headmistress Kadambini Rout were travelling on a motorcycle. They were attacked by unidentified assailants at a dimly lit spot.

Both victims were rushed to the district headquarters hospital in Balasore with the help of locals. Doctors declared Das dead on arrival, while Rout was discharged after receiving primary treatment. Police said Das' throat had been slit with a sharp weapon.

Following the incident, a scientific team along with senior police officers launched an in-

vestigation.

Preliminary findings suggest the accused had been visiting the school campus for over a year, allegedly trying to befriend female students by offering them chocolates. The headmistress had opposed their activities, leading to disputes.

Police said the accused were allegedly waiting for an opportunity to take revenge. After the attack, they went into hiding at a relative's house in Chandipur area of Balasore district.

Acting on a tip-off, a police team led by the station officer conducted a raid at around 3am Saturday and apprehended both suspects.

They were later sent to court after undergoing medical examination Sunday, police added.

VIMSAR PG student attempts suicide over 'mental harassment'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, March 29: A post-graduate medical student at Veer Surendra Sai Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (VIMSAR) at Burla in this district was rendered critical after she tried to commit suicide by consuming sedatives Saturday.

The student has been identified as Nihar Nalini Meher, 26, a first-year PG student in the Paediatrics Department of VIMSAR. She consumed an excessive dose of 'Phenobarbitone', after which she underwent dialysis. Her condition has shown slight improvement, sources said.

The incident has sparked concern in the area and widespread discussion within the hospital premises. Meher was rescued and is currently undergoing treatment in the intensive care unit (ICU), officials said. Her condition is reported to be stable.

Sources said the student had joined the department about a month ago and was reportedly under mental stress due to emergency duties and other workload pressures. Discussions are also gaining ground over alleged mental harassment by the head of the department, which may have contributed to the incident.

VIMSAR Superintendent and acting Director Dr Lal Mohan Nayak said the student will be questioned after recovery, and appropriate action will be taken based on the findings of the inquiry. Meher's husband is also a doctor and pursuing postgraduate studies in neurosurgery at SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack.

Fratricide over property: 2 held



POST NEWS NETWORK

Koraput/Narayanpatna, March 29: Police in Narayanpatna have arrested two brothers for allegedly murdering their elder sibling over a property dispute in Kendumunda village under Tentulipadar panchayat.

The accused have been identified as Karla Huika and Lingu Huika. Lakshmi SDPO Manoj Behera said Sunday that the two were taken into custody following an investigation into the incident.

According to police, the victim, Palus Huika, 40, the eldest among four brothers, held ownership of the family property. The accused had reportedly been in dispute with him over sharing the land.

Palus went to his brothers' house March 27 evening over a financial matter related to borrowed money. An argument ensued, which soon turned violent. Police said the two younger brothers tied him with a cloth and assaulted him brutally before attacking him with a sharp weapon, leading to his death on the spot.

The victim's wife, Tulasi, who tried to intervene, was threatened by the accused. She later lodged a written complaint at Narayanpatna police station. Police registered a case, recovered the body and sent it for post-mortem. During questioning, the accused confessed to the crime, police said. Both were produced in court Sunday.

Narayanpatna police station IIC Mamata Panda was present during the press briefing.

AI trap helps arrest poacher in Similipal

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, March 29: A suspected poacher was arrested in the Similipal Wildlife Sanctuary after an alert from an AI-enabled Trailguard camera triggered a swift late-night operation by forest officials.

According to an official press note issued by the Similipal South Wildlife Division, the incident occurred at about 1:35am March 28, when staff of Podadiha wildlife range received a photo alert indicating suspicious movement inside the forest.

Acting swiftly, a special team rushed to the spot, took up concealed positions and kept the area under surveillance. The team apprehended one suspect who attempted to flee.

The accused has been identified as Dasarath Singh, 50, of J.S. Jambhi village under Kaptipada police limits in Ma-



yurbhanj district.

During the search, officials seized a single-barrel muzzle-loading (SBML) handmade gun, 155 grams of black explosive stored in a plastic container and 25 grams of white explosive in a plastic bottle. Other materials recovered included 220 cycle balls, 10 cotter pins, six fish net balls and two matchboxes, all suspected to be used for poaching.

According to the press note, prima facie, the accused vio-

123 kg of sambar meat seized; 4 poachers held

Thakurmunda: Forest officials seized 123 kg of sambar meat and arrested four poachers in the Thakurmunda wildlife range of Mayurbhanj district. The accused have been identified as Bikram Mahali, Arjun Mahali and Sunil Mahali of Asankud Mahalisahi under Hatigoda gram panchayat, and Derega Dangil of Ranibhol village. According to officials, the sambar was allegedly hunted in the Similipal forest March 26. Acting on a tip-off, a team led by the assistant conservator of forests and the range officer conducted a raid. Two poachers were intercepted while returning from the forest and venison was recovered from their possession. One suspect managed to flee, while another was apprehended on the spot. Subsequent investigation led to the arrest of three more persons involved in the case. Forest officials also seized two blood-stained axes along with the meat. A case has been registered under the Thakurmunda wildlife range.

lated provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 — specifically Sections 9, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 39 and 52 — and is punishable under Section 51 of the Act, as amended up to 2022.

The accused was produced before the Chief Judicial Magistrate's court in Baripada and forwarded for judicial remand.

Forest officials said further investigation is underway to ascertain the involvement of other members in the poaching network. Samrat Gouda, Deputy Director of Similipal South Wildlife Division, confirmed that efforts are ongoing to identify and apprehend accomplices.

VSS Airport turns flyer-friendly with launch of 2 new services

Jharsuguda: Two new passenger-friendly initiatives have been launched at the Veer Surendra Sai Airport here to improve their air travel experience. Union Civil Aviation Minister K Ram Mohan Naidu Saturday inaugurated a dedicated pick-up and drop-off lane and free high-speed Wi-Fi services via virtual mode from Rajkot airport. The newly introduced lane is designed to streamline vehicle movement on the airport premises and enhance passenger safety. Officials said the facility will help ensure smoother access and reduce congestion for travellers. In addition, passengers will now have access to free high-speed Wi-Fi, enabling them to stay connected digitally while at the airport. Airport Director Upendra Nath Dhaundia said the initiatives aim to strengthen infrastructure and provide a more comfortable and efficient travel experience to flyers. He added that such steps will further improve service standards at the airport.

Keonjhar BJD hit by mass resignations

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, March 29: Keonjhar Municipal Vice-Chairman Barada Prasanna Das and nine BJD councillors resigned Sunday and are set to join the BJP in Bhubaneswar Monday in the presence of Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi.

The resignations mark a significant setback for the BJD in Keonjhar amid a shifting political landscape following Majhi's elevation as Chief Minister, which has triggered defections from other parties. Earlier, BJD MLAs from Ghasipura and Champua had backed the Chief Minister, leading to the suspension of Champua MLA Sanatan Mahakud.

Das said the BJD, originally formed as a non-Congress party, has deviated from its founding principles by aligning with Congress during the Rajya Sabha elections.

He cited dissatisfaction with party leadership as the key reason for the resignations.

Those who quit include councilors Sarat Sahu, Abhinash Mishra, Dayanidhi Patra, Padmini Patra, Bhagaban Naik, Sabita Pattnaik, Hemanta Pati and Karunakar Marandi, along with General Secretary Shubhendra Pattnaik. Resignation letters were submitted to the state leadership, with copies sent to the district unit.

BJD district president Ashish Chakraborty alleged the move was influenced by mining transporters' money, but termed its impact temporary.

The BJD currently holds 13 of 21 wards in the municipality, while the BJP has eight. Analysts say the shift could benefit the BJP ahead of civic polls, though voter response remains uncertain.

IndianOil

Reconstitution of IndianOil Retail Outlet.

M/s Nilachal Service Station, District: Puri, Odisha

M/s Nilachal Service Station, District Puri, Odisha was operated by Late Jayakrushna Brahmachary as the Managing Partner. An application for reconstitution of the said dealership has been received by Indian Oil Corporation Limited from the beneficiaries of Late Jayakrushna Brahmachary, as per the decree passed in Civil Suit No. 181/1994 dated 22.07.2025. If any person has any claim as partner of M/s Nilachal Service Station, he/she may submit his/ her claim within 30 days from the date of publication of this notice at the following address:

Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. (MD), Bhubaneswar Divisional Office, Indian Oil Bhawan, 2nd Floor, A/2, Chandrasekharpur, Bhubaneswar-751024, Odisha

Claim received after 30 days shall not be entertained. Thereafter, the Corporation shall process the reconstitution application as per its prevailing policy, without further reference.

बैंक ऑफ इंडिया

Bank of India BOI

Bank of India

Zonal Office : Star House, 1/1-D, Jayadev Vihar, Nayapalli Bhubaneswar, Odisha, PIN-751015

POSSESSION NOTICE

[Rule-8 (1) & (2)] of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules-2002

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the **Bank of India** under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under Section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice calling upon the Borrower(s)/Co-Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s)/Mortgagor(s) in the loan account given below to repay the amount mentioned in the Notice plus interest & expenses thereon within **60 days** from the date of receipt of the said Notice. The Borrower(s) having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to Borrower(s)/Co-Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s)/Mortgagor(s) and the public in general that the undersigned has taken **Symbolic Possession** of the property described here-in below in exercise of the powers conferred on him / her under sub-section (4) of section 13 of the Act read with Rule-8 of the Security Interest Enforcement Rules, 2002. Borrower(s)/Co-Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s)/Mortgagor(s) in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property & any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the **Bank of India, Chandaka Industrial Complex Branch** for the amount stated below with interest thereon. **The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of Sub-section (8) of the Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to them, to redeem the secured assets.**

CHANDAKA INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX BRANCH / Name & Address of the Borrower(s) / Co-Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s) / Mortgagor(s)	Liabilities due as per Notice	Date of Demand Notice/ Date of Possession (Symbolic) Notice	Description of Immovable Property/ies
1) (For Home Loan) Borrower & Mortgagor: Mr. Saroj Lala, S/o- Susanta Lala / Co-Borrower & Mortgagor: Mr. Sanjay Kumar Lala, S/o- Susanta Lala, Both are At: Sathilo, Bhubaneswar, Dist.: Khurda, Odisha, PIN-752102, 2) (For Cash Credit) Borrower: M/s. Lalani Bakery & Food Products, Prop.: Mr. Saroj Lala (Mortgagor), S/o- Susanta Lala / Guarantor & Mortgagor: Mr. Sanjay Kumar Lala, S/o- Susanta Lala, Both are At: Sathilo, Bhubaneswar, Dist.: Khurda, Odisha, PIN-752102	₹69,15,524.58 + interest & other charges thereon	03.01.2026 / 26.03.2026	All the part and parcel of Land and Building situated over Conversion Khata No.: 316/105, Corresponding to Khata No.: 120, Plot No.: 154, Total Area: Ac.0.120dec., KISSAM: Gharabari at Mouza: Sathilo, PS: Baliaanta (No.: 80), SRO: Baliaanta, Tahasil: Baliaanta (No.: 358), Dist.: Khurda, PIN-752102, Odisha standing in the name of Mr. Saroj Lala, S/o- Susanta Kumar Lala and Mr. Sanjay Kumar Lala, S/o- Susanta Kumar Lala , Bounded by- North: Road, South: Dhruva Sahoo, East: Plot No.: 155, West: Boundary Line of Mouza

Place: Bhubaneswar
Date: 30.03.2026

Authorized Officer
Bank of India

FOCUS GEOPOLITICS

IRAN'S WATER WEAPON



If Iran retaliates 'without restriction,' the consequences could devastate the Gulf's saltwater kingdoms

before US markets opened on 23 March, aiming to steady oil prices; he later extended the deadline to 6 April. Despite Trump touting talks with Iran (which the Islamic Republic has denied are taking place), ongoing US military deployments to the region suggest a possible escalation. The Trump administration has also refused to rule out seizing Kharg Island—through which 90% of Iran's oil exports flow—as part of an all-out effort to cripple the Iranian economy and force the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz.

If the US made such a move, the Gulf countries would likely bear the brunt of retaliation. After earlier US strikes on Kharg Island, Iran accused the UAE of facilitating the attacks. On 25 March, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, speaker of the Iranian parliament, warned that if America and Israel occupy an Iranian island with the support of a regional power, "all the vital infrastructure of that regional country will, without restriction, become the target of relentless attacks." Although Ghalibaf was not explicit, the warning likely refers to the UAE and the islands of Kharg and Larak, but may also allude to the disputed islands of Abu Musa and the Greater and Lesser Tunbs, seized by Iran in 1971.

The Iranian regime is fighting for its survival. It cannot defeat the US or Israel directly, but it can inflict widespread economic pain and strain relations between the US and the Gulf, as well as among the Gulf Cooperation Council's six members. As the clock ticks down to Trump's deadline, will the US jeopardize the Gulf's desalination lifelines in a risky bid to seize Kharg Island and reopen the Strait of Hormuz? If Iran retaliates "without restriction," the consequences could devastate the Gulf's saltwater kingdoms.

The writer is Associate Professor of History and Director of the Middle East Center at the University of Utah.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

The oil-rich monarchies of the Persian Gulf are often described as petrostates. But the US-Israeli war with Iran has highlighted that they are also saltwater kingdoms, societies whose survival depends on desalination, or converting seawater into potable water at industrial scale. Life in the Gulf relies on the "black magic" of turning oil and oil revenue into water. This technological prowess has fuelled the region's dynamic growth, but now it looms as its greatest vulnerability.

Since the 1970s, the Gulf countries have embraced fossil-fuel-powered solutions to acute water scarcity. Today, the region produces more than 40% of the world's desalinated water in more than 400 plants. It is difficult to overstate their dependence on desalination, which provides 99% of drinking water supplies in Qatar, more than 90% in Bahrain and Kuwait, 86% in Oman, 70% in Saudi Arabia, and 42% in the United Arab Emirates.

When the United States and Israel first attacked Iran, they targeted the country's military sites and leadership. But on 7 March, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi accused the US of committing a "blatant and desperate crime" by attacking a freshwater desalination plant on Qeshm Island. "Attacking Iran's infrastructure is a dangerous move with grave consequences," he added, noting that the US, not Iran, set this precedent.

While the claim remains unverified, its implications are unmistakable. Araghchi signalled a potential shift in the war's logic: water systems, long treated as civilian lifelines and protected under the Geneva Conventions, had been drawn into the conflict. His warning was clear. If Iran's infrastructure were attacked, Gulf desalination plants would be fair game.

That same day, Israel bombed some 30 oil depots in Tehran and nearby Alborz province.

Oil spilled into streets as a dark haze of smoke and toxic fumes engulfed the capital city. Iran has since responded by widening its targets across the region. On 8 March, Bahrain reported that Iran had caused "material damage" to one of its desalination plants, although authorities clarified that there had been "no impact on water supplies or water network capacity."

The war has since escalated. Strikes from both sides have hit all types of civilian infrastructure, from hotels to airports, erasing nearly every pre-existing taboo and redline. Among the most concerning are strikes on or near nuclear facilities. Iran has targeted the town of Dimona, just miles from the Shimon Peres Negev Nuclear Research Center. Israel struck near Iran's nuclear power plant in Bushehr, forcing Russian Rosatom staff to evacuate, and, more recently, attacked Iran's uranium processing facility in Yazd and Khondab Heavy Water Complex.

But global attention is squarely focused on fossil-fuel infrastructure. On 25 March, French Finance Minister Roland Lescure said that 30-40% of the Gulf's refining capacity has been damaged or destroyed, removing 11 million barrels per day from the international market and triggering an oil crisis, particularly in Asia. Moreover, Iranian strikes on Qatar's Ras

Laffan facilities have wiped out 17% of the country's liquefied natural gas export capacity.

As oil prices surged and the Strait of Hormuz remained largely shut, US President Donald Trump issued a stark ultimatum on 21 March, threatening to "obliterate" Iran's power plants if the country did not reopen the strait within 48 hours. In response, Iranian military spokesman Ebrahim Zolfaqari warned that the Islamic Republic would retaliate by striking regional infrastructure, including "water desalination facilities."

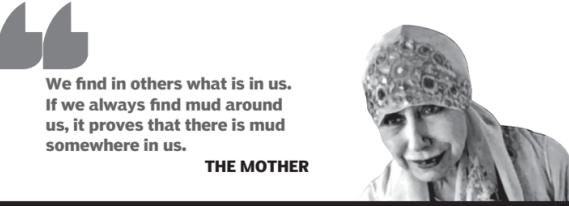
Shortly afterward, pro-regime Telegram and social-media channels began circulating a chilling list of potential targets, including Saudi Arabia's Ras al-Khair and Shuaiba desalination plants and the UAE's Taweelah desalination plant and Barakah nuclear power plant. As the Hudson Institute's Can Kasapo lu explains, the vulnerability of desalination infrastructure is a different category of risk. Unlike disruptions to oil markets, which primarily trigger economic consequences by raising prices and constraining supply, striking desalination facilities "directly threatens daily survival in some of the world's most water-scarce states."

Facing mounting pressure, Trump abruptly announced a five-day pause on strikes against Iranian power plants just hours



Michael Christopher Low

LIFE IN THE GULF RELIES ON THE 'BLACK MAGIC' OF TURNING OIL AND OIL REVENUE INTO WATER



We find in others what is in us. If we always find mud around us, it proves that there is mud somewhere in us.

THE MOTHER

Fuel Politics

Fuel has been a long time great economic and political tool in the hands of the government in India. It enables the government to make windfall gains when crude prices fall and with the earnings it makes its budgetary allocations according to its policies which cater to its whims and fancies. It has never passed on the benefits of lower international prices to the citizens. But whenever crude prices rise, the government immediately makes the people pay for it instead of cushioning them against the shocks. The whole economic-political calculus, however, changes, when elections are round the corner. Then the government tries to project itself as a friend of the people coming to their rescue. India is now going through this phase when the war in West Asia has caused an unprecedented global fuel crisis at a time when four states and one Union Territory are going to the polls. The government now seems to care more for the ruling party's political cost than the rules of economics it should follow. It reduced Central excise duty on petrol and diesel for domestic consumption by Rs 10 a litre on 27 March. The move benefits oil marketing companies (OMCs) directly but not the consumers. Only indirect benefit accrues to the people by cushioning them from higher prices. Before the war, global crude benchmarks were hovering around \$70-75 a barrel, which translated into a domestic fuel cost of about Rs 40 a litre. But it was sold above Rs 100 after accounting for refining, freight, Central excise and state levies, dealer commissions and OMC margins. Within this, Central excise comprised the biggest component. But now, Indian OMCs are losing about Rs 48 a litre after absorbing the ongoing rise in global crude prices. According to Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, Central excise stood at about Rs 24-30 a litre for petrol and diesel, and by forgoing a part of it, the government is taking a huge hit on tax revenue. This, we must understand, is not generosity in any manner.

The government also imposed export duties on diesel and aviation turbine fuel, ensuring adequate domestic availability. Officials say the moves attempt to shield Indians from the global price and supply shocks amid the West Asia crisis. But truth be told, the actual reason behind the duty cuts is the Assembly elections due next month. The move gives a temporary breather to consumers for now.

No other item causes as much volatility in the Indian economy as oil prices. When global crude rises, inflation anxieties spread quickly across households, transport costs ripple through supply chains and governments scramble to contain the political fallout.

India imports roughly 90 per cent of its crude requirements which makes it a key component in its fiscal and political calculations. What could have been a technocratic debate about tax policy has now become a politically sensitive issue because of the Assembly elections.

As of March, the Centre collects about Rs 21.90 per litre in excise duty on petrol and Rs 17.80 per litre on diesel, through a layered structure that includes basic excise duty, special additional excise duty, road and infrastructure cess, and the agriculture infrastructure development cess. These levies generate enormous fiscal income. Central excise collections from petroleum products have averaged about Rs 2.6-2.7 lakh crore annually in recent years, making fuel taxes one of the government's largest non-GST revenue streams. That is also a major reason for fuel not being included under the GST umbrella.

The current volatility illustrates the problem vividly. Brent's surge to \$115 — even though temporary — has rekindled fears of rising pump prices. In an election season, the optics of expensive fuel can quickly overshadow broader economic narratives which anyway are not holding much strength for this government currently. The ensuing polls have, without doubt, made the government cut excise duties to soften retail prices and signal relief to voters for a very limited period. It is not bothered that such relief is expensive. Each Re 1 reduction in excise duty costs the exchequer roughly Rs 13,000-16,000 crore annually. Even the modest cut could therefore wipe out tens of thousands of crores in revenue at a time when the government is attempting to narrow the fiscal deficit while sustaining high infrastructure spending.

For obvious reasons the government would not mind incurring the additional expenditure if it gives them huge electoral dividends. The stakes are too high this time with electoral fortunes in key states such as West Bengal, Kerala and Tamil Nadu going to be decided. Whether the duty cuts would prevail in May if the global prices stay higher for longer and the electoral verdict is known is not a very big guess.

WISDOM CORNER

We're all going to die, all of us; what a circus! That alone should make us love each other, but it doesn't. We are terrorized and flattened by trivialities. We are eaten up by nothing.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI

I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by conscious endeavor.

HENRY DAVID THOREAU

Beginning today, treat everyone you meet as if they were going to be dead by midnight. Extend to them all the care, kindness and understanding you can muster, and do it with no thought of any reward. Your life will never be the same again.

OG MANDINO

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1282:** The people of Palermo massacred 2,000 French residents in the Sicilian Vespers, a revolt against the Angevin king Charles I.
- 1853:** Dutch painter Vincent van Gogh, one of the greatest Post-Impressionists, known for works that convey not only keen observations of nature but the anguish of a mental illness, was born.
- 1858:** Hyman L. Lipman of Philadelphia received a U.S. patent for a pencil with an attached eraser.
- 1865:** The Treaty of Paris is signed, ending the Crimean War. Russia lost the war to a coalition of the Ottoman Empire, France, Britain, and Sardinia.
- 1867:** The United States buys Alaska from Russia. US Secretary of State William H. Seward struck a deal to purchase Alaska from Russia for \$7.2 million. The decision was mocked as "Seward's folly," not least because it was a well-known fact that Russia had been attempting to sell Alaska since before the American Civil War. Seward's critics were silenced, however, following the Klondike gold rush, in which about \$50 million was mined—enough to justify the price of the purchase many times over.
- 1981:** In Washington, D.C., barely two months after his inauguration as the 40th president of the United States, Ronald Reagan was shot and seriously wounded by would-be assassin John W. Hinckley, Jr.

SPECTRUM CONNECTIVITY

Build railroads, not runways

At a critical time of fuel scarcity, the push to the nearly a decade-old India's Regional Connectivity Scheme—UDAN (Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik)—is confronting a hard truth: aviation cannot be socially engineered into viability. Despite a renewed push involving tens of thousands of crores in public spending—now again allocated Rs 28,840 crore in expanded commitments—the scheme's structural weaknesses are becoming more pronounced, not less. The country needs to review the policy as railway and regional metro transit are serving better.

What was conceived as a democratisation of air travel risks turning into a cautionary tale of misplaced priorities. Even in the North-East with a difficult terrain the scheme could not succeed as most operators ceased services. The reason is no different from other areas—routes could not attract enough passengers.

Between 2020 and March 2026, India saw multiple fatal helicopter and small aircraft crashes involving military, government, and pilgrimage services. Major incidents include 2022

Pawan Hans accident in the Arabian Sea, and several crashes in Uttarakhand's Kedarnath sector killing multiple pilgrims in 2025. Authorities have periodically suspended services and tightened safety norms, but risks remain significant as the latest Baramati accident of a private company plane killing Maharashtra minister Ajit Pawar shows.

UDAN's premise was simple: build airports, subsidise airlines, and demand will follow. But aviation demand does not arise from infrastructure alone. It is a function of income, business activity, and time sensitivity. Many small airports revived under the scheme remain underutilised or intermittently operational. Seven airports were closed in Uttar Pradesh alone. Ayodhya airport has hardly any commercial flight. The reason is straightforward—passenger volumes are too low. India's air traffic continues to be concentrated along major metro and high-density routes, while Tier-III towns lack the economic base to sustain regular flights. Even where routes exist, load factors remain weak. Aircraft

often fly half-empty, making operations commercially unviable despite subsidies. Smaller airlines operating these routes have struggled with thin margins, high maintenance costs, and low yields. Many have either exited or reduced operations.

If UDAN was already fragile, the ongoing Iran conflict has exposed its vulnerability. The war has disrupted global energy flows and pushed up ATF prices, which already account for 30-40% of airline operating costs. Since early March 2026, fuel prices have surged due to supply disruptions, forcing Indian airlines such as Air India, IndiGo, and Akasa Air to impose fuel surcharges. For regional aviation, this is devastating.

The crisis is not limited to fuel. Currency depreciation, maintenance costs, and insurance premiums have all risen, adding pressure on airlines. At the same time, passenger growth has slowed. India's aviation sector is expected to incur losses of up to Rs 10,500 crore in FY26 due to high costs and subdued traffic. This combination—rising costs and weak demand—is lethal for regional routes.

The government's response to UDAN's shortcomings has been to expand—adding over 100 destinations, more helipads, and committing large public funds. Yet expansion does not fix viability; it spreads inefficiency. Each new airport brings fixed costs—maintenance, staffing, security—without assured passenger traffic, risking underused assets turning into liabilities.

India's connectivity needs are undeniable, but aviation is not always the best solution. For distances of 300-800 km, railroads—especially trains like Vande Bharat Express—offer faster, cheaper, and more energy-efficient travel. Railways carry more passengers, require less investment, and integrate better with local transport systems. Strengthening rail links between Tier-II and Tier-III cities could yield far higher returns than building idle airports.

A more rational approach would prioritise economic viability over geographic coverage, and invest where demand already exists—or can realistically emerge. In many parts of India, that may not mean more flights. It may simply mean better trains. INFA



Shivaji Sarkar

WHAT WAS CONCEIVED AS A DEMOCRATISATION OF AIR TRAVEL RISKS TURNING INTO A CAUTIONARY TALE OF MISPLACED PRIORITIES

Glory to grief

Sir, Vijaypat Singhania, the former chairman of Raymond Ltd, has passed away at 87, leaving behind a legacy marked by both towering success and poignant personal struggle. He transformed Raymond into a global textile powerhouse, crafting iconic brand identities through campaigns like "The Complete Man." Yet, his later years revealed a stark contrast. Despite immense wealth and stature, Singhania endured a deeply public family dispute, alleging that he and his wife were forced out of their own residence and stripped of privileges by his son. His candid admission that transferring his wealth was his "biggest mistake" reflected profound regret. Singhania's life underscores the duality of achievement and vulnerability—where extraordinary professional triumphs coexisted with personal turmoil, offering a sobering reflection on legacy, family, and the cost of success.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Graceful on the court

Sir, Spain's women's badminton great Carolina Marin, who has hung up her boots, is destined to join the game's hall of fame. A series of left knee injuries forced the 32-year-old to retire from the sport. One of the greatest players ever to grace the game, Carolina, the three-time world champion and Rio de Janeiro Olympics gold medalist, was a sight to behold on the court. With her grunts, she reminded fans of the Russian tennis great Maria Sharapova. Though the noises she made on the court distracted and unnerved opponents, the left-handed Carolina was as graceful as a dancer at her best: literally because she was a flamenco dancer in her younger days. Ranked world number one for a record 66 weeks, the Spanish was known for her no-holds-barred, relentless attack on her opponents. When the women's world badminton in particular has no real "entertainers" at present, the absence of Carolina Marin will be widely felt by her countless fans.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

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

COOKING UNDER LPG CRISIS

Delhi eateries battle 'beizatti', rising costs



Eateries in national capital reel under LPG shortages and rising costs, cutting menus and staff, yet stay open fearing shame

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 29: Small eateries, long the backbone of the bustling food streets of the national capital, are losing their spark. Pushed by dwindling LPG supply and soaring black-market prices, many are being forced to reshape menus, reduce staff, and return to cooking on coal and wood.

For Neeraj Chawla, who has been running Vaishno Rasoi in Rajouri Garden for the past year after stepping away from a joint family setup, the struggle is both financial and personal. Shutting shop would make sense, he confides, but it is the fear of "beizatti" (shame) that keeps his stoves - now largely running on coal and wood - alight, even as hope begins to flicker.

"Beizatti nahi ho ke band karke baith gaya hai, isiliye chala raha hoon (I keep it running to avoid the shame of shutting down)," Chawla told PTI, explaining why he continues despite high operational costs and mounting losses.

Amid the West Asia crisis, the government has revised the priority order for allocating domestically produced natural gas, placing LPG production alongside CNG and piped cooking gas at the top. This has led to an alleged supply crunch for hotels and restaurants which use market priced commercial LPG.

With daily sales, which once hovered around ₹12,000 on a

good day, slipping further as coal and wood double cooking time and reduce efficiency, Chawla has already had to lay off two staff members.

From neighbourhood staples like KK Da Dhaba in Tagore Garden, a stone's throw from Chawla's eatery, to Khadak Singh Da Dhaba in Malviya Nagar, farther across the city, small eateries are facing the same struggle.

Pankaj Dawar at KK Da Dhaba has turned to coal and slashed fried items from the menu.

Disappointment was written large on his face as he said, "No layoffs yet. But LPG prices in the black market are crazy, beyond reach of most people."

The situation is more worrisome for Rajinder Singh Bhandari, owner of Khadak Singh Da Dhaba, who hasn't had LPG for a week.

"No non-veg, only a temporary stove on the tandoor. LPG mil hi nahi raha (can't find LPG anywhere)," he says, adding that daily sales have fallen from ₹30,000 to half.

Delhi Food and Supplies Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa said the government has taken steps to address the issue by increasing cylinder allocation.

In a post on X, Sirsa said the allocation of commercial LPG cylinders has been increased from 20 per cent to 50 per cent of the average daily consumption.

He added that the government is taking strict action to prevent black marketing and hoarding, while assuring residents and businesses of uninterrupted supply.

According to the minister, the allocation has been raised from 1,800 to 4,500 cylinders (19 kg equivalent) per day.

To think that only small eateries are bearing the brunt of

People familiar with the situation said that a cylinder, typically priced between ₹1,000 and ₹1,500, is now being sold for anywhere between ₹3,000 and ₹4,500

the situation would be misleading. Franchise chains and plush cafes alike are in the same boat, scrambling for quick-fixes to minimise losses and keep their kitchens afloat.

The sudden LPG shortage has forced restaurants to rethink how they cook, and Secret Ingredient, a consultancy that advises restaurants, has been fielding nonstop calls.

"We've been actively working with brands to identify credible induction and electric equipment partners, including solutions that can handle high-intensity formats like woks and bulk cooking.

"Alongside this, we're helping teams rethink menu design and prep structures to reduce unnecessary gas dependency, whether through smarter batching, sequencing, or real-locating certain processes to alternative heat source," said Sid Mathur, founder-director of Secret Ingredient.

Popular chains such as Roll-sKing, trendy casuals like Bomba Pizzeria & Taqueria, and high-end Moroccan-inspired restaurant Sorbo in Gurugram are adjusting to these new realities.

Even Bomba's signature items have felt the pinch. At its MG Road outlet, Neapolitan pizza bases - known to be gas-guzzling - are temporarily off the menu.

At Sorbo, the adaptation has been more radical.

Frying and steaming have moved to electric alternatives, the pizza oven now runs on apple wood, and the clay oven uses lava stone to slash gas use. Even iconic slow-cooked dishes like 'Moroccan Lamb Tagine' and 'Truffle Mushroom Soup' have been paused.

"These changes keep operations running without compromising quality," said founder Bhagesh Tekriwal, adding that the LPG crisis and spike in prices has slashed margins further in an already tight industry.



A supporter of the LGBTQIA+ community during a protest against the passage of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026, at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi, Sunday

DMC ACT REVISION ₹1,000 fine for dog owner if pet found sans leash on street

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 29: The fine for letting a dog roam in a public street without a leash, which currently is ₹50 under the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957, will increase to ₹1,000 if the Parliament passes the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2025.

This change is part of the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026, which was introduced by Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Jitin Prasada in the Lok Sabha on Friday. The bill proposes several amendments to the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act of 1957. Under the proposed amendments, the fine for tethering cattle on a public road will also rise from ₹100 to ₹1,000. Additionally, defacing or destroying a house number, which currently incurs a ₹50 fine, will be increased to ₹1,000.

Other fines are set to increase as well. For instance, discharging fireworks that may cause danger will go from ₹50 to ₹500. Preventing a municipal official from entering premises, which also carries a fine of ₹50, will increase to ₹500.

JeM operatives turn to crime networks in Northern India

FUNDS DRY UP, STRATEGY SHIFTS

Post the Pahalgam attack, security is high both at the borders and within Jammu and Kashmir. Not only have infiltrations become hard, but operating within the Valley is tough owing to heavy scrutiny



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 29: With the Jaish-e-Mohammad largely remaining in reset mode, its operatives within India have been told to find new ways of raising funds for operations in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Jaish-e-Mohammad was one of the hardest hit terror groups during Operation Indoor. Not only was its headquarters in Bahawalpur razed to rubble, but its chief Masood Azhar ended up losing several of his closest family members.

Although there are scores of Jaish-e-Mohammad operatives waiting in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) to infiltrate

into India, they have not been able to do so owing to very high security. Now, the Jaish-e-Mohammad cadres in Jammu and Kashmir have been told to raise funds and recruit locals to carry out attacks.

An Intelligence Bureau official said that there are several overground workers (OWGs) in Jammu and Kashmir, and they have been told to run an extortion racket. The official said that these OWGs have been preparing a hit list, not just in Jammu and Kashmir, but in Punjab, Haryana and New Delhi. The idea is to target rich individuals and extort money from them. Further, these operatives are also plan-

ning kidnappings in exchange for ransom, the official added.

In addition to this, the Jaish-e-Mohammad is also building a spy network at the behest of the ISI. The OWGs have been told to identify vulnerable people in the bordering states and trap them into joining the spy network, officials say.

The Jaish-e-Mohammad continues to nurture 100s of OWGs in Jammu and Kashmir. They have been instructed not to indulge in acts of terror in the Valley at the moment. Instead, they have been told to raise funds through kidnappings and extortions. Another official said that there is a clear sign that the outfit is taking things slow, because it is very hard to operate now.

Another major issue that the Jaish-e-Mohammad is facing relates to funding. The cash flow has almost stopped, and hence its operatives in the Valley have been told to fend for themselves.

Officials say that the Jaish-e-Mohammad realises that infiltrations have become extremely hard. This has led the outfit to change its strategy and think about completely localised operations.

First Jammu International Marathon draws massive turnout despite rain

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, March 29: Braving incessant rain, thousands of enthusiastic runners took part in Jammu's first-ever international marathon, flagged off by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, who also joined the participants, here Sunday.

The marathon started at sunrise from the MA Stadium, featuring three race categories, including Half Marathon (21 km), 10 km Fitness Run, and 5 km Fun Run. A total prize pool of ₹1.33 Crore will be distributed among the winners.

The event blended fitness with entertainment and celebrity participation. Fitness icon Milind Soman and his wife Ankita Konwar joined Abdullah in the 21-km run, while actress Gul Panag attended the flag-off ceremony. Musical performances by Kamal Khan and Prateek Narula added to the festive atmosphere.

The inaugural edition witnessed participation of more than 4,000 runners, including over 1,000 from outside Jammu and Kashmir and over 90 international athletes. Legislators, MLAs and senior administrative officers were also seen actively participating in the event.

The chief minister's sons, Zahir and Zamir, were also seen participating in the marathon. Participants, including inter-



CM JOINS RUNNERS

The enthusiasm remains high even in this rainy weather. Brotherhood, love, harmony, diversity, and the fight against drugs will continue. We are people who fight storms, who stand against the waves-we are Dogra warriors. This will be a message to Pakistan that while they are a factory of terrorism, we are a factory of tourism and sports

SATISH SHARMA | SPORTS MINISTER, JAMMU AND KASHMIR

national runners from Kenya, praised the spirit of the event. Franklin, visiting Jammu for the first time, said running in the rain was not unusual and described Jammu as a "cool and better place" with favourable conditions.

In cramped GB Road, a quiet shift to learning, healing

The Mahila Police Chowki has, since its inception in February 2024 as one of the first two all-women police posts in the city, emerged as a quiet yet powerful space for empowerment in an area that houses hundreds of multi-storey brothels and over 1,000 sex workers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 29: A small hall of a multi-storey brothel in Delhi's red-light area, Garstin Bastion Road, popularly known as GB Road, became an unlikely venue for a session on mental health and self-worth when about 40 sex workers paused their daily routines and gathered for the sitting.

During the two-hour session, the hall echoed with affirmations such as "Main khud ke liye garv mehsoos karti hoon" (I feel proud of myself).

Handling between 15 and 20 customers a day and often under the influence of intoxicants, these moments provide them with a scarce respite and an opportunity to laugh.

In the hall, which has five small enclosures, each measuring 3 feet by 5 feet, used by the women to sleep and carry out their work, the sex workers - aged between 20 and 50 - were asked to write their names on sheets marked with different emojis to symbolise their moods.

"These women struggle to write their names. Most of them have little understanding of what constitutes a crime against them. Their internalised trauma has made them numb to physical pain," said an NGO worker who counsels them regularly.



A NEW DAWN

The programme was led by Sub-Inspector Kiran, popularly known as 'Lady Singham', who heads the All-Women Police Post (Mahila Police Chowki) at GB Road, in collaboration with an NGO.

The Mahila Police Chowki has, since its inception in February 2024 as one of the first two all-women police posts in the city, emerged as a quiet yet powerful space for empowerment in an area that houses hundreds of multi-storey brothels and over 1,000 sex workers.

The police post has been running regular skill development and awareness programmes aimed at helping women from economically weaker sections move towards self-reliance.

Coaching classes, makeup

artist training, sewing courses, cooking sessions, aerobics, and counselling are among the initiatives conducted on the first floor of the police post. Other activities include embroidery, bag-making, pot-making, and creative exposure through film-related initiatives.

Self-defence and awareness sessions are also held regularly. On March 22, around 50 women participated in a police-led programme where they were sensitised about their rights. Educational activities are conducted for children in the area as well, benefiting over 50 girls with basic education and introductory computer knowledge.

Health and hygiene form a key component of the initiative. Regular health camps

have been organised since 2023, benefiting both sex workers and residents. Nearly 500 individuals have been provided with spectacles, while dental check-ups are conducted with support from Maulana Azad Dental Hospital. Awareness on hygiene, including the distribution of sanitary napkins and guidance on safe practices, is also carried out.

Mental health counselling is offered for nearly 20 days a month at a dedicated counselling room within the police chowki. De-addiction awareness campaigns and psychological assessments are also part of the outreach.

But while the aforementioned facts provide data, witnessing real-life impact tells a story of hope and courage. In one case, a woman rescued from a brothel, along with her two children, including a son with multiple disabilities, was provided medical care and shelter, with both children now pursuing education.

Another woman trained in handicrafts and cake baking is currently employed at a restaurant in Rajouri Garden. Others have been trained in makeup artistry, paper craft, and similar skills to support self-employment. One woman was also provided with an e-rickshaw, which she now drives to earn a livelihood.

Speaking to PTI, Pooja (name changed), aged around 35 years, who has been attending regular coaching classes for six months, said, "I have never felt more confident than this. I had no idea how to even spell my name. Today, I can write it and also understand the basics. Whenever we feel something wrong is happening with us, we can go to the chowki and freely tell madam (Sub-Inspector Kiran)."

Police officials said over 50 people, including minors, have been rescued from brothel houses so far since the post came into existence, with several rehabilitated through shelter homes, skill training, and employment opportunities.

The initiative has also enabled cultural expression. In February 2025, in a first-of-its-kind effort, 17 sex workers performed a play titled "Pardah" at the National School of Drama. Nukkad natak has also been organised multiple times since 2024.

These women, often shunned by society and viewed through a different lens, now find comfort in having a women's police post nearby. Many of them also become informers, alerting police about the movement of criminals in brothels. From surviving in confined spaces, they are now beginning to laugh, learn, and dream of a life beyond them.



Until a few years ago, this was only seen in a few homes. But today, the impact of the 'PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana' is being observed in every corner of the country

NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

ASSAM RIFLES ALLOCATES SOLAR LIGHTS IN ARUNACHAL VILLAGE

The Assam Rifles organised a civic outreach programme for the distribution of solar lights at a village in Arunachal Pradesh's Tirap district, an official statement said Sunday. The initiative by the paramilitary force's Khonsa Battalion was undertaken at Old Paniduria village to support residents of remote areas by providing sustainable lighting solutions and improving their quality of life



of the day quote

Our government took several decisions for the development of Noida. They have nothing to show, which is why they are making such statements



AKHILESH YADAV | SP PRESIDENT

India is a nation of young people, and their overall development is crucial for the advancement of society and the nation



BHAJANLAL SHARMA | RAJASTHAN CM

Leaders who ignore or trouble party workers are not needed. Those who work hard will be recognised, protected, and encouraged with positions



N CHANDRABABU NAIDU | TDP SUPREMO

SHORT TAKES

Ashok Kharat's police custody extended

Nashik: A court in Nashik Sunday extended the police custody of self-styled godman Ashok Kharat, arrested in a rape case, till April 1. Kharat, who headed a temple trust at Mirgaon in Nashik district and whom several prominent Maharashtra politicians visited over the years, was arrested March 18 after a woman accused him of raping her repeatedly over three years. Ten FIRs, eight for alleged sexual assault or exploitation and two for cheating, have so far been registered against him at Sarkarwada police station in the city.

Jawan dies in police custody

Dehradun: A Provincial Guards Force (PRD) jawan, who was taken into police custody here on charges of creating a ruckus, died under suspicious circumstances at the Raipur police station, officials said Sunday. Superintendent of Police (Rural) Jaya Baluni said that the police were alerted by Mahadev Petrol Pump in Ladpur Saturday evening when Sunil Raturi, 45, refused to pay after refuelling his vehicle and misbehaved with the staff while intoxicated.

Three dead as house under repair collapses

Chandigarh: Three labourers were crushed to death after a house under repair collapsed in village Pharwah in Punjab's Barnala early hours Sunday, police said. Three labourers were crushed under the debris in the incident, Sadar SHO Jagjit Singh said, adding that the owner had given the repair work of the house to a contractor. The house had been undergoing repair work, which included lifting and restoring the structure after it had developed structural damage, some locals told reporters.

Bus caught fire

Mathura (UP): A Noida-bound private bus carrying 48 passengers caught fire on the Yamuna Expressway here Sunday, an official said. In the incident, which occurred near milestone 64 in the Naujheel area, the bus was completely gutted, he said, adding that no injuries were reported. A short circuit is suspected to be the cause of the fire, he said, adding that four fire tenders were rushed to the spot and brought the blaze under control after 45 minutes. The incident occurred near milestone 64 in the Naujheel area when the driver of the bus, travelling from Agra to Noida, noticed smoke emanating from the engine.

Govt ramps up measures to ensure fuel, LPG supplies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 29: The government has stepped up measures to secure fuel and gas supplies amid the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, while urging citizens to avoid panic buying as sporadic rushes were reported at fuel stations.

In a statement, giving an update on developments following the war in West Asia, the oil ministry said refineries are operating at high capacity with adequate crude inventories, and stocks of petrol and diesel remain sufficient nationwide. Retail outlets are functioning normally, even as rumours triggered temporary spikes in demand in some states.

"There were certain rumours, which led to panic buying at some retail outlets in a few states, resulting in unusually high sales and heavy crowding at retail outlets. However, it is informed that there are adequate stocks of petrol and diesel available at all petrol pumps in the country," it said.

To boost domestic availability, the government has cut excise duty on petrol and diesel by Rs 10 per litre and imposed export levies of Rs 21.50 per litre on diesel and Rs 29.50 per litre on aviation turbine fuel (ATF).

In the gas sector, supplies have been prioritised for households and transport, with 100 per cent allocation to piped natural gas (PNG) and CNG, while industrial and commercial users are receiving about 80 per cent of average consumption.



Two more Indian LPG tankers transit Hormuz

NEW DELHI: Two more Indian-flagged LPG tankers, carrying roughly a day's supply of the country's cooking gas, have safely navigated through the war-hit Strait of Hormuz and are expected to reach Indian shores in the next couple of days. "Two LPG carriers, BW TYR and BW ELM, carrying a combined LPG cargo of about 94,000 tonnes, have safely transited the region and are moving towards Indian shores," an official statement said. While BW TYR is proceeding towards Mumbai with an expected arrival March 31, BW ELM is en route to New Mangalore with an estimated arrival date of April 1. The US and Israel attacks on Iran and Tehran's sweeping retaliation have all but halted shipping through the strait - the narrow shipping lane that is a conduit for oil and gas exports from Gulf countries to the world. Iran, however, last week said "non-hostile vessels" may transit the waterway after coordinating with Iranian authorities.

Fertiliser plants are being supplied at 70-75 per cent, with additional LNG cargoes being sourced, it said.

The ministry said the expansion of city gas distribution networks is being accelerated

by streamlining approvals and pushing a shift from LPG to piped natural gas (PNG).

More than 2,90,000 new (PNG) gas connections were added in March, while companies, including Indraprastha Gas, Mahanagar Gas, GAIL Gas and BPCL, are offering incentives for PNG adoption. LPG supplies have been impacted by the geopolitical situation, though deliveries remain normal with no reported shortages. Daily refill deliveries exceeded 55 lakh cylinders, and measures to curb diversion have been tightened, it said.

Commercial LPG supply has been gradually restored to about 70 per cent of pre-crisis levels, with priority given to hospitality, food services and key industries. The government has also increased kerosene allocations to states and intensified enforcement against hoarding and black marketing, conducting about 2,900 raids and seizing around 1,000 cylinders recently.

81.79% students pass Bihar School Examination Board's Class X exam

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Patna, March 29: The Bihar School Examination Board (BSEB) announced the results of its Class X board examination Sunday, and close to 82 per cent of the students have passed the exam. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar congratulated all students who passed the exam, and said the overall performance of girls has been good, while noting that the top position has been secured by two girls.

Pushpanjali Kumari of Jamui district and Sabreen Prawn of Vaishali district topped the exams with 98.4 per cent marks, state Education Minister Sunil Kumar said.

According to a statement issued by the Bihar School Examination Board (BSEB), Nahid Sultana of Begusarai district secured second position with 489 marks, while Anupa Kumari of Buxar and Om Kumar of Begusarai jointly stood third with

488 marks. "This year, two girl students have jointly secured the top position in the matriculation examination. Overall, the performance of girls has also been good," a statement from the Chief Minister's Office quoted Nitish Kumar as saying.

"This achievement by girl students is a strong example of women's empowerment. Along with the girls, their parents also deserve praise," the Bihar chief minister said.

He emphasised that various schemes run by the state government for girls have boosted their confidence, and they are making steady progress in every field. "Boys have also done well in the exams. I wish a bright future for all successful students," the chief minister added.

Earlier in the day, Bihar Education Minister Sunil Kumar said that Bihar is the only state this time to announce the results of class 10 and 12 exams in March itself.



A farmer separates mustard seeds and its chaff through winnowing, at a village, in Prayagraj district, Uttar Pradesh

PTI PHOTO

India launches yoga protocols to fight lifestyle diseases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 29: The Union Ayush Ministry has launched a comprehensive "Yoga Protocol for Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and Target Groups", in a significant push towards reshaping the country's healthcare narrative from treatment to prevention.

Launched during the Yoga Mahotsav 2026 earlier this month by Union Ayush Minister Prataprao Jadhav, the initiative is being seen as a timely intervention to tackle various lifestyle diseases.

The initiative has been developed by the World Health Organisation Collaborating Centre for Traditional Medicine (Yoga) (WHOCIND 118), at the Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga under the Ministry of Ayush.

The protocols are designed as structured, evidence-based modules that integrate Yogic practices into daily life in a simple, accessible, and scalable manner.

India today faces an alarming rise in non-communicable

diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular ailments, chronic respiratory conditions, and mental health disorders, an official source said.

According to recent estimates, these conditions now account for nearly two-thirds of all deaths in the country, signalling a clear epidemiological shift from infectious diseases to lifestyle-driven illnesses.

With a growing burden of mortality attributed to NCDs each year, the urgency for preventive solutions has never been greater, the source underlined. It is in this context that the new yoga protocols assume significance.

Built on scientific evidence and clinical insights, the modules prescribe daily sessions of 30 to 60 minutes that combine asanas, pranayama, meditation, and relaxation techniques, sources said.

The approach is gradual, adaptable, and designed to suit varying fitness levels and medical conditions.

Emphasising the preventive potential of yoga, Jadhav noted



that prevention is the future of healthcare, and yoga is India's answer to the rising burden of lifestyle diseases.

"This initiative reflects our commitment to building a healthier nation through holistic, preventive, and people-centric approaches rooted in India's rich traditional knowledge," the minister said.

What sets the initiative apart is its targeted design, with specific yoga interventions curated for major health conditions.

Maoist carrying ₹5 lakh bounty killed in Ch'garh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sukma, March 29: A Naxalite carrying a bounty of Rs 5 lakh was killed in an encounter with security personnel in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district Sunday, two days before the March 31 deadline set by the Centre to eliminate Left Wing Extremism from the country, police said.

The gunfight occurred on a forested hill under the Polampalli police station area, where a team of the District Reserve Guard (DRG), a unit of the state police, was out on an anti-Naxal operation based on inputs about the presence of Maoists in the area, Sukma Superintendent of Police Kiran Chavan said.

Once the exchange of fire stopped, the body of a Naxalite, along with a weapon, was recovered from the spot, he said.

The deceased cadre, Muchaki Kailash, was the section commander of platoon no. 31 of Maoists and carried a bounty of Rs 5 lakh, the official said.

He said that Kailash was involved in incidents of civilian killing, planting improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and attacks on police.

The encounter comes just two days ahead of the March 31 deadline set by the Centre to eliminate armed Naxalism from the country.

Inspector General of Police, Bastar Range, Sundarraj Pattilingam said that the opportunity for surrender and rehabilitation available to Maoist cadres has now reached its final stage, and they have very limited time to avail themselves of it.

With this incident, 27 Maoists have been killed in separate encounters in Chhattisgarh so far this year.

Incarceration without trial is punishment: SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 29: Observing that incarceration without trial amounts to punishment, the Supreme Court granted bail to a Punjab resident in an attempt-to-murder case, noting that he had spent two years in jail without the trial even commencing.

A bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and P V Varale, in its recent order, said Pradeep Kumar alias Banu was booked for various offences, including attempt to murder, in February 2024, but the prosecution is yet to examine any one of the 23 witnesses related to the case.

It set aside the July 11, 2025, order of the Punjab and Haryana High Court rejecting Kumar's bail plea.

"Prosecution proposes to examine 23 witnesses to drive home the charges against the appellant, but none has been examined. Thus, the trial is likely to take some time to conclude," the bench said in its March 13 order.

It added that almost two years have passed since Kumar was arrested, without a trial having commenced and a conclusion thereof nowhere in sight. "Incarceration without trial amounts to punishment," the bench highlighted.

Taking an overall view of the matter, the court was of the considered opinion that further detention of the appellant pending trial is not necessary; and, since the appeal deserves acceptance, the appellant may be admitted to an order for the grant of bail, it said.

Imposing conditions on Ku-



mar, the bench said he shall be released on bail, subject to furnishing of bail bonds to the satisfaction of the trial court and subject to such other terms and conditions as may be imposed by it.

"Needless to observe, the appellant shall not, directly or indirectly, by making inducement, threat or promise, dissuade any person acquainted with the facts of the case from disclosing such facts to the court," it said.

In the event there is any breach of the terms and conditions for the grant of bail, the trial court shall be at liberty to cancel the bail of the appellant, it added.

The top court, while allowing the appeal, directed Kumar to diligently attend proceedings of the trial, unless exempted.

"If he abstains from attending the proceedings without justifiable cause, that could also be seen as a breach of the conditions for grant of bail and the trial court will be free to pass appropriate orders," it said.

The bench further said the observations made in this order and grant of bail will not be treated as findings on the merits of the case.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

health-focused routines for adolescents, and mobility-enhancing practices for the elderly to specialised guidelines for women and pregnant mothers, the initiative seeks to make yoga a lifelong companion for health and well-being, another official source explained.

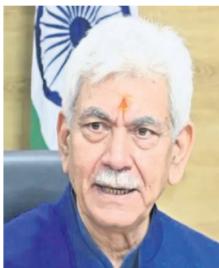
At a time when mental health concerns are rising sharply, the protocols also place strong emphasis on emotional well-being, with dedicated practices focused on breathing and meditation aimed at reducing stress, anxiety, and depression.

Public health experts believe the initiative's real strength lies in its scalability. With minimal infrastructure requirements, the protocols can be implemented across schools, workplaces, healthcare centres, and community spaces, making them a cost-effective solution for a country of India's size and diversity.

Beyond individual health benefits, the larger impact could be systemic, reducing long-term healthcare costs and easing pressure on medical infrastructure, the source said.

Highlighting the scientific foundation of the initiative, Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha, Secretary, Ministry of Ayush, said that "the protocols are rooted in evidence and have been carefully developed to align traditional knowledge with modern clinical understanding."

From playful yoga modules for young children to mental



Peace, prosperity and enabling conditions have made the UT a destination for world-class events. Its dream realised at last, as after seven decades, J&K claims its rightful place on the global stage

MOB SETS 'NSCN(IM) OFFICE' ON FIRE An office allegedly used by NSCN(IM) was set on fire by an irate mob in Manipur's Ukhrul district Sunday, officials said.



of the day quote

For years, the Congress kept borders open for infiltrators and, in their greed for a vote bank, changed the state's demography

After a long wait, the first phase of the Noida International Airport at Jewar was inaugurated yesterday, where-as not only its blueprint but all the necessary basic works had already begun during my government under the BSP

About 10 years ago, the Una incident shook the entire nation to its core. Dalit youths were publicly stripped and brutally beaten. At that time, I stood in solidarity with their families

Mamata pillories Shah over 'chargesheet', 'leg injury' dig at her



Purulia/Bankura (WB), March 29: A day after Union Home Minister Amit Shah released a 'chargesheet' against the TMC government, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Sunday said he should be chargesheeted for his past deeds

from Delhi yesterday and filed a chargesheet against the TMC. "Who are you to file a chargesheet? You should be chargesheeted," she said while listing several past allegations against Shah.

POST OF THE DAY

Chinese youth vs Indian youth. History will not forgive Modi & Shah for shaping this kind of India, just 10 to 20 yrs down the line. An entire generation of young people is suffering due to the policies of this regime & we have been pushed back by at least 50 yrs in mindset.

SHORT TAKES

4 injured after jumping from burning building

New Delhi: Four people, including a child, were injured after they jumped from the first floor of a residential building in northeast Delhi's Gokal Puri area to escape a fire that broke out in the early hours of Sunday.

16 held for alleged immoral activities

Shillong: Sixteen people were arrested in Shillong during a police crackdown under provisions of the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, police said Sunday.

Tremor hits Amreli

Amreli (Gujarat): A 3.1 magnitude tremor hit Amreli district of Gujarat Sunday, with no reports of casualties or damage to property, officials said.

She also took umbrage over Shah's apparent remarks about the injury she suffered during the 2021 Assembly polls and asked him to check the medical report, which detailed the extent of the damage to her leg.

While releasing the political "chargesheet" against the TMC government a day ago, Shah had accused the ruling party's supremo of having "always played the politics of the victim card".

On Sunday, Banerjee, while canvassing for Sandhya Rani Tudu, her party's candidate in Purulia district's Manbazar, said, "They are saying that I roam around with a bandage during the polls. I have repeatedly returned from the brink of death. Go and check the report of the doctor."

Smoke from amplifier causes scare at PM rally

Palakkad (Kerala), March 29: There were tense moments at the venue where Prime Minister Narendra Modi was scheduled to address a BJP rally after smoke was seen emanating from an amplifier, police said Sunday.

According to officials, the incident occurred shortly before the Prime Minister arrived at Kottamaidanam, the rally venue here. Police said that around half an hour before Modi reached Palakkad, smoke was noticed coming from an amplifier connected to the microphones.

Banerjee asserted that she is effectively the candidate for all seats and urged the electorate to place their trust in her leadership.

"You don't have to see who the candidate is. I am the candidate. Place your trust in me and cast your vote. Trinamool will form the government no matter how many conspiracies they hatch."

Banerjee accused Shah and the BJP of attempting to destroy the democratic setup of the country, as she alleged that a conspiracy was being hatched to conduct repolls in booths under areas considered the TMC's bastion.

DGCA mandates 60% free seats on flights from April 20

New Delhi, March 29: Airlines will start offering at least 60 per cent of seats in a flight without levying any additional charge from April 20, as well as maintain a transparent seat allocation policy, according to aviation watchdog DGCA.

On March 18, the civil aviation ministry announced that directions have been issued to the DGCA to direct airlines to allocate a minimum of 60 per

HC bans night safaris, drones in Jawai Reserve beyond hours

Jaipur, March 29: The Rajasthan High Court has prohibited night safaris and the use of drones in Pali district's Jawai Leopard Reserve, expressing concern over disturbance to wildlife due to unregulated tourism activities.



Christians hold palm branches as they offer prayers on the occasion of Palm Sunday near Loyola Ground, in Ranchi, Jharkhand. Palm Sunday marks the beginning of Holy Week and commemorates the entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem

Vijay to enter election fray from Perambur, Trichy east

Unveiling a youth-focused agenda, which he termed a "guarantee", Vijay promised several measures, including steps towards a drug-free Tamil Nadu and collateral-free loans of up to ₹20 lakh for students from class 12 to PhD



actor-turned-politician announced emphatically amid loud cheers at a meeting of party functionaries held at a five-star hotel in the city.

Chennai, March 29: TVK chief Vijay Sunday named his party's candidates for all 234 Assembly constituencies in Tamil Nadu for the April 23 elections, announcing his electoral debut from two seats, including Perambur in Chennai, considered a DMK stronghold.

HC bans night safaris, drones in Jawai Reserve beyond hours

Jaipur, March 29: The Rajasthan High Court has prohibited night safaris and the use of drones in Pali district's Jawai Leopard Reserve, expressing concern over disturbance to wildlife due to unregulated tourism activities.

The court noted that such time restrictions are in line with the norms followed at Ranthambore National Park and are necessary to minimise stress and disturbance to animals, particularly during dusk hours



and are necessary to minimise stress and disturbance to animals, particularly during dusk hours. It further directed authorities to strictly prohibit the use of torchlights, searchlights,

On the occasion, he also named and introduced nominees for the remaining 232 seats, including members of his core team. Reiterating that the electoral contest was between his "people's alliance TVK" and the "Stalin-led alliance", he described the ruling DMK-led bloc as a "patch-up".

Air Transport Circular dated March 20. A DGCA official said the circular would come into effect from April 20. The regulator has said that airlines should ensure at least "60 per cent of the seats in any flight shall be offered free of charge".

The court also ordered that any instance of misconduct by safari operators, hospitality personnel or other individuals, causing harassment or interference with wildlife, must be promptly reported and dealt with expeditiously under the

"They are not mere 'vet-palargal' (candidates), but 'makkalkappalargal' (people's protectors)," Vijay said, urging voters to extend wholehearted support to them. He particularly exhorted Gen Z voters to turn out in large numbers for the party's "whistle" symbol and encourage their families to back TVK candidates.

Official sources had earlier told PTI that the Centre is also preparing an "operations and development" blueprint, which is expected to include an announcement for the withdrawal of about five Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) battalions from these regions and the launch of multiple welfare schemes.

Lok Sabha to debate efforts to wipe out Maoist threat today

New Delhi, March 29: The Lok Sabha will discuss efforts to free the country from left-wing extremism (LWE) Monday, a day before the government's March 31 deadline to eliminate Naxalism ends.

Lok Sabha to debate efforts to wipe out Maoist threat today

New Delhi, March 29: The Lok Sabha will discuss efforts to free the country from left-wing extremism (LWE) Monday, a day before the government's March 31 deadline to eliminate Naxalism ends.

The Lok Sabha Secretariat has listed the discussion on "efforts to free the country from left-wing extremism" for Monday under Rule 193, which does not entail voting. The short-duration discussion under the rule requires a reply by the government.

The discussion will be initiated by TDP MP Byreddy Shabari and Shiv Sena member Shrikant Shinde. Union Home Minister Amit Shah had announced that the Naxal menace would be completely eliminated by March 31, 2026. A fresh review of the Naxal violence affected regions has brought down the number of LWE-hit districts in the country to seven from eight.

A comprehensive review of the 'National Policy and Action Plan to address LWE' was undertaken recently by the Union government with nine states comprising 38 districts. These states are Jharkhand, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Telangana and West Bengal. Security forces deployed in the anti-Naxal operations grid had launched a mega operation to neutralise the remaining armed Maoist cadres ahead of the March 31 deadline.

international



The only thing that the remnants of this regime can be relied on to do is to buy time, to cheat and to steal. They will never be honest or true partners for peace
REZA PAHLAVI | IRANIAN OPINION FIGURE

CHINESE ARTISTS STAGE DANCE DRAMA BASED ON RAMAYANA

A group of Chinese dancers have staged "Adi Kavya - The First Poem", a dance drama based on the translation of Ramayana by noted Chinese scholar Prof. Ji Xianlin. The drama, directed by Chinese Bharatanatyam exponent Jin Shanshan, featured a cast of over 50 local performers and was held at the old Indian Embassy premises



of the day quote

China is willing to actively expand European Union imports, and hopes the 27-state bloc will relax controls on high-tech exports to China and refrain from politicising trade issues
WANG WENTAO | CHINESE COMMERCE MINISTER

Spoke with PM Narendra Modi a few days ago about the fuel supply disruptions Sri Lanka is facing due to the Middle East conflict. Grateful for India's swift support. 38,000 MT of fuel arrived in Colombo yesterday
ANURA KUMARA DISSANAYAKE | SRI LANKAN PRESIDENT

For Ukraine, this is also a matter of principle: terror must not prevail anywhere in the world. Protection must be sufficient everywhere
VOLODYMYR ZELENSKYY | UKRAINE PRESIDENT

Oli remanded in judicial custody for five days



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kathmandu, March 29: Nepal's former Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli was remanded in judicial custody for five days by the Kathmandu District Court Sunday, even as protests continue to erupt in various parts of the country over the arrests. Oli and former home minister Ramesh Lekhak were arrested Saturday for their alleged involvement in suppressing the Gen Z movement of September 8 and 9 last year, in which 76 people, including around two dozen youths, were killed.

The arrests came a day after the newly formed Balendra Shah government decided to implement the report of the probe commission into the Gen Z protests in its first cabinet meeting.

Lekhak was presented before the district court seeking remand for ten days to carry out further investigation into their alleged involvement in the incidents of killings. He was also remanded in custody for five days.

However, ex-PM Oli virtually attended the district court session due to his deteriorating health conditions, according to Deepak Kumar Shrestha, information officer at the district court.

Oli is currently undergoing medical treatment at Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital in Maharajgunj, Kathmandu, as his health conditions deteriorated when he was taken to the hospital Saturday for a health check-up following the arrest.

Iran war raises 2028 stakes for Trump's legacy

REUTERS

Washington, March 29: As the war in Iran threatens to imperil President Donald Trump's legacy, the political stakes also are rising for two of his top lieutenants: Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

The pair, widely viewed as potential successors to Trump, have been thrust into still-developing negotiations to end the war at a moment when the Republican Party is already weighing its post-Trump future.

Vance has taken a cautious approach, reflecting his skepticism toward prolonged US military involvement, while Rubio has aligned himself closely with Trump's hawkish stance and emerged as one of the administration's most vocal defenders of the campaign.

Trump has said both men were involved in efforts to force



Iran to accept US demands to dismantle its nuclear and ballistic missile programs and allow oil traffic to pass freely through the Strait of Hormuz. With the next presidential election due in 2028 and term limits barring Trump from running again, the president has been putting the succession question to allies and advisers in private, asking "JD or Marco?", two people familiar with his views said. The outcome of the US military operation now in its fifth week could shape the two men's 2028 prospects, political analysts and Republican officials said. A swift end to the war that favors the US might bolster Rubio, who also serves as Trump's national security adviser and could be seen as a steady hand during a crisis. A prolonged conflict could give Vance space to argue he reflected the anti-war instincts of Trump's base without openly breaking with the president.

Trump's own standing is also at stake. His approval rating fell in recent days to 36%, its lowest point since he returned to the White House, hit by a surge in fuel prices and widespread disapproval of the Iran war, a four-day Reuters/Ipsos poll completed last week found. Some Republicans say they are watching closely for which senior aide Trump appears to favor as the Iran conflict unfolds. Some see signs of Trump leaning toward Rubio but note he could change his mind quickly.

FROM TRUMP RIVALS TO LIKELY HEIRS
Vance, 41, a former Marine who served in Iraq, has long argued against US entanglements in foreign wars. His public comments on Iran have been limited and calibrated, and Trump has noted the two have "philosophical differences" on the conflict. Once a self-described "nev-

er-Trumper," Vance wrote an opinion piece in the Wall Street Journal in 2023 saying Trump's best foreign policy was not starting any wars during his first four years in office between 2017 and 2021.

The White House has downplayed any rift between the president and vice president. Standing alongside Trump in the Oval Office earlier this month, Vance said he supported Trump's handling of the war and agreed with him that Iran should not obtain a nuclear weapon.

Vance could take on a more direct role in negotiations if Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff and son-in-law Jared Kushner make sufficient progress, a person with knowledge of the matter said.

Rubio, 54, has said he will not run for president if Vance does, and sources familiar with Rubio's views say he would be content as Vance's running mate.

SHORT TAKES

Netanyahu to expand invasion in Lebanon

Islamabad: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced Sunday that Israel will widen its invasion of southern Lebanon. Netanyahu said Israel would expand what he called the "existing security strip" in Lebanon as Israeli forces continue to target the Iranian-backed Hezbollah militant group. "We are determined to fundamentally change the situation in the north," he said on a visit to northern Israel, adding that "Hezbollah still has residual capability to fire rockets at us." There were no immediate details.

B'desh: GPS trackers to discipline buses

Dhaka: Bangladesh is set to introduce Global Positioning System (GPS) to discipline the movement of buses in the capital, which is said to be a major cause for the traffic jam, the Road Transport and Bridges Minister said Sunday. "Authorities will monitor vehicles centrally, installing GPS trackers particularly in buses alongside trucks and covered vans to ensure discipline in transport movement," Sheikh Rabiul Alam told reporters.

Quake hits Nepal; no casualties

Kathmandu: A 4.5 magnitude earthquake hit Nepal's Sindhupalchowk district Saturday night, according to the National Earthquake Monitoring and Research Centre. There were no immediate reports about any damage or human casualty. The epicentre of the earthquake, which took place around 11.35 pm local time, was located near Nulhala Kharka area of Sindhupalchowk -- around 80 km northeast of Kathmandu. Tremors were also felt in neighbouring districts, including Kathmandu.

PIO held in UK

London: An Indian-origin man has been arrested on suspicion of attempted murder after seven people were seriously injured when a car drove into pedestrians in England, police said Sunday. The incident occurred Saturday at 9:30 pm in a city centre street, Friar Gate, Derby, after a car crashed into pedestrians. The police confirmed that seven people were injured in the incident. "The car, a black Suzuki Swift, struck several people in Friar Gate at about 9:30 pm Saturday, 28 March," a statement from Derbyshire police said.



Pope Leo XIV presides over Palm Sunday Mass in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican

17 killed in rain-related accidents in Afghanistan

AGENCIES

Kabul, March 29: Severe flooding, a landslide and thunderstorms in parts of Afghanistan left 17 people dead and 26 injured over the last 24 hours, with more heavy rainfall predicted, authorities said Sunday.

The number of casualties could increase as crews from the country's National Disaster Management Authority survey the affected areas, the authority's spokesman, Yousuf Hammad, said in a statement. Thirteen of Afghanistan's 34 provinces, mostly in the western, central and north-western parts of the country, were affected.

The severe weather also left 147 homes either completely or partially destroyed, wiped out 80 km of roads and destroyed agricultural land and irrigation canals and businesses, Hammad said. In all, he said, 530 families were affected.

Heavy rainfall was also forecast to affect eastern and central parts of the country

Monday, and Hammad warned flooding was also possible in those areas. The disaster management authority warned residents to avoid river banks and areas at risk of flooding in those regions, and ordered local officials to be on standby to provide assistance.

Earlier this year, heavy snowfall and flash floods left dozens of people dead across the country.

Afghanistan is highly vulnerable to extreme weather events, with snow and heavy rain that trigger flash floods, often killing dozens, or even hundreds, of people at a time. In 2024, more than 300 people died in springtime flash floods.

Decades of conflict, coupled with poor infrastructure, a struggling economy, deforestation and the intensifying effects of climate change have amplified the impact of such disasters, particularly in remote areas where many homes are built of mud and offer limited protection against sudden deluges or heavy snowfall.

North Korea tests missile capable of targeting US

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Seoul, March 29: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un observed a test of an upgraded, high-thrust, solid-fuel engine for weapons and hailed it as a significant development to boost the country's strategic military capability, state media reported Sunday.

While the test was in line with Kim's stated goal of acquiring more agile, hard-to-detect missiles targeting the United States and its allies, some experts speculate North Korea's claim may be an exaggeration.

The Korean Central News Agency reported Kim watched the ground jet test of the engine using a composite carbon fiber material. It said the engine's maximum thrust is 2,500 kilotons, up from about 1,970 kilotons reported in a similar solid-fuel engine test in September.

KCNA reported the test was conducted as part of the country's five-year arms build-up meant to



upgrade "strategic strike means," a term referring to nuclear-capable ballistic missiles and other weapons. Kim said the latest engine test had "great significance in putting the country's strategic military muscle on the highest level," according to KCNA. KCNA did not report exactly when or where the test occurred. North Korea's report on the latest test could be "bluffing" as it didn't disclose some key information like the engine's total combustion time, said Lee Choon Geun, an honorary research fellow at South Korea's Science and Technology Policy Institute.

When North Korea described the September test as the ninth and final ground test of a solid-fuel engine that it earlier said would be used for intercontinental ballistic missiles. Observers predicted at the time North Korea would soon test-launch an ICBM loaded with that engine, but it hasn't done so yet.

North Korea's solid-fuel engine development program may be facing some delays or the country might have determined to develop a better engine, possibly with Russian technical assistance, Lee said. Cooperation between the countries has deepened in recent years, with the North sending troops and conventional weapons to support Russia's war against Ukraine.

In recent years, North Korea has test-fired a variety of ICBMs demonstrating the potential range to reach the US mainland, including missiles with solid propellants that make detection prior to liftoff more difficult.

Beached whale on Baltic coast weakens; hopes of return fade

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Berlin, March 29: The humpback whale stranded along Germany's Baltic coast looks weaker, with experts fearing it won't be able to find a way back to the Atlantic despite several attempts for its rescue this week.

A 500-metre restricted area was enforced around the whale so it could get some rest and hopefully free itself, officials said Sunday in a news conference in the eastern German coastal town of Wismar, near where the giant cetacean has been stuck.

"He would be able to do so if he regains his strength, and that is why we decided to leave him alone, allowing him to actually set off and then successfully leave this area," said Till Backhaus, the environment minister of the state of Mecklenburg-Pomerania, where Wismar is located.

"But we also have to assume that he is weakened. And he is also sick," said Backhaus, adding that the humpback whale may have injuries because it came into contact with a fishing net.



Previous efforts to rescue the 12 to 15-metre-long whale off a sandbank at Timmendorfer Strand beach and in the Wismar Bay with the help of an excavator and boats, creating large waves to help it swim free earlier this week, captivated Germans - with media sending news alerts of updates on its progress and streaming live video from the scene.

The whale also became a popular topic of conversation across the country, with people exchanging text messages about rescue efforts.

But by now, hopes are dimming that the whale is still strong enough to swim free and find its way back to the Atlantic through German and Danish waters.

Iranians cross into southern Iraq for cheaper groceries, internet

AIRSTRIKES DISRUPT DAILY LIFE



Cross-border movement has significantly declined, though dozens of Iranians continue to enter Iraq seeking cheaper goods, internet access and brief family visits before returning to nearby cities such as Abadan and Ahvaz

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dubai, March 29: Iranians crossed into southern Iraq via the Shalamcha border Sunday, hours after an airstrike hit the Iranian side, cutting power and halting trade for several hours, said Haider Abdul Samad, the crossing's deputy director.

The strike, not the first since the war began, occurred around 3 am, he said, without providing any details on casualties

or the strike. Electricity was restored and trade resumed by mid-morning, but Abdul Samad said such disruptions have become routine amid the ongoing war.

Cross-border movement has significantly declined, though dozens of Iranians continue to enter Iraq seeking cheaper goods, internet access and brief family visits before returning to nearby cities such as Abadan and Ahvaz.

Crossing the border, Iranians urged the US to end the war, describing relentless airstrikes, rising prices and worsening living conditions, but insisting they would not leave their country.

"A message to America: Stop the war," said Atef al-Fatlawi, 30, who arrived from Ahvaz with her husband and young son. She said daily life had deteriorated sharply, with insecurity replacing what she described as previous stability. The family crossed into Iraq via the Shalamcha crossing in Basra.

Al-Fatlawi crossed into Iraq to buy groceries, including rice, which is now cheaper than in Iran due to soaring costs. She said an explosion near her

home shattered windows and frightened her child.

"There is fear. My son is scared, so we brought him with us," she said.

Others made brief trips for basic needs. Fatima Ghaffari, 39, said she crossed the border mainly to access the internet before returning to her home in Abadan. "It's scary, so scary," she said of daily life in Ahvaz.

Many described the US-Israel strikes as relentless and frightening but said they would not leave.

"There is no reassurance. We don't know when our homes could be targeted," said Razzak Saghri Al-Mousawi, 71, who entered Iraq from Iran Sunday.



In the week ahead, focus will remain on developments in West Asia -- any sign of escalation and de-escalation may drive the financial market lower or higher
PRANAV MER | VICE PRESIDENT, EBG - COMMODITY & CURRENCY RESEARCH, JM FINANCIAL SERVICES

BITCOIN'S TOPSY-TURVY TRADE

Bitcoin weakened to around \$66,000 after a bout of bearish sentiment over the past few sessions, breaching both its 200-day moving average and year-to-date average - levels closely watched by traders as indicators of trend strength. The break below these technical supports signals near-term downside pressure, largely driven by macro risk-off sentiment and tighter liquidity conditions. However, the decline has so far been orderly rather than panic-driven, with prices stabilising in the mid-\$60,000 range



of the day **QUOTE**

The decline also aligns with large numbers of prospective Middle East homebuyers, who invest significantly in Indian real estate, hitting the pause button under the war cloud
ANUJ PURI | CHAIRMAN, ANAROCK

The policy approach has correctly focused on maintaining production continuity and supporting viable enterprises. The next phase requires industry to build on this foundation with practical and responsible actions
CHANDRAJIT BANERJEE | DIRECTOR GENERAL, CII

We have almost 369 stores right now, and we expect to add around 40 stores next year (2026-27); however, we won't be in a hurry to open them
SAUMEN BHAIKUMI | MD, CARATLANE

US-India e-commerce deadlock stalls WTO reform roadmap



REUTERS

Yaounde, March 29: Trade ministers are close to agreeing a reform plan for the World Trade Organization, as wrangling continues over extending a moratorium on customs duties for electronic transmissions such as digital downloads, two diplomats said.

The talks at a WTO meeting in Cameroon include efforts to bridge differences between the US and India over extending the e-commerce moratorium, which is due to expire this month.

Extending the moratorium - first adopted in 1998 as part of a declaration to encourage early digital trade growth - is seen as a test for the WTO's relevance, following a year of tariff-fuelled trade turmoil and major disruptions due to the Iran war.

DRAFT REFORM PLAN TAKES SHAPE

After initial resistance from some WTO members, a new draft of the reform roadmap provides a timeline for progress and sets out the key issues to address, according to a copy of the draft seen by Reuters.

Those issues include improving decision-making in a consensus-based system that has long been stymied by a few countries, and the trade benefits extended to developing countries.

The reform debate comes amid efforts to rework WTO rules to render subsidy use more transparent and make decision-taking easier. The US and the EU argue China in particular has taken advantage of current rules to their detriment. Bringing into WTO rules an agreement reached by a sub-

set of members aimed at boosting investment in developing countries also remains blocked by India, which said plurilateral accords risk eroding the body's founding principles.

E-COMMERCE AGREEMENT KEY FOR US SUPPORT

Alongside the reform discussions, a senior diplomatic source - speaking on condition of anonymity - said there was a possibility of a four-year extension to the e-commerce moratorium.

India indicated Friday it would accept a two-year extension, diplomats said, while there were suggestions the US could accept a 10-year extension, another diplomat said. US Trade Representative Jamieens Greer said this week that Washington wanted a permanent extension.

A new draft document on e-commerce seen by Reuters proposed support for developing country members concerned about losing out on tax revenues, as well as a review clause.

Business leaders say an extension is vital to guarantee predictability, fearing duties could otherwise be introduced. It is also seen as key to securing US support for the global trade body. "If the moratorium does not get extended, the US will use it as an excuse to beat the WTO on the head," a senior diplomat said.

Banks ask RBI for 3 months to comply with FX position caps

REUTERS

Mumbai, March 29: Lenders have urged the Indian central bank to grant three months for compliance with new foreign exchange position limits, noting that a quick implementation could trigger disorderly unwinding of positions and potential losses, six bankers told Reuters.

The Reserve Bank of India said after the market close Friday that banks must ensure that by April 10 their net open rupee positions in the onshore deliverable market do not exceed \$100 million at the end of each business day.

The decision to impose limits on onshore positions comes against a backdrop of mounting pressure on the rupee, spurred by an oil price surge and heavy foreign portfolio outflows following the start of the Iran war.

Following the notification of the new rules, however, senior treasury officials from both local and foreign banks met with central bank officials to convey their concerns, the bankers, who did not wish to be identified, said.

The rules could force a sudden unwinding of arbitrage trades between the non-deliverable forward (NDF) and onshore markets, leaving banks exposed to potential losses on those trades, they said.

An extension of the timeline could alleviate the stress by allowing banks to simply let such positions mature as opposed to rushing to unwind them, two of the bankers said.

One of the bankers explained that since most of the arbitrage positions are clustered in the 1-3 month bucket, an extension would allow them time to mature and prevent "one-sided panic."

In addition to the extension, bankers have also proposed that the RBI allow them to maintain existing positions until they mature, the bankers said.

A spokesperson for the RBI did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment.

The rupee hit an all-time low of 94.84 per US dollar Friday and is down over 5% year-to-date.

What inspired the idea of manufacturing eco-friendly cow dung paint, and how did the concept evolve into a scalable business?

The inspiration came from a simple observation during my dairy training. I saw farmers struggling because old cows generated little income, while cow dung had very low commercial value. I wondered if it could become a high-value, eco-friendly product. After extensive research and experimentation, we developed sustainable paint. By building a supply chain with rural farmers, we not only manufacture paint but also support a rural ecosystem by purchasing cow dung and creating additional income for farmers.

How does Gaumaya Paints differentiate itself from conventional and other eco-friendly paint brands? What R&D efforts went into developing a product that lasts up to 15 years?

Our key differentiation lies in blending traditional



knowledge with modern technology. Gaumaya Paints offers natural anti-bacterial and anti-fungal properties from cow dung, breathable coatings that reduce dampness, and low-VOC, toxin-free formulations. Our paints provide durability of up to 15 years. Achieving this required extensive R&D, with multiple trials to perfect formulation stability, adhesion, and weather resistance. Through continuous lab testing and field feedback, we ensured eco-friendly paints deliver performance equal to or better than conventional paints.

How do you address consumer skepticism about cow dung-based paints in urban markets?

Initially, many customers were surprised by the concept of cow dung paint. However, once they see its finish and performance, their perception changes. We address skepticism through live demonstrations, sample applications, scientific explanations of the processing technology, customer testimonials, and real project references. When people understand that the material is hygienically processed, their hesitation fades. Today, many urban customers prefer it for its safety and eco-friendly benefits.

What challenges does the eco-friendly paint industry currently face in terms of awareness, regulation, or scalability?

The eco-friendly paint industry faces challenges such as limited customer awareness, price sensitivity, fewer policy incentives, and difficulties in scaling raw material collection. However,

Start with purpose, not profit: Priyadarshini

Durga Priyadarshini, Founder and Managing Director of Gaumaya Paints, began her journey as a homemaker with a vision to contribute meaningfully to society and the environment. In 2020, while exploring opportunities in dairy farming, she realised that although milk was valued, cow dung—despite its immense potential—was largely overlooked. This realisation inspired her to transform what was often considered waste into a valuable eco-friendly product. Today, Gaumaya Paints stands not just as a paint company but as a mission dedicated to supporting farmers, protecting the environment, and promoting sustainable living. Her journey has been strengthened by the unwavering support of her family and her belief that powerful innovation can emerge from simple rural resources. Excerpts...



DURGA PRIYADARSHINI
 FOUNDER AND MANAGING DIRECTOR, GAUMAYA PAINTS

these challenges also present opportunities as demand for sustainable products continues to grow. To support this sector, greater awareness campaigns, green product incentives, standard certification support, and government procurement initiatives are needed. With stronger policy backing, eco-friendly paints have the potential to become a mainstream category in the future.

What is Gaumaya Paints' long-term vision — national expansion, exports, or product diversification?

Our future plans focus on expanding our distribution network across India, entering international export markets, and developing more sustainable building materials. We also aim to strengthen our R&D capabilities and create greater livelihood opportunities for farmers. Our vision is to make Gaumaya Paints a powerful example of how rural innovation can drive meaningful impact at the national level.

What motivated you to enter this industry as an entrepreneur, and what advice would you give to those aspiring to build a successful venture in this field?

My biggest motivation was to prove that even a homemaker with determination can build something meaningful. Although I did not come from a technical background, I had the courage to learn, adapt, and keep moving forward. My advice to aspiring entrepreneurs is to start with a purpose, not just profit, and be prepared to face failures while continuing to learn. Focus on solving real problems, build a strong support team, and remain persistent. Success comes through patience, consistency, and strong belief in one's vision.



SHORT TAKES

EPL, Indovida merge

New Delhi: EPL Ltd, a global leader in flexible packaging solutions backed by Blackstone, and Indovida India Pvt Ltd, a rigid PET packaging platform, on Sunday announced a merger deal to form a \$1 billion revenue entity with a combined valuation of \$2 billion. EPL and Indovida India Pvt Ltd (Indovida), one of the leading global rigid PET packaging platforms backed by Indorama Ventures, have signed definitive agreements for a merger. EPL Ltd said in a regulatory filing. The merger has been approved by the board of directors of the respective companies and is subject to regulatory and shareholders' approvals, it added. The merger will establish a stronger platform by combining the packaging portfolio and capabilities, expanding global access, and enhancing the addressable market size, growth potential and financial metrics, it said. "The combined platform will have a valuation of \$2 billion, with EPL being valued at \$1.2 billion and Indovida being valued at \$0.7 billion," the filing said. The merged entity will be one of the leading emerging markets-focused packaging companies with \$1 billion of revenue, it added.

NSE to launch Dated Brent Crude Oil futures

New Delhi: The National Stock Exchange (NSE) will introduce Dated Brent Crude Oil (Platts) futures from April 13, expanding its commodity derivatives offerings linked to global oil benchmarks. The contract, based on the S&P Global Energy (Platts) Dated Brent assessment, will be traded under the symbol "BRCRUDEOIL". "The exchange is pleased to inform its members that, having received approval from Sebi, Dated Brent Crude Oil (Platts) Futures contracts would be available for trading in the NSE commodity derivatives segment with effect from April 13, 2026," the bourse said in its circular. The introduction of the contract aims to provide market participants with a hedging tool aligned with international crude benchmarks. The futures contracts will be listed on a monthly basis, with trading scheduled from Monday to Friday between 9:00 am and 11:30 pm/11:55 pm, depending on US daylight saving time. The contracts will be cash-settled, with the final settlement price determined based on the monthly simple average of Platts Dated Brent assessments, converted into rupees using the RBI's USD-INR reference rate.

Russia to introduce ban on gasoline exports from April 1

REUTERS

Moscow, March 29: Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak instructed the energy ministry to draft a resolution banning gasoline exports from April 1, the Russian government said.

The state-run TASS news agency earlier reported that the ban would remain in place until July 31.

Novak said that turmoil in the global oil and oil products market, caused by the crisis in the Middle East, is leading to significant price fluctuations. At the same time, the high demand for Russian energy resources in foreign markets remains a positive factor, he added.



HOLIDAY-SHORTENED WEEK

WAR IMPACT, OIL TRENDS SET TO GUIDE EQUITIES

In a holiday-shortened last week, the BSE benchmark Sensex lost 949.74 points or 1.27%, and the NSE Nifty tanked 294.9 points or 1.27%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 29: Developments related to the ongoing month-long war in West Asia, its impact on crude oil prices, and global trends would continue to be key drivers for domestic equities in the holiday-shortened week ahead, analysts said.

Besides, the rupee-dollar trend and trading activity of foreign investors would also play a crucial role in dictating investors' sentiment.

"This week is expected to remain influenced by global macro developments, particularly crude oil price trends and progress in the US-Iran ceasefire negotiations, which will be critical in shaping market sentiment. Stability in the rupee will also be important for any revival in foreign institutional flows," Ajit Mishra, SVP, Research, Religare



Stock markets would remain closed Tuesday and Friday for Shri Mahavir Jayanti and Good Friday, respectively

Broking Ltd, said. On the domestic front, key data releases include industrial production data for February and the HSBC Manufacturing PMI for March, which will provide insights into economic momentum and fiscal positioning, he said.

Foreign investors have pulled out ₹1.14 lakh crore (about \$12.3 billion) from domestic equities this month amid the widening conflict in West Asia and a weakening rupee.

The West Asia conflict started February 28. While the US and Israel attacked Iran, the Islamic Republic retaliated by targeting Washington's allies in its neighbourhood and Tel Aviv.

"Looking ahead, markets are

likely to remain volatile and driven by developments on the geopolitical front. Investors will be closely watching the situation in the Middle East, where any escalation or signs of easing could quickly shift sentiment, particularly through their impact on crude oil prices.

"Elevated oil prices are expected to keep pressure on markets, while any pullback could prompt short-covering and support a rebound," Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

Foreign investor flows, moves in the rupee, and broader global market trends are also likely to play a key role in shaping the near-term outlook, he said.

RELIANCE BIGGEST LAGGARD

Mcap of 7 of top-10 most valued firms drops by ₹1.75L-cr

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 29: The combined market valuation of seven of the top-10 most valued firms tumbled by ₹1.75 lakh crore in a holiday-shortened last week, with Reliance Industries taking the biggest hit, in tandem with a weak trend in equities.

Last week, the BSE benchmark Sensex lost 949.74 points or 1.27 per cent, and the NSE Nifty tanked 294.9 points or 1.27 per cent. The market valuation of Reliance Industries eroded by ₹89,720.3 crore to ₹18,24,515.62 crore. HDFC Bank's valuation tanked by ₹37,248.59 crore to ₹11,64,018.69 crore.

State Bank of India lost ₹35,399.42 crore from its market valuation, which stood at ₹9,41,569.15 crore. The market capitalisation (mcap) of ICICI Bank dropped by ₹8,121.76 crore to ₹8,83,551.30 crore, and that of Bharti Airtel declined by ₹2,480.42 crore to ₹10,50,413.33 crore. Infosys added ₹6,245.3 crore, taking its valuation to ₹5,15,034.67 crore.

Reliance Industries retained the title of the most valued firm, followed by HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India, ICICI Bank, TCS, Bajaj Finance, Infosys, Larsen & Toubro and Hindustan Unilever.

MI break 14-year jinx

Rohit, Ricketon's blistering fifties power Mumbai Indians to 6-wicket win over KKR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 29: Mumbai Indians rode on blistering half-centuries from former skipper Rohit Sharma (78) and Ryan Rickelton (81) to comfortably beat Kolkata Knight Riders by six wickets thus breaking the hoodoo of not winning any of their opening games in last 13 editions of the IPL, here Sunday.

While they had lost each of their first matches of an IPL edition since beating Chennai Super Kings by eight wickets in 2012, five-time winners Mumbai Indians hit full throttle in their chase of 221, replying with 224/4 in 19.1 overs.

Playing his first T20 game since last IPL, former India and Mumbai Indians captain Rohit appeared to have sharpened his game a few notches as he smacked a 38-ball 78 with six sixes and as many fours.

At the other end, Ryan Rickelton made a belligerent 81 off 43 balls with eight sixes and four fours while making the most of two lifelines, helping Mumbai Indians finally collect those elusive two points from the first game.

Rohit was adroit in not just picking the lengths of the ball early or with his movement at the crease, but with some of the shots that he executed to perfection.

Like against the lanky Blessing Muzarabani, the 38-year-old danced down the track to spank a short ball over extra cover for a six in the fourth over, or when he timed the ball as sweetly as it could be against Varun Chakravarthy to send it sailing over the cover for another six in the next.

And those quintessential Rohit's hits over cover were on display too, one of which was unleashed effortlessly against Kartik Tyagi in the sixth as Rohit completed his half-century



off a mere 23 balls.

At the other end, Rickelton blissfully took down KKR's mystery spin duo of Sunil Narine and Chakravarthy, targeting the leg-side boundaries to clear the ropes.

Rohit and Rickelton put on 148 off 72 balls to put MI in the driver's seat before falling to Anukul Roy's brilliance in the outfield. It was the fifth-wicket pair of Hardik Pandya (18 not out) and Naman Dhir (5 not

out) that took MI over the line.

Earlier, skipper Ajinkya Rahane (67) and Angkrish Raghuvanshi (51) struck vital half-centuries but Kolkata Knight Riders posted a par score of 220 for 4.

On a placid wicket, Shardul Thakur (3/39) provided Mumbai crucial breakthroughs as their bowlers could not really impose themselves in their maiden outing. Both senior pacers Trent

Boult (0/38) and Jasprit Bumrah (0/35) went wicketless but India pace spearhead's 18th and 20th over stopped KKR from getting closer to 250.

BRIEF SCORES
Kolkata Knight Riders: 220 for 4 in 20 overs (Ajinkya Rahane 67, Angkrish Raghuvanshi 51; Shardul Thakur 3/39) lost to **Mumbai Indians:** (Ryan Rickelton 81, Rohit Sharma 78; Sunil Narine 1/30) by 6 wickets

EMOTIONAL REUNION

CSK meet RR as Samson, Jadeja face former teams

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, March 29: Sanju Samson is set for an emotional clash against Rajasthan Royals, the side he led and shaped for over a decade, as he turns out for Chennai Super Kings, while Ravindra Jadeja will also face his former franchise, adding a poignant subplot to the IPL match between the two teams here Monday.

For more than a decade, Samson was synonymous with RR, their batting mainstay, leader and all-time leading run-scorer who guided them to the 2022 final.

Much like MS Dhoni at CSK, Samson was the Royals' identity, but in a blockbuster swap that sent Jadeja back to RR, the Kerala batter now finds himself in yellow, adding a new dimension to CSK's evolving core.

Samson also arrives in prime form, having played a decisive role in India's triumphant T20 World Cup campaign.

His hat-trick of 50-plus scores in must-win games against West Indies, England and New Zealand has made

him the star of the nation as the unassuming keeper-batter will come with a renewed self-belief.

He along with skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad, who are set to open also, will also form the core leadership of the team who will miss Dhoni for at least two weeks due to a calf strain. Dhoni has not travelled with the side to Guwahati as his absence will put Samson and Gaikwad in the spotlight.

Their bowling attack, featuring Noor Ahmad, Akeal Hosen, Matt Henry and Khaleel Ahmed will also offer variety and control.

For RR, Samson's departure signals the end of an era and the beginning of another under Riyan Parag who will begin his captaincy stint playing at his home ground.

The return of Jadeja adds experience and balance but his waning finishing skills could be a concern for the Royals.

Their batting will revolve around Yashasvi Jaiswal, who now shoulders greater responsibility as the senior-most top-order presence.

Alongside him, teenage prodigy Vaibhav Sooryavanshi and

the in-form Shimron Hetmyer provide firepower, particularly in the powerplay where RR were among the most explosive sides last season.

However, their bowling remains a concern.

Despite an overhaul following a disappointing 2022 campaign questions remain over the consistency of their pace unit led by Jofra Archer while the spin department will have to depend on Jadeja and Ravi Bishnoi. Both teams are coming off underwhelming seasons, with CSK finishing at the bottom and RR just above them in ninth as they would look to reset.

Brevis ruled out

If Mahendra Singh Dhoni's calf muscle injury wasn't enough, Chennai Super Kings have been dealt a second telling blow in the form of Dewald Brevis' side strain which will keep him out for the first few games, head coach Stephen Fleming confirmed here Sunday. The Super Kings will face Rajasthan Royals here on Monday in their opening IPL game. "Brevis is out. He had a side injury during training. So again, he is rehabbing," Fleming said when a specific question related to Brevis' injury was put forth.



Indians shine in World Wushu Championship

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Tianjin (China), March 29: Indian athletes secured two bronze medals while four others moved to the finals in different categories at the 10th World Wushu Championship here Sunday.

In the semifinal matches, India's Anu faced a tough contest against China's Zhang Lining but lost the bout, earning a bronze medal in the girls section while in the boys' semifinal, Goutam Mankas was defeated by his opponent to secure another bronze.

Furthermore, four Indian players registered victories to enter the finals.

Upendro Thougam defeated Ahmed Mohamed of Egypt to reach the final, while Pama Heiba Singh beat Alimou Sy of Senegal to secure a place in the title clash.

Yuvraj defeated Xiviel Bantali of the Philippines to enter the final, while Victor overcame Said Karim Mohamed of Egypt to progress to the summit clash.

UNSTOPPABLE FORCE

Sabalenka completes 'Sunshine Double'

The world No 1 overpowered fourth-ranked Gauff in the first and third sets with sizzling groundstroke winners and became the first player to accomplish the "Sunshine Double" - winning Indian Wells followed by Miami Open in the same season - since Iga Swiatek in 2022

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Miami Gardens (USA), March 29: Aryna Sabalenka beat Coco Gauff in the Miami Open women's singles final 6-2, 4-6, 6-3 Saturday.

It was Sabalenka's second straight title at the Miami Open, Gauff's hometown tournament, and put her ahead of Gauff in their head-to-head record, 7-6. "You've pushed me to be a

better player," Sabalenka said during the ceremony, before adding about the crowd, "You always bring a full stadium."

The match lasted 2 hours, 11 minutes and ended on Gauff getting broken for the fourth time with a wide backhand.

Gauff fought back to force the third set, but couldn't maintain the momentum she appeared to get from the deafening crowd supporting her.

"It sucks not to come out with a better result but I had a

lot of joy this week," Gauff said to the crowd. "You guys brought energy every day this week."

Sabalenka at times was frustrated by the fan noise, including when someone yelled "out" during a long rally. She used a curse word at the fan and the chair umpire warned the crowd, but also gave a code violation to Sabalenka. "I shouldn't be that rude, but come on, you cannot do that," Sa-

balenka said at the ceremony. "So let's agree we were both wrong, so sorry."

Gauff's off-and-on serve created seven double faults while Sabalenka registered none.

Sabalenka broke Gauff in the first game of the third set, helped by a Gauff double fault and an unforced error. On break point, Sabalenka crunched a backhand winner.

"I was disappointed about that first game of the third set up 30-0 with momentum," Gauff said. "It was an important game to win in that moment."

The match was attended by Kai Trump, President Donald Trump's granddaughter and a golfer at the University of Miami. She posted a photo with Sabalenka at the tournament on social media Friday.

Sabalenka, who earned her 24th pro title, said before the match she was happy Gauff had found her best tennis in her home tournament at which she had never gotten past the fourth round.



You've (Coco Gauff) pushed me to be a better player
ARYNA SABALENKA

Antonelli scripts F1 history with Japanese GP win

TEENAGER BOSSING THE CIRCUIT

The 19-year-old's success at Suzuka makes him the sport's youngest championship leader, taking the record away from Lewis Hamilton, the seven-time world champion he replaced at Mercedes

Of course it's great, but it's still a long way to go. I think we need to keep our head down and keep raising the bar
KIMI ANTONELLI

REUTERS

Suzuka, March 29: Italian teenager Kimi Antonelli said he wants to keep raising the bar after making Formula One history with his win in Sunday's Japanese Grand Prix. Hamilton led the standings as a 22-year-old in his 2007 rookie season.

Antonelli also became the first Italian to win back-to-back races in Formula One since Alberto Ascari in 1953. "I'm not thinking too much

about the championship," said Antonelli, who only took his maiden Formula One win in China two weeks ago and leaves Japan, the third round of the season, with a nine-point lead over teammate George Russell.

Antonelli, starting from pole, had dropped to sixth after a slow start.

An ideally timed safety car, deployed in response to a high-speed crash for Haas racer Oliver Bearman, allowed him to make his stop while his rivals, who had already pitted under full racing conditions, were running at reduced speed.

Antonelli acknowledged the safety car had smoothed his path to victory but pointed to his searing pace on the hard tyres in the second part

of the race.

Minor gremlins also put teammate Russell, winner of the season opener in Australia, on the back foot for the second race weekend in a row.

Had the Briton pitted but a lap later, he would have come out in the lead. Instead he finished fourth. "I feel he's obviously a super, super strong, very complete driver," said Antonelli of his teammate.

"I think he showed many times last year, and that's why it's not going to be easy, and that's why I need to do everything as perfect as possible."

LONG HIATUS
FORMULA 1 NOW TAKES A FIVE-WEEK BREAK WITH RACES FOR APRIL IN SAUDI ARABIA CALLED OFF BECAUSE OF THE WAR IN IRAN.

SPANISH PARA BADMINTON INT'L

Pramod leads India's charge with one gold, two silver

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Toledo (Spain), March 29: India delivered an impressive performance at the Spanish Para Badminton International 2026 - Level 1 in Toledo, with Pramod Bhagat emerging as the stand-out performer. The Paralympic champion clinched one gold and two silver medals, spearheading India's strong showing on the international stage.

Pramod Bhagat's campaign was highlighted by a gold medal finish in the Mixed Doubles SL3-SU5 category, where he partnered with Manisha Ramdass. The Indian duo displayed excellent chemistry and resilience as they defeated compatriots Nitesh Kumar and Thulasimathi Murugesan in straight games. They took the first set comfortably at 21-15, before edging a closely fought second set 24-22 to seal the title in a 30-minute encounter.

In the Men's Singles SL3 final, Pramod Bhagat put up a determined fight but settled for silver after going down to fellow Indian Nitesh Kumar with a scoreline of 10-21, 17-21.

He added second silver in the Men's Doubles SL3-SU5 event alongside Sukant Kadam. The pair fought valiantly against the Indian combination of Naveen

I'm really happy to come away with a gold and two silvers from Toledo. Every match was a tough challenge, especially competing against my fellow Indian teammates. This performance gives me a lot of confidence, and I'm motivated to keep improving and perform even better in the upcoming tournaments

PRAMOD BHAGAT

Sivakumar and Surya Kant Yadav. After losing the opening set 16-21, Bhagat and Kadam bounced back to win the second 21-12, but eventually fell short in the decider 15-21, securing silver.

India's overall campaign in Toledo was marked by multiple podium finishes across categories. Nitesh Kumar secured gold in Men's Singles SL3, while Manasi Joshi and Thulasimathi Murugesan clinched gold in Women's Doubles SL3-SU5. Thulasimathi Murugesan also secured gold in Women's Singles SU5, with Manisha Ramdass finishing with silver in the same category. Several other Indian shuttlers contributed to the medal tally with podium finishes, underlining the depth and strength of India's para badminton contingent.

