



## Aahana's observation

Actor Aahana Kumra believes the evolving content landscape is pushing creators to be more honest in their storytelling

LEISURE | P2



## Middle East crisis

France tells US NATO serves Euro-Atlantic security, not to launch offensive operations in the Strait of Hormuz

INTERNATIONAL | P10



## Stellar start

Starting the new fiscal year on a high note, stock markets close nearly two per cent higher Wednesday

BUSINESS | P11



## FIFA WC calling

The 48-team field for FIFA's biggest ever World Cup is complete after a qualifying process that spanned more than two and a half years

SPORTS | P12



**POLL PREP:** Election officials walk through a paddy field carrying postal ballots ahead of the Assam Assembly Election, at Buraburi in Morigaon district, Wednesday

PTI PHOTO

## ATF prices up 8.5 pc for domestic airlines, more than double for foreign

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 1:** Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) prices for domestic airlines were raised by a calibrated 8.5 per cent Wednesday, instead of more than doubling as warranted by a war-driven surge in global oil prices, even as rates for commercial LPG and premium petrol were also increased amid firm energy trends.

ATF or jet fuel for domestic carriers was hiked by ₹8,289.04 per kilolitre, or 8.56 per cent, to ₹1,04,927.18 per kl from ₹96,638.14 per kl last month, according to state-owned oil firms.

Domestic airlines will pay half of what foreign airlines, as well as other carriers such as non-scheduled, ad hoc, and charter, would pay. For them, the prices have gone up by ₹1,10,703.08 per kl, or 114.5 per cent, to ₹2,07,341.22 per kl.

Alongside, rates of commercial LPG - the other petroleum product apart from ATF, whose pricing is deregulated - were increased by ₹195.50 per 19-kg cylinder.

Price of select premium, or branded petrol and diesel, which make up for 2-5 per cent of all auto fuels sold in the country, too, was increased by ₹1.50 a litre to ₹92.99 for 'Extra Green' diesel and by ₹11 to ₹160 a litre for 100 octane petrol (XP100).

Prices of normal, or unbranded petrol and diesel, remain unchanged, and so do the rates of domestic cooking gas LPG.

The Petroleum Ministry



## COMMERCIAL LPG, PREMIUM PETROL PRICES RISE

stated that while the international oil prices have jumped to over USD 100 per barrel in one month, only a partial and staggered increase of 25 per cent (only ₹15 per litre or ₹15,000 per kl) was being passed on to airlines. The Civil Aviation Ministry also endorsed the number.

The difference between the two was explained by Sujata Sharma, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, as one was the final rate inclusive of all levies and taxes, while the 25 per cent number was the increase on the base price of ATF.

With the partial hike in ATF price, airlines would recalibrate their pricing and the move prevents a potential industry-wide crisis, he added.

The jet fuel price rise is likely to further strain airlines, which are already burning more fuel in taking longer routes for flying to Western destinations due to the war. Fuel makes up around 40 per cent of an airline's operating cost.

## CM inaugurates visa application centre in capital

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, April 1:** Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi inaugurated a visa application centre here Wednesday.

Speaking at the inaugural event, Majhi said the establishment of the centre reflects Odisha's growing global connectivity and the state government's commitment to citizen-centric services.

The centre has been opened at Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar Bus Terminal in Baramunda area of the capital city. "Such initiatives enhance ease of travel, promote industry and tourism, and support international engagement," he added.

Majhi said there was a growing need for a visa application centre in the state, and a request had been made to the Union government to facilitate its establishment in Bhubaneswar.

"We are happy that the Central government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has extended full support and cooperation in opening this centre here (Bhubaneswar)," he said. The CM further said the newly launched centre will significantly benefit residents of Odisha, who previously had to travel to Kolkata to submit their visa applications.

In its first phase of operations, the CM said, the centre will cater to visa services for 10 countries - the UK, Ireland, Austria, Estonia, Italy, Malta, Switzerland, Japan, Morocco, and Egypt.

## UTKAL DIVAS CELEBRATED AT UTKALMANI GOPABANDHU DAS' BIRTHPLACE

# ₹585cr for Satyabadi devpt

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, April 1:** Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Wednesday announced that historic Satyabadi Bana Vidyalaya and the nearby Bakula Bana in Puri district will be redeveloped as a heritage tourism site at a cost of ₹585 crore.

Majhi visited Suando village in Satyabadi area, the birthplace of Utkalmani Pandit Gopabandhu Das, Wednesday morning and paid floral tribute to the statue of Das.

Addressing a gathering during an event organised at a nearby college to celebrate the statehood day, Majhi said the state government is committed to the development and beautification of the birthplace of Das.

The CM said that plans have been prepared for the development of Satyabadi Bana Vidyalaya and the entire area at a cost of ₹585 crore.

"About ₹90 crore will be invested for the revival and development of the historic Bakula Bana. It will be transformed into a cultural, spiritual and educational centre and its historical identity will be protected," he said.

"Along with this, Satyabadi area will be redeveloped at a



cost of ₹495 crore. A heritage corridor will be built and the project will start very soon," he added. Satyabadi Bana Vidyalaya, an open-air school in Sakhigopal area in Puri district, was established in 1909 by Pandit Gopabandhu Das.

Five iconic leaders of Odisha - Utkalmani Gopabandhu Das, Pandit Krupasindhu Mishra, Acharya Harihar Das, Pandit Godavarish Mishra and Pandit Nilakantha Das - had founded the Bakul Bana Vidyalaya in the same area with students being taught in the natural environment.

Stating that his government is fully committed to the protection and promotion of 'Odia As-

## Odisha mesmerises everyone: PM Modi

**Prime Minister Narendra Modi** Wednesday said Odisha has the power to mesmerise everyone and lauded its rich cultural heritage, spiritual depth, and the resilience of its people, while reaffirming the Centre's commitment to the state's development. Modi wrote a four-page letter to Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on the occasion of the Utkal Dibasa or the statehood day. He recalled many great sons and daughters of the soil on the occasion. "They left an indelible mark on India's history," Modi said, while describing Odisha as a "civilisational treasure" and marvelled at its glorious past and its people.

restored," he said.

To make Puri a modern tourist destination, the state government will implement the Sharmukha Project in an area of 1,500 acres. This project will become one of the best tourist centres in the world with a combination of natural beaches and modern infrastructure, Majhi added.

He also said a World Tourism Centre and cruise terminal will be established in Puri.

Besides, steps are being taken to establish an airport in the seaside town. The Puri-Bhubaneswar NH will also be widened, the CM said.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I didn't paint the Supreme Leader in a poor light, sir. I merely reposted his photo that he himself had posted

**A** new DNA analysis is adding a surprising dimension to the enduring mystery of the Shroud of Turin, with researchers reporting that a significant share of genetic material found on the cloth may trace back to India.

The linen shroud, measuring about 4.4 metres long and 1.1 metres wide, is one of Christianity's most debated relics. First documented in France in 1354 and now housed in the Cathedral of Saint John the Baptist in Turin, Italy, it is believed by some to have wrapped the body of Jesus after his crucifixion.

In a study posted on the pre-print server BioRxiv and not yet peer-reviewed, researchers led

by Gianni Barcaccia of the University of Padova analysed DNA extracted from dust particles collected from the shroud in 1978. Their findings reveal a complex biological record shaped by centuries of human contact and environmental exposure.

"Analysis of the DNA traces found on the Shroud of Turin suggests the potentially extensive exposure of the cloth in the Mediterranean region and the possibility that the yarn was produced in India," the researchers wrote.

The study found that about 38.7 percent of the human genomic data identified on the cloth corresponds to Indian lineages. "The presence of 38.7 percent of



the overall human genomic data from Indian lineages is unexpected," the team noted, adding that it may be "linked to historical

interactions associated with importing linen or yarn from regions near the Indus Valley." Scientists also detected DNA

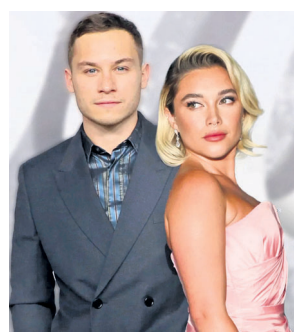
from a wide range of animals, including dogs, cats, chickens, cattle, goats, sheep, pigs and horses, as well as wild species such as deer and rabbits. Plant DNA traces included wheat, potatoes, tomatoes, peppers and carrots, pointing to extensive environmental exposure.

The researchers cautioned that the diversity of genetic material reflects repeated handling and contamination over time, making it difficult to isolate any "original DNA" from the cloth. "Genetic and microbial evidence discloses a complex history of the Turin Shroud, reflecting interactions with a diverse array of individuals," the team wrote. They also iden-

tified skin-associated bacteria, including *Cutibacterium* and *Staphylococcus*, further supporting evidence of intense human handling.

While the findings offer new clues about the shroud's journey across regions and cultures, they do not resolve the question of its age. "Nevertheless, our findings constitute a novel and significant contribution to the field," the researchers concluded, "thoroughly elucidating the biological traces left by centuries of social, cultural and ecological engagement." The study underscores the shroud's global connections, while leaving its origins and authenticity an open question.

AGENCIES



FLORENCE PUGH CONFIRMS HER RELATIONSHIP WITH FINN COLE

Hollywood star Florence Pugh has confirmed her relationship with actor Finn Cole on Instagram. The actress shared a carousel post on Instagram, which featured a photo of Pugh and Cole at an event in Milan, Italy.

STONE NOT IN FAVOUR OF INTIMATE SCENES

Hollywood actress Sharon Stone is not really in favour of experiencing intimate scenes on the screen. The actress has shared that she "fast-forwards" through sex scenes because she wants to maintain the "mystery", reports *Female First UK*.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

You are likely to remain careful and watchful today, foretells Ganesha. And because you'll be invited to parties and other social events, your enthusiasm will remain buoyant. You will also strike the right balance between business and pleasure, says Ganesha.

TAURUS

You are likely to be in a mood to get away from the daily grind and take a much needed break. You would naturally try to stay free from future concerns and commitments and keep all your woes and worries aside for the day. An adventurous and fun filled outing or a trip to some happening resort, along with your friends and family members is a near certainty, assures Ganesha.

GEMINI

You will be faced with household problems and worries about your children today. You will need to help your children with schoolwork in the morning. In the evening you will likely head out to dinner with family and friends and relax, says Ganesha.

CANCER

Your speech will today explode your thoughts. You will ponder over new deals and decide to act only after much thought. Ganesha feels that you met with success in your ambition to achieve a breakthrough.

LEO

Don't expect you'll be handed everything on a silver platter. Especially today, you must put such expectations on the back burner, says Ganesha. Today, you would do better to dig deep into your resources of persistence, as a somewhat less productive day awaits you. But do not let this momentary glitch upset you; stick to your plan and slog it out. Efforts made today will have a major bearing on the fruits you receive in the future.

VIRGO

Today is a day for introspection and you will find yourself in a pensive mood. Ganesha advises you to search for the inner peace that you want. Stay calm to discover the hidden treasures within you. In the evening you will be glad to help someone who is in need of it.

LIBRA

Somebody in a position of power at your workplace may decide to pick on you, just for fun. But your luck is strong, and no one but your own thoughts and misgivings can harm you. You shall find it relatively easy to come out of these troubles; much to the chagrin of those who wish otherwise, predicts Ganesha.

SCORPIO

If you have recently started a joint business venture, today you may take your first step towards sealing a profitable deal. However, you should buy some time before signing any contract today; also, be cautious that you do not get the short end of the stick. The best thing is to go through the finer prints of the deal in order to avoid any misgivings in the future, suggests Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS

You may have to make important decisions of life today, says Ganesha. Remember, haste makes waste, so take every decision only after thinking about its long-term consequences or end results. Be patient.

CAPRICORN

Your power of reasoning will be strong today, says Ganesha. Those of you beginning your career will show a disposition to take up a job in television or print media. The spiritual side of you may also come to the fore and make you feel at peace, especially when visiting a holy place.

AQUARIUS

You will feel deeply inclined towards development and research, today. Actions speak louder than words, and your efforts and overall growth will speak plenty about your character. Your romantic side will come to the fore today. You will be willing to do anything and everything to bring a bright smile on the face of sweetheart, feels Ganesha, all of it will get noticed. Enjoy the good times!

PISCES

For those who are salaried, today should be a progressive day for you. Important meetings at the work-place will benefit from your presence and the suggestions you have to make. This should enhance your relationship with your superiors. Compliments galore will come your way throughout the day. There are also indications of an important event occurring in your personal life today, says Ganesha.

Sam's energy blueprint

MUMBAI: Actress Samantha Ruth Prabhu, known as Sam among her fans, has opened up about the importance of starting the day right, revealing a simple yet effective "power morning" routine that she says has brought about a significant transformation in her life.

Sharing her routine, the actress suggested avoiding phone usage for the first hour after waking, followed by a few minutes of deep, intentional breathing to calm the nervous system. "I want to share with you some simple clear actions that have helped me tremendously," the actress shared adding, "Slow breathing activates your vagus nerve telling your brain you're safe and a safe brain burns fat and repairs better than a stressed one."



She also recommended getting early sunlight exposure, consuming a simple morning elixir, and having a balanced breakfast to maintain stable blood sugar levels.

Samantha also advised setting a clear intention for the day by deciding on a task to accomplish, noting that writing it down can help the mind stay focused and avoid distractions.

The actress concluded the video by saying that these are her steps that have helped her create a power morning routine.

In the caption section, she encouraged her followers to try it consistently for 21 days and push through initial resistance, adding that doing so can help people realise how much control they have over shaping their own lives.

MUMBAI: Actor Radhikka Madan has responded to conversations around "paid negative PR" in the film industry, stating that she does not support such practices.

In a recent interview with a news portal, Madan said, "You can never rise by pulling someone down," while addressing the idea of using negativity to get ahead. She further added, "May God never give me so much insecurity that I have to pull someone down to feel myself,"



Radhika on negative PR

Madan emphasised that she prefers to stay focused on her work rather than engage in such tactics. Her comments indicate that she views long-term growth as being rooted in individual effort and consistency rather than perception-building exercises.

good about underlining belief in over-tion-drives. panding spectve, pointed out is not lim-individual. "I isn't space for just one person at the top. There's space for everyone," she said, suggesting that the industry can accommodate multiple talents without rivalry turning negative.

'Storytelling today needs to be honest'

MUMBAI: Actor Aahana Kumra believes the evolving content landscape is pushing creators to be more honest and fearless in their storytelling.

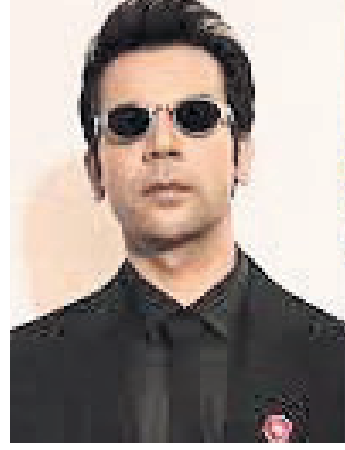
Speaking about the shift, she said, "I think it's very brave in today's times. And you have to be brave. You can't avoid going deeper anymore... We're not skirting the line anymore. Audiences today are extremely smart... If you try to present a glorified version that doesn't truly exist, people will... call it out. That's why storytelling today needs to be honest and brave."

She also spoke about her transition into production with Working Panda Films, adding "As an actor, you move within a certain circle. But as a producer, the journey becomes much larger... I'm sure that journey will be even more exciting."

Speaking on the sidelines of Content India 2026, a three-day industry gathering organized by Dish TV India that brought together over 700 voices from across platforms, studios and global markets to exchange perspectives on storytelling and the business of content, she said, "It's one of the big platforms where everyone comes together... These are the platforms where key decisions are being shaped."



SOURAV BIOPIC GETS A TITLE



MUMBAI: Actor Rajkumar Rao's upcoming film has been making massive buzz ever since even the news emerged years back: a biopic on India's star cricketer Sourav Ganguly. The film has finally gone on

floors now, and got a title too.

Rajkumar took to Instagram on Wednesday evening, and shared that he has started shooting for it. "And it begins... The one and only #DADA" he wrote in the caption.

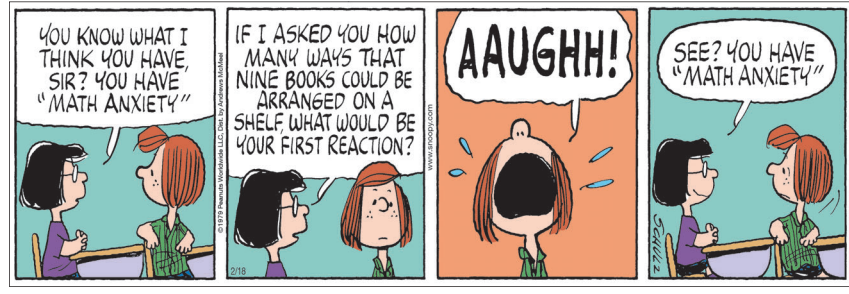
The film is being produced by Luv Ranjan, and directed by Vikramaditya Motwane.

*Dada- The Sourav Ganguly Story* had made headlines recently as well- albeit for a different reason altogether.

Rajkumar's changed appearance had left fans concerned in February, after he attended an event with weight put on and a different hairstyle. He had to clarify and assure everyone that nothing was wrong with his health then- he was prepping for his next film, the Ganguly biopic, for which he had to undergo a transformation.

"For *Nikam* I had to gain around 9-10 kgs and I was eating 2 pizzas and lot of sweets and my fav Aloo Parathas, Biryani and to not use anything glam to look like the part. And now it's the transition phase and time to lose these extra kgs and get ready to slip into Ganguly mode. Our very own Dada," read a portion of his post on Instagram.

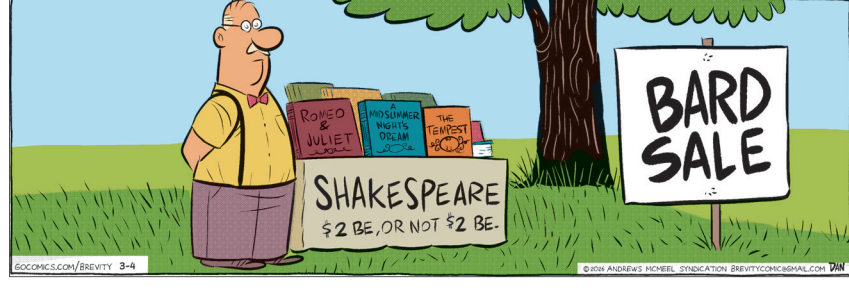
PEANUTS



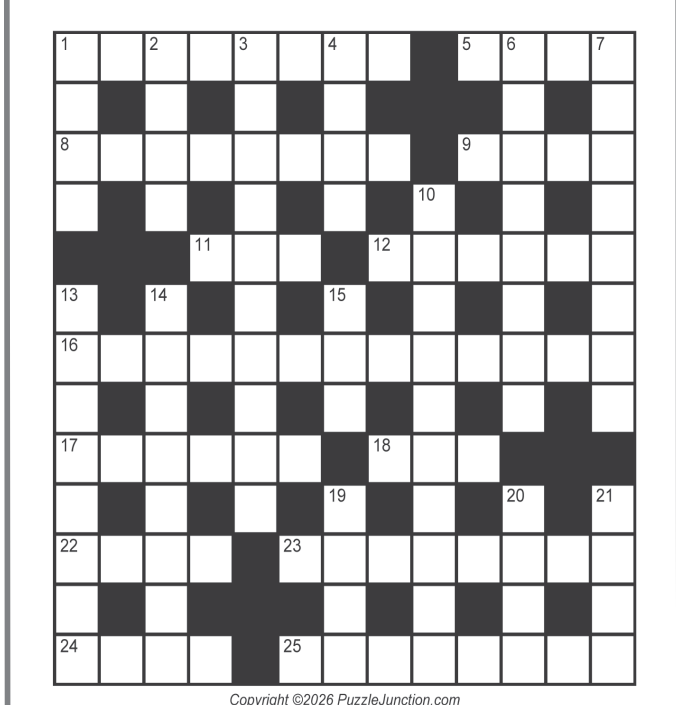
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



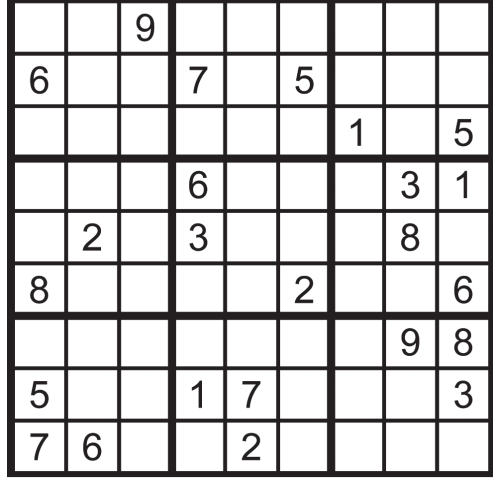
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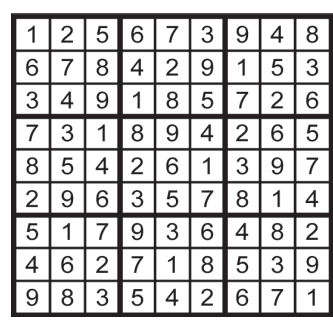
- Across
- 1 Platypus
  - 5 Subway system
  - 8 Eccentric
  - 9 Therefore
  - 11 Do sums
  - 12 Depressing
  - 16 Gate crashers? (9,4)
  - 17 Ability
  - 18 City on the Danube
  - 22 Kind of sax
  - 23 Not at work (4,4)
  - 24 Diplomat's forte
  - 25 Dupe (4,4)
  - 4 Weaver's apparatus
  - 6 Turmoil
  - 7 Op-ed writer
  - 10 London's Tate, for one (3,7)
  - 13 Painting style
  - 14 Like Olympians
  - 15 Coal holder
  - 19 Diva's song
  - 20 Tower site
  - 21 Durable wood
- Down
- 1 Ship part
  - 2 Applaud
  - 3 Burger side, maybe (5,5)

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

## Self-enumeration for Census 2027 begins in Odisha

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, April 1:** The self-enumeration facility for Census 2027 was rolled out in Odisha Wednesday, officials said. Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati completed his self-enumeration online and urged all to do the same to ensure every household is counted in the Census.

“On the commencement of Census 2027, I extend my greetings to the people of Odisha. As the first citizen of Odisha, I have fulfilled my duty by completing my self-enumeration and I urge each one of you to do the same,” the Governor said in a video message.

Census, an important national exercise, forms the foundation for planning and development, he said.

“Therefore, your participation in the house listing phase will ensure that every household is counted and represented. Let’s all come together to make this Census accurate, inclusive and successful,” he said. Prior to the household data collection, the provision for self-enumeration was made available online from Wednesday and it will continue till the midnight of April 15, officials said.



**DESPERATE TIMES:** Autorickshaws queue up near a fuel station amid LPG and petrol price hike, in Bengaluru, Wednesday

PTI PHOTO

## Who’s biggest litigant: SC raps Centre

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 1:** Rapping the Centre for getting into unnecessary litigation, the Supreme Court Wednesday imposed costs of Rs 25,000 on it for challenging a Punjab and Haryana HC order setting aside a CJSF official’s dismissal.

Upholding the HC’s ruling, a bench of Justices BV Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan also granted the official back wages after finding the punishment disproportionate.

“We fail to understand why the Union of India has challenged the order of the high court division bench. We hear pendency, pendency. Who is the biggest litigant? Cost should be imposed,” Justice Nagarathna said. “Why can’t there be an opinion that if the high court found it disproportionate and granted relief setting aside all the orders, we shall not go to the Supreme Court? He took medical leave but he also had to deal with an elopement in his family,” she observed.

Referring to her recent statement in a conference organised by the SCBA about the government being responsible for the backlog in cases, Justice Nagarathna said the court had taken the SCBA conference very seriously. “It was not just to go to some resort and come back. We made preparations, we did homework. We spoke. Not to forget,” she said.

## US may exit Iran war soon: Trump

REUTERS

**Washington/Tel Aviv/Cairo, April 1:** The US will end its war on Iran fairly soon and could return for “spot hits” if needed, President Donald Trump told Reuters Wednesday, hours before he was scheduled to make a primetime address to the nation.

Trump also said he would state in the speech that he was considering withdrawing the US from the NATO alliance.

Asked when the US would consider the Iran war over, Trump said, “I can’t tell you exactly ... we’re going to be out pretty quickly.” He was expected to reiterate a two-to-three-week timetable for ending the war in Iran during the address, a White House official later said.

US action had ensured Iran would not have nuclear arms, Trump said, “They won’t have a nuclear weapon because they are incapable of that now, and then I’ll leave, and I’ll take everybody with me, and if we have to we’ll come back to do spot hits.” An Iranian official, Mehdi Tabatabai, said in a post on X that an important letter to the American people from Iran’s President Masoud Pezeshkian would be released “in a few hours”.

### TRUMP CONSIDERS QUITTING NATO

Global oil supplies were expected to be hit twice as hard this month as in March, the



International Energy Agency said Wednesday, underlining the urgent need for an end to the conflict that began February 28.

Trump said separately on social media that Iran had asked for a ceasefire but that he would not consider it until Tehran ceased blocking the Strait of Hormuz. Iran denied making any such request.

Two security sources from Pakistan, which is mediating in the conflict, earlier told Reuters that Islamabad had proposed a temporary ceasefire to both sides but had not heard back from either.

US Vice President JD Vance communicated with intermediaries from Pakistan about the Iran conflict as recently as Tuesday, a source briefed on the matter told Reuters Wednesday. At Trump’s direction, Vance signalled privately that Trump was open to a ceasefire as long as certain US demands were met, including reopening the Strait of Hormuz, the source said.

Trump had signalled Tues-

day he could wind down the war in two to three weeks even without a deal, and scaled up threats to pull the US out of the NATO defence alliance if European states did not help stop Iran threatening the waterway.

In his remarks to Reuters Wednesday, Trump said he would express his disgust with NATO for what he considers the alliance’s lack of support for US objectives in Iran.

European states took pains to appear unruffled and France’s junior army minister Alice Rufio said operations by NATO in the Strait of Hormuz would be a breach of international law.

### TANKER HIT OFF QATAR

Drones hit fuel tanks at Kuwait’s international airport, causing a big blaze, and authorities in Bahrain reported a fire at an undisclosed company facility from an Iranian attack.

Qatar said an oil tanker leased to state-owned QatarEnergy was hit by an Iranian cruise missile in Qatari waters,

but that there were no injuries or environmental damage.

An overnight strike hit Shahid Haghani Port, Iran’s largest passenger terminal, deputy regional governor Ahmad Nafisi told state media, calling it a “criminal” attack on civilian infrastructure.

Iran has fired repeatedly on Gulf countries, some home to US bases, during the conflict, and is using the Strait of Hormuz, a conduit for a fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas, as a bargaining chip.

Iran’s Revolutionary Guards have threatened to hit US companies in the region including Microsoft, Google, Apple, Intel, IBM, Tesla and Boeing. Trump has said he was not concerned.

### LATEST STRIKES

In Tel Aviv Wednesday, evening air raid sirens and air defence systems were repeatedly triggered as Iran fired a volley of missiles around an hour before the start of Passover, the Jewish festival of freedom.

Israel’s fire and rescue service said there had been multiple “impacts” in the greater Tel Aviv area. It was not immediately clear if the impacts were caused by missile strikes or debris from missile interceptions.

Shortly after the latest Iranian attack, the Israeli military said in a statement that the Air Force was carrying out strikes on dozens of targets across Tehran.

## 4 ministers, 26 MLAs appointed heads of DPCs

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, April 1:** The state government has appointed four ministers and 26 MLAs of the ruling BJP as chairpersons of the district planning committees (DPCs), officials said.

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi has approved names of heads of the planning committees for 30 districts, they said.

According to a notification issued by the Chief Minister’s Office (CMO), Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Suresh Pujari has been appointed the DPC chairman of Deogarh district, while Law Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan will head the DPC in Gajapati.

Ministers Nityananda Gond and Krushna Chandra Patra have been appointed as chairmen of the planning committee of Rayagada and Sambalpur districts, respectively, it said.

The MLAs who have been appointed heads of DPCs include Ashok Mohanty (Angul), Laxman Bag (Bolangir), Padmalochan Panda (Balasore), Ashwini Kumar Sarangi (Bargarh), Purna Chandra Sathy (Ganjam), Amarendra Das (Jagatsinghpur), Tankadhar Tripathy (Jharsuguda), Fakir Mohan Naik (Keonjhar), Jay Dholkia (Nuapada), and Prasanta Kumar Jagadev (Khurda).

## Man dies of burns while setting wife’s body afire



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bolangir/Deogaon, April 1:** A 65-year-old man died of burn injuries he suffered while allegedly trying to set his wife’s body on fire after killing her in Ramchandrapur village under Deogaon police limits in Bolangir district Wednesday, police said.

The deceased were identified as Upendra Kalsai and his wife, Damayanti Barik, 57, an auxiliary nurse midwife. The couple, originally from Sundargarh district, had lived in a staff quarters at a local sub-health centre in the village for nearly three decades.

Police said the incident came to light after they received a tip early Wednesday and reached the staff quarters.

Upendra suffered severe burn injuries while reportedly trying to set Damayanti’s body on fire. He was taken to Bhima Bhoi Medical College and Hos-

pital in Bolangir but died from his injuries Wednesday afternoon, police said.

Damayanti was found dead inside the quarters with head injuries. A steel bottle with blood stains was discovered near her body, they said.

Police said a domestic dispute may have prompted Upendra to assault his wife with the bottle, causing severe bleeding and her death. “Upendra then poured petrol on the body and attempted to set it on fire, during which he sustained severe burn injuries,” a police official said.

Police registered a case and launched an investigation. A forensic team and SDO Saroj Upadhyaya visited the scene.

Locals said the couple’s two children were studying outside the district, and the couple was alone at home at the time of the incident.

## Operational: 2FA for digital transactions

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 1:** Two-factor authentication (2FA) for all digital transactions, including popular UPI platform, becomes effective from Wednesday in line with the RBI’s direction as a measure to curb fraud.

Transactions will only be processed if the user completes both verification steps. This means that even if someone sees your PIN, unauthorised payments will not go through.

According to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), all digital payment transactions in India are required to meet the norm of 2FA. While no specific factor was mandated for authentication, the digital payments ecosystem has primarily adopted SMS-based one-time password (OTP) as the additional factor.

“All payment system pro-

viders and payment system participants, including banks and non-bank entities, will ensure compliance with these directions by April 01, 2026,” it had said.

The central bank introduced 2FA to reduce bank fraud and improve accountability.

From today onwards, users will not be able to make transactions by simply entering their UPI PIN, but will also have to verify the transaction by either entering an OTP, fingerprint authentication or facial recognition.

Besides, the user will not be able to take screenshots or screen recordings in the banking app, as it is completely banned to protect the user from any fraud.

The 2FA could lead to a few seconds’ delay in the transaction, as one has to feed the other OTP.

## Suboptimal diet behind 4mn ischaemic heart disease deaths

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 1:** Less-than-optimal diet, such as one being low on whole grains or high on sodium, may have caused over four million deaths worldwide from ischaemic heart disease in 2023, according to an analysis.

Ischaemic heart disease, or coronary artery disease, is a condition in which flow of oxygen-rich blood to the heart muscle is reduced because plaque build-up narrows coronary arteries.

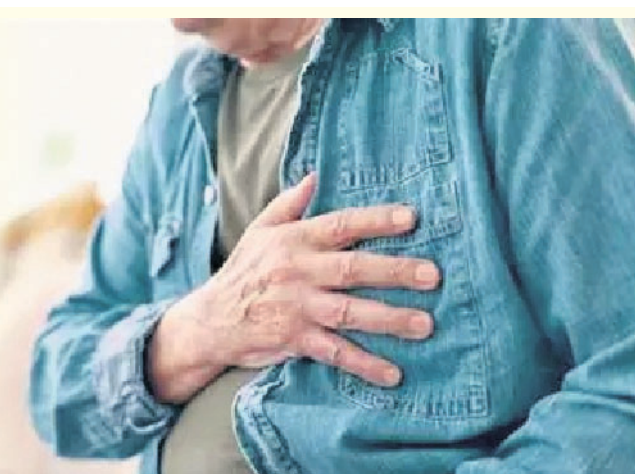
Researchers, including those from the Massachusetts General Hospital in the US and Kyung Hee University in South Korea, analysed data from the Global Burden of Disease Study (2023), a comprehensive database of health loss across places – in 204 countries and territories – over time.

“In 2023, a suboptimal diet was responsible for 4.06 million ischaemic heart disease

ISCHAEMIC HEART DISEASE, OR CORONARY ARTERY DISEASE, IS A CONDITION IN WHICH FLOW OF OXYGEN-RICH BLOOD TO THE HEART MUSCLE IS REDUCED BECAUSE PLAQUE BUILD-UP NARROWS CORONARY ARTERIES

AMONG DIETARY FACTORS, LOW INTAKE OF NUTS AND SEEDS (9.87 DEATHS PER 100,000 POPULATION), LOW WHOLE GRAINS (9.22), LOW FRUITS (7.25) AND HIGH SODIUM (7.15) WERE PRIMARY CONTRIBUTORS TO ISCHAEMIC HEART DISEASE DEATHS

INDIVIDUALS AGED 65 AND ABOVE HAD NOTABLY HIGHER DEATH RATES, COMPARED TO THOSE AGED 45 AND UNDER



deaths,” the authors wrote in the study published in the journal Nature Medicine.

Compared to 1990, the number of global diet-related ischaemic heart disease deaths increased by 41.59 per cent in 2023, the team found.

However, the age-standardised death rate attribut-

able to dietary risks decreased by nearly 44 per cent between 1990-2023, from 80.62 per 100,000 population to 45.22 per 100,000 population, suggesting population growth and health improvements, they said.

“Among dietary factors, low intake of nuts and seeds (9.87 deaths per 100,000 population),

low whole grains (9.22), low fruits (7.25) and high sodium (7.15) were primary contributors to ischaemic heart disease deaths,” they said.

The study identified the portion of ischaemic heart disease burden directly modifiable through food interventions, the team added.

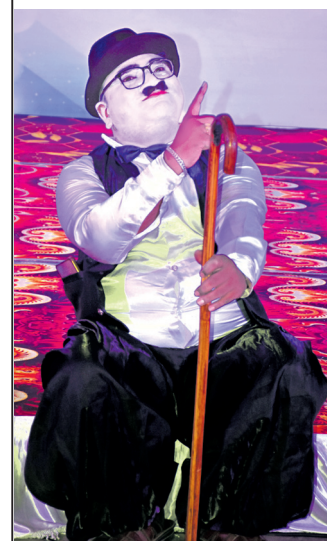
The burden due to ischaemic heart disease attributable to suboptimal diet was found to be particularly pronounced in countries with a low or middle-sociodemographic index, which had a prominent burden due to an inadequate intake of protective dietary components.

However, countries with a higher sociodemographic index exhibited a notable trend of burden from ischaemic heart disease resulting from an excessive consumption of potentially harmful dietary factors, such as processed meats and sugary drinks, the study said.

Individuals aged 65 and above had notably higher death rates, compared to those aged 45 and under.

Further, the authors said that most regions showed a decline in ischaemic heart disease burden due to a less-than-optimal diet over time, except Southeast Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Oceania and South Asia.

# OP celebrates 15th anniversary



**MOMENTS TO CHERISH:** Staffers of OrissaPOST and Dharitri gathered at the office auditorium in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday to celebrate the 15th anniversary of Odisha's only homegrown English daily. The occasion coincided with Utkal Divas and the birthday of Editor Tathagata Satpathy, in the presence of Chief Executive Adyasha Satpathy. The milestone was marked with vibrant song and dance performances, as employees fondly shared memories from the newspaper's 15-year journey. The celebration was filled with smiles, positivity and ecstasy, making it a truly memorable day. PICS: MANORANJAN MISHRA & BIKASH NAYAK

## Prez, PM & CM hail state's rich legacy

**Bhubaneswar, April 1:** President Droupadi Murmu, Vice-President CP Radhakrishnan, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and several other VIPs Wednesday greeted the people of Odisha on the state's 90th foundation day (Utkal Divas). Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, Leader of the Opposition (LoP) Naveen Patnaik, also greeted people on the occasion.

President Murmu said, "Warm greetings to the people of Odisha on Odisha Day. The occasion celebrates the state's rich cultural heritage, timeless traditions and the resilience of its people. Odisha's invaluable contribution to India's freedom struggle and nation-building continues to inspire us. I pray to Lord Jagannath for the continued progress and prosperity of the people of Odisha."

Radhakrishnan, in a social media post, said, "Warm greetings to the people of Odisha on the occasion of Odisha Day. This day is a celebration

### UTKAL DIVAS



of the State's glorious cultural legacy, rich traditions and the indomitable spirit of its people. May the State march ahead on the path of peace, prosperity and progress, and contribute significantly to the vision of Viksit Bharat."

PM Modi said in post on X: "Odisha is a state that stands tall as a timeless symbol of cultural as well as spiritual greatness. Odia music, art and literature have enriched India in countless ways. The people of Odisha, known for their determination, simplicity and warmth, have made remarkable contributions across fields. May Odisha keep scaling new

heights of progress in the times to come."

Union Home Minister Amit Shah also greeted the people of the state saying, "Blessed with a rich cultural heritage and divine blessings of Prabhu Jagannath, Odisha shines as India's pride. May the state touch new heights of progress and prosperity in the journey towards a Viksit Bharat."

Governor Hari Babu Kamhampati also greeted the people of the state and paid his tributes to the sons of the soil who made unparalleled contributions to the formation of a separate Odisha.

"Let us all come together and resolve to further strengthen Odisha's identity and pride," Kamhampati said.

CM Majhi, in a video message, said, "On this historic day marking the formation of the separate Odisha Province, I extend my heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to all Odia brothers and sisters residing in the country and abroad. As the first state formed on the basis of language, Odisha created its

distinct identity on the world stage. On this occasion, I pay my deep respects to those great sons of the soil whose sacrifices and foresight made a separate Odisha possible."

Majhi said the state government remains committed to safeguarding Odia identity and culture.

"We continue to work tirelessly to fulfil the dreams and aspirations of every Odia. Our sole aim is to build Odisha into the foremost state of the nation. On this sacred day today, let us all come together and take a firm pledge to build a Prosperous Odisha," the chief minister said.

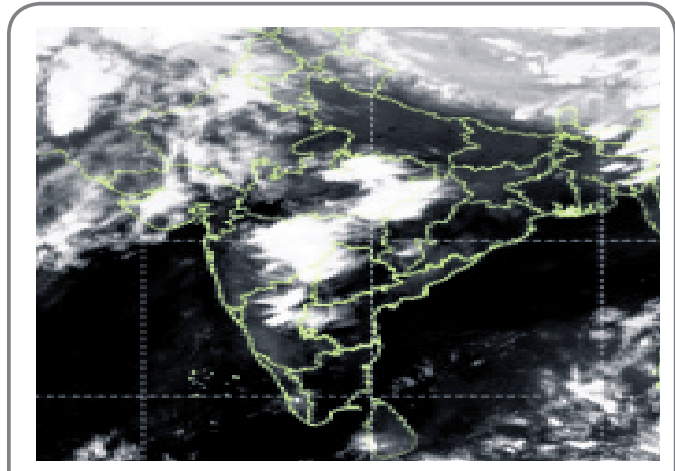
Patnaik, in a social media post, said, "Odisha Day is not just a celebration; it is an emotion. It is the pride and progress of every Odia. On this day, Odisha gained recognition as a separate state, the first in the country based on language."

On this day in 1936, Odisha became a separate province on the basis of language by carving out parts of the erstwhile Bihar, Bengal and Madras.

## ₹53cr 15th FC grant for rural governance

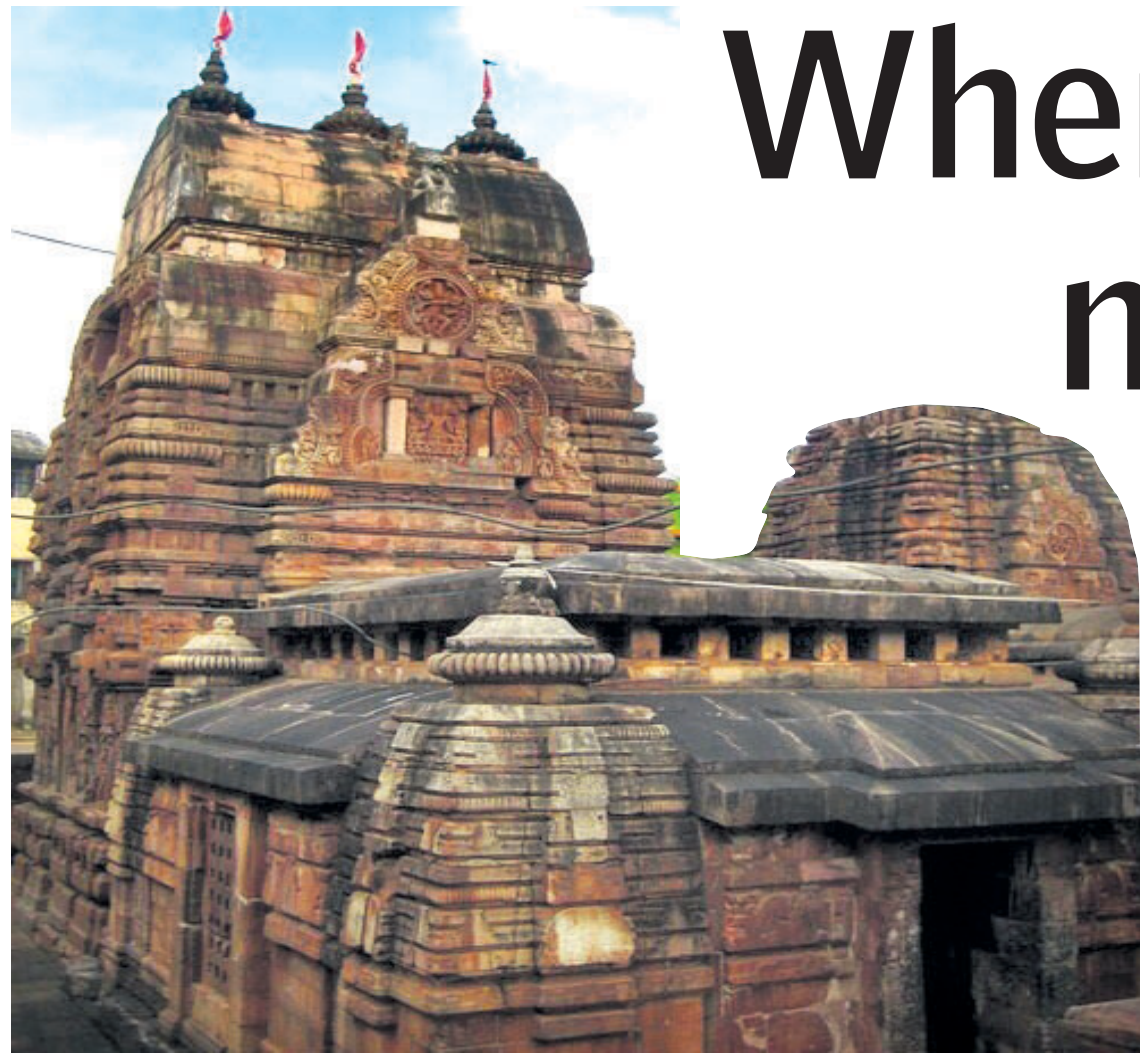
**Bhubaneswar:** The Union government has released over ₹1,536 crore as 15th Finance Commission (XV-FC) grants to strengthen Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) across eight states, with Odisha receiving ₹53.13 crore aimed at improving rural governance and essential services. According to the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, the funds — comprising tied and untied grants — have been disbursed during 2025-26 financial year to states including Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Odisha, Rajasthan, Telangana and Uttarakhand to boost rural local governance. Odisha received ₹ 53.13 crore under tied grants, representing withheld portions of the first and second installment for FY 2025-26. The funds will benefit 10 eligible zilla parishads, 17 panchayat samitis, 40 gram panchayats (for both installments), 15 additional GPs (second installment only). The allocation is expected to strengthen grassroots governance and accelerate delivery of basic civic services in rural parts of the state. Tied grants are earmarked for critical rural infrastructure and services while untied grants can be used by local bodies to address location-specific needs across 29 subjects.

MARKET WATCH					
CURRENCY		BOURSES		COMMODITIES	
INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION
DOLLAR	93.22 ↓ 0.23	SENSEX	73134.32 ↑ 1186.77	GOLD	₹150,100 ↑ ₹3181
EURO	108.23 ↑ 0.21	NIFTY	22679.40 ↑ 348.00	SILVER	₹243,687 ↑ ₹2795



WEATHER			
	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	37.5°	36.4°	Light to Moderate rain or thunderstorm
Min Temp	23.0°	21.4°	
Humidity	65%	71%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	

# Where architecture meets mysticism



Known for its rare Khakhara architecture, tantric associations and vivid sculptures, the 8th-century Vaital Temple in Bhubaneswar reflects a unique blend of mysticism, artistic excellence and early medieval religious traditions in Odisha

tifs typical of early medieval temple art.

Above the Jagamohana, two prominent Chaitya windows dominate the façade. The lower window features Surya with Usha and Pratyusha, the personifications of dawn and early light, while Aruna drives the seven-horsed chariot. The upper window displays a medallion of Nataraja.

In front of the hall stands a carved stone post featuring figures resembling Buddha in the Dharma-Chakra-Pravartana mudra, hinting at cross-religious artistic influences.

**The fierce deity within**

Inside the dim sanctum resides the temple's most powerful image: an eight-armed Chamunda, locally known as Kapalini. The goddess is depicted seated on a corpse, adorned with a garland of skulls, and accompanied by a jackal and an owl. She holds weapons including a sword, trident, bow and shield, symbolising her destructive energy.

Surrounding niches contain intense imagery, including a skeletal form of Bhairava and figures holding skull-cups filled with blood. Severed heads carved as offerings further underscore

the shrine's association with tantric practices.

**A legacy of tantric worship**

Just outside the Jagamohana stands a stone post believed to have been used for ritual sacrifices, reinforcing the temple's historical link to tantric traditions. The sanctum remains dimly lit, with only the early morning sun briefly illuminating the deity—enhancing its mystical aura.

Umakanta Mishra, Associate Professor of History at Ravenshaw University, says, "The Vaital Temple belongs to the Khakara Order and was the center of Tantric worship and sacrifice. The shrine is dedicated to the deity Chamunda, an eight-armed goddess representing the violent side of the universe. The shrine is an excellent example of Kalinga architecture and attracts visitors from across the world. The two-storeyed semi-cylindrical wagon roof of the temple suggests the influence of Buddhist cave architecture."

**Enduring significance**

Today, Vaital Deula remains an important Shakti shrine and a compelling monument of early medieval Odisha. Its unusual architecture, powerful iconography and layered cultural influences make it a vivid testament to the artistic brilliance and spiritual diversity of the region.



ANISHA KHATUN, OP

In the heart of Bhubaneswar, a temple unlike any other challenges conventional ideas of sacred architecture and worship. Vaital Temple, also known as Bait la Deula or Tini-mundi Deula, stands as a striking fusion of artistry, mysticism and tantric tradition, offering a rare glimpse into a powerful and lesser-explored spiritual world of early medieval India.

Built in the 8th century, the temple is dedicated to the fierce goddess Chamunda and represents a striking example of the Khakhara style within the broader tradition of Kalinga architecture.

The name Tini-mundi Deula refers to the three spires crowning the structure—a rare feature believed to symbolise the goddess's three manifestations: Mahasaraswati, Mahalakshmi and Mahakali.

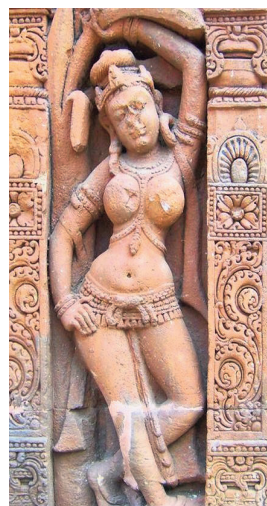
**Distinctive architecture and layout**

The temple's most remarkable feature is its sanctuary tower. Unlike the curvilinear spires typical of Kalinga temples, the Vaital Deula has a semi-cylindrical, wagon-vaulted roof—characteristic of the rare Khakhara order, often associated with tantric shrines.

The structure follows an oblong plan, with a rectangular Jagamohana (assembly hall) in front. Small subsidiary shrines are embedded at each corner, adding complexity to the layout. This architectural departure highlights both experimentation and the temple's unique ritual context.

**Rich sculptural narratives**

The outer walls are adorned with intricate sculptural panels depicting deities such as Shiva and Parvati, alongside vivid scenes of hunting, elephant capture and occasional erotic imagery—mo-



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FOCUS GEOPOLITICS

FRIENDSHIP WITH AMERICA



American imperialist foreign policy uses friendship as a strategic tool to advance its so-called national interests—that is, to uphold the dominance of capitalism at all costs

families, communities, and countries in order to preserve its own interests. British colonialism divided the Indian sub-continent, but American policy is keeping India and Pakistan apart by supporting terror strategies of the Pakistani military, thereby containing India while also contributing to Pakistan's political and economic deficit and instabilities within democratic governance.

American foreign policy is serving corporate interests in the name of national interests, while many working people in the US continue to face hunger, homelessness, unemployment, and poverty. The American state and its ideological apparatus are not aligned with the broader interests of people or the planet, but instead serve propertied classes and various forms of their capitalist interests.

The writer teaches at the London Metropolitan University.

Friendship is a form of egalitarian relationship where mutual understanding, support, trust, interests, respect, equality, and dignity thrive to expand cooperation, minimise risks, and share both happiness and sorrow, thereby creating a society based on mutual dependency and solidarity.



Bhabani Shankar Nayak

THERE IS NO GENUINE FRIENDSHIP IN AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY; IT IS DRIVEN BY CORPORATE INTERESTS

American foreign policy has, at various times, betrayed Australians, Afghans, Africans, British, Egyptians, post-Soviet states in Eastern Europe, Chinese, French, Filipinos, Indians, Pakistanis, Japanese, Nepalese, Sri Lankans, Spaniards, Ukrainians, Russians, Western Europeans, Iraqis, Iranians, Latin Americans, Mexicans, Canadians, Kurds, Vietnamese, Koreans, and countries in the Arab and Gulf regions.

There is no country, other than Israel, that US foreign policy has not betrayed, at some point, disappointed or turned against in its interactions. The USA has not truly helped any country; rather, its assistance, aid and relief packages have of-

ten been tied to advancing its own interests. For example, food aid to India was designed to undermine Indian agriculture and food sovereignty, potentially creating food markets for American corporations.

American foreign policy often seeks to undermine democratic governments and constitutional states while supporting reactionary, authoritarian, and anti-democratic regimes to advance its strategic interests. Pakistan, for instance, is widely seen as having suffered politically and economically due to its unequal strategic partnership with the US, in which the Pakistani army is often acting in alignment with American interests at the cost of Pakistani people and their interests.

American regime-change operations have occurred in many parts of the world. Washington has frequently been destabilising countries and governments that do not align with its strategic priorities. US actions have single handedly contributed to the devastation of countries such as Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, as well as several nations in Africa and the Middle East, while at the same time supporting

reactionary family-led regimes in Arab and Gulf regions. Similarly, in Latin America, the US has backed right-wing and authoritarian forces, often under the justification of combating drug cartels.

American foreign policy is often seen as using the language of terrorism, democracy, freedom, and human rights to destabilise and disrupt the prevailing order and stability in different regions of the world. President Donald Trump's recent unprovoked attack on Iran is not merely as an accident or a sudden decision by a megalomaniac president, but as part of a well-designed foreign policy. It is argued that such actions aim to divert public attention from issues such as the abandonment of Ukraine and the Epstein scandal, while also fuelling prolonged ethnic conflicts in Asia, Arab, and Middle Eastern countries.

From Vietnam and Korea to Kosovo and Ukraine, American foreign policies have contributed in creating divisions within

Succession Problem

The Divine Truth is greater than any religion or creed or scripture or idea or philosophy.

SRI AUROBINDO



The applause in Washington when Israeli and US airstrikes killed Iran's senior political and military leaders was understandable. It was also unintentionally revealing. The premise behind decapitation strikes is not merely military. It is constitutional. It assumes that the leader is the regime, that authority is biographical, and that killing the man can kill the system.

That assumption is false about Iran. But it is becoming increasingly true about the country making it.

The strategic illusion is easy to state. American and Israeli planners acted as if the Islamic Republic's authority resided in its leaders' bodies rather than in its institutions—as if killing enough of the right people could kill the system itself. Remove them, and the regime should stagger or collapse.

But Iran has not collapsed. Nor has it staggered in any decisive way. It was built, from the beginning, to survive exactly this kind of assault. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's problem in 1979 was not simply how to seize power, but how to institutionalize it. The doctrine of Velayat-e Faqih was meant to ensure that supreme authority resided in an office, not in a mortal body. The same logic informed the regime's redundant military and security architecture. This is continuity-of-government planning by a state that has long expected decapitation attempts—and prepared accordingly.

Ironically, the United States now seems unable to recognize the constitutional principle that makes such resilience possible, because that principle is being recklessly dismantled at home.

It is a principle older than liberty. Before constitutions were about rights, they were about survival. How does a political order endure the death, incapacity, or disappearance of its ruler without violence, paralysis, or collapse? Medieval political theology expressed the point by distinguishing between the sovereign's mortal body and the immortal political body of the Crown. What Ernst Kantorowicz called "the king's two bodies" was not a mystification. "The king is dead, long live the king" was a practical solution to the central problem of politics: the office must survive the man.

The US Constitution inherited this imperative. Its regular elections, fixed terms, separation of powers, vice presidency, and succession rules are not merely mechanisms for limiting power. They are devices for ensuring continuity of power. Article II answers the formal question of succession: in case of the president's removal, death, resignation, or inability, the powers and duties of the office devolve upon the vice president. The Twenty-Fifth Amendment later clarified the handling of presidential incapacitation. In the abstract, the system works.

But while formal succession fills the chair, it does not guarantee that the chair still carries the authority, institutional relationships, and governing machinery that make it meaningful. Nowhere is this clearer than in the US today.

Donald Trump is not governing primarily through the US presidency's constitutional prerogatives—the powers that would automatically pass to Vice President JD Vance—but through personal intimidation, loyalty networks, theatrical dominance, and the systematic weakening of institutions that would otherwise operate independently of his will. He has attacked the civil service, fired inspectors general, bent law enforcement toward personal and political ends, and treated neutral offices as instruments of private rule. These are not incidental abuses. They are assaults on the impersonal infrastructure that makes constitutional continuity possible.

That is why the reassuring answer—Vance would succeed him—is inadequate. Vance would inherit the office. He would not inherit Trump's personal authority over frightened legislators, donors, media owners, prosecutors, or foreign leaders. He would not inherit the peculiar mixture of fear, dependency, and cultic attachment by which Trump has replaced institutional government with personal rule. This kind of power is not constitutional. It is not transmissible. It cannot be bequeathed by amendment. It dies with its owner.

This is the real continuity-of-government crisis in America. Trump has not merely concentrated power; he has hyper-personalized it. He has degraded the institutional structures that allow the state to function without him, replacing them with forms of command that exist only in relation to him. Succession exists because presidents are mortal, because incapacity is possible, and because unforeseen rupture is certain to come sooner or later. Trump, however, is interested only in a different kind of emergency: the fake or exaggerated crisis that licenses rule-breaking in the present. A migrant caravan becomes an invasion; a legal dispute becomes a coup attempt. Crises that he can manufacture, manipulate, and exploit enlarge his discretion. They convert law into theater and exception into method.

Trump's own death or incapacitation is the one emergency that does not interest him, because it offers him nothing. It cannot be staged for advantage. It cannot be weaponized against an opponent. It cannot be declared on his terms.

Preparation for that kind of emergency would mean strengthening the civil service rather than gutting it, protecting inspectors general rather than firing them, preserving prosecutorial independence rather than corrupting it, and accepting that the state's operating logic must remain independent of the ruler's personality. The contradiction at the center of Trumpism is that personalistic rule cannot prepare institutionally for its own absence without undermining itself.

Iran, however repressive and however ugly its constitutional order, still grasps a truth that Trump's America is forgetting: regime resilience depends on the separation of the ruler's body from the body politic. The irony is stark. While the US wages war on the assumption that killing leaders can destroy states, Trump is busily making that proposition terrifyingly plausible at home. Yes, the US still has an agreed succession formula. But that formula matters only if the institutions surrounding it still function. Whereas the US was built on the assumption that the political body outlives the mortal one of its president, Trump is president only in the present tense. Unlike the Islamic Republic, the American republic has only one body now. And a political order with only one body does not outlive it.

The writer is Professor of Law at New York University School of Law.

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People with goals succeed because they know where they're going. EARL NIGHTINGALE

Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible. DALAI LAMA

It's not wise to violate rules until you know how to observe them. TS ELIOT

SPECTRUM GRASSROOTS DATA

The new social contract

Odisha is currently at a crossroads. The state has successfully transitioned from a disaster-prone identity to a development-surplus model. However, this success has created an aspiration gap. The modern Odia voter no longer votes for survival; they vote for quality of life. As noted in recent fiscal analyses of the Odisha Budget 2026-27, this shift represents a move from patronage governance to partner governance.



Sagari Gupta

THE TRILLION-DOLLAR ECONOMY IS A POWERFUL GOAL, BUT IT CAN MASK LOCAL VULNERABILITIES

The rise of the village-level data auditor is the most significant result of this shift. In tribal belts and coastal hinterlands, a generation of educated youth is no longer satisfied with the announcement of a scheme. Equipped with smartphones and an understanding of the Data Governance Quality Index (DGQI), these individuals cross-reference state promises with local realities. They are the civic technologists silently auditing the last mile of governance.

While headlines focus on high-speed rail and semiconductor hubs, these local auditors look at the granular level. They check if village nutrition data matches the state digital dashboard. They

verify if skilling programmes result in local placement rather than just certification. This bottom-up scrutiny is the invisible engine driving recent administrative efficiency. According to the 2026 Odisha Economic Survey, such transparency is becoming a prerequisite for sustaining the state's targeted double-digit growth.

The trillion-dollar economy is a powerful goal, but it can mask local vulnerabilities. The informal sector remains the backbone of the state labour market. From the weavers of Bargarh to returning migrant workers, the informal economy requires more than just credit links. It requires social security that is as agile as the digital economy it serves. Reports on labour market trends in 2026 suggest that without these safeguards, industrial enclaves risk becoming disconnected from the social realities of their surrounding districts.

The unique strength of the Odisha model is community-led resilience. The state machinery worked during the pandemic and after cyclones because the community was a stakeholder. Now, that stakeholder is more

informed and more demanding. As the state moves toward its 2026 economic targets, the challenge is to ensure that industrial growth does not create isolated economic pockets. The maritime wealth promised by the Blue Economy Roadmap 2026 must translate into climate-resilient housing and stable livelihoods for coastal communities. The village auditor is the bridge that connects these macro-economic goals to micro-level realities.

Odisha's path to 2030 will be defined by how it manages this new auditor-citizen. This is an opportunity to refine delivery mechanisms and ensure that growth reaches the smallest hamlet. The future of the state is being written in the data logs of village panchayats and the smartphones of its youth. It is a story of a state moving into a realm of sophisticated, accountable, and citizen-led prosperity.

This grassroots digital literacy is not a threat to authority but a tool for precision. When a youth in Koraput can track the fund flow of a local road project or a woman in Ganjam can verify her self-help group's credit rating on a mobile app,

the margin for error in governance shrinks. This transparency builds a level of trust that no billboard can replicate.

Furthermore, this movement is addressing the historical information asymmetry that has long plagued rural development. In the past, policy was something that happened to people; now, it is something people participate in. The "Odisha Model" of the future will likely be studied for how it successfully integrated the digital ambitions of its youth with the traditional roots of its rural economy.

Ultimately, the trillion-dollar dream will be realised through the millions of small-scale interventions made by these informed citizens. They ensure that progress is not just fast, but equitable. By embracing this new social contract, Odisha sets a precedent for how to turn data into a tool for genuine social empowerment. The 2026 maritime and fiscal strategies provide the framework, but the people provide the audit.

The writer is a policy researcher working on governance, development policy, and AI ethics.

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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

Strategic gamble

Sir, Amid repeated claims by President Donald Trump that the United States could deploy troops to seize Iran's key oil export hub at Kharg Island, experts remain divided on whether such an operation would succeed particularly given the likely resistance from Iran. A comparable episode offers caution: during the early phase of the Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Russia captured Snake Island, a small but strategically important location in the Black Sea, only to abandon it within months after sustained Ukrainian attacks exposed the difficulty of defending an isolated, vulnerable position. Kharg Island presents a similar, if not more complex, challenge. Located about 50 km off Iran's coast, this small outcrop handles roughly 1.5 million barrels of oil daily, making it one of Iran's most critical economic lifelines. However, any attempt to capture it faces three major hurdles. First, disrupting Iranian exports could sharply drive up global oil prices. Second, even if the island were seized, Iran could simply halt oil flows from the mainland, rendering control of Kharg ineffective. Third, holding the territory would be extremely difficult, as US forces would remain exposed to continuous attacks from Iranian positions on the mainland and in surrounding waters.

Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH

Autism & humanity

Sir, World Autism Awareness Day (WAAD) is observed on 2 April every year after it was declared by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007. It was first started to create awareness about autism and help people understand it better. Over time, this effort has grown into a wider movement that focuses on acceptance, respect, and inclusion of autistic people in society. Autistic advocates have played an important role in this change by sharing their real-life experiences and helping the world understand autism in a more accurate and human way. In 2026, WAAD is observed under the theme "Autism and Humanity - Every Life Has Value." This theme encourages societies to move beyond narrow views and include autistic people in all areas of life, such as education, health, jobs, and community life, in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Krishna Kumar Vepakomma, HYDERABAD

# The resilient journey of Basanti Apa



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Once a celebrated face of Odisha's theatre and cinema, Sagarbala Patnaik—fondly known as “Basanti Apa”—now lives far from the applause and dazzling stage lights that once defined her life. Her journey is not merely a story of fading fame, but one of extraordinary resilience, dignity, and quiet strength.

At 76, Sagarbala's life reads like a poignant film script—etched with her family's joys, her aging shoulders, adversity, and an unyielding will to survive. A native of Jagatsinghpur district, she was once among the brightest stars of the iconic Annapurna Theatre B Group in Cuttack during the golden era of Odia theatre in the 1960s and 70s.

Today, she resides in Alamakarpur village under Alla gram panchayat, sharing a modest home with her bedridden son, daughter-in-law, and two granddaughters. Ever since her son met with a devastating accident in 2018 that left him mentally incapacitated, Sagarbala has become the sole breadwinner of the family.

She now receives a modest government pension of Rs 2,000 as an artist and was provided a house under the Antyodaya Gruha Yojana. Yet, survival demands more. Every day, she runs a small roadside tea stall, selling tea to make ends meet.

“Acting was once my passion and profession,” she says softly, her voice carrying both pride and pain. “But circumstances forced me into this life.”

Sagarbala's artistic journey began in 1965 with the play Bhanumatira Khela, at a time when women on stage still battled social stigma. Her talent and determination soon made her a leading figure in theatre, and over a career spanning more than three decades, she performed in over 200 plays across Odisha—from Puri to Baripada, Keonjhar to Dhenkanal.

She later transitioned into films, appearing in notable Odia movies such as Sessa Shrabana, Mana Akash, Samaya Bada Balaban, and Abhinetri, earning recognition as a versatile and powerful performer.

However, the tides began to turn after the devastating 1999 Odisha Super Cyclone, which disrupted the state's theatre ecosystem and left many artists struggling. For Sagarbala, the hardest blow came years later—on December 12, 2018—when her only son's tragic accident shattered the family's stability.

Since then, she has carried the weight of her family's survival with care and responsibility. Frail in body but resolute in spirit, she continues her daily struggle with quiet dignity.

Her tea stall is more than a livelihood—it is a symbol of sacrifice, perseverance, and the enduring spirit of an artist who refuses to surrender.

Reflecting on the changing times, she notes with a tinge of sadness, “Today, many enter the industry for money. The passion we once had is fading.”

The legacy of Annapurna Theatre itself is historic. Founded by Somnath Das in the early 20th century, it pioneered mobile theatre in Odisha, bringing performances to towns and villages long before modern entertainment took over. But as the curtains fell on many such stages, artists like Sagarbala were left to navigate life's uncertainties alone.

Srikant Kumar Singh, convenor of the Jagatsinghpur Heritage Walk who felicitated her for her lifelong contribution to art recently, described her as “a symbol of women's empowerment and indomitable willpower.” Despite immense suffering, he said, she continues to fight on, setting an example for all. “She is the pride of our district and our state.”

Today, passersby may unknowingly walk past her modest tea stall, unaware that the woman serving them tea once commanded packed auditoriums and roaring applause.

But in many ways, “Basanti Apa” is still performing—only now, her stage is life itself, and her role is the most demanding of all: survival with dignity.

# The silent bell

BAISAKHI DAS

The sound is unmistakable, yet increasingly rare, a rhythmic, metallic “tink-tink-tink” cutting through the heavy stillness of summer afternoon. In the heat of summer afternoon, that sound was more than just a signal; it was a siren song that sent children scrambling for coins and sprinting toward the street.

As we mark another anniversary of chronicling our state's changing landscape, we look at a profession that is being quietly hushed. The street-side vendor, once the primary architect of childhood joy is facing a sharp downfall, caught between the gears of a high-speed digital economy and changing social habits.

Perhaps the most nostalgic, and now entirely vanished, tradition was the “Hair-for-Sweets” trade. Long before digital wallets or even pocket money were common for children, the currency of the street was organic.

In a ritual that feels like folklore today, women would save “fallen hair”

# Fading echo of the street peddler

from their combs in small tins. When the “Soan Papdi” vendor arrived, carrying his glass-topped wooden box, a fascinating exchange occurred. He would weigh the clumps of hair on a tiny hand-scale, and in return, hand over a block of flaky, melt-in-your-mouth “Soan Papdi” or the stretchy, neon-pink “Bombay Mithai”.

“It wasn't just about the sweet,” recalls Manas, a Cuttack resident who grew up in the 90s. “It was the thrill of the trade. We felt like little merchants, turning something as mundane as hair into something as magical as sugar.”

His bicycle carried a heavy wooden box wrapped in weathered red cloth, insulated with salt and sawdust. He sold “Malai Kulfi” on a stick, often slightly salty from the ice-melt—a flavour profile no branded, plastic-wrapped cone can replicate. “The salt kept the ice from melting, but it gave the kulfi that signature edge,” says a veteran vendor.

“Twenty years ago, I didn't have to ring the bell twice,” says Kailash, a vendor who has navigated the lanes of Cut-



tack for three decades. “Before I could even stop the cycle, I'd be surrounded. Today, I can ride through an entire colony and not see a single child run out.”

Often seen with a flat tray on his head or a small box on a cycle, he sold “Pink Mithai” (pulled sugar) and “Nadia Kora” (coconut sweets). These were treats handcrafted in small home kitchens, sold by the very people who made them, carrying the thumbprints of local tradition.

Armed with a manual ice-shaver that made a rhythmic, grinding “crrr-crrr” sound, he turned a block of ice into a masterpiece of “kala khatta” and rose syrup. “The sound of the ice being shaved was the soundtrack of my summer,” says Sunita, a mother of two. “My kids now just press a button on a fridge for ice cubes; they don't know the music of the street.”

The downfall of this industry isn't just about changing tastes; it's a math problem. The cost of milk, sugar, and the ice required to keep a manual box cold has skyrocketed. Meanwhile, every “Kirana” store now houses a branded freezer, offering “Buy One Get One” deals that a solo cyclist simply cannot match.

Furthermore, the “chase” has vanished. Today's children are more likely to track a delivery rider on a smartphone than run barefoot behind a bicycle bell. The personal connection—the vendor who knew exactly which child liked extra syrup—has been replaced by an anonymous transaction.

Modern parenting has also changed the landscape. In an era of organic labels and heightened hygiene concerns, the humble, uncovered “Bombay Mithai” is often viewed with skepticism. The charm of the “local” has been replaced by the perceived safety of the “sealed.”

While a few vendors still frequent our neighborhoods on alternate days, their numbers are dwindling. The manual

ice-shaver has been replaced by electric grinders, and the hair-for-sweets barter is a story we now tell children rather than something they witness.

“I still ring the bell,” says a vendor who has been walking the same route for twenty years, “but the response is quieter now. Sometimes I feel like I'm ringing a bell for a world that has already moved on.”



As we celebrate progress, let us also spare a thought for the silent bells. The next time you hear that familiar chime outside your gate, step out. Not just for a taste of the past, but to support a legacy that is fighting to stay relevant in an increasingly indifferent, high-speed world.



OP PHOTOS

# Bringing SMILE to the Rural Life...

## SNM GROUP

Weigh Bridge Road, Barbil, Dist : Keonjhar - 758 035, Odisha  
Website: [www.snmgroups.com](http://www.snmgroups.com)

# ODISHA DAY CELEBRATED AT KOTIA

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Pottangi, April 1:** The district administration Tuesday celebrated the 90th Odisha Day (Utkal Divas) in the disputed Kotia panchayat area of Koraput district, reaffirming the state's linguistic and cultural identity among border residents.

The event was held in front of the Kotia panchayat office, a region at the centre of an ongoing inter-state boundary dispute. Marking the occasion, the district information and public relations department organised a special photo exhibition highlighting Odisha's heritage and development.

Among those present were local MLA and Congress Leg-



islature Party (CLP) leader Rama Chandra Kadam, Koraput MLA Raghuram Machha, zilla parishad chairperson Sasmita Melka, Sunabeda NAC chairman Rajendra Patra, former MP Jayaram Pangi and former MLA Prafulla Pangi. District Collector Manoj Satyawan Mahajan presided over the programme.

The dignitaries visited the exhibition and interacted with attendees, with many capturing moments at the display. Addressing the gathering later, speakers underlined the historical significance of April 1, 1936, when Odisha

was formed as a separate state on a linguistic basis, giving a distinct identity to Odia-speaking people.

They also sought to create awareness among Kotia's border residents about the importance of preserving their linguistic and cultural heritage.

In a notable segment of the programme, educated women from the panchayat conveyed messages about Odisha's formation in the regional Kui language, promoting harmony with neighbouring Andhra Pradesh.

The celebration also featured cultural performances by students from various schools, adding vibrancy to the event.

Pottangi block chairperson Kalpana Pangi, zilla parishad member Tikai Gemel, additional district magistrate Naresh Chandra Sabar, CDO Benudhar Sabar, retired collector and 'Ama Kotia' convenor Gadadhar Parida, and other officials attended the event.

The programme was coordinated by BDO Ramakrishna Nayak, tehsildar Debendra Bahadur Singh Dharua, additional tehsildar Swagatika Rout and other administrative officials, who ensured its smooth conduct.



**SHOWCASING CULTURE:** Artistes perform folk dance at a procession to observe Utkal Divas at Barbil in Keonjhar district, Wednesday

## Koraput marks statehood day

**Koraput:** Odisha Day (Utkal Divas) was celebrated with enthusiasm at Koraput district headquarters, showcasing the state's rich cultural heritage and history. Officials, students and residents participated in the district-level event. Floral tributes were paid to freedom fighters across the town. District Collector Manoj Satyawan Mahajan led the ceremonies and honoured Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati Narayan Dev at his statue near the fire office. A colourful procession featuring students and traditional dance performances passed through the town and ended near the sub-collector's office, where tributes were paid to Utkalmani Gopabandhu Das and Utkal Gourav Madhusudan Das. Zilla Parishad President Sasmita Meleka and other officials attended the programme. The collector urged people to take part in Odia Pakhya from April 1 to 14 and promote Odia language and culture. A cultural programme was held at Sanskriti Bhavan in the evening. Additional District Collector Naresh Chandra Sabar inaugurated the event. Speakers highlighted the significance of Odisha's formation and called for collective efforts towards development.

## CLASSIFIED LOST

I Rajendra Kumar Sahu, S/o. Late Krushna Sahu of Bhanjanagar town while going to UCO Bank, Bhanjanagar on 26.03.2026 at about 11 AM lost my original regd. sale deed having no. 670/1998 of SRO, Ghumsur, Bhanjanagar. If any one find it, kindly inform me on my number 9437263698.

I, Sri Sandip Ray, S/o-Dilip Ray, At- Kalyani, Unit-8, Near Governor House, PS-Capital, BBSR, Pin-751001 declare that according FIR at Dhauli Police Station on dt.20.03.2026, I have obtained the Original Regd. Sale Deed No. 4509 which was purchased from Raj Kishore Rout on dt.19 August 1997 Krushnapur Mouza which Khata No. was 165/15, Plot No. 262, 275, 263, 355 and 356 missed somewhere near Dhauli Chhak while coming from my Kharavela Nagar home. If anybody find the above Lost Documents kindly contact Sandip Ray, Mob-9438701628

## AFFIDAVIT

I, Pramila Kumari Patra, D/o. Krushna Chandra Patra, W/o. Satyanarayana Patro, resident at MIG-111, Bhimatangi, Phase-II, HB Colony, Bhubaneswar Urban, P.O.: Old Town, P.S.: Airfield, Dist.: Khordha, PIN - 751002, Odisha declare by this Affidavit No. 93 Dt.24.03.2026 that now onwards I shall be known as Pramila Patra for all future purposes.

I Shaikh Saifuddin, S/o- Shaikh Safiruddin resident of Vill- Yousufpur Chhadak Mohalla, PO/ PS- Puruna Bazar, Bhadrak, Pin-756100 declare by this affidavit No.580, dtd.06.03.2026 that now onwards I shall be known as SK SAIFUDDIN for all future purposes.

## Youth dies in hospital; negligence alleged

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Dhenkanal, April 1:** An 18-year-old youth died due to alleged medical negligence at the district headquarters hospital here Wednesday morning, his family claimed.

The deceased, Alok Samal of Malpura village in Bhuban block, had sustained severe abdominal injuries Tuesday after falling into a latrine tank.

He was admitted to the hospital in the evening. Family members alleged that after providing initial treatment, doctors attempted to discharge him. However, the family members insisted to keep him under observation as his condition remained critical.



When his condition worsened Wednesday morning, the family requested to shift him to Cuttack for advanced treatment. They alleged that hospital authorities did not cooperate and failed to provide proper care. They also claimed that a wrong injection was administered, leading to his death.

Alok's mother Padmabati Samal and elder brother Prashant Samal alleged negligence and demanded action against those responsible.

Chief District Medical Officer Dr Sanjay Kumar Mohapatra refuted the allegations, stating that the youth had suffered a serious abdominal injury due to the fall. "The patient was brought to the hospital between 9pm and 9:15pm. His condition was stable at the time. When his condition suddenly worsened Wednesday morning, he was referred to Cuttack," he said.

He added that the death occurred due to a delay in arranging a vehicle for transfer, according to preliminary information.

## Water crisis grips Mohanpada village



NARENDRA RAUT, OP

**Koraput, April 1:** Mohanpada village in Koraput district is grappling with a severe drinking water crisis, exposing years of alleged administrative neglect and unfulfilled promises. Despite repeated assurances, nearly 1,400 residents continue to struggle to meet their basic water needs.

Many villagers wake as early as 3am to queue for water, often waiting until late morning, disrupting daily routines and livelihoods. Local resident Kanak Khillo said people are forced to forgo work hours to collect water, adding that the situation worsens in summer when the only functional tube well frequently produces muddy and unsafe water.

The crisis is particularly acute in Gauda Sahi, where two of the three tube wells have long been defunct, leaving residents dependent on a single

unreliable source. Villagers have demanded the immediate installation of a new tube well.

With no alternative, residents also cross a busy highway to reach a nearby river for bathing and washing, putting their lives at risk.

Former councillor Narayan Chandra Bhattacharya criticised authorities for their inaction. He said two wells and a tube well were constructed during his tenure in 2000, but most have since become defunct. Repeated complaints, he alleged, have gone unanswered.

He added that a piped water supply system stopped functioning eight months ago after a transformer was stolen and has not been restored.

With villagers travelling nearly 2 km each day to fetch water, the crisis is taking a toll on health and livelihoods, particularly among daily wage earners.

## Man threatens lady cop, arrested

**Udala:** Police arrested a youth for allegedly entering Kaptipada police station in Mayurbhanj district and issuing death threats to a woman officer. The accused was identified as Deepak Singh of Dharampur area under Berhampur police limits in Balasore district. A case-78/26 has been registered in this connection and further investigations are on. According to reports, Singh had come to the police station Tuesday evening as a mediator in an abduction case. While sitting inside the station in an inappropriate manner, he was asked by a woman assistant sub-inspector (ASI) to sit properly. This reportedly angered him, and he misbehaved with the officer. Hearing the commotion, Inspector-in-Charge Madhumita Mohanty reached the spot, but Singh allegedly abused her as well using obscene language. He also allegedly threatened to kill police personnel before being taken into custody, police said.

## 25 cattle die after drinking contaminated water

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Nabarangpur, April 1:** At least 25 cattle have died after allegedly consuming contaminated water discharged from a maize processing unit in Nabarangpur district, triggering tension and protests in the area.

Residents of Bamuni and Kusumpali villages under Rajoda panchayat of Kosagumuda block alleged that toxic effluents released from the Vijayanagar Biotech maize factory near their villages led to the deaths. Villagers claimed that more than 50 cattle have died over the past 15 days due to exposure to the polluted water.

Locals accused the factory authorities of releasing untreated waste and effluents into open areas instead of storing them safely, leading to the incident. The situation turned tense as villagers de-



manded immediate action against the unit.

On being informed, Nabarangpur MLA Gouri Shankar Majhi and District Collector Maheshwar Swain visited the site and took stock of the situation. When questioned by the Collector about the discharge of toxic water, factory officials

reportedly failed to provide any satisfactory answer. On the other hand, the factory authorities attempted to cover up the discharge point of the contaminated water with soil after learning about the visit of the Collector and MLA, the villagers alleged.

The Collector and MLA said

that water samples would be tested by the State Pollution Control Board and the Water Resources Department, and an inquiry would be conducted into the allegations.

The factory, set up by an Andhra Pradesh-based company, had initially faced local opposition before commencing operations with community support. However, villagers Dharamdas Bhattacharya, Mohan Chalan, Pradip Kumar Bhuyan hailing from Bamuni, Kusumpali, Bhaluguda, Kidripali, Kotniaguda and Chhelipadar, now allege severe problems due to air and water pollution from the unit.

Veterinary officials have conducted post-mortem examinations of the cattle carcasses. Villagers have demanded compensation for the losses and immediate closure of the factory. Factory authorities could not be reached for comment.

## 6 get 3-year jail for leopard hide smuggling

**Rayagada:** A local court sentenced six persons to three years of rigorous imprisonment each after convicting them in a leopard hide smuggling case. The Chief Judicial Magistrate Apama Mahapatra also slapped a fine of ₹25,000 on each of the convicts, apart from the punishment. They will have to undergo an additional eight months of rigorous imprisonment, in case of default in payment of the fine. The convicted persons were identified as Rabindra Bidika, Akshaya Kumar Oda, Simanchal Sabar, Nikhil Ganta, Haladhar Sabar and Sangana Kadra. During the trial, the court examined eight witnesses before pronouncing the verdict. The prosecution was conducted by Additional Public Prosecutor Sitaram Panda and counsel Giribasa Rao. According to case records, Padmapur forest guard Mahapatra received information May 9, 2024, about the illegal trade of a leopard hide. Acting on the tip-off and informing the Rayagada Divisional Forest Officer, he seized the leopard hide and detained suspects involved in the smuggling. Based on further investigation, forest officials conducted a raid May 10, 2024, at an orchard near Bichikote Square under Padmapur circle and apprehended four accused while they were allegedly negotiating for trade of the hide. They were arrested and later produced before the Gunupur SDJM court.

## Bharat Ratna demand for Madhusudan Das grows

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Manguli/Jagatpur, April 1:** A strong demand for conferring the Bharat Ratna on Utkal Gourav Madhusudan Das, the chief architect of a separate Odisha state, gathered momentum on the occasion of Odisha Day.

Marking the celebrations, a large bike rally was organised by Madhupremi members from Tangi in Cuttack district to Satyabhampur, the birthplace of Madhusudan Das, under Jagatpur police limits.

Across the state, Odisha Day was observed with enthusiasm, and the rally emerged as a key highlight in the Tangi region. Led by educationist and founder of Tetrahedron Group of Institutions, Trivedi Behera, more than 600 youths participated in the procession. The rally featured over 400 motorcycles and a secured four-wheeler, moving through key points including the block area, Ram Mandir, Hanu-



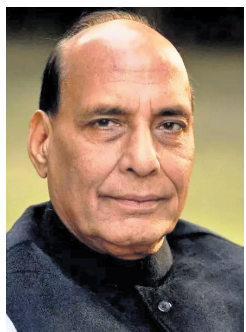
man Temple square, Dreams square, Bhattimunda and Gopinathpur village before reaching Satyabhampur.

Upon arrival at the birthplace of Madhusudan Das, Behera paid floral tributes to the statue of the legendary leader.

Several dignitaries, including a President's Award recipient and senior citizens, attended the event, with participants from 15 panchayats joining the rally.

Locals noted that this was the first such large-scale rally in the Tangi area pressing for Bharat Ratna status for Madhusudan Das.

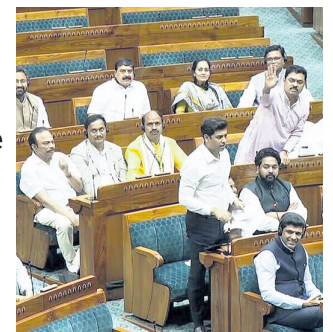
In a separate programme, Itisha Foundation adviser Anusaya Mohanty offered floral tributes to Madhusudan Das, with the Itishree Mishra, president Shastri Bahadur Pradhan and other members in attendance.



Those who stole the gold from the doors of the Sabarimala shrine, will be shown the door by the people of Kerala

BUDGET SESSION LIKELY TO BE EXTENDED

The Budget session of Parliament is unlikely to be adjourned sine die Thursday as the government is planning to summon it again for two-three days in the third week of April to bring a Bill to increase the number of Lok Sabha seats to 816 so that 273 of them could be reserved for women, sources privy to the development said



of the day quote

For the sake of Muslims in West Bengal getting greater representation in political decision-making, and for their true development, we have joined hands with Kabir. Together, we will give a jolt to Mamata Banerjee and her party

Journalists risk their lives during emergencies like COVID-19 to keep the public informed. It is the administration's responsibility to provide them with high-quality facilities

As Orunodoi is linked to ration cards, families with more members will be allotted two ration cards so that two women from the same household can benefit from the scheme

POST OF THE DAY

This old man is quite funny. He told the nation to be prepared for a Covid-like situation. He told us that we will fight through this situation together. Then he went off to campaign for his party in state elections. While we're still standing in LPG queues.

FCRA debate in LS deferred

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Alappuzha, April 1: A discussion in the Lok Sabha on a Bill to amend the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) scheduled for Wednesday was deferred amid a political slugfest, with the Opposition alleging that the new measures could curb minority rights and tighten government control over NGOs.

The BJP, on its part, defended the Bill as necessary for national security and transparency, and asserted it does not target any religious organisation. As the rival parties traded charges over the FCRA (Amendment) Bill, 2026, just ahead of the Assembly elections in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Kerala and Puducherry, sources said it is unlikely to come up in the ongoing Budget session.

The session is likely to end Thursday amid indications that two or three more sittings could be held later this month. At present, approximately 16,000 associations are registered under the FCRA and receive around Rs 22,000 crore annually, according to the statement of objects and reasons of the Bill.

In the Lok Sabha, the Bill was listed for consideration and passage. But as soon as the Question Hour began at 11 am, opposition members, mainly from Kerala, started raising slogans against the provisions of the Bill. The Bill to amend the FCRA was introduced in the Lok Sabha

LS passes Jan Vishwas amendment Bill

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 1: The Lok Sabha Wednesday passed a Bill to amend certain provisions in different laws for decriminalising and rationalising minor offences to further promote ease of doing business and living.

The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026, was passed with a voice vote. The Bill proposes to amend 784 provisions of 79 Central Acts administered by 23 ministries. It seeks to decriminalise 717 provisions and amend 67 provisions to facilitate ease of living.

It also seeks to rationalise more than 1,000 offences, removing outdated and redundant provisions, thereby improving the overall regulatory environment. Replying to the debate on the bill, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said it will help people and MSMEs.

Amendments moved by Congress member K Kavaya were rejected by voice vote. Meanwhile, an amendment Bill which provides graded punishment for bodily harm to transgender persons has received the assent of President Draupadi Murmu.

Opposition MPs had slammed the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026, for excluding gays and lesbians from its ambit.

According to a law ministry notification dated March 30, the amended law will come into effect on a date appointed by the Central Government through a notification in the official gazette.



March 25, with the government making it clear that individuals engaging in forced religious conversion through foreign funding will not be spared.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said the Bill seeks to protect national security and interest and asserted it was not aimed against any religion or organisation.

The move was aimed at preventing misuse of foreign contributions, Rijiju said in a bid to assuage the concerns of the opposition, as he accused the Congress and Left parties of misleading people of Kerala, which goes to polls April 9.

He said though the bill had been listed in Wednesday's official agenda for the Lok Sabha, it was not being taken up for discussion on the day.

Kerala BJP chief Rajeev Chandrasekhar said the Centre will not proceed with the proposed amendments without addressing concerns raised by various sections,

including Christians. Defending the amendments, BJP MP Dinesh Sharma rejected the Opposition's charge that the bill targets minorities.

Opposition parties, however, mounted a strong attack on the bill. Several church heads have also voiced serious concern.

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan accused the Centre of "ignoring" the concerns of minority communities over the FCRA amendment and alleged that the move was driven by "political motives".

Congress MP Manickam Tagore claimed that opposition unity forced the government to withhold the FCRA Amendment Bill for now, alleging that the move exposed its "double standards".

Congress MP Manish Tewari termed the amendments "un-constitutional".

Several opposition MPs led by the Congress also staged a protest in the Parliament House complex against the bill and demanded its withdrawal.

SC: 19 tribunals to hear exclusion or inclusion pleas

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 1: Nineteen appellate tribunals headed by former chief justices and high court judges will decide on the pleas of those excluded from the voter list during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls in poll-bound West Bengal, the Supreme Court said Wednesday.

The court said the tribunals will also adjudicate upon the pleas of Election Commission (EC) officials, who may be aggrieved by the inclusion of persons in the voter list by adjudicating authorities, including 700 judicial officers from West Bengal, Odisha and Jharkhand.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joy-malya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi took note of two communications received from the chief justice of the Calcutta High Court, updating the progress of the exercise.

Highlighting the "extraordinary exercise" of adjudicating the objections in the ongoing SIR process, the CJ said approximately 47.4 lakh objections out of a total of 60 lakh were disposed of as March 31.

The bench said according to the communications received from the chief justice, "as March 31, 2026 till 4:04 pm, 46,60,135 objections have been decided in the entire state, against the total number of 60,06,675 objections filed. We



are informed that as of today, the disposal has crossed 47,30,000". It noted that March 20, the poll panel notified the constitution of 19 appellate tribunals that will be working from the Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherjee National Institute of Water and Sanitation, Diamond Harbour Road in Kolkata, an institute run by the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Ministry of Jal Shakti, for the next eight weeks.

"It goes without saying that, as and when required, the Election Commission of India will either seek further extension from the Ministry of Jal Shakti and/or identify alternative premises in consultation with the parties," the bench said.

"We, however, clarify that, in any case, the appellate tribunals shall function at Kolkata," it said. The bench said the chief justice of the high court has also highlighted the issue of alleged non-availability of "reasons" for the rejection of the objections by the adjudicating authority.

PM reviews common man's needs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 1: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Wednesday called for an 'all-out effort' to safeguard the Indian citizens from the impact of the war in West Asia and stressed a timely and authentic public information system to ward off any misinformation or rumour-mongering.

At a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), chaired by him, the prime minister assessed the availability of

critical needs for the common people and said all efforts must be made to safeguard the citizens from the impact of this conflict.

The meeting was held to review measures taken by ministries and departments in view of the West Asia conflict, and discuss further initiatives in that context, the Prime Minister's Office said in a statement.

This was the second special CCS meeting on this issue. The first was held March 22.

Modi directed all concerned departments to take all possible measures to ameliorate the problems of citizens and sectors affected by the ongoing global situation, the PMO statement said.

At the meeting, the prime minister took stock of fertilisers and steps being taken to ensure their availability in the Kharif and Rabi seasons.

He emphasised a smooth flow of authentic information to the public to prevent misinformation and rumour-mongering.

Blast outside BJP office in C'garh; NIA rushed, no casualties

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, April 1: A blast outside the Punjab BJP headquarters here Wednesday evening sent people panicking, with police saying a "crude" device appeared to have been hurled. No casualties were reported.

A team of the National Investigation Agency was at the site to investigate the blast, which occurred at around 5 pm, a police officer said. The BJP's state unit chief Sunil Jakhar dubbed it an "attack" at the party office.

Meanwhile, an unverified video surfaced on social media showing a person carrying a helmet in his hand and throwing a grenade-like object while another recorded the act. After the object was hurled, both started running, followed by the sound of a blast. Their faces were not visible in the 10-second video, the veracity of which was yet to be ascertained.

Chandigarh Senior Superintendent of Police Kanwardeep Kaur said, "Prima facie, it appears that a small crude-type device was thrown." She said the occurrence of a blast near the Punjab BJP office was reported at around 5 pm.

The party's state media cell head, Vineet Joshi, said the office staff heard the sound and they immediately alerted police. The Punjab BJP headquarters is located in Sector 37, which also houses Law Bhavan and a petrol pump.

The office often hosts press conferences and is a hub of other party activities. Reacting to the blast, Jakhar said, "First, there were continuous grenade attacks on police stations in Punjab; then recently, a statue of Babasaheb Dr B R Ambedkar was vandalised in Hoshiarpur; and today, the BJP state-level office in Chandigarh was attacked."

EAST COAST RAILWAY Tender Notice No. ETELCONBBST-383E, Dated: 25.03.2026. Includes details for renovation of electrical wiring and replacement of electrical assets.

EAST COAST RAILWAY Tender Notice No. ST-OT-HDS-PRDP-WORKS-656, Dt. 25.03.2026. Includes details for maintenance and operation of signalling and telecommunication gears.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA 34001/279/2526 OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER GANJAM (R&B) DIVISION NO. II, BERHAMPUR. Includes details for bid invitation for BIDS (IFB) [e-Procurement] TENDER CALL NOTICE.

Government of India Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship Directorate General of Training CITS ADMISSION NOTICE - SESSION 2026-27. Includes details for admission to courses under Craft Instructor Training Scheme (CITS).

CENSUS 2027 President, PM, Home Minister take part in self-enumeration exercise

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 1: President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi Wednesday took part in the first self-enumeration exercise in India's census history, which began in the national capital and seven other states and UTs giving an option to citizens to submit their information through a special web portal.

The first citizen of the country self-enumerated on the SE portal (se.census.gov.in) where she filled all her details in Rashtrapati Bhavan in the presence of Home Secretary Govind Mohan and Registrar General and

Census Commissioner of India Mrityunjay Kumar Narayan and Deputy Director General (Census Planning) Biswajit Das.

Prime Minister Modi also filled his self-enumeration details in the presence of the officials.

"Completed my self enumeration. Today marks the beginning of the first phase of Census 2027, relating to house listing and housing operations. This census is the first time data collection being done through digital means," Modi said on X.

Vice President C P Radhakrishnan and Home Minister Amit Shah also filled self-enumeration form online. "As part of the first phase of

the Census, the 'House Listing' process commencing today, I filled the self-enumeration form. This process will play a crucial role in accelerating India's development journey and ensuring that government schemes reach every citizen effectively," Shah said on X.

The Census 2027 kick-started on Wednesday in eight states and Union Territories, including NDMC and Delhi Cantt areas of the national capital, with the opening of a 15-day self-enumeration window, a first in the history of the massive exercise, where citizens will have the option to digitally submit information on their own.



We are fully committed to NATO. Secondly, that whatever the pressure on me and others, whatever the noise, I'm going to act in the British national interest in all the decisions that I make. And that's why I've been absolutely clear that this is not our war and we're not going to get dragged into it

INDIA RECEIVES LIGHT MACHINE GUNS FROM ISRAEL

A leading Israeli small arms manufacturer has delivered the first batch of light machine guns (LMGs) to India under the 'Make in India' initiative with technology transfer.



of the day quote

Our centre-right party will allow a rival with far-right roots to enter the government if the country's election this year produces a right-wing majority, taking a further decisive step to bring it into the political mainstream



We are inviting you on a journey to recover values for a proper and healthy life



We think that this will be one of the fairest elections that we have seen in recent years



Pak, Afghanistan open fresh talks in China

REUTERS

Peshawar, Pakistan/Kabul, April 1: Afghanistan and Pakistan have opened a new round of talks in China to end the deadliest fighting between two Muslim nations since the Taliban returned to power in 2021, sources said Wednesday.

Beijing has been trying to mediate a negotiated settlement to the conflict, which has claimed heavy losses on both sides, although many more on the Afghanistan side, since Pakistan launched air strikes in late February.

Islamabad accuses the Taliban of harbouring and supporting Islamist militants who carry out attacks inside Pakistan. Kabul denies that claim, saying the militancy is Pakistan's domestic problem.

The new round of talks coincides with Pakistani Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar's visit to Beijing to seek Chinese support for Islamabad's initiative to broker a peace deal between the US and Iran. Foreign and defence ministry delegates from both countries have travelled to the northwestern Chinese city of Urumqi, four sources in Pakistan and Kabul said.

The four spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to disclose the information, saying the talks involved mid-level officials.

Pakistan's foreign ministry and the Kabul administration did not respond to requests for



China mediates talks for ceasefire and border reopening after deadly clashes

Pakistan accuses Taliban of harbouring militants; Kabul denies, calls militancy Pakistan's issue

Talks in Urumqi involve mid-level foreign and defence ministry officials from both countries

comment. The talks will focus on a potential ceasefire and on the reopening of border crossings to allow trade and travel, they said, adding that the new round of talks was a Chinese initiative.

"Our top leadership agreed with them and decided to participate in the process," a Taliban leader in Kabul said.

Both sides traded heavy fire this week after a temporary ceasefire along their 2,600-km (1,600-mile) border.

The pause in hostilities was announced for the Islamic festival of Eid al-Fitr, and was also requested by Turkey, Qatar and

Saudi Arabia, which Islamabad ended last week, saying it was responding to an attack from the Afghan side.

Afghanistan has not yet announced officially whether the ceasefire was still holding on its side.

Kabul said more than 400 people were killed in a Pakistani air strike on a drug rehabilitation centre in Kabul last month before the neighbours suspended the fighting. A Reuters reporter counted more than 100 bodies at one hospital after the air strike.

Pakistan has rejected the Taliban's statements about the strike, saying it "precisely targeted military installations and terrorist support infrastructure".

The Chinese mediation efforts come as Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, who hosted talks between Pakistan and Afghanistan during previous clashes in October, find themselves embroiled in the US and Israeli war on Iran.

Russia claims full control of Ukraine's Luhansk region

REUTERS

Moscow, April 1: The Russian Defence Ministry said Wednesday that its forces had taken full control of the Luhansk region in eastern Ukraine, suggesting they had wrested control of a small sliver of land which had remained beyond their reach since 2022.

Reuters could not independently verify the battlefield report and a Ukrainian military spokesperson said there had been no battlefield changes in the area in the last six months.

More than 99% of Luhansk, one of four Ukrainian regions Russia claimed as its own in 2022 - something Kyiv and most Western countries have rejected as an illegal land grab - has long been under Russian control. "Units of the 'West' military grouping have completed the liberation of the Luhansk People's Republic," the Defence Ministry said in a statement, using Moscow's preferred name for the region.

Luhansk is one of two regions - along with Donetsk - which make up the wider industrialised Donbas area. The Kremlin on Wednesday reiterated its demand that Ukrainian forces withdraw from the part of Donetsk which Moscow does not control to end what it called the "hot phase" of the war, a demand Kyiv has repeatedly dismissed as absurd.

Russia's Defence Ministry said its forces had also taken control of the village of Verkhnya Pysarivka in Ukraine's Kharkiv region and of Boikove in the Zaporizhzhia region in southeastern Ukraine. Reuters could not independently verify those battlefield assertions.

NATO serves Euro-Atlantic security, not Hormuz offensive missions: France



REUTERS

Paris, April 1: France hit back Wednesday at threats by President Donald Trump to pull the US out of NATO, saying the military alliance was designed to ensure security in the Euro-Atlantic area and not to launch offensive operations in the Strait of Hormuz.

Trump told Reuters he would state in an address to the nation later Wednesday that he was "absolutely" considering withdrawing the United States from NATO, echoing comments he made in an interview with Britain's Daily Telegraph after allies failed to back US military action against Iran.

French President Emmanuel Macron has suggested having a UN framework for any action in the Strait of Hormuz, a vital artery for global oil supplies that Iran has effectively shut, and said international efforts could happen only when hostilities calm, insurance and shipping firms are consulted and Iran consents.

"Let me remind you what NA-

TO is. It is a military alliance concerned with the security of the Euro-Atlantic region. It is not designed to carry out operations in the Strait of Hormuz, which would be a breach of international law," Junior Army Minister Alice Rufo told the War & Peace conference in Paris.

Rufo, who is a close ally of Macron and was one of his top diplomats, said she understood the Americans were annoyed about France's refusal to join a coalition to immediately unblock the strait.

But Paris favoured working on a plan to restore transit and freedom of navigation by means "not of an offensive nature," she said.

"I understand this irritation, but I am not speaking on behalf of the United States," Rufo said.

"I am speaking for a country that is a founding member of the Atlantic Alliance (NATO) and a founding member of the European Union, and which for the past 20 years has been saying that Europeans must take a greater share of responsibility for collective defence in Europe."

SHORT TAKES

Sapana Malla becomes Nepal's acting CJ

Kathmandu: The senior-most judge of the Supreme Court Sapana Malla took charge as Nepal's acting Chief Justice Wednesday. Malla, 62, assumed the top judicial post following the retirement of Chief Justice Prakash Man Singh Raut Tuesday, when he reached the retirement age of 65. Raut was appointed to the post October 6, 2024, after serving eight years as a Supreme Court Justice. The leadership of the apex court automatically went to Malla as the senior-most justice. She holds a Master of Laws (LLM) degree from the University of Delhi. She is the second woman to assume the leadership of the judiciary after Sushila Karki, who later headed the caretaker government and became the first female interim prime minister of Nepal.

China, Bhutan discuss boundary alignment

Beijing: China and Bhutan Wednesday discussed boundary alignment in areas "where there are no disputes" as the two sides held the 15th Expert Group Meeting on their boundary issues. At the expert group meeting held here, the two sides affirmed the progress made in the China-Bhutan boundary negotiations in recent years, a joint press release issued by both sides after the talks said. They had frank and constructive discussions in a friendly atmosphere on the way forward to make further progress on the implementation of the Three-Step Roadmap, it said. The two sides agreed to maintain the momentum of boundary negotiations and hold the next round of Expert Group Meeting in Bhutan at mutually convenient dates, it said.

Boat capsizes off Turkiye, killing 19

Ankara: A fast-moving boat carrying Afghan migrants capsized in the Aegean Sea Wednesday while attempting to evade the coastguard in rough waters, leaving 19 dead - including a baby, officials said. The Turkish Coast Guard Command said the boat carrying dozens of migrants ignored repeated warnings to stop and attempted to flee at high speed. The boat began to take on water in the choppy waters and eventually capsized. At least 20 other migrants were rescued. The sinking occurred off the coastal city of Bodrum, a popular Turkish vacation destination. Rescue teams supported by a helicopter dispatched from the nearby city of Izmir initially pulled 21 survivors from the water and recovered 18 bodies, the Coast Guard said. One of the migrants later died in hospital.

Hungary's far-right party seen as potential kingmaker in election



REUTERS

Budapest, April 1: Hungary's far-right Our Homeland party could become kingmaker after an April 12 election, as two opinion polls Wednesday showed it is the only small party likely to win enough votes to enter parliament alongside the two main parties.

Nationalist Prime Minister Viktor Orbán is trying to extend his 16-year hold on power but the centre-right Tisza party, led by former government insider Peter Magyar, leads Orbán's Fidesz party in independent polls.

Surveys published by independent pollsters 21 Research Centre and Zavecz Research showed that Our Homeland (Mi Hazánk) is the only party besides Tisza and Fidesz with a chance of winning the 5% of votes required to enter parlia-

ment. 21 Research Centre put support for Our Homeland at 5% among decided voters and Zavecz put it at 4%.

Our Homeland, which won 6.7% in a European Parliament election in 2024, is part of the far-right Europe of Sovereign Nations group, which includes Germany's Alternative für Deutschland. Our Homeland campaigns on an anti-European Union, anti-migration and anti-vaccination platform and says it will fight corruption and crime.

Laszlo Toroczka, the 48-year-old leader of Our Homeland, rejects being categorized as far-right and says he considers his party "sovereignist", as opposed to globalist forces.

Our Homeland attracts openly antisemitic and anti-Roma voters and should certainly be seen as a far-right party, said Robert Laszlo, an election expert at think tank Political Capital, though he said they were a minority in the party.



A liquid representing a fossil fuel runs down demonstrators' faces during a Fossil Free London protest over oil dependency, amid rising oil prices, as the US-Israeli conflict with Iran continues, outside the US Embassy in London, Britain

Jailed Palestinians fear death by hanging without due process

REUTERS

Ramallah/Jerusalem, April 1: Palestinians in the occupied West Bank voiced fears Tuesday that their jailed relatives could be hanged without due process after Israel adopted a new law making the death penalty the default sentence for Palestinians convicted of lethal attacks.

The law would also apply to Israeli citizens, but by defining the lethal attacks in question as those "negating Israel's existence" it would be very unlikely that it would be used against Jewish Israelis, critics say.

The law, which passed late Monday, is expected to be struck down by Israel's Supreme Court following an appeal by rights groups as it has elements in breach of an international convention, Israeli

legal experts said, adding it is unlikely that any executions will actually be carried out.

The UN rights chief Tuesday said the legislation violated international humanitarian law. MILITARY COURTS HAVE 96% CONVICTION RATE

The law mandates execution specifically by hanging, a provision experts said was included over concerns Israeli doctors would refuse to conduct lethal injections. It would generally require execution within 90 days of sentencing, with no right to clemency.

The law provides judges the option to choose life imprisonment over capital punishment, but only in unspecified "special circumstances".

Israeli rights group B'Tselem says military courts in the West Bank, where only cases involving Palestinians are



heard, have a 96% conviction rate and a history of extracting confessions under duress or even through torture. Israel denies this. In the West Bank city of Ramallah, the families of Palestinian prisoners held a protest Tuesday where they called for the death penalty law to be repealed. "I am afraid for my son and for all the prisoners. The news came down like a thunderbolt on the prisoners' families," said Maysoun Shawamreh, whose son, 29-year-old Mansour, has been imprisoned on attempted murder charges. Abdel Fattah al-Himouni's

Death is default sentence for Palestinians convicted of lethal attacks

Palestinians lack due process in military courts, rights groups say

Israeli Supreme Court likely to strike law down, experts say

SUPREME COURT LIKELY TO STRIKE DOWN LAW, EXPERTS SAY

The Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 - which Israel has ratified - says that persons condemned to death cannot be deprived of the right of petition for pardon and lays down a minimum of six months between sentence and execution. Mordechai Kremnitzer, a law professor with the Israel Democracy Institute, said the law is "a clear case that invites the Supreme Court to strike it down."

"The likelihood of executions in the near future is not very high," Kremnitzer said. Judges are likely to show a negative attitude towards capital punishment because it runs against both universal morality and Jewish morality, he added.



**Escalation of hostilities in West Asia since late February 2026 has reintroduced risks, particularly for India's energy and food security. A prolonged conflict or disruption of the Strait of Hormuz could constrain the supply of oil, gas and fertilisers, triggering global supply shocks**

**K RAVICHANDRAN** | EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT & CHIEF RATING OFFICER, ICRA

**UPI TRANSACTIONS HIT RECORD HIGH**

Fuelled by festivities and financial year closure, the transaction through the popular Unified Payments Interface (UPI) touched a record high of ₹29.53 lakh crore and 22.64 billion in value and volume terms, respectively, in March, according to data released by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI). NPCI said the value of transactions was at ₹29.53 lakh crore in March against ₹24.77 lakh crore in the same month a year ago, registering a 19 per cent growth on an annual basis



**of the day quote**

**The Indian auto component sector is moving beyond a scale-driven growth phase into a capability-led consolidation cycle**

**Koushik Bhattacharyya** | MANAGING DIRECTOR AND HEAD OF INDUSTRIALS INVESTMENT BANKING, AVENDUS CAPITAL

**The data centre story in India is no longer about potential but about execution at scale**

**Anshuman Magazine** | CHAIRMAN AND CEO (INDIA, SOUTH-EAST ASIA, MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA), CBRE

**From being an importer of mobile phones back in 2014, India has now become a net exporter. We have more than 300 mobile manufacturing units operational in the country. Smartphones have emerged as India's top exported commodity in CY (calendar year 2025)**

**Jitin Prasad** | MINISTER OF STATE FOR ELECTRONICS AND IT

# Air travel gets dearer

*Airfares to rise with steep jump in jet fuel price*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 1:** Airfares are expected to rise with the steep increase in jet fuel prices amid the ongoing West Asia conflict.

The price of Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) has more than doubled to a record ₹2.07 lakh per kilolitre Wednesday, and this is the first time that the jet fuel price has crossed the ₹2 lakh per kilolitre mark.

In Delhi, ATF price has been hiked by ₹1,10,703.08 per kilolitre, or 114.5 per cent, to ₹2,07,341.22 per kl, according to state-owned fuel retailers.

Officials said airfares are expected to rise as airlines would have to increase fares to cover the higher operational costs.

There were no immediate comments from airlines on the impact of the ATF price hike on the airfares.

The steep price hike would add to the spiralling operational costs of airlines, which are already facing headwinds due to the West Asia conflict that started February 28.

ATF accounts for around 40 per cent of an airline's operational costs. State-owned Indian Oil Corporation, Bharat Petroleum, and Hindustan Petroleum revise ATF and LPG prices on the first day of every month based on international benchmarks and



the exchange rate.

On Tuesday, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) said that airfares are already rising in the wake of the West Asia turmoil.

"... without knowing the length and intensity of the

war in the Middle East, it is impossible to quantify the full impact that it will have on airline prospects. But some things are already clear. Fuel costs have risen sharply. With tight capacity and thin margins, airfares are already

**PRICE OF ATF HAS MORE THAN DOUBLED TO A RECORD ₹2.07 LAKH PER KILOLITRE WEDNESDAY, AND THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THAT THE JET FUEL PRICE HAS CROSSED THE ₹2 LAKH PER KILOLITRE MARK**

**INDIAN CARRIERS ARE ALREADY BURNING MORE FUEL FOR OPERATING MANY INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS AS THEY ARE FORCED TO TAKE LONGER ROUTES DUE TO AIRSPACE CURBS IN THE WEST ASIA REGION**

**WITH INCREASING FUEL PRICES, LAST MONTH, INDIAN CARRIERS IMPOSED FUEL SURCHARGES ON TICKETS**

rising," IATA Director General Willie Walsh said Tuesday.

IATA is a global grouping of around 350 airlines, including Air India, IndiGo, Air India Express and SpiceJet.

# D-Street begins FY27 on a high

**SENSEX JUMPS 1,186 PTS ON DE-ESCALATION HOPES**

**BSE SENSEX**

APRIL 1, 2026



**TOP GAINERS**

TRENT	+7.00%
INDIGO	+6.01%
ADANI PORTS	+5.47%
BEL	+4.54%
SBIN	+3.88%

**TOP LOSERS**

NTPC	-1.64%
SUN PHARMA	-1.64%
POWER GRID	-1.13%
ULTRATECH CEMENT	-0.29%
BHARTI AIRTEL	-0.13%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, April 1:** Stock markets closed nearly 2 per cent higher Wednesday, with the Sensex and Nifty rallying in tandem with global peers amid hopes of de-escalation in the West Asia conflict.

Starting the new fiscal year on a high note, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 1,186.77 points or 1.65 per cent to settle at 73,134.32. During the day, it surged 2,017.03 points or 2.80 per cent to 73,964.58.

Snapping its two-day falling streak, the 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 348 points or 1.56 per cent to end at 22,679.40.

A drop in crude oil prices also boosted the market sentiment.

From the 30-Sensex firms, Trent, InterGlobe Aviation, Adani Ports, Bharat Electronics, State Bank of India and Eternal emerged as the major gainers.

NTPC, Sun Pharma, Power Grid, UltraTech Cement and Bharti Airtel were the laggards.

In Asian markets, South Korea's benchmark Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225 index, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index ended sharply higher. Kospi jumped 8.44 per cent, while Nikkei 225 index climbed 5.24 per cent.

Markets in Europe were trading in positive territory.

Sectorally, BSE Services surged 4.99 per cent, followed by PSU Bank (3.66 per cent), Industrials (3.40 per cent), Capital

**Thanks to the rally in equities, Market investors added ₹9.60 lakh crore to their wealth**

Goods (3.29 per cent), MidSmall Private Banks Quality Tilt (3.07 per cent), Consumer Discretionary (2.79 per cent), Commodities (2.72 per cent) and IT (2.40 per cent). BSE Healthcare emerged as the only laggard.

A total of 3,828 stocks advanced while 508 declined and 101 remained unchanged on the BSE.

The US market ended significantly higher Tuesday.

The Nasdaq Composite index surged 3.83 per cent, S&P 500 jumped 2.91 per cent and Dow Jones Industrial Average climbed 2.49 per cent.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, declined 0.22 per cent to \$103.7 per barrel.

Stock markets were closed Tuesday for Shri Mahavir Jayanti.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹11,163.06 crore Monday, according to exchange data. Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs), however, bought stocks worth ₹14,894.72 crore. On Monday, the Sensex tumbled 1,635.67 points or 2.22 per cent to settle at 71,947.55. The Nifty slumped 488.20 points or 2.14 per cent to end at 22,331.40.

**SHORT TAKES**

**Govt extends special relief measure for SEZs**

**New Delhi:** The government has announced a one-time special relief measure in the form of certain duty benefits for special economic zones (SEZs), a move which would provide support to units in these enclaves amid global uncertainties. However, the exemption will be available only if the unit in the SEZ had commenced production of goods on or before March 31, 2025, the department of revenue has said in a notification dated March 31. They also have to prove that the goods in respect of which benefits of this exemption notification have been claimed, fulfil all the specified conditions. "This notification shall come into force with effect from the 1st day of April, 2026," it said. It added that the goods for which exemption under this notification is claimed should have been manufactured by the unit in the SEZ and should have undergone a minimum value addition of 20 per cent.

**Power consumption grows marginally**

**New Delhi:** Power consumption in the country grew marginally by 1.8 per cent to 149.56 billion units in March from 146.92 BU a year ago amid lesser use of appliances like air-conditioners and coolers due to unseasonal rains. Intermittent rains have kept the temperature at a lower level, delaying the onset of summer across the country. According to the government data, the peak power demand met or the highest supply during March this year rose slightly to 238.37 GW from 235.22 GW recorded in February 2025. The peak power demand touched an all-time high of about 250 GW in May 2024. The previous all-time peak power demand of 243.27 GW was recorded in September 2023.

**Ola Electric surges back in March**

**New Delhi:** Ola Electric Wednesday announced a strong comeback in business performance with daily orders crossing 1,000 units in the last week of March 2026 and registrations rising to 10,117 units during the month (as per VAHAN), up from 3,973 units in February, translating to over 150 per cent month-on-month growth signaling a sharp resurgence in demand momentum. Market share also witnessed a V-shaped M-o-M recovery, with the company continuing to gain share through the month, Ola Electric said in a statement.

## IndiGo revises fuel charges; airfares rise

The country's largest airline IndiGo Wednesday announced revised fuel charges ranging from ₹275 to ₹10,000, which will push airfares higher for many domestic and international flights amid the rise in jet fuel prices. From March 14 onwards, the airline has been levying fuel charges ranging from ₹425 to ₹2,300 on domestic and international flight tickets as the fuel prices jumped in the wake of the West Asia conflict. "Although fully offsetting the fuel price increase would require substantial fare revisions, IndiGo has passed on a relatively smaller amount to customers, keeping in mind the consequential burden on them," IndiGo said Wednesday and regretted the inconvenience to passengers resulting from the fuel charges. For domestic flights, the revised fuel charges will be ₹275 to 950, and in the case of international flights, the fuel charges will vary from ₹900 to ₹10,000. The charges, which will depend on the distance, will be applicable from 0001 hours April 2. The fuel charge will be ₹275 for domestic flights on routes that are 0-500 kms long and ₹400 for flights that fly 501-1,000 kms. The amount will be ₹600 for 1,001-1,500 kms, ₹800 for 1,501-2,000 kms and ₹950 for distances above 2,000 kms. Currently, the airline levies a flat fuel charge on domestic flight tickets. In the Indian subcontinent, the fuel charges will be ₹900 for up to 500 kms and ₹2,500 for above 500 kms. For GCC and Middle East services, the amount will be ₹3,000 for up to 2,000 kms and ₹5,000 for above 2,000 kms. IndiGo said that for Southeast Asia and China, the fuel charges will be ₹3,500 for up to 2,000 kms and ₹5,000 for above 2,000 kms. For Africa flights, the fuel charge will be ₹5,000, and in the case of Greece and Turkey, it will be ₹7,500. The fuel charge will be ₹10,000 for UK and Europe flights. Air India, Air India Express and Akasa Air, which had also started levying fuel surcharges last month, did not announce any changes Wednesday.

**STRONG GLOBAL TRENDS**

## Silver skyrockets ₹9K, gold advances ₹3,500

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 1:** Silver prices surged by ₹9,000 to ₹2.46 lakh per kg, while gold jumped by ₹3,500 to ₹1.55 lakh per 10 grams Wednesday, following firm global trends.

According to the All India Sarafa Association, the white metal appreciated by ₹9,000, or 3.8 per cent, to ₹2,46,000 per kg (inclusive of all taxes) from Monday's closing level of ₹2,37,000 per kg.

Gold of 99.9 per cent purity also increased by ₹3,500, or 2.3 per cent, to ₹1,55,000 per 10

grams (inclusive of all taxes). The yellow metal had settled at ₹1,51,500 per 10 grams in the previous market session.

In the last fiscal year 2025-26, gold prices soared by ₹57,350, or around 61 per cent, from ₹94,150 per 10 grams, recorded April 1, 2025. Silver also zoomed by ₹1,34,500, delivering more than 131 per cent returns to investors in the domestic markets.

In the international market, spot gold gained \$76.51, or nearly 2 per cent, to \$4,743.89 per ounce while silver was trading marginally lower at \$75.04 per ounce.

## MGM Minerals bags multiple honours

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 1 :** MGM Minerals participated in the 27th Mine Environment and Mineral Conservation (ME&MC) Week 2025-26, which was organised under the aegis of the Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM) Bhubaneswar.

During the event, MGM Minerals Limited's Patabeda Iron Mine received multiple honours for its operational excellence. The mine was awarded the first prize for 'Afforestation', the second prize for 'Sustainable Development', and the third prize for 'Overall Performance'. The chairman of the



company, Pankaj Lochan Mohanty, along with other senior mining officials, received these awards from the chief guest.

The ceremony was attended by several high-ranking officials from the Indian Bureau of Mines, including Pankaj Kulshrestha, Controller General of Mines, as well as the Chief Controller of Mines, the Controller

of Mines (East Zone), and other senior officers.

The function was successfully coordinated by officials from the Indian Bureau of Mines (Bhubaneswar Region), including Regional Controller of Mines Arun Kumar, Regional Mining Geologist Sanjeev Kumar Mahapatra, and other department officers.

## Soumitra Majumdar assumes charge as General Manager of South Eastern Rly

**Kolkata:** Soumitra Majumdar has taken over the charge of General Manager, South Eastern Railway Wednesday. Prior to this, Majumdar was the Additional General Manager, South Eastern Railway. He is an officer of Indian Railways Traffic service, 1989 Exam Batch. He has worked in various posts and in different capacities i.e. Principal Chief Commercial Manager, Eastern Railway, Chief Passenger Transportation Manager & Chief Traffic Planning Manager, South Eastern Railway. He has also worked as Chief

Public Relations Officer in both Eastern Railway & South Eastern Railway for a very long period. He will be looking after the post of General Manager till posting of regular incumbent. Majumdar has vast knowledge and working experience in railway operations and commercial issues as well as public relations and media management of railways. He has also served as the President of the Eastern Railway Sports Association (ERSA).



# PV mkt: M&M now second to Maruti Suzuki

**Domestic PV sales scale new heights at 47 lakh units in FY26 riding on GST2.0 boost**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 1:** Homegrown automaker Mahindra & Mahindra has become the second-largest passenger vehicle maker by volume in the Indian market in 2025-26, riding on its SUVs.

Mahindra & Mahindra overtook long-time number two player Hyundai Motor India and homegrown rival Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles Ltd



in FY26. Maruti Suzuki is the market leader in India.

According to sales data released by automakers, Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles Ltd was the third-largest by sales

in FY26, ahead of Hyundai Motor India Ltd, which dropped to fourth from second in FY25.

Maruti Suzuki India continued to lead the domestic market with its passenger ve-

**Our priority remains unchanged: to create products that truly wow our customers and we are delighted to see that coming to life**

**RAJESH JEJURIKAR** | ED & CEO, AUTO AND FARM, M&M

hicle sales of 18,23,129 units in FY26 as against 17,60,767 units in FY25, registering a growth of 3.54 per cent.

Following in the second place was Mahindra & Mahindra with 6,60,276 units in FY26 as against 5,51,487 units in FY25, a growth of 20 per cent.

Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles Ltd was in the third spot with FY26 domestic sales of

6,31,387 units as compared to 5,53,585 units in FY25, up 14 per cent. On the other hand, Hyundai Motor India Ltd clocked domestic sales of 5,84,906 units as against 5,98,666 units in FY25, a decline of 2.29 per cent.

Commenting on securing the number two position, M&M ED & CEO, Auto and Farm, Rajesh Jejurikar said, "Our ambition has been to be the number one SUV player by revenue and we are proud to have achieved that. We are equally humbled to be the number two passenger vehicle company for FY26."

Overall passenger vehicle sales in India scaled a new high of 47 lakh units in 2025-26 as compared to 43.4 lakh units in 2024-25.

**GAS CRUNCH, PEAK SUMMER**

## 1st time in 6 months: Coal India's sales rise

REUTERS

**New Delhi, April 1:** Coal India's sales in March grew for the first time in six months, the company said on Wednesday, indicating a ramp-up in coal stocks ahead of peak summer amid a shortfall in gas supply due to the US-Israeli war against Iran.

Coal India's offtake, or sales to customers, rose 0.7% to 69.5 million tons in March, despite a 1.5% drop in its provisional output to 84.5 million tons, the company said in a stock exchange filing.

The state-run company accounts for over 80% of the country's production and is the world's largest coal miner by output.

Coal India's offtake fell for six consecutive months after a 7.6% jump in August, boosting inventory levels at power plants as temperate weather dented India's power demand in 2025. Domestic coal remained relatively more attractive in certain segments, he said, adding that disruptions in liquefied natural gas supply and reduced gas-based power generation are expected to boost reliance on coal for power generation.

India, which relies on coal for nearly 75% of its power generation, is expected to lean more on the polluting fuel during the summer due to the gas shortage, Reuters reported in March.

# 'Impactful' Rizvi smashes fifty

**DELHI CAPITALS CRUSH LSG BY SIX WICKETS**



over keeper's head for a six off Anrich Nortje, he opened up. The turning point was Shahbaz Ahmed's lone over -- the 10th of the DC innings. Rizvi slog swept him and behind square, pulled him to the square leg and tickled one

the stuffing out of LSG's sails. To defend a small total, LSG needed early breakthroughs and Shami was right on the money as KL Rahul was gone for first-ball duck trying to slash one over point.

DC's most dependable player, their skipper Axar Patel got a beauty from Prince Yadav, a delivery that tailed in getting him clean bowled.

**TODAY'S MATCH**  
**KKR vs SRH**  
 TIME: 7:30 PM  
 Star Sports channels & JioHotstar

But then, Rizvi and Stubbs had other ideas as they slowly and surely ensured an impressive win. Earlier, LSG put up an embarrassing batting display with some questionable tactical calls to be shot out for 141 in 18.4 overs after Delhi Capitals skipper Axar opted to bowl first.

Even though the Ekana Stadium wicket wasn't a belter, there couldn't be any tangible excuse for LSG unit for its pathetic batting display.

A fit-again T Natarajan (3/29 in 4 overs), Kuldeep Yadav (2/31 in 4 overs) and the brilliant Lun-

gi Ngidi (3/27 in 3.4 overs), who bowled perhaps a contender for the 'ball of the tournament', made life miserable for the home team, which looked as bad on field as it had seemed on paper as per the pre-tournament predictions.

Captain Rishabh Pant, in a surprising move from the team's perspective, broke a successful opening pair of Aiden Markram and Mitchell Marsh and promoted himself at the top of the order.

Pant (7 off 9 balls) started with a nice bowler's back-drive off Mukesh Kumar but in the next over was run-out at the non-striker's end when the bowler was able to get finger tip onto a smashing straight hit from Marsh.

But to be frank, Pant didn't look comfortable for once despite that opening boundary and it seemed more like a desperation to get his India T20 slot back.

**BRIEF SCORES**  
**Lucknow Super Giants:** 141 all out in 18.4 overs (Mitchell Marsh 35, Abdul Samad 36; Lungi Ngidi 3/27, Kuldeep Yadav 2/31, T Natarajan 3/29) lost to Delhi Capitals: 145 for 4 in 17.1 overs (Samer Rizvi 70 not out, Tristan Stubbs 39 not out; Prince Yadav 2/20) by six wickets

**FIDE CANDIDATES**

## Praggnanandhaa slips to third spot



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Paphos (Cyprus), April 1:** Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa suffered a major setback in his campaign, going down to Javokhir Sindarov of Uzbekistan in the third round of the FIDE Candidates Tournament here Tuesday.

The defeat with the white pieces could prove costly for Praggnanandhaa, who had begun his campaign on a high by defeating Dutch Grandmaster Anish Giri, leaving the Indian on 1.5 points after the setback and in urgent need of a quick recovery.

Apart from Sindarov, American Grandmaster Fabiano Caruana -- the pre-tournament favourite -- defeated Wei Yi of China in one of the strangest games of the opening three rounds, with Caruana and Sindarov sharing the lead on 2.5 points apiece.

They are followed by Praggnanandhaa on 1.5, while Matthias Bluebaum, Andrey Esipenko, Hikaru Nakamura and Giri are tied for fourth on one point each. Wei Yi sits at the bottom on half a point in the eight-player double round-robin event with 11 rounds still to be played.

For Praggnanandhaa, it was heartbreak after a rousing start, as with the white pieces he faced a Queen's Gambit Declined and, on another day, it could well have been a straightforward draw had he not pushed to play decisively.

Sindarov, the youngest-ever World Cup winner, has emerged as a fierce competitor against the world elite over the past year, and Tuesday was no different as the Uzbek seized his chances in the middle game, sacrificing a piece to dismantle white's initiative early on.

## Nominations sought for 34th Ekalabya Puraskar

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 1:** The Indian Metals Public Charitable Trust (IMPACT), managed by the IMFA Group, has invited nominations for the 34th Ekalabya Puraskar-2026.

The Ekalabya Puraskar is an annual sports award recognising outstanding young sportspersons from Odisha. The award carries a cash prize of Rs 7 lakh. In addition, two citation awards, each carrying Rs 1.5 lakh, will also be presented.

Eligible candidates can submit nominations through recognised sports organisations, boards, associations, universities, colleges and schools within Odisha. Applicants must be below 25 years of age as of March 31, 2026.

The application must include detailed performance records, supported by evidence and proof of age, covering achievements at state, national and international competitions over the past two years, from April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2026.

Nominations must reach the Ekalabya Puraskar office at IMPACT, IMFA Building, Bomikhal, Bhubaneswar-751010, by May 31, 2026. Entries may also be submitted via email at [ekalabya@imfa.in](mailto:ekalabya@imfa.in), with supporting documents sent separately to the postal address.

# Odisha chase table toppers in KITG

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Raipur, April 1:** With just one day of track and field competitions left, second-placed Odisha continued to chase the table toppers with four gold on Day 8 of the Khelo India Tribal Games Wednesday to take their overall tally to 17 gold, 10 silver and 16 bronze medals.

Dayanidhi Munda (men's 800m), Roshan Khadia (men's 400m hurdles), Dipa Kisan (women's high jump) and Dhanmati Xess (women's javelin throw) clinched gold medals for Odisha on a day when Jharkhand also boosted their third position in the medal's tally with a gold each in women's 400m hurdles and 10km race walk.

Jharkhand now have a total of 19 medals -- nine gold, three silver and seven bronze medals.

Race walker Dasharath Talwar and middle-distance runner Nagini added a gold medal each to table toppers Karnataka's tally while Chhattisgarh's Gajendra Thakur bagged a silver in the men's 800m.

Dasharath led Karnataka's 1-2 in the men's 10km race walk with a time of 45:13.85s with Darshan Bagadi (46:25.90s) finishing second ahead of



**DAYANIDHI MUNDA** (men's 800m) **ROSHAN KHADIA** (men's 400m hurdles) **DIPA KISAN** (women's high jump) **DHANMATI XESS** (women's javelin throw)

Gujarat's Sagarbhai Katara (48:16.09s) at the Kreedaa Parisar athletics track in Jagdalpur. Nagini then dominated the women's 800m race to clinch the gold with a time of 2:13.80s to take Karnataka's gold medal tally to 21.

Karnataka has also bagged eight silver and seven bronze for an aggregate of 36 medals.

Chhattisgarh's Gajendra Thakur claimed the men's 800m silver medal with a timing of 1:53.82s behind Munda, who clocked 1:53.33s.

Earlier, Chhattisgarh men's hockey team clinched the bronze medal by beating neighbouring Madhya Pradesh 14-6. The two medals took their tally to two gold, eight silver and five bronze and are placed 10th in the overall standings.

In football, Chhattisgarh defeated Arunachal Pradesh 3-2 to book their final spot against West Bengal.

Captain Akhilesh Kumar Uikay led from the front, scoring a brace for the hosts in the 34th and 66th minutes with Manoj

Kumar Lekam striking another goal in the 75th minute.

Arunachal Pradesh were late bloomers and couldn't catch up with the hosts as Rahul Goju Singhpho brought them close to victory, scoring a double in the 81st and 86th minutes.

In the other semifinal, West Bengal trumped Goa 5-2 with Saurav Sabbar (27th minute), Dilip Oraon (36th), Bijay Murmu (42th), Rahul Murmu (45+1) and Chaku Mandi (90+2) finding the net once each.

# FIFA WC set for new era as giants miss out

The 48-team field for FIFA's biggest ever World Cup is complete after a qualifying process that spanned more than two and a half years

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Mexico City, April 1:** The remaining places for this year's FIFA World Cup were finalised, capping a qualifying campaign that spanned nearly three years and setting the stage for the tournament's first 48-team edition.

The competition will be held across the United States, Mexico and Canada from June 11 to July 19. The expanded format has opened the door to new contenders while leaving several established powers and high-profile players on the outside looking in.

**Iraq end 40-year drought**

In a historic achievement, Iraq have ended the 40-year-old wait to qualify for the FIFA World Cup 2026 with a thrilling 2-1 win against Bolivia in the final match of the qualifiers played at the Monterrey Stadium Wednesday.

Iraq last played the multi-national tournament in 1986, which was also co-hosted by Mexico, but the team could not perform well as they exited from the group stage. And now, after 40 years, they will return to the same place and compete with 47 teams to get their first FIFA World Cup trophy. Iraq took the early lead in

the match when Luton Town striker Amir Al Ammari picked out Al Hamadi from a corner, who nodded his header past the goalkeeper.

**Players to watch**

Despite being at vastly different points in their respective careers, Lionel Messi, Kylian Mbappe and Lamine Yamal are expected to be central figures in the tournament.

Messi remains Argentina's focal point, still capable of dictating games and delivering at clutch moments despite stepping away from Europe's top leagues.

Mbappe, already a World

- Iraq beat Bolivia to claim final berth
- Italy miss third straight FIFA WC after shootout heartbreak
- Lewandowski hints at int'l retirement after Poland misses out

Cup winner, continues to define France's attack with his pace and finishing, and will again be crucial to their title hopes. Yamal, meanwhile, arrives as one of the game's most exciting young talents, having already played a pivotal role in Spain's recent success.

Uruguay's Federico Valverde offers energy and versatility in



## Missing stars



The biggest name missing from football's biggest stage will arguably be Poland's Robert Lewandowski. The 37-year-old Barcelona striker, who has scored 89 goals in 165 games for his country, might have played in his last major international tournament. Italy's absence will mean the likes of Manchester City goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma and Inter Milan pair Alessandro Bastoni and Nicolò Barella will enjoy an extended summer break. Borussia Dortmund striker Serhou Guirassy, one of the most prolific strikers in Europe over the past three years, will also miss out after Guinea was eliminated in African qualifying. Another high-profile absentee will be Georgia's Khvicha Kvaratskhelia, who was influential in Paris Saint-Germain's UEFA Champions League triumph last year, scoring in the 5-0 win over Inter Milan in the final.

## GIANTS MISS OUT ON GLORY

Italy will miss a third straight World Cup after losing its playoff final to Bosnia and Herzegovina on penalties. The first time was considered a fluke. The second was treated as a crisis. Now, with Italy failing to qualify for a third consecutive World Cup, it has become almost expected for the once-proud soccer nation, which won its fourth World Cup title in 2006 and won the 2020 European Championship. Elsewhere, Nigeria's absence stands out in Africa, with the Super Eagles unable to navigate a competitive qualifying campaign despite a squad drawn from top European leagues. Chile, twice Copa America champions in the past 11 years, also missed out as the core of its golden generation fades, reports Xinhua. Poland is another notable omission, having lost its playoff final against Sweden, while Costa Rica, quarterfinalists in 2014, also missed out for the first time since 2010 after a poor CONCACAF zone qualifying campaign. Even with 16 additional teams in this year's tournament, the list is a reminder that qualification still leaves little margin for error.

## WORLD CUP GROUPS

- Group A:** Czechia, Mexico, South Africa and South Korea
- Group B:** Canada, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Qatar and Switzerland
- Group C:** Brazil, Haiti, Morocco, Scotland
- Group D:** Australia, Paraguay, Türkiye and United States
- Group E:** Curacao, Ecuador, Germany and Ivory Coast
- Group F:** Netherlands, Japan, Sweden and Tunisia
- Group G:** Belgium, Egypt, Iran and New Zealand
- Group H:** Cape Verde, Saudi Arabia, Spain and Uruguay
- Group I:** France, Norway, Senegal and Iraq
- Group J:** Algeria, Argentina, Austria and Jordan
- Group K:** Colombia, Congo, Portugal and Uzbekistan
- Group L:** Croatia, England, Ghana and Panama (AP) APA

The World Cup kicks off June 11 and will be co-hosted by the United States, Mexico and Canada.

