



Global return

Actor Rashmika Mandanna returns as presenter at the 10th Anime Awards in Tokyo, continuing her growing global recognition

LEISURE | P2



Myanmar elections

Myanmar junta chief Min Aung Hlaing elected president by pro-military parliament

INTERNATIONAL | P10



The crude oil shock

Crude oil sustaining above \$100 per barrel will push headline inflation above 6% and trigger rate hikes, a foreign brokerage has said

BUSINESS | P11



From prodigy to elite

Indian-origin chess prodigy Bodhana Sivanandan becomes England's top-rated female player, as per the latest FIDE rating list

SPORTS | P12

6 hurt in blast while making firecrackers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, April 3: At least six persons, including a minor boy, sustained serious burn injuries in a blast while preparing firecrackers for a festival in Nayagarh district Friday, police said.

The incident took place at Korada village within Nuagaon police limits, they said.

Fire service and police personnel went to the spot and shifted the injured to a primary health centre at Nuagaon.

They were later referred to the district headquarters hospital as their condition remained critical.

"We were in shock when a massive explosion took place. Villagers rushed to the spot and informed fire services and police," a local resident said.

"A police team has been sent to the village, and an investigation has been launched," an officer of Nuagaon police station said.

A similar incident took place in Itamati area of the district in 2016, when at least 9 people lost their lives in a firecracker explosion.

'Silenced, not defeated,' says Raghav Chadha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 3: A day after the AAP removed him as its deputy leader in Rajya Sabha, MP Raghav Chadha Friday said he has been "silenced, not defeated," prompting the party to launch an all-out attack, accusing him of shying away from raising his voice against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Centre in Parliament and instead engaging in "soft PR."

As he appeared to be falling out of favour with the party's leadership, Chadha vowed to hit back like a devastating 'sailab' (flood) at an opportune time.

Lambasting Chadha, AAP colleagues accused him of indulging in "soft PR" through issues like rate of samosas in airport canteens while avoiding real issues and attacking the prime minister and BJP government at the Centre.

They also slammed him with 'Jo Dar Gaya Samjho Mar Gaya' jibe (Whoever gets scared is considered dead), over the intensifying bickering over his removal as deputy leader of the party in Rajya Sabha.

Chadha asserted that he was "silenced, not defeated" while sharing an Urdu couplet. "Meri Khamoshi Ko Meri Haar Mat Samajh Lena, Main wo Dariya Hum Jo Waqt Aane Par Sailab Banta hai (Don't take my silence for my defeat, I am the river which turns into a devastating flood when time comes)," he read out the couplet for those who "snatched away his right to speak and silenced" him.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I can neither confirm nor deny I'm going home due to LPG crisis. I value my social media presence too much



BLUE BEAUTY: Artemis II astronauts capture the Earth's beauty as they zoom ever closer to the moon. NASA released the crew's first downlinked images Friday, one and a half days into the first astronaut moonshot in more than half a century

India-bound Iranian oil tanker reroutes to China

The mid-voyage diversion of a sanctioned tanker from India to China highlights the fragile intersection of geopolitics, sanctions, and financial constraints. Despite a temporary sanctions waiver by the US, unresolved payment mechanisms, largely due to Iran's exclusion from SWIFT, have derailed India's potential resumption of crude imports. While India treads cautiously amid compliance risks, China's willingness to navigate opaque payment routes reinforces its advantage in securing discounted Iranian crude

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 3: A US-sanctioned tanker carrying Iranian crude oil has rerouted mid-voyage from its previously indicated destination of India - where it would have marked the first such shipment in nearly seven years - to China.

The Aframax tanker Ping Shun, built in 2002 and sanctioned by the US in 2025, is now



signalling Dongying in China as its destination instead of Vadinar in Gujarat, which it had indicated earlier this week, according to ship-tracking firm Kpler.

"An Iranian crude vessel 'Ping Shun' that had been en route to Vadinar, India, over the past three days has dropped India as its declared destination near arrival and is now signalling China," said Sumit Ritolia, Lead Research Analyst, Refining and Modelling at commodity market analytic firm Kpler.

Oil on Ping Shun would have been the first Iranian crude that India would have purchased since 2019. Indian refiners have

been looking at opportunities to purchase a few cargoes of Iranian oil on water following the recent sanctions waiver by Washington. According to Ritolia, the shift in destination of Ping Shun appears to be payment-related, with sellers tightening terms, moving away from the earlier 30-60 day credit window toward upfront or near-term settlement.

Vadinar is home for 20 million tonnes a year oil refinery of Russian oil giant Rosneft-backed Nayara Energy.

"While such mid-voyage destination changes are not unprecedented with Iranian crudes, they highlight the increasing sensitivity of trade flows to financial terms and counterparty risk," he said.

"If the payment issues are resolved, the cargo could still make its way to an Indian refinery. However, the episode underscores how commercial terms are becoming as critical as logistics in determining Iranian crude flows to other countries apart from China."

US Army chief of staff ousted

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, April 3: Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth has ousted the Army's top uniformed officer and two other generals, the Pentagon said Thursday without giving a reason for the departures while the United States is waging a war against Iran.

Gen Randy George "will be retiring from his position as the 41st Chief of Staff of the Army effective immediately," said Sean Parnell, the Pentagon's top spokesman. George has held the post of Army chief of staff, which typically runs for four years, since August 2023 under the Biden administration.

The ouster, reported earlier by CBS News, is just the latest of more than a dozen firings of top generals and admirals by Hegseth since he took office last year. Like many of those other firings, Pentagon officials are not offering a reason for George's departure, which comes nearly five weeks into US-Israel attacks on Iran and with no clear timeline from President Donald Trump on when the war may end.

CM: Reliable data key to development



CM Mohan Charan Majhi self-enumerates, Friday

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 3: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Friday urged citizens to cooperate with the upcoming Census exercise, with house listing set to begin from April 16.

In a video message, he appealed to people to participate in the process, including self-enumeration being carried out ahead of the door-to-door survey. "I

have done my self-enumeration. You too should do it. If you have not provided your information yet, please do so and cooperate in the Census," Majhi said.

"This information is crucial for planning and implementation of development programmes for the state and the country," he said, highlighting that reliable data is essential for overall development of the nation.

Weight-loss injections become part of pre-wedding prep

REUTERS

Hyderabad, April 3: Soon-to-be brides and grooms seeking shortcuts to shed pounds before the big day have become the latest consumer target for weight-loss drugs in India.

New Delhi wellness clinic Klarity Skin Clinic touts a 'Mounjaro bride' package, while other clinics have woven weight-loss injections into 'pre-wedding' transformation packages typically focused on skin treatments and hairstyle makeovers.

In a social media video, Klarity offers "guided nutrition, Mounjaro and smart workouts" to prepare brides to walk down the aisle. The clinic did not respond to a request for comment.

Eight doctors interviewed by Reuters said they have been fielding inquiries from brides, and some grooms, about taking weight-loss drugs before taking

their vows. Many asked for Eli Lilly's Mounjaro, the first GLP-1 medication to enter India's market for both diabetes and weight loss. It has become more sought after than Novo Nordisk's rival Wegovy, the doctors said.

Aditi, a 26-year-old finance worker from Mumbai, consulted a doctor in November for a weight-loss prescription after exercise and diet failed to get the desired results.

"When I see the result, I feel happy," Aditi said about losing 10 kg on Mounjaro before her February wedding. "If I am not happy, I don't feel confident. I did not want to feel that way at the time of the wedding."

She is one of the half a dozen brides, and one groom, who spoke to Reuters about pre-wedding use of weight-loss drugs, but asked not to use their family names due to social stigmas. They cited societal pressure to



Dr Swati Pradhan speaks with a patient about the Mounjaro injection for weight loss procedures at a clinic in Mumbai

REUTERS

look a "certain way" at their wedding and most had discontinued the injections soon after.

Novo and Lilly launched their obesity drugs in India last year. The market is forecast to reach ₹80 billion by 2030. Mounjaro sales doubled in the

months after launch, making it the highest-selling drug in the world's most populous nation.

The lowest Mounjaro injection pen dose sells for ₹13,125 per month in India, while the highest dose costs ₹25,781.

Novo, which this week cut

prices of Ozempic and Wegovy for the second time, is selling the lowest Wegovy dose for ₹5,660 and the highest for ₹16,400 a month.

"We understand the curiosity, but this cannot be a quick fix," said Dr Swati Pradhan, founder of obesity and metabolic wellness clinic Live Light.

Pradhan said she prescribed the injections to only a few soon-to-be brides if they were medically eligible and showed signs of other medical issues, while insisting on lifestyle changes for sustainable results.

Akshitha, who got married in Hyderabad last year, said the drugs helped her shed 15 kg, taking her weight to 76 kg before the wedding. A family doctor had suggested she try the injections when she worried about her weight, she said.

"There's so much chaos before the wedding, with all the planning and preparation. I knew I would not get time to go to the gym and be on a diet. That's when these drugs looked like a better option," she said, adding she might consider using them again after a future pregnancy.

For 27-year-old Priya, a tech worker from Bengaluru, weight-loss drugs became a way to counter body-shaming from prospective grooms' families.

"I've had men and their families reject my proposal because of my weight. I was told I was fat," Priya told Reuters.

She initially used Novo's oral semaglutide, approved in India for diabetes, as an off-label treatment and lost more than 12 kg before switching to injectable Mounjaro. Her search for a groom continues.

INDIA'S 'MOUNJARO BRIDES'



RYAN GOSLING OPTS OUT OF DANIELS' UPCOMING FILM
Hollywood star Ryan Gosling has reportedly exited the upcoming film directed by Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert. The actor was supposed to feature in the Universal Pictures film, which is described as "sci-fi action comedy" and is set to release November 19, 2027

HAILEE STEINFELD, JOSH ALLEN WELCOME THEIR FIRST CHILD
Hailee Steinfeld has embraced motherhood, as she has given birth to a baby girl. The *Pitch Perfect* actress and her husband Josh Allen have confirmed they have welcomed their first child into the world, but haven't offered any details including her name or when she was born



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
If you get a chance to display your presentation skills, don't lose it, says Ganesha. Your eloquence may receive wide acclaim. Your children too may give you reason to be proud. Do remember to take time out for the elderly in your family.

TAURUS
You may feel that you woke up on the wrong side of the bed today, says Ganesha. The day is filled with a fair share of jittery moments and lingering worry. Stand firm and remember that every night has a dawn. The law of averages will make your evening more enjoyable. You may discuss certain intimate issues with your sweetheart for the betterment of your relationship.

GEMINI
Your day will be spent indulging in activities that appeal to you. You may go out shopping with your family members, or go out to dinner with friends. A leisurely, entertainment filled, fun day awaits you, says Ganesha.

CANCER
You may face unwanted events and circumstances. As a result you will feel sad, yet you will wriggle out of it with your efficiency. Put in efforts in studies, says Ganesha. Remember that in success destiny is one per cent and effort 99 per cent.

LEO
One way to assure success is by believing in oneself and one's abilities. Let this confidence and your high spirits take you to newer heights today, says Ganesha. Remain cheerful all day long, and you will see your hardships disappear as you tackle them with consummate skill. But more importantly, Ganesha foresees the day leading you to a fulfilling evening. Enjoy!

VIRGO
A medley of good and bad awaits you today. Emotional people will find you immature and inconsistent. But your bag o' jokes is never empty, and you remain the jester as always. Ganesha advises you to meditate and engage in spiritually rich activities to channel and focus all your talents.

LIBRA
There is no end to work, so buckle up, as it is highly probable that work pressure will take up most of your time today. This leaves precious little for your family, but as always, they fully understand. Ganesha expects you to be both hard-working and conscientious today. You may also launch a new business scheme, especially if you are self-employed.

SCORPIO
The spectre of financial instability will keep haunting you. But there can be a brighter side to life too, says Ganesha. Long overdue payments might get encashed today. And those blind bluffs you call sometimes in business might pay handsome rewards, predicts Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS
You may have women swooning over you today; such is your charm and way with them, says Ganesha. But friends are highly valuable to you, and you shall spend much time with them cherishing their company and reliving amazing times spent together.

CAPRICORN
It may seem to be an unusual combination, but you will experience pain and pleasure in equal measure today, says Ganesha. The errands you may have to run for at home will leave you exhausted, so conserve some energy for the rest of the day. Your wit can get you whatever you want, but it's important that you use it in the right way and not just to meet your selfish interests.

AQUARIUS
Good news may hit home today. Promotion, profit, scholarship, anything you've been working for will probably materialise. You are ingenious, and will crack the toughest of problems with consummate ease. Ganesha sees money lenders and brokers doing well.

PISCES
Being a friend in need is what today will be about, says Ganesha. Making new acquaintances and associations is also on the cards. Try not to let jealousy mar your better judgement while you are at it.

Divya recalls brave childhood lesson

Mumbai: Divya Dutta recently opened up about a powerful childhood incident that shaped her confidence and taught her the importance of standing up against harassment. The actor shared how the courage to confront such situations was instilled in her by her mother.

Recalling the moment, Divya revealed that she once confronted a man who tried to eve-tease her sister. When he attempted to behave inappropriately, she immediately grabbed him and confronted him. The sudden reaction drew attention from people around them, prompting others to step in and help. The man eventually ran away. According to Divya, that moment showed her the importance of standing up for someone you love and refusing to stay silent in the face of wrongdoing.

She also spoke about another incident from her school days when a boy repeatedly harassed her on her way home. When she told her mother about it, the response was immediate. The next day, her mother waited in the same lane with a few people and confronted the boy directly, sending a strong message that such behaviour would not be tolerated.

The National Award-winning actor, known for films like *Veer-Zaara*, said these early experiences shaped her outlook in life and career. She learned to maintain clear boundaries in the film industry, choosing roles that aligned with her values rather than compromising her principles.



AGENCIES

Rashmika's Tokyo return

Mumbai: Rashmika Mandanna is once again making headlines as she prepares to return as a presenter at the 10th edition of the Crunchyroll Anime Awards. The prestigious event will take place May 23 in Tokyo, bringing together creators, performers and global icons who celebrate the world of anime.

Rashmika had previously created history in 2024 by becoming the first Indian presenter at the ceremony. Announcing her return this year, the actor shared the news on her Instagram Story, writing, "Back to Japan. To celebrate the incredible people behind anime," along with a heart emoji.

Last year's appearance was particularly special for the actor, who had long dreamt of visiting Japan. Sharing her excitement after the event, she spoke about how surreal it felt to present an award to one of the creators in the anime world. Rashmika also expressed her admiration for Japan's culture, cuisine, hospitality and cleanliness, saying the experience was unforgettable and promising to return often.

On the professional front, Rashmika continues to enjoy global popularity, while her films such as *Geetha Govindam* and *Dear Comrade* alongside Vijay Deverakonda remain fan favourites. With her growing international presence, Rashmika continues to represent Indian cinema on global platforms. AGENCIES



Aparna on her career regret

Mumbai: Aparna Sen recently reflected on one of the biggest regrets of her career, turning down *Ankur*, the debut film of acclaimed filmmaker Shyam Benegal. The film later went on to become a landmark in India's parallel cinema movement and marked the powerful acting debut of Shabana Azmi.

In a recent interview, Sen admitted that several of her choices in Hindi cinema during that time were not the best. She explained that she never entered Hindi films with the ambition of becoming a mainstream heroine and often accepted projects for financial reasons. While she was more careful with her work in Bengali cinema, she acknowledged that her Hindi film selections were sometimes misguided.

Recalling *Ankur*, Sen revealed that Benegal had sent her a synopsis describing a character who would speak Hindi with traces of a Telugu dialect and work as a household help. The unfamiliar setting and the nature of the role made her feel uncertain about taking it up. As a result, she politely declined the offer, even though she appreciated the story.

Looking back, Sen admitted that *Ankur* is among the films she wishes she had not rejected. However, she also acknowledged that the decision ultimately led to Shabana Azmi delivering a remarkable performance, which earned her the National Award for Best Actress and launched an extraordinary career. AGENCIES



WEB SERIES REVIEW

Maamla Legal Hai 2: Quirky courtroom chaos returns

Maamla Legal Hai returns with its second season, once again diving into the chaotic yet amusing everyday life of a district court. Set in Patparganj Court, Delhi, the story follows Vishweshwar Dayal Tyagi, played by Ravi Kishan, who has now been promoted to Principal District Judge. While Tyagi enjoys the new responsibility, he soon realises that the position comes with strict limitations that curb his free-spirited personality. Meanwhile, his former chamber is taken over by

Munshi ji (Vijay Rajoria), assisted by Mintu (Anjum Batra) and Sujata Negi (Nidhi Bisht), whose humorous rivalry over the chamber's name leads to a quirky competition of solving the most cases.

The season also focuses on young lawyer Ananya Shroff (Naila Grrewal), who is desperate for her first courtroom victory. Her case involving Banaspati (Dinesh Lal Yadav), who sues a deodorant brand after suffering burns due to misleading advertising, becomes the highlight of the



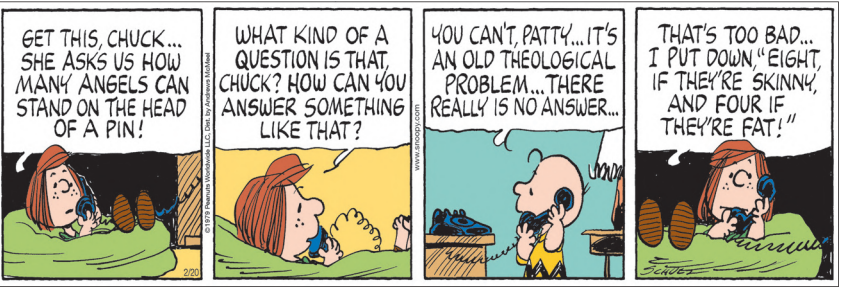
show. The situation grows more intense when Ananya faces her childhood rival Nayana Arora (Kusha Kapila) in court.

Directed by Rahul Pandey, the series stands out for its

witty dialogues, bizarre yet real-life inspired cases and light-hearted humour. The performances, especially by Ravi Kishan, Nidhi Bisht and Anjum Batra, add charm and authenticity to the narrative. However, despite its entertaining moments, the season struggles to deliver strong emotional depth. While the humour lands well, the dramatic highs and the finale feel slightly underwhelming.

Overall, *Maamla Legal Hai Season 2* remains an engaging watch for its quirky courtroom chaos and sharp humour, even if it doesn't quite reach the impact of its premise. AGENCIES

PEANUTS



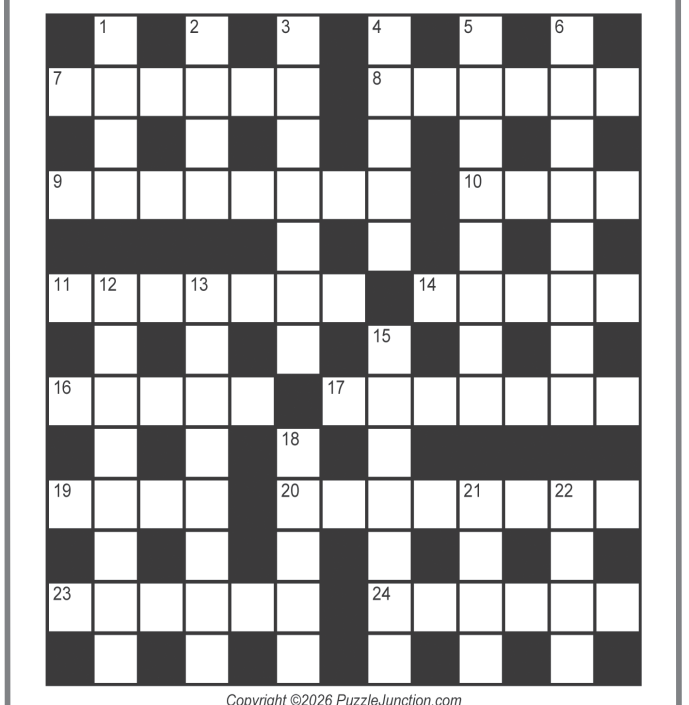
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



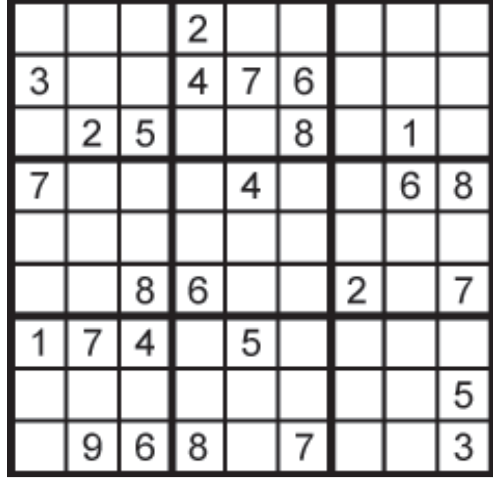
CROSSWORD



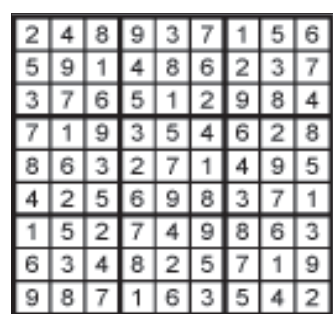
- Across**
- 7 Break in the action
 - 8 Root vegetable
 - 9 French endive
 - 10 Exigency
 - 11 Sweet liqueur (4,3)
 - 14 Tunic
 - 16 Durable wood
 - 17 ___ thermidor
 - 19 Family member
 - 20 Salad ingredient (5,3)
 - 23 Italian port
 - 24 Paradise
- Down**
- 1 Hit alternative
 - 2 Greek promenade
 - 3 Baltic State
 - 4 Exorbitant
 - 5 They come with age
 - 6 Popular terrier
 - 12 Construction worker, e.g.
 - 13 Genius
 - 15 Toxic
 - 18 Sweetie pie
 - 21 Greek god of love
 - 22 Bird venerated by ancient Egyptians

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



MAJOR MILESTONE: India commissions its third indigenously-built nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine, INS Aridhaman, at a ceremony held at a frontline naval base in southern India, Friday

3-language formula from Class VI: CBSE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 3: The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has rolled out its new curriculum, launching a phased implementation of the three-language formula from Class VI and a two-level system of Mathematics and Science for Class IX starting in the 2026-27 academic session, officials said Friday.

While the three-language formula mandated under the new National Education Policy (NEP) will be implemented from 2026 for Class VI, introduction of the two-level system of mandatory standard and optional advanced courses in Mathematics and Science will be done for Class IX.

“Languages are organised through a structured three-language framework across stages: R1, R2 and R3. As per recommendations of new National Curriculum Framework (NCF), two of these three languages must be native to India. In continuation of the board’s phased implementation of multilingual education, a third language will be made mandatory from Class VI with effect from the academic session 2026-27, ensuring that every learner studies at least two Indian languages,” a senior board official said.

“While it is desirable that the same scheme of language

is adopted, under exceptional circumstances for students returning from foreign schools where the third language studied till Class VIII or IX is not available in domestic schools, such students may be exempted as per approved norms. However, such students will be required to study the total number of subjects as stipulated in the scheme of studies,” the official added.

According to the officials, the third language or R3 is not being made mandatory for Class IX students yet.

“R3 level textbooks will be introduced in Class VI this year. They will write their board exams in 2031 and that is when the entire scheme will change, and the three-language formula will be entirely implemented,” the official added.

Mathematics and Science will see a major structural shift with the introduction of a two-level system starting in the 2026-27 academic session.

“All students will study the standard curriculum and appear for a common 80-mark examination of three hours; those opting for higher proficiency can choose an additional ‘advanced’ level in either or both subjects. This advanced component will consist of a separate 25-mark, one-hour paper designed to test higher-order thinking skills and



Language options

As per the National Curriculum Framework, students have to choose two Indian languages, from the 22 Scheduled languages, and one foreign language. The Scheduled languages are Hindi, Bengali, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, Punjabi, Urdu, Odia, Assamese, Sanskrit, Kashmiri, Sindhi, Nepali, Konkani, Manipuri (Meitei), Bodo, Dogri, Maithili and Santhali. Among the foreign languages are English, French, German, Spanish, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Arabic, Persian, and Russian.

deeper conceptual understanding,” the official said.

“Students must mandatorily take the standard exam, while the advanced paper remains optional. Importantly, performance in the advanced paper will not be added to the overall aggregate; instead, students scoring 50 per cent or above will have the advanced-level qualification reflected separately in their mark sheet,” the official added.

Excise official among 2 arrested for fraud

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhubaneswar, April 3: Sambalpur police have arrested two persons, including an Excise department official, in connection with embezzlement of over Rs 3.67 crore between 2022 and 2025. The arrested accused are Sandeep Kumar Pattnaik, a suspended junior assistant of Excise department, and Sarat Chandra Behera, a retired Excise assistant sub-inspector (ASI). Another accused, retired ASI Achyuta Dehury, is absconding.

The fraud surfaced during an audit of departmental financial records. Based on a complaint by Ashok Kumar Seth, I/C Deputy Commissioner of Excise (Northern Division), Ainthapali police registered a case March 9 and began investigation.

Police found that multiple unauthorised sanction orders were generated through the IFMS portal in Dehury’s favour, leading to excess withdrawal of pension and salary arrears between November 2022 and October 2025. Records were manipulated and poorly maintained.

Bank analysis revealed high-value suspicious transactions, including cash withdrawals and transfers. Pattnaik was arrested March 28, and Behera March 31.

Liquor sale in tetra packs allowed: Min

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, April 3: Excise Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan Friday said the state government has allowed the sale of liquor in tetra packets with certain criteria in its new Excise Policy for 2026-29.

Harichandan said selling

liquor in tetra packs was there in the state’s excise policy since 2014. However, it is not yet made available in the Odisha market, he said. “If any licensed liquor manufacturer or vendor wants to produce or sell the liquor in tetra packs, they can do it. The government will not restrict them,” he clarified.

The government is giving priority for proper regulation of manufacturing and selling of liquor in the state, the minister added. “We just ensure that there is no illegal sale of liquor in the state,” he said. As per the new Excise Policy, which came into force from April 1, India-made foreign liquor (IMFL) man-

ufacturers can supply their products in tetra packaging and in glass bottles in specified sizes. Only 180 ml can be supplied in tetra packs.

The tetra packs must have six protective layers and must have the shelf life or the date fit for consumption clearly mentioned on the packaging, the guidelines said.

Deemed-to-be univ status for NCERT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 3: The National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has been formally declared a deemed-to-be university empowering it to award its own degrees.

“The Ministry of Education, on the advice of the University Grants Commission (UGC), declared NCERT, along with its six constituent units, as deemed-to-be university under distinct category,” an official notification said.

These constituent units are regional institutes of education in Ajmer, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Mysuru & Shillong, and Pandit Sunderlal Sharma Central Institute of Vocational Education in Bhopal. As the apex organisation for school education, NCERT undertakes various activities and programmes, in-

cluding educational research and innovation, curriculum development and development of textual and teaching-learning materials.

Three years back, the Centre had approved granting the deemed-to-be university status to NCERT in the ‘De Novo’ category. A De-Novo deemed university is an institution that can apply to the UGC for setting up a new institution as deemed-to-be university, which will undertake study and research in unique and emerging areas of knowledge that are not offered by any existing institution.

Tremors in several parts of north India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 3: Earthquake tremors were felt in several parts of north India Friday night, including Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab and Haryana, officials said.

The tremors, which lasted a few seconds, occurred around 9:45 pm. There were no immediate reports of any damage.

An official in J-K said the quake was of 5.9 magnitude.

The epicentre of the quake was Afghanistan at latitude of 36.398 degrees north and longitude of 70.878 degrees east, the official said.

The depth of the quake was 150 km, he added.

“I felt a strong jolt which lasted for a few seconds,” Baldev Chand, a Chandigarh resident who lives in a flat on the second floor, said.

Why Iran’s drone strikes on data centres signal a new war frontier

THE CONVERSATION/AGENCIES

Atlanta, April 3: Before dawn March 1, 2026, Iranian Shahed drones struck two Amazon Web Services (AWS) data centres in the UAE. A third commercial data centre in Bahrain was also hit, though it is unclear if it was deliberately targeted. This marks the first known instance of a country intentionally targeting commercial data centres during wartime.

On March 31, Iran’s state media announced it would target major American tech firms, including Microsoft, Google, Apple, Meta, Oracle, Intel, HP, IBM, Cisco, Dell, Palantir and Nvidia. The Financial Times reported another drone strike on an AWS facility in Bahrain April 1, while Iranian media claimed an attack on an Oracle data centre in Dubai April 2.

Iran has also faced similar attacks. On March 11, a mis-



sile—reportedly from US or Israeli forces—struck a data centre in Tehran operated by Bank Sepah, according to The Jerusalem Post.

While data centres have previously been targets of cyberattacks and espionage, these Gulf incidents involved physical destruction. Drones caused structural damage.

The growing importance of artificial intelligence (AI) has elevated the strategic value of data centres. The US military uses AI systems for decision support in operations, including strikes on Iran and Venezuela. These

systems rely on cloud infrastructure, often hosted by AWS, to process intelligence and support missions. Iran may view such infrastructure as indirectly supporting military action against it.

However, it remains unclear whether the targeted Gulf data centres directly supported US military operations. The attacks may instead reflect a broader effort to pressure the UAE over its ties with US.

The US increasingly integrates AI tools into military systems. These tools depend on secure cloud environments hosted in commercial data centres. Beyond military use, such facilities underpin everyday services, from streaming platforms to banking systems. Indeed, the UAE strikes caused disruptions in local banking.

Data centres are now critical infrastructure, enabling AI systems and much of the

global internet. Disrupting them can affect both military capabilities and civilian life. Given AWS’s central role in global cloud services, its facilities may remain targets in future conflicts.

US policy typically requires sensitive government data to be stored domestically or on Department of Defence bases, making it uncertain whether Gulf-based centres host such data. Nonetheless, Iran’s IRGC claimed the strikes targeted infrastructure supporting “enemy” intelligence and military activities. The attacks may also have symbolic and economic motives. Despite their significance, these strikes may not represent a fundamental shift in warfare.

Still, as AI and cloud computing grow in importance, commercial data centres are likely to become increasingly frequent targets in future conflicts.

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ODISHA TOPS INDIASKILLS



Bhubaneswar, April 3: Odisha emerged as the top-performing state at IndiaSkills 2025-26, securing the highest medal tally in the country with a total of 57 medals.

Congratulating the winners, Skill Development and Technical Education (SD&TE) Minister Sampad Chandra Swain highlighted that the achievement reflects state's world-class training standards, a strong culture of skill excellence, and robust institutional support. He also expressed confidence that Odisha will continue to achieve greater

success on global platforms. Extending his congratulations, SD&TE Commissioner-cum-Secretary Bhubendra Singh Poonia and World Skill Center (WSC) CEO Rashmi Ranjan Mohapatra commended the competitors for their outstanding performance and wished them continued success in the upcoming WorldSkills Competitions.

Out of 90 participants representing the state, an impressive 57 competitors emerged victorious—including 15 gold, 12 silver, and 14 bronze medals, along with 16 participants who secured medallions for excel-

lence. The closing ceremony of the national championship was held at the India Expo Centre and Mart, Greater Noida. The medal winners were accorded a warm welcome upon their arrival at Biju Patnaik International Airport.

Officials from the WSC heaped praises on the efforts of the participants, noting that the accomplishment highlights the dedication, discipline, and technical excellence of Odisha's youth, as well as the strength of the state's skilling ecosystem.

Organised by National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), IndiaSkills 2025-26 witnessed participation from over 650 candidates across the country, competing in diverse sectors including construction, manufacturing, ICT, creative arts, and services. The competition was conducted across multiple locations, including Greater Noida and key centres in Odisha and other states.

The successful candidates from this national championship will represent India at the prestigious WorldSkills Competition and bring pride and recognition to the nation on a global stage.



BACK TO BASICS: With the Iran war fuelling an LPG crunch, a man carries firewood to keep his kitchen running in Bhubaneswar, Friday

PHOTO: BHAGSHI NAYAK

NCDS's 36th board of governors meet

Bhubaneswar: The 36th board of governors meeting of the Nabakrushna Choudhury Centre for Development Studies (NCDS), Bhubaneswar, was held Friday at the institute's seminar hall under the chairmanship of Development Commissioner-cum-Additional Chief Secretary Deoranjana Kumar Singh. The meeting marked a significant step in strengthening the institutional vision of NCDS and concluded with a forward-looking consensus to transform the centre into a globally recognised hub of research excellence aligned with Odisha's developmental priorities. The board engaged in detailed deliberations on strengthening the institutional framework, enhancing the quality and impact of research, and expanding collaborative partnerships with leading national and international institutions. Special emphasis was placed on promoting interdisciplinary and policy-oriented research aligned with Odisha's developmental priorities, particularly in areas such as social inclusion, gender equity, livelihood enhancement, and sustainable development.

3-day 'Chakravyuha and Genesis' kicks off at ITER



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 3: Three-day techno-cultural festival 'Chakravyuha' and 'Genesis' commenced Friday at the Institute of Technical Education and Research (ITER), faculty of engineering under Siksha 'O' Anusandhan (SOA), bringing together innovation, creativity and cultural excellence.

The festival was formally inaugurated by SOA VC Pradipta Kumar Nanda, who attended as chief guest. Addressing students, he highlighted ITER's remarkable achievement of being ranked 22nd among engineering institutions in India in the NIRF Rankings 2025. He urged students to take pride in being part of the institution and strive to build a global identity. SOA pro VC Prashant Kumar Patra encouraged students to

equip themselves with modern knowledge and skills to excel in a competitive world.

Speaking on the occasion, ITER Dean Pradeep Kumar Sahu emphasised the institute's strong focus on research and technological advancement. ITER Director Manas Kumar Mallik noted that ITER has grown into a leading educational hub over the past 25 years, supported by active student clubs and initiatives such as NCC, NSS, and the Atal Incubation Centre.

The festival will feature a series of technical competitions and cultural performances by renowned artists. Adding a special touch, students and children supported through the 'Jago' initiative presented captivating dance performances during the inauguration ceremony.

ILS hosts EVOLVE 2026

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 3: Institute of Life Sciences (ILS) inaugurated an international conference titled EVOLVE 2026 here Friday, bringing together leading scientists from the country and across the globe to explore cutting-edge advances in novel therapeutics.

Organised under the aegis of the Indian Society for Extracellular Vesicles (InSEV), the conference focused on the growing significance of extracellular vesicles (EVs)—tiny membrane-bound particles released by cells that play a vital role in intercellular communication by transporting proteins, lipids, and genetic material throughout the body. The three-day event drew 180 participants from 62 institutions across the country, along with researchers from France, Germany, Sweden, the UAE, and the United States. Discussions centred on the diverse applications of EVs in diagnosing and treating a wide range of diseases, including infectious conditions caused by bacteria and viruses, as well as non-communicable diseases.

ECoR bifurcation irks BJD, Congress; BJP too unhappy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, April 3: Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and Congress Friday opposed the Railway Board's decision to exclude the Palasa-Ichchhapuram section from ECoR jurisdiction and demanded a rollback of the move. The decision has also not been welcomed by a section of leaders within the ruling BJP.

The Palasa-Ichchhapuram section is currently under the administration of the Khurda Road division within the East Coast Railway (ECoR), and the board decided to merge the stretch with the newly formed South Coast Railway (SCoR) zone.

In a letter to Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, BJD MP Sasmith Patra said the decision would impact Odisha, a state that contributes significantly to Indian Railways' freight earnings through coal, minerals, and industrial output.

Any diversion of jurisdiction over such high-revenue sections risks financial loss, weakens administrative control, and dilutes Odisha's role in railway network planning and prioritisation, Patra said in the letter.

"I register my strong opposition to the recent revision of jurisdiction under the proposed SCoR Zone, as conveyed by the Railway Board, particularly the inclusion of the Palasa-Ichchhapuram section under the Visakhapatnam division," he said.

He also urged Vaishnaw, who is also a Rajya Sabha MP from Odisha, to immediately roll back this revision and ensure that "no changes affecting Odisha are implemented without due consultation and concurrence with the people of the state and their public



representatives".

Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president Bhakta Charan Das, in a post on X, said, "The transfer of Palasa-Ichchhapuram section from Khordha Road Division of ECoR to the Visakhapatnam Division of SCoR is yet another instance of step-motherly treatment towards Odisha."

"This injustice is unacceptable. Odisha deserves its rightful share," the Congress leader said. Railway Board Executive Director Rameshwer Meena, in a letter to the general managers of both zones, said Thursday that the jurisdiction of the proposed SCoR zone has been reviewed.

"In partial modification, it has now been decided by the competent authority to include the Palasa-Ichchhapuram section in the proposed Visakhapatnam division of SCoR," the letter said. ECoR General Manager Parmeshwar Funkwal said there will be a discussion with the SCoR GM over modalities to execute the Railway Board's decision. Asked whether it would be beneficial for the ECoR, Funkwal said, "It is not the matter to be discussed at our level."

Berhampur BJP MP Pradeep Kumar Panigrahy, in a social media post, said, "I have formally written to Hon'ble CM Shri @MohanMODisha regarding the

alarming reports of merging the Palasa-Ichchhapuram rail section with SCoR (Vizag). We must protect Odisha's railway sovereignty! #OdishaRailways #Berhampur #ViksitOdisha @RailMinIndia."

He also said Palasa-Ichchhapuram section is the "economic artery" of southern Odisha and "its exclusion will hurt our logistics and revenue". "Instead of shrinking, we demand the creation of a new railway division at Berhampur," he said.

BJP MLA Purna Chandra Sethi said a delegation of legislators would soon meet Vaishnaw and request him to review the Railway Board's decision.

Meanwhile, at a presser, BJD leader and former minister Atanu S Nayak strongly opposed the bifurcation of Palasa-Ichchhapuram section from the ECoR. "It appears to be a sinister move. The ECoR, once the top profit-making unit, has been divided, with portions such as Palasa and Ichchhapuram being added to the Visakhapatnam division," BJD spokesperson Lenin Mohanty said.

No revenue loss for ECoR: Rlys

The Ministry of Railways has clarified that not even an inch of railway track from Odisha will be transferred to any other state. The Railways assured that ECoR, Bhubaneswar, will not suffer any revenue loss. It noted that the Palasa-Ichchhapuram section does not have any major freight revenue-generating stations, and hence, no revenue impact is expected. The ministry stated that over Rs 93,000 crore has been sanctioned for railway development in Odisha, with budgetary allocation witnessing a significant rise. For the past three years, more than Rs 10,000 crore has been allocated annually.

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before The Executive Magistrate, Babil vide SI.No. 1172, dated 31.03.2026, I, SIDDHARTH SINGH, declare that my correct name is "SIDDHARTH SINGH, S/O. VIJAY PRATAP SINGH" and I shall be known as "SIDDHARTH SINGH, S/O. VIJAY PRATAP SINGH" for all purposes.

SIDDHARTH SINGH

Terracotta workshop by ORMAS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, April 3: With an objective to learn new skills and practical experience, a two-day Terracotta Training Workshop was successfully organised by ORMAS under the Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water department April 1 and 2 at CNBT Bus Stand here.

The workshop featured Sakuntala Muduli and Sri Laxmidhar Muduli as resource persons, who provided hands-on training to the participants.

They demonstrated various aspects of terracotta art, including painting and pottery techniques, in a simple and practical manner. Participants were trained in clay preparation, design development, crafting terracotta items, and creative product design through practical sessions.

Students from Ravenshaw University actively participated in the training programme. Along with learning the artistic and practical aspects of terracotta craft, they also gained

insights into its market value and entrepreneurial potential. In addition, several community members also joined the workshop and benefited by learning new skills.

During the two-day workshop, participants gained practical exposure to various aspects of terracotta craft, including design innovation and product development. They learned to create items such as earthen lamps, decorative pieces, home décor items, and small utility products.

ECoR logs record freight loading in 2025-26

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 3: East Coast Railway (ECoR) gained outstanding achievements for the financial year 2025-26, highlighting record-breaking freight performance, strong revenue growth, and major infrastructure advancements.

ECoR retained its position as the top freight handling zone of Indian Railways for yet another year, continuing its dominance for the ninth consecutive year. The zone also surpassed 200 million tonne (MT) of freight loading for the seventh year in a row, underlining its consistent operational excellence.

During FY 2025-26, ECoR achieved highest-ever freight loading of 286.26 MT, marking a significant increase of 27 MT over the previous year. Freight unloading also reached 258.56 MT, up by 21.88 MT. The zone handled a record 544.82 MT of freight. The railway zone generated



gross revenue of Rs 32,766.02 crore, with freight operations contributing Rs 29,456.60 crore—an increase of over 10.36 per cent compared to the previous financial year.

ECoR secured the first position among all railway zones in Apportioned Gross Revenue of Rs 25,911.85 crore, and Apportioned Goods Revenue of Rs 22,786.13 crore

The zone alone contributed 17.1 per cent of the total 1,669.9 MT freight loading achieved by Indian Railways during

the year. ECoR also recorded growth in passenger services, carrying 97.64 million passengers and earning Rs 2,536.44 crore, compared to 93.52 million passengers in the previous year. To meet rising demand, 1,598 special trains were operated.

The zone maintained strong financial efficiency, securing second position in operating ratio at 55.04 per cent, reflecting prudent cost management.

Significant strides were made in infrastructure and safety 108.28 km of new lines and multi-tracking commissioned, 536.545 km of safety fencing completed, 25 level crossings eliminated, 22 Road Over Bridges (ROBs) and 77 Limited Height Subways (LHSs) constructed, 567.81 km of track renewed.

Passenger convenience remained a priority, with improvements across stations 4 stations redeveloped under Amrit Bharat Station Scheme, 20 Foot Over Bridges (FOBs)

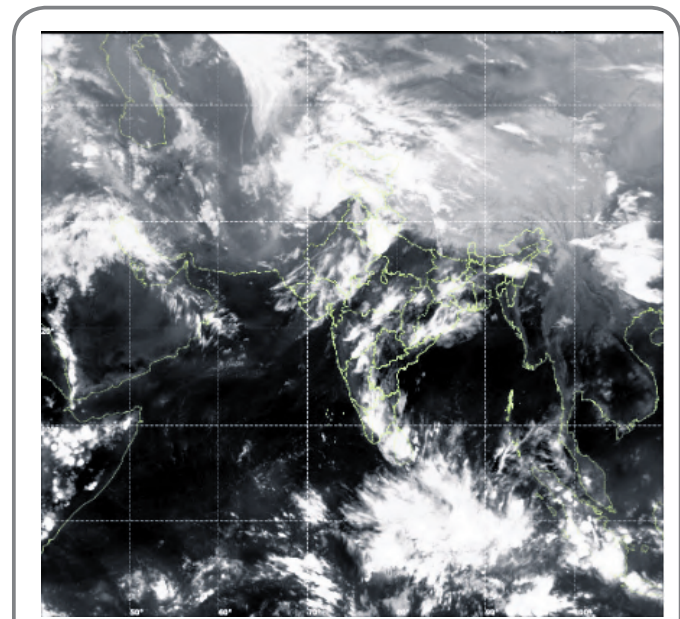
constructed, 69 platforms raised and 73 upgraded, 1,073 benches installed, 44 stations made fully Divyang-compliant, enhanced facilities including lifts, escalators, waiting halls and circulating areas.

Additionally, 166 solar-powered CCTV cameras were installed, with plans to expand to over 2,500 cameras by June 2026.

A notable innovation was the deployment of India's first rail Robocop, 'ASC ARJUN', at Visakhapatnam station.

The railway budget allocation for infrastructure and safety projects in Odisha stood at Rs 10,599 crore for FY 2025-26. ECoR achieved 100 per cent expenditure of its allocated share, while utilisation for Odisha stood at 98.76 per cent.

The zone also achieved a major milestone in electrification, with the entire Broad Gauge network in Odisha fully electrified, and all new projects being executed with electrification.



WEATHER			
	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	38.7°	38.4°	Light to Moderate rain or thunderstorm
Min Temp	25.0°	23.2°	
Humidity	75%	79%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	

Defunct ACs hit dialysis service at Sonepur DHH



POST NEWS NETWORK

Sonepur, April 3: Patient care at the district headquarters hospital (DHH) in Subarnapur has been severely affected due to administrative lapses, with critical infrastructure lying unattended for years.

The air conditioning systems at the kidney dialysis unit, set up within the maternal and child health (MCH) complex, have remained non-functional for the past two years. Despite repeated inconvenience to patients and staff, authorities have failed to repair the units.

The dialysis centre, operated by a Chandigarh-based agency under an agreement with the

state government, handles a growing number of kidney patients. Currently, dialysis is conducted in three shifts, serving around 21 patients daily.

As per medical norms, dialysis procedures should be carried out at around 25 degrees Celsius. However, due to the defunct ACs, patients are undergoing treatment in higher temperatures, leading to severe discomfort. Each dialysis session lasts three to four hours, during which patients are struggling with heat and suffocation, particularly during the afternoon shift from noon to 4pm.

Patients, attendants and hospital staff have expressed concern over the prolonged ne-

glect. They allege that despite drawing substantial salaries, administrative officials have not taken basic steps to address the issue.

There are also complaints that senior health officials rarely inspect the unit or take stock of the prevailing conditions.

Highlighting the issue, a kidney patient, Pabitra Mohan Negi, raised the matter on social media Friday, seeking intervention from the government and district administration. He, however, appreciated the outsourced staff at the unit for their dedicated service and courteous behaviour towards patients.

With the number of kidney patients rising in the district, concerns are growing over the hospital's preparedness to handle the load. Locals and intellectuals have urged Health Minister Dr Mukesh Mahaling, who represents the neighbouring Loisingha constituency in Bolangir district, to personally visit the hospital and review the functioning of the health department officials.

The situation has triggered demands for immediate intervention to restore basic facilities and ensure humane conditions for patients undergoing life-saving treatment.

Missing minor girl's body found in canal

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rajnagar, April 3: The body of a seven-year-old girl, who had been reported missing, was recovered from a canal near Badakolla village under Chandibaunsamul panchayat in Kendrapara Friday, with police detaining two persons on suspicion of murder.

The deceased, identified as Shubhalaxmi Senapati, had gone missing around 11am Thursday while playing with other children near a kirtan venue in the village. Despite extensive searches by family



members, police and fire services, she could not be traced.

Her body was found floating under a culvert in a nearby canal Friday and was retrieved by fire service personnel. She was taken to Rajnagar Community Health Centre, where doctors declared her dead. The body has been sent to Kendrapara District Headquarters Hospital for post-mortem.

During the investigation, a sniffer dog repeatedly led police to a neighbouring house, prompting the detention of a man and his son for questioning. Police sources said the canine unit entered the residence and later moved towards the canal, indicating a possible link.

Kendrapara Superintendent of Police Siddharth Kataria visited the spot and supervised the investigation, while a scientific team also conducted an on-site inquiry.

Family members had earlier alleged that the neighbour had issued threats following the death of his grandson in a drowning incident five months ago. Police are probing all angles, including possible foul play.

The incident has triggered tension and grief in the area with locals demanding a thorough investigation.

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The incident has triggered tension and grief in the area with locals demanding a thorough investigation.

Elephant tramples elderly man to death

BASTA: An elderly man was trampled to death by a wild elephant in Natakata panchayat of Basta block late Thursday night, triggering panic in the area. The victim, identified as Thakur Marandi, was attacked while he was on the road near Bhandipur and Paninagar villages. A herd of 13 elephants that had strayed from the Mayurbhanj border forests had entered the villages, causing widespread damage to crops. The incident has created an atmosphere of gloom and fear in the area. Locals have also raised concerns over the prolonged shortage of officials and staff at the Basta Forest department office, alleging delayed response to recurring elephant intrusions.

Collector faces heat over delayed order

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar/Hatadihi, April 3: The Keonjhar district administration has come under scrutiny for failing to comply with a directive of the Orissa High Court within the stipulated time, leading to the filing of a contempt of court case.

A report highlighting the delay in compliance was published in OrissaPOST April 1. A day after the report appeared, Keonjhar Collector Vishal Singh issued an order in accordance with the high court's directive.

However, the order (No. 611, dated March 9, 2026) was sent to the complainant via email April 2, indicating a delay of 21 days.

According to the order, the complainant was not terminated from service and may apply through appropriate procedures for enhanced remuneration.

The matter relates to a District Mineral Foundation

(DMF) employee who alleged that he was illegally and verbally removed from service after seeking a salary hike. He subsequently filed a writ petition (WPC No. 35177/2025) before the Orissa High Court.

The high court, directed the Collector December 10, 2025 to examine the complaint within four weeks. A notice (No. 84, dated January 13, 2026) was later issued, fixing January 17 for the hearing.

However, despite the hearing, no decision was communicated for more than two months, prompting the complainant to file a contempt petition March 26, 2026.

The case (CONTC No. 1870/2026) has been filed against the Collector in his capacity as chairman of the Keonjhar DMF.

The delay in issuing and communicating the order has raised concerns over adherence to judicial timelines and administrative accountability.

Toddler killed, 5 critical in mishap

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bahanaga, April 3: A one-and-a-half-year-old girl child died in a tragic road accident on National Highway 16 in Balasore district Friday evening.

The incident occurred near Khantapada market in front of Khushi Hotel, when a speeding car rammmed a passenger auto-rickshaw from the rear. The impact left the toddler, identified as Stuti Mahalika, dead at the scene.

Five others sustained serious injuries in the crash. They were initially rushed to Khantapada Community Health Centre and later shifted to Balasore District Headquarters Hospital after their condition worsened.

The injured have been identified as the deceased child's mother Ashrita Mahalika, Sumitra Mahalika, Basanti Pradhan, the toddler's elder sibling, Sruti Mahalika, and auto driver Sapan Kumar Raul.

All are residents of Chakajannathpur area under Bahanaga block. Police from Khantapada reached the spot, seized the vehicle involved in the accident and launched an investigation. The driver of the car fled the scene and is currently absconding, police said.



RITUAL SPECTACLE: A massive gathering of devotees at the Panchashambhu and Pancha Kali Mahamilan held at Binchana village of Belaguntha block in Ganjam district, Friday

OP PHOTO

Headmistress halts HPV drive in Koraput school

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nandapur, April 3: A free HPV (Human Papillomavirus) vaccination drive for adolescent girls was disrupted at a government school in Koraput district after the headmistress allegedly stopped students from taking the vaccine.

The Centre and state Health departments are running a campaign to vaccinate girls aged 9 to 14 against cervical cancer. As part of the drive, an Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK) team has been visiting schools, creating awareness and transporting students to nearby health centres.

The team visited Padua Government High School under Nandapur block April 2 and convinced authorities and students to participate. Fifteen students were sent to Padua Primary Health Centre for vaccination, while more were to follow.

However, headmistress Gouramani Das reportedly instructed the warden to stop the process and bring back the students, and not to send others. The students returned without vaccination, leading to wastage of prepared doses.

Following this, Nandapur Community Health Centre superintendent Amit Kumar Sahu informed the Block Education Officer and the Chief District Medical Officer, alleging obstruction of the National Immunisation Programme.

The incident comes amid earlier complaints against the headmistress by local representatives and parents, who had sought her transfer citing irregularities. Das said she halted the vaccination fearing parental objections. BEO Bhawani Nandan Pattanayak said an inquiry has been conducted and the report submitted to higher authorities for further action.

Man poisons mother to death; held

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhograi, April 3: A 35-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly forcing his elderly mother to consume pesticide, leading to her death in Balasore district, police said Friday.

The incident occurred in Parulia village under Bhograi block and has triggered shock among local residents. The accused, Laxmikant Dalai, is reportedly an alcoholic and frequently used to pick fights with his family members, including his 70-year-old widowed mother, Padmabati Dalai.

Neighbours alleged that the elderly woman was often subjected to abuse and neglect. She was reportedly denied proper food and clothing and was frequently assaulted. Locals said that any attempt to intervene



often resulted in threats or violence from the accused.

Following a quarrel Thursday, Laxmikant allegedly drove

his mother out of the house without food. Later that night, she returned and slept on the verandah, reportedly out of fear.

Police said that the accused dropped his wife and two children at his in-laws' house Friday morning before returning home. He then allegedly forced his mother to consume pesticide while she was resting on the verandah.

Villagers, upon learning about the incident, overpowered the accused, tied him to a tree and assaulted him before police reached the spot. He was rescued and taken into custody by Kamarda police.

A case has been registered based on a complaint filed by the victim's grandson. The body has been sent for post-mortem, and further investigation is underway.

Newborn girl rescued

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rairangpur, April 3: A newborn girl was rescued from a forest area near Damouda village under Gorumahisani police station limits in Mayurbhanj district Friday after villagers heard the abandoned child's cries.

Locals alerted the police after noticing the infant lying near the forest edge. Police reached the spot promptly and rescued the baby, who was initially admitted to Gorumahisani Community Health Centre. After a preliminary medical examination, doctors referred the infant to Rairangpur Sub-Divisional Hospital for further care.

Officials of the Women and Child Development department were informed about the incident. An Anganwadi worker has been deployed at the hospital to look after the child. According to Child Development Project Officer Kaili Mani Tudu, the newborn is currently under medical supervision and receiving necessary care. Police have launched an investigation to trace those responsible for abandoning the infant.

2 HELD FOR ABDUCTION, RAPE OF 15-YR-OLD GIRL

POST NEWS NETWORK

Deogarh, April 3: Police in Deogarh district Friday arrested two persons in connection with the abduction and rape of a 15-year-old girl and produced them in court, where their bail pleas were rejected.

According to police sources, the minor from Rimalal police limits had gone to a village under Kundeigola police limits March 14 to watch a local fair, where she went missing. Her father lodged a written complaint March 17. Police registered a missing case and launched an investigation. During the probe, the girl was rescued and one accused, identified as Akash Khan, 19, of Ma-

jhimunda village under Rimalal police limits, was arrested for allegedly abducting her.

At the time of rescue, the minor was found to be 18 weeks pregnant. Further investigation revealed that she had allegedly been raped by another accused, Kirtan Sabar, 25, of Taleisar village under Kundeigola police limits. Police subsequently registered a case against Kirtan on charges of rape and under relevant provisions of the POCSO Act, while Akash was booked for abduction and rape and arrested. Both Kirtan and Akash were produced in court Friday, and after their bail pleas were rejected, they were remanded to judicial custody.

AT THE TIME OF RESCUE, THE MINOR WAS FOUND TO BE 18 WEEKS PREGNANT

Scribe dies of heart attack

RAJKANIKA/AUL: A pall of gloom descended on Baripada (Muradpur) village under Deulatara panchayat in Rajkanika block following the sudden death of local reporter Subas Chandra Barik, 60, early Friday.

Barik, a correspondent covering the Olavar area, suffered a heart attack late Thursday night while preparing to go to bed after dinner. He was initially rushed to the Rajkanika Community Health Centre and later shifted to the Kendrapara District Headquarters Hospital, where he died at about 3:35am, sources said. On receiving the news, members of the district journalists' association reached the hospital Friday morning to pay their last respects. Arrangements were made to take his body to his native village. A funeral procession was organised en route, with tributes paid at Pattamundai, near Aul Dak Bungalow Square and at Gadagadi Bridge under the aegis of the Kanika Press Club. Several journalists, local residents and members of social organisations participated in the procession and paid homage to the deceased.



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Advt. No. R&P/315/2026 Dated: 12.03.2026

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FOCUS GEOPOLITICS

WHEN FOOLS GO TO WAR



US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin miscalculated how the conflict would play out, and each is now struggling to devise some face-saving way to escape the hole he has dug for himself

been caught off guard. He ignored the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and failed to do the math. Iran probably had ten times more new-generation light drones than the US had old-school interceptors, and the latter would cost ten times as much per unit. Something similar happened in 2022. Putin and his generals somehow did not anticipate that a long line of tanks and armored vehicles on a single road leading to Kyiv could be easily blocked—and then decimated—by blowing up a single bridge north of the capital.

These disastrous decisions are symptomatic of a deeper pathology. A single person cannot drag an entire country to ruin unless its institutions are already broken. Trump and Putin both relied on a narrow circle of yes-men and sycophants who would never alert them to the real risks of their actions.

It's not difficult to see how an aging, isolated dictator in the Kremlin would become blind to reality. But the fact that a US president can disregard expert advice from his own military and launch a major war without consulting Congress or the American people, much less longtime allies, reveals the depth of America's institutional dysfunction.

Putin and Trump are different, to be sure. But they do share some personality traits—a lack of empathy, a seamless ability to lie, indifference to right and wrong, vengefulness when faced with unpleasant truths—and they made the same kind of mistake in going to war. If the war with Iran leads to a global recession, the crisis of American democracy will be the cause.

The writer is an editor-at-large at Corriere della Sera.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

side. Iran will not renounce its uranium enrichment and ballistic-missile programs, and it remains determined to extract a pound of flesh from Trump by deciding who may and may not transit the Strait of Hormuz, and at what price. And Ukraine, for understandable reasons, will not simply cede the Donbas region to Putin as a reward for his territorial aggression. Instead, the Ukrainians remain determined to stand their ground and deter Russia by imposing an extraordinary death toll (now at least four times higher than US losses in Vietnam) on its army. Neither Ukraine nor Iran is in a hurry to accommodate its enemy by giving it an easy exit, despite heavy bombing from the air.

While there is no moral equivalence between Ukraine and Iran, there are intriguing similarities in the mechanics of the two wars. Both were launched on the basis of wildly optimistic assumptions. Putin expected to take Kyiv within a few days; Russian servicemen were told to bring their parade uniforms for the imminent victory celebration. The Ukrainian government would be replaced

by a Kremlin puppet. Likewise, Trump assumed that Operation Epic Fury would lead immediately to regime change in Iran. He thought he could shock and awe the ayatollahs and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps into submission simply by assassinating the top leadership. He, too, thought he could install a puppet—as in Venezuela—to carry out America's wishes.

The relevant question is not whether either plan could stand the test of the battlefield (of course they couldn't). It is why each aggressor was so catastrophically mistaken.

Moreover, the two countries under attack knew what to do. For four years, Iran had been supplying drones and drone technologies to Russia, and watching Ukraine perfect the use of aerial and maritime drones to wipe out Russian ships in the Black Sea and destroy Russian oil and gas infrastructure. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps simply applied the same lessons to Hormuz and the Persian Gulf, thereby taking the global economy hostage and piling pressure on the US. Yet Trump seems to have

Although one might be hard-pressed to find similarities between the wars in Ukraine and Iran, Donald Trump's April Fools' Day speech from the White House has brought the parallel into sharper focus.

To be sure, Ukraine is a democracy (however imperfect) aspiring to European integration, and posing no threat to its neighbors, whereas Iran is ruled by a murderous regime that has oppressed its population, fostered terrorism, and destabilized the Middle East for decades. Ukraine and Iran also stand on opposite fronts globally. Iran's government has supplied drone technology to Russia's autocratic regime and receives intelligence support in return, and receives funding by selling sanctioned oil to China. Ukraine, by contrast, receives intelligence support from the United States, as well as money and weapons from Europe and other democracies.

But look past these moral and strategic dimensions, and striking parallels begin to emerge. Chief among them is the character of the leaders who started the wars. Both Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin miscalculated how the conflict would play out, and each is now struggling to devise some face-saving way to escape the hole he has dug for himself.

Hence, Trump's recent 15-point American plan for "peace" in the Gulf reads very much like the Kremlin's 28-point Ukraine "peace" plan concocted last year for Trump's amateur diplomats, Jared Kushner and Steve Witkoff. Both documents, as well as Trump's gibbering April Fools' Day address, should be taken seriously but not literally. What they signal is an attempt to find a dignified exit.

Of course, each overture was swiftly dismissed by the other



Federico Fubini

IF THE WAR WITH IRAN LEADS TO A GLOBAL RECESSION, THE CRISIS OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY WILL BE THE CAUSE

“A quiet mind does not mean that there will be no thoughts or mental movements at all.”

SRI AUROBINDO

Governance Gridlock

There's a familiar outrage cycle in India: a project stalls, costs spiral, and we instinctively reach for the "corruption" label. It's neat, satisfying, and often incomplete. Because sometimes, the system isn't leaking. It's freezing.

Take the coal block allocation case. A Delhi court, after years of investigation, acquitted all five accused, babus and others, in one of the oldest coal scam cases. It noted there was "not even an iota of evidence" and that the Central Bureau of Investigation had "miserably failed" to prove wrongdoing. In fact, the court found no proof of conspiracy or personal gain despite a decade of scrutiny and reputational damage.

If you're a serving officer watching this unfold, what exactly is the takeaway? Not "be honest and decisive." More like: even if you're clean, you may spend the next 10-15 years proving it. That's not accountability. That's deterrence.

Which brings us back to an old but uncomfortably relevant idea from "In Service of the Republic" by Vijay Kelkar and Ajay Shah, published in 2019—*asymmetric punishment*.

Simply, the system punishes errors of commission (doing something that later looks questionable) far more than errors of omission (doing nothing at all). Sign a file, and you risk investigations, audits, and headlines. Sit on it, and life goes on quietly, safely, pension intact.

Now connect the dots. A system that can prosecute first and prove later (sometimes never) doesn't just fail at accountability. It actively discourages decision-making. The rational babu adapts; files slow down, projects stall, costs inflate, and not always because of corruption, but because delay is the safest career strategy available. And when that becomes the norm, paralysis isn't incompetence. It's self-preservation.

Which leaves us with an awkward question Kelkar and Shah asked years ago, and we're still dodging: have we made honesty too expensive to practice?

UP's investment pitch hits an awkward pause

All governments love big-ticket announcements. Few enjoy the morning after. The recent clarification by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath that a Rs 25,000 crore AI MoU is merely "preliminary" and "not binding" has that unmistakable whiff of a deal announced first and understood later. Which, if we're being honest, is not the kind of innovation ecosystem Uttar Pradesh should be pioneering.

An MoU of that scale isn't a casual handshake at a trade fair. It's a signal to investors, competitors, and markets that the state means business. Walking it back in public, almost casually, doesn't just dilute the deal; it chips away at credibility. And credibility, unlike MoUs, isn't something you can sign and un-sign at will.

What makes this more puzzling is the tone of the clarification. It sounds less like a calibrated correction and more like someone suddenly discovering the fine print after the press release went out. That's not reassurance. That's a red flag waving enthusiastically.

Now, to be fair, governments do sign preliminary agreements all the time. Not every MoU matures into a project. But there's a way to manage that ambiguity quietly, professionally, without making the state look like it's hedging its own commitments in real time.

Which brings us to the uncomfortable subtext. Somewhere in the system, someone clearly thought this was a good idea, both the signing and the subsequent clarification. One doesn't need to name names to see the problem. This is less about one document and more about a style of functioning that mistakes optics for outcomes.

Uttar Pradesh has spent years trying to reposition itself as investment-friendly, predictable, and serious. That effort doesn't collapse overnight—but it does take hits like this. Because investors don't just read agreements. They read signals. And right now, the signal feels a bit... improvised.

Hard power is fashionable

Delhi's favourite parlour game is back: guessing the next Ajit Doval (though he's showing no signs of signing off yet!). And right on cue, the name doing the rounds is Samant Goel, a man who, if the chatter is to be believed, prefers operating in the shadows rather than trending on social media platforms.

The pitch for Goel is straightforward: capability over charisma. Not a soundbite machine, but someone who deals with the mess behind the headlines. His reported bluntness with Jake Sullivan, the outreach across Iran-Russia-Central Asia post-Afghanistan, and the quiet stitching together of intelligence networks is being framed as the kind of hard-edged realism India needs next.

Fair enough. But here's the question: will this actually help? India's security challenges are no longer just about outmanoeuvring adversaries in the shadows. They're also about managing optics, alliances, and economic interdependence in full public view. Being "ruthless when required" sounds reassuring until it collides with diplomatic fallout, trade interests, or the occasional ally having a meltdown over methods.

Take the expanding intelligence footprint and alleged deep linkages with countries like Russia and Iran. Smart, perhaps necessary. But also a tightrope walk in a world where alignments shift faster than WhatsApp forwards. Today's strategic autonomy can quickly become tomorrow's awkward explanation.

And then there's the bigger philosophical drift embedded in this conversation: the idea that a "stronger, security-driven state" is the logical path to Viksit Bharat. That's where the anxiety creeps in. Security efficiency is seductive. But it often comes bundled with a certain impatience for dissent, nuance, and messy democratic processes.

Goel may well be exceptionally good at what he does. The real question is whether India needs a master of covert chess or a player equally skilled at the very public game of balancing power, perception, and principle.

Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect

WISDOM CORNER

“The most important thing is to enjoy your life - to be happy - it's all that matters.”

AUDREY HEPBURN

“Success and fame... both are temporary. There today, gone tomorrow.”

WAHEEDA REHMAN

“Give a girl the right shoes, and she can conquer the world.”

MARILYN MONROE

SPECTRUM DEMOGRAPHY

Harnessing India's youth dividend

India stands at a crucial inflexion point in its development journey. With over 65% of its population under 35, our glorious motherland possesses what economists call a demographic dividend. It is a vast reservoir of youthful energy, aspirations, and productive potential. However, history is clear on one specific point: a demographic dividend is not an automatic guarantee of prosperity. It must be consciously nurtured, strategically managed, and institutionally supported. Otherwise, it risks becoming a demographic burden.

One of the most urgent challenges is the ongoing disconnect between education and employability. While India produces millions of graduates each year, a significant number remain either unemployed or underemployed. This paradox arises from a structural mismatch between academic curricula and industry needs. To tackle this, we must shift from degree-focused education to competency-based learning. Vocational training, apprenticeships, internships, and industry-linked programmes should be mainstreamed rather than viewed as peripheral options. Institutions must work with industry stakeholders to ensure that graduates

are equipped not only with theoretical knowledge but also with practical and market-relevant skills.

The traditional education system, largely built for an industrial-era economy, is increasingly inadequate in a knowledge-driven, digital-first world. Critical thinking, problem-solving, digital literacy, and adaptability must become fundamental pillars of education. Policy frameworks such as the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 offer a blueprint, but implementation remains the main bottleneck. Investments in teacher training, digital infrastructure, and curriculum redesign are vital to turn policy intentions into real outcomes. India's rapid digitalisation presents a unique chance to empower its youth. From online education to gig economy opportunities, the digital ecosystem can bridge geographical and socio-economic divides. Ensuring fair access to high-speed internet, affordable devices, and digital literacy programmes is essential. Without this, digital transformation risks worsening existing inequalities rather than reducing them.

India's youth are not simply job seekers. They are potential job creators. The rise of startups across sectors, from fintech

to edtech, demonstrates the entrepreneurial dynamism of young Indians. But this ecosystem remains uneven and concentrated largely in urban clusters. To democratise entrepreneurship, access to credit, mentorship, and incubation facilities must be expanded to Tier-II and Tier-III cities. Simplifying regulatory frameworks and reducing bureaucratic friction may further encourage risk-taking and innovation. India's developmental challenges, ranging from climate change to rapid urbanisation, require innovative and scalable solutions. Engaging youth in nation-building initiatives through policy programs can channel their energy toward collective progress. Platforms that encourage civic participation, volunteerism, and social entrepreneurship can transform youth from passive beneficiaries to active contributors to national development.

Amid discussions on skills and employment, the mental health of young people often remains neglected. Increasing academic pressure, job insecurity, and social expectations heighten stress and anxiety among youths. A holistic approach to youth development must include mental health support, counselling services, and awareness campaigns. A

resilient workforce is not only skilled but also mentally and emotionally strong. Additionally, gender disparities in workforce participation, especially among women, lead to an underuse of human capital. Likewise, youth from rural and marginalised communities often encounter systematic barriers to education and employment. Targeted interventions such as scholarships, skills development programmes, and affirmative policies are essential to ensure no segment of the youth population is left behind.

India's youthful population is its most valuable asset in the 21st century. However, assets, unless carefully managed, do not generate returns. Turning this demographic advantage into a sustainable growth driver calls for coordinated efforts across education, industry, governance, and civil society. The window of opportunity is limited. As demographic trends shift, the urgency to act increases. If India successfully leverages its youth capital, it will not only boost its own development but also reshape its position in the global economy.

The writer is a Research Scholar, Department of Business Administration, Berhampur University



Ashyashree Praharaj

ASSETS, UNLESS CAREFULLY MANAGED, DO NOT GENERATE RETURNS

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

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Youth leaders' challenges

Sir, according to reports, recent developments have raised concerns about the space for educated young leaders in politics. K. Annamalai's election loss and Raghav Chadha's removal have added to this discussion. Some people are questioning whether young politicians are facing challenges. This topic is being widely debated now, as well as in the past. Raghav Chadha's removal as Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)'s Rajya Sabha deputy leader has sparked speculation about internal party differences. The AAP replaced Chadha with Ashok Mittal, citing no specific reason. However, sources suggest that Chadha's silence on key party issues and his absence from events led to the decision. Chadha had raised questions about paternity leave and gig workers' rights. Party insiders claim that Chadha had grown distant from the leadership, missing crucial events, including Arvind Kejriwal's show of strength after his discharge in the excise policy case. However, it was later clarified that the move was part of regular party functioning, setting aside the controversy.

CK Subramaniam, NAVI MUMBAI

Defence exports surge

Sir, This refers to "Defence exports rise 62% to hit a record Rs 38,424 crore," Orissa POST, April 3. India's defence export surge marks a decisive shift in its strategic and economic posture. Driven by the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat, the country has transformed from a major arms importer into an emerging global supplier. Indigenous platforms such as the BrahMos missile and the Akash air defence system have gained international traction, reflecting growing trust in India's technological capabilities. Exports now extend to over 80 countries, supported by streamlined regulations and reduced bureaucratic hurdles. India's portfolio has expanded beyond basic equipment to advanced systems, including the HAL Dornier 228 and fast interceptor boats. This diversification signals a maturing defence industrial base. Heightened global conflicts and shifting geopolitical alignments have further accelerated demand. Nations seeking reliable and cost-effective alternatives to traditional suppliers are increasingly turning to India. By positioning itself as a dependable partner, India is not only boosting exports but also strengthening its geopolitical influence in an evolving security landscape.

N Sadasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Gulf war batters India's glass heartland

REUTERS

Firozabad, April 3: Famed as India's "Glass City" with a four-century tradition of glass-making, Firozabad's furnaces are now burning low, putting thousands of day labourers out of work in what would normally be peak season.

The industry has been crippled by the war in the Middle East because of its intense energy needs. Gas-fired heat chambers need to run constantly at above 1,000 degrees Celsius (1,832 degrees Fahrenheit) to keep the glass molten and prevent defects.

India's heavy reliance on gas across the economy - businesses of all sizes, households, agriculture, public transport - makes its factories among the most vulnerable in Asia.

New Delhi stockpiles oil but not gas, and when supply dwindles, it cuts off industry first.

With the war extending into a second month, Firozabad may be a harbinger of what is to come throughout Indian manufacturing, from textiles to high tech, dealing a blow to India's goal of increasing manufacturing's share of the economy to 25% from around 17% currently.

HSBC's India manufacturing flash PMI slumped to a four-and-a-half-year low in March as the Middle East conflict triggered instability in markets and uncertainty among consumers.

SHUTTERED SHOPS AND IDLE LABOURERS

Just a short drive east of the Taj Mahal, Firozabad's glass-making furnaces sit mostly apart from the colourful marketplaces where tourists haggle over the city's hallmark glass bangles, which typically sell for about a dollar a dozen.

Jobless labourers loitered



- Gas shock forces furnaces to shut, puts thousands out of work
- Spike in shipping costs strands freight containers at ports
- Pain has spread to Indian textiles, machinery, car parts
- Challenges government goal of raising manufacturing's share of GDP

near the kilns they would ordinarily be toiling over, scrolling on mobile phones.

Furnace operator Somesh Yadav said a unit that had employed more than 500 workers until last month now had jobs for fewer than 200. Many smaller glass artisans had shuttered shop as they waited for gas to become available, and affordable.

Some 200,000 people work in Firozabad's glassware industry, according to the Uttar Pradesh Glass Manufacturers' Syndicate, rising to about 500,000 when including indirect workers such as vendors, sellers and suppliers of broken glass to factories.

"If the war drags on another month, our entire production season could be wiped out," said Rajkumar Mittal, an official at the industry group.

The effect of the gas shortage isn't linear. Furnace operators say supply cuts of more than

20% since early March have knocked output down by 40%.

CRISIS HITS AT PEAK SEASON FOR EXPORTS

India's glassware exports were on pace to rise some 3% in the financial year ended March 31 from \$4 billion in the previous period, but shipments tumbled as much as 20% last month, according to industry estimates.

Mukesh Kumar Bansal, a Firozabad manufacturer supplying retailers in the US and Europe, said output had dived by more than a third at his factory.

"Usually from March to August we ramp up for Christmas and Halloween orders," he said. "This year, not a single container has moved in March."

That's not solely the result of scarce gas and cramped production. India - unlike Japan, South Korea and Taiwan - depends on Gulf shipping routes to move its products, and those

routes have become prohibitively expensive as freight and insurance costs spike.

Nomura economist Sonal Varma called India "one of the most vulnerable countries in Asia to the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz", and manufacturers across industries spoke of merchandise stranded in shipping containers at ports in Mumbai and elsewhere.

Bansal said the price of shipping a 40-foot (12.2-meter) container to Europe has soared more than 60% since the war began, while exports to Gulf nations have stalled completely.

CONTAINERS STRANDED AS FREIGHT COSTS SPIKE

The United Arab Emirates is India's biggest export destination after the U.S., taking mainly refined petroleum products, jewellery and engineering goods, a category that includes machinery, electrical equipment and auto parts.

The non-profit Association of Indian Entrepreneurs said that some 17% of more than 20 million small manufacturing and exporting units are facing sharp increases in energy, chemical and transport costs that threaten their survival.

Cityflo to launch 300 buses for shuttle service in Kolkata

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, April 3: App-based bus commute service provider Cityflo will launch shuttle operations in Kolkata from April 6 with around 300 buses, days after ride-hailing platform Uber discontinued that service in the city from Friday, offering an alternative option for office-goers, a company official said.

Cityflo, which has been in operation since 2015 and currently runs around 1,000 buses daily across Mumbai, Delhi and Hyderabad, said the Kolkata service will largely operate on the same routes, timings and stops earlier served by Uber Shuttle to minimise disruption for regular commuters.

"We are launching 300 buses April 6 in Kolkata, largely serving the same routes, timings and stops that the city's pattern of office clusters and residential corridors suited Cityflo's operating model."

According to Venad, the company had originally planned to launch services in the city in May, but accelerated the rollout after the announcement of Uber Shuttle's shutdown.

"We wanted to ensure that commuters across the city who had built their daily routine around the (Uber) service faced the least disruption, and so we moved quickly to be ready by



Cityflo, which has been in operation since 2015 and currently runs around 1,000 buses daily across Mumbai, Delhi and Hyderabad, said the Kolkata service will largely operate on the same routes, timings and stops earlier served by Uber Shuttle to minimise disruption for regular commuters

April 6," he said. Cityflo service will connect residential neighbourhoods, including Ranikuthi, Bijoygarh, Sonarpur, Barauiapur, Joka, Barasat, Barrackpore and Howrah directly to Sector V and New Town, which house a large concentration of IT and corporate offices. According to sources, Uber Shuttle had about 800 vehicles in service. The company had

initially planned to begin operations with around 100 buses, but decided to increase the fleet size following a strong commuter response in the past week.

"We had originally planned 100 buses at launch April 6, but the response from customers over the last week pushed us to move faster. We're now launching with 300 buses to accommodate increased time slots and routes from day one, expanding steadily over the next two months," Venad said.

Cityflo will work with local bus operators for the service, many of whom previously operated buses for Uber Shuttle. "It's a practical arrangement that works well for both sides, wherein they continue running their businesses without disruption, and we get to work with operators who already know the city and the commute patterns," Venad said.

"Our central team is managing the launch directly, and we're actively building out the city team to ensure smooth, on-ground operations over the coming weeks," he added.

UP CM Yogi lauds All India Radio's role

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, April 3: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath Thursday lauded the role of All India Radio in connecting society, preserving linguistic diversity and strengthening national consciousness.

While addressing the 89th foundation day celebrations of the radio broadcaster's Lucknow centre, the chief minister recalled his childhood, saying that in an era devoid of smartphones, television and widespread telephone connectivity, radio was the primary source of information and inspiration.

"The first voice we heard was that of All India Radio, also known as Akashvani. Its morning signature tune and programmes connected every household and reflected both linguistic purity and credibility in news dissemination," he said. He noted that Akashvani

played a key role in promoting regional dialects such as Bhojpur, Awadhi, Garhwali and Kumaoni, providing a platform for local languages, folk arts and cultural traditions.

"It was not merely a source of entertainment but also of knowledge, cultural pride and social awareness," he said.

Highlighting its legacy, Adityanath said the Lucknow station was inaugurated April 2, 1938, by then United Provinces premier Govind Ballabh Pant, even before Independence.

He said the broadcaster contributed to the freedom movement by promoting patriotic sentiment, including airing Vande Mataram.

He said Akashvani chronicled key phases of India's history, including the Quit India Movement, the trauma of Partition, the adoption of the Constitution, the formation of elected governments and the Emergency.



Reflection of nuns on a taxi's window during a Good Friday procession, in Kolkata, West Bengal, Friday

PTI PHOTO

OVER 81,000 POLICE POSTS TO BE FILLED IN UP: CM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, April 3: The Uttar Pradesh government will recruit more than 81,000 personnel in the state police department during 2026-27, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said.

According to an official statement issued late Thursday, Adityanath said the financial year 2026-27 will be crucial for youths aspiring to join the Uttar Pradesh Police, as preparations are underway to fill over 81,000 vacancies within the year.

The chief minister made the remarks while conducting a comprehensive review of ongoing activities and future action plans of various units of the police department Thursday night.

He said the large-scale recruitment drive would not only generate employment opportunities for youths but also help build a capable, energetic and modern police force in the state.

The statement said that more than 81,000 posts across various



categories - including sub-inspectors, civil police constables, radio assistant operators, computer operator grade-A, and confidential sub-inspectors - are proposed to be filled. The recruitment process for some of these posts has already commenced.

Adityanath also directed the Uttar Pradesh Police Recruitment and Promotion Board to ensure that all direct recruitments are conducted in a time-bound manner with complete transparency, fairness and in accordance with prescribed reservation norms.

He stressed the need to make the recruitment process technology-driven and to complete it within the stipulated timeline to further strengthen the confidence of the youth.

WB's favourite food becomes sharpest political hook of polls

The old Bengali phrase 'mache bhate Bangali', which means a Bengali is defined by the consumption of fish and rice, has become this election's de facto slogan for the parties

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, April 3: In West Bengal's election waters, fish has leapt from the dinner plate to the centre of the political net, with the Trinamool Congress trying to hook Bengali pride, and the BJP scrambling not to get caught on the wrong side of the 'mache bhate Bangali' phrase.

From giant katla held aloft at roadshows to ilish, pabda and chingri finding pride of place in political speeches, fish has emerged as an unlikely but potent metaphor in West Bengal's assembly polls, turning food habits into a fierce contest over identity, culture and who

FISH, IDENTITY, VOTES



represents the "real" Bengali. The old Bengali phrase 'mache bhate Bangali', which means a Bengali is defined by the consumption of fish and rice, has become this election's de facto slogan for the parties.

The TMC has sought to weaponise the sentiment by arguing that the BJP, which it seeks to associate with Hindi speakers and vegetarianism-promoting politics of North India, is culturally alien to West Bengal

and, if voted to power, could eventually impose restrictions on fish, meat and eggs.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee sharpened the attack at a rally by saying, "They will not let you eat fish. You cannot have meat, you cannot have eggs, you cannot speak in Bengali. If you do, they will call you Bangladeshi", thus linking food, language and Bengali identity into one political argument.

The allegation has allowed the TMC to move the campaign away from anti-incumbency, corruption and unemployment and towards a terrain where it feels more comfortable - Bengali sub-nationalism. Fish, in that telling, is no longer merely lunch. It is a badge of Bengali pride.

The party's social media handles have posted photographs of delicacies like ilish bhapa, pabda jhal, chingri malai curry

and kosha mangsho after Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced he would spend 15 days in West Bengal for campaigning.

"West Bengal welcomes tourists. Do not miss our delicacies," one TMC post said, in a swipe at Shah that mixed sarcasm with culinary nationalism. Political analyst Maidul Islam said the TMC sees West Bengal "essentially as a Bengali project".

"Within that Bengali project, fish-eating is an important element. When fish markets are attacked elsewhere, or Hindi-speaking leaders wrinkle their noses at fish, it becomes a campaign point. The TMC is saying it is the organic party of Bengalis and therefore organically linked to Bengali food habits," he said.

That argument has acquired traction because West Bengal's relationship with fish goes far beyond cuisine.

In West Bengal, fish is part of every important moment in life - from a baby's first rice-eating ceremony and the gift sent to a groom's house before a wedding to the meal that marks the end of mourning after a 'shradha'.

According to World Bank data, West Bengal consumes 8.36 lakh tonnes of fish annually, nearly twice the national average, while fish and meat together account for almost a fifth of household food expenditure in the state.

The BJP insists the TMC is deliberately manufacturing fear. Its leaders point out that there is no proposal to ban fish or meat in West Bengal and accuse the ruling party of trivialising the election by reducing it to a menu card.

Yet, significantly, the BJP now finds itself having to publicly prove that it is not anti-fish.

Bidhannagar BJP candidate Sharadwat Mukherjee recently campaigned carrying a five kg katla fish through neighbourhoods, telling voters that the BJP would never interfere with Bengali food habits.

In Pandaveswar, BJP candidate Jitendra Nath Tiwari filed his nomination papers accompanied by a "fish procession", with supporters carrying baskets of fish while he himself held a large one.

"If promoting West Bengal's culture is drama, I am proud of this drama," Tiwari said.



Ayodhya is an important pillar of India's global recognition, economic power and cultural continuity

HC PROTECTS PERSONALITY RIGHTS OF PREACHER ANIRUDDHACHARYA

The Delhi High Court has protected the personality rights of preacher Aniruddhacharya, who is also popular as 'Pookie' Baba, and restrained the unauthorised use of his name, voice and image for creating memes, videos or any other content, including AI or deepfake content



of the day quote

Even today, the Congress is attempting to divide people for political gains. But the people of Assam are now aware. This election is not about the victory or defeat of a candidate; it is about determining our future



The Congress government had opened the gates for infiltrators and gave our lands to them for vote bank politics. During their tenure, women and land were not safe



Goyal cannot talk about us being dynastic because he himself is one. He comes from a political family, and I think many of the BJP leaders are from political families. Maybe the prime minister is not, but a lot of them (party leaders) are. I don't think they should talk about that



Ganga water meets bathing standards; pollution declining

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 3: Ganga water meets bathing standards at all monitored locations and pollution levels in the river are declining, according to the government.

In a written reply to a question in Lok Sabha, Minister of State for Jal Shakti Raj Bhushan Choudhary Thursday said pH and dissolved oxygen levels of the river meet the required norms for bathing criteria across all locations, based on median water quality data for 2025 (January to August).

He said the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) monitors water quality of the River Ganga at 112 locations across five main-stem states of Uttarakhand (19), Uttar Pradesh (41), Bihar (33), Jharkhand (4) and West Bengal (15).

The minister said water quality with respect to biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) conforms to bathing criteria in the entire stretch of the river in Uttarakhand,

Jharkhand, Bihar and West Bengal, except certain stretches in Uttar Pradesh, including Farrukhabad to Purana Rajapur in Kanpur, Dalmau in Raebareilly, and downstream Mirzapur to Tarighat in Ghazipur.

He said bio-monitoring conducted during 2024-25 at 50 locations along River Ganga and its tributaries and 26 locations along River Yamuna indicates that biological water quality predominantly ranges from "good" to "moderate", reflecting the ecological potential of the rivers to sustain aquatic life.

The minister said a "diverse and holistic set of interventions" has been undertaken under the Namami Gange Programme for cleaning and rejuvenation of Ganga and its tributaries, including waste water treatment, river front management, ensuring e-flow, rural sanitation, afforestation, biodiversity conservation and public participation.



Tourists gather at the snow-covered area near the Atal Tunnel North Portal, in Lahaul and Spiti district, Himachal Pradesh

PTI PHOTO

MALDA JUDICIAL OFFICERS' GHERAO

Mamata alleges BJP-AIMIM nexus as 'mastermind' held



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, April 3: A former AIMIM candidate was arrested Friday over the gherao of the seven judicial officers in Malda district, adding a fresh political twist to the case as Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee blamed the Asaduddin Owasi-led party, the BJP, and the ISF for "engineering" the unrest.

An NIA team visited Mothabari and Kaliachak police stations in Malda to probe the Wednesday incident. The federal anti-terror probe agency has been tasked by the Election Commission to investigate the matter, following a directive from the Supreme Court. Advocate Mofakkarul Islam, described by the police as the "mastermind" behind Wednesday's blockade and gherao in Malda's Kaliachak area, was arrested at Bagdogra airport while allegedly trying to board a flight to Bangalore.

THE UNREST BEGAN WEDNESDAY MORNING WHEN RESIDENTS OF MOTHABARI, SUJAPUR AND ADJOINING AREAS BLOCKED NH-12 TO PROTEST AGAINST THE ALLEGED DELETION OF NAMES FROM THE ELECTORAL ROLLS DURING THE SIR EXERCISE

AS THE AGITATION SPREAD, SEVEN JUDICIAL OFFICERS ENGAGED IN THE REVISION PROCESS WERE CONFINED INSIDE THE KALIACHAK-II BLOCK OFFICE FROM AROUND 4 PM TILL NEARLY MIDNIGHT

being investigated.

ADG (North Bengal) K Jayaraman said three cases had been lodged against Mofakkarul for allegedly instigating locals through speeches at different protest sites.

Police said Mofakkarul, a resident of Itahar who now lives in Kolkata, had posted a cryptic message on social media before his arrest.

In a Facebook Live video before being taken away, Mofakkarul claimed he had only joined a protest against the deletion of names from the voters' list. As he was being taken to Malda, he remained defiant. "This movement will continue till the names are restored," he told reporters.

The arrest came barely 24 hours after the Supreme Court sharply criticised the West Bengal administration over the confinement of the judicial officers engaged in the Special Intensive Revision exercise and directed that the incident be investigated by an agency like the NIA or CBI.

The arrest has also opened a political faultline in the middle of the heated assembly election campaign. Addressing a rally at Harirampur in Dakshin Dinajpur district, Banerjee alleged that the BJP had "borrowed" Mofakkarul from AIMIM and used him to foment trouble.

"The ISF is with them; the Congress and the BJP had also instigated people," the Trinamool Congress supreme alleged.

Cong MLA Rajendra Bharti disqualified from MP Assembly



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhopal, April 3: Madhya Pradesh Congress MLA Rajendra Bharti has been disqualified from the state legislative Assembly following his conviction in a case involving the tampering of bank records to secure illegal interest payments, officials said Friday.

The disqualification, however, has triggered a political row, with the opposition party terming the "midnight" move a "blatant violation of the democratic process".

Following deliberations on the issue Thursday night, the Vidhan Sabha authorities issued a notification annulling Bharti's membership from the Datia assembly seat, after his conviction in a case involving the tampering of bank records to secure illegal interest payments, officials said. The Congress leader had defeated former MP home minister Narottam Mishra of the ruling BJP from the seat in the 2023 Assembly polls.

Reacting to the development, Madhya Pradesh Congress president Jitu Patwari claimed that the Delhi court had given Bharti 60 days to appeal against his conviction. However, despite this, Assembly Speaker Narendra Singh Tomar opened the Assembly Secretariat at midnight and terminated his membership.

Cong alleges MCC violation over govt's special session

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 3: The Congress Friday alleged that the government has called a "special session" of Parliament for passing bills related to amending the women's quota law and delimitation to "grab political mileage" in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu polls, which, it claimed, is a "gross violation" of the model code of conduct.

Asserting that the government's push for rushed delimitation exercise would have "dangerous consequences", Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said, "We do not want any disturbance in the present differentials and relative strength."

The Congress also cautioned against any haste in amending the Constitution regarding delimitation of parliamentary and assembly constituencies, saying it is a sensitive matter and the government must tread carefully, otherwise the exercise might put several states like Tamil Nadu and Kerala at a significant disadvantage.

Ramesh said the government kept "sleeping" for 30 months after the passage of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023, and now wants to take "double credit" in the election season.

He said there has been no official communication or proposal from the government's side on delimitation.

"However, off the record, we got to know that there would be a proportionate increase in Lok Sabha seats," Ramesh told a press conference here.



He said the claim is that it would be proportional but the reality is that smaller states and those in the south, north-east, and west would suffer massively.

With the proposed bill, Uttar Pradesh's strength will zoom to 120 while Kerala will crawl up to at best 30, he claimed.

"So what we have heard unofficially this would be very dangerous for many states," he said.

"The only objective of this special session is to grab political mileage to influence polls in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. Could it not have been called after 15 days," Ramesh asked.

Leaders of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi will call a meeting of senior Congress MPs and then hold discussion with other opposition leaders before April 16 to strategise on this.

This government functions on "narrative management" They want to call a "special session" as they are losing the political and foreign policy narrative, Ramesh said.

The government should not be in a hurry and call an all-party meeting after April 29, he asserted.

Fuel supply: Crackdown on hoarding & black marketing

INVOKING PROVISIONS UNDER THE ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES ACT AND THE LPG CONTROL ORDER, THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS ASKED STATES TO INTENSIFY ENFORCEMENT, CONDUCT DAILY RAIDS AND INSPECTIONS IN COORDINATION WITH OIL MARKETING COMPANIES, AND MAINTAIN STRICT VIGILANCE AGAINST DIVERSION AND MISINFORMATION

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 3: The Centre has directed states and Union Territories to take strict action against hoarding and black marketing of petroleum products and LPG, amid supply concerns triggered by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

Invoking provisions under the Essential Commodities Act and the LPG Control Order, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG) asked states to intensify enforcement, conduct daily raids and inspections in coordination with oil marketing companies, and maintain strict vigilance against diversion and misinformation, according to an official statement.

States have also been instructed to institutionalise dai-



ly press briefings, set up control rooms and helplines, and actively counter fake news to reassure the public about fuel availability.

The move comes as the government steps up measures to ensure an uninterrupted sup-

ply of petrol, diesel and LPG across the country despite the ongoing geopolitical situation.

The government advised citizens "to avoid panic purchase of petrol and diesel as well as unnecessary booking of LPG," and cautioned against

rumours, urging reliance on official sources. Consumers have also been asked to use digital modes for LPG bookings and avoid visiting distributors unless necessary.

People were encouraged to adopt alternate fuels such as PNG, induction and electric cooktops where feasible, and to conserve energy in daily use.

Despite the "war situation," the government said it has accorded the highest priority to domestic LPG and piped natural gas, along with essential services such as hospitals and educational institutions.

Measures taken include boosting refinery output, extending LPG booking intervals to 25 days in urban areas and up to 45 days in rural areas, and prioritising critical sectors. Alternate fuels like kerosene and

coal are being deployed to ease LPG demand, with additional coal supplies directed to states.

States have been advised to expand PNG connections and ensure targeted LPG distribution. In a review meeting with state officials, the MoPNG reiterated that there is no disruption in LPG supply for migrant workers.

More than 4,000 raids have been conducted across states and UTs to check hoarding and black marketing, with over 1,300 LPG cylinders seized in the latest action. Public sector oil marketing companies have also issued over 670 show-cause notices to LPG distributors.

So far, 21 states and UTs are conducting regular press briefings to keep citizens informed, the statement said.

CBSE issues advisory on QR code misinterpretation

New Delhi: The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has issued an advisory clarifying the purpose of QR codes printed on question papers, saying they are not web links, according to officials. The advisory comes in the wake of recent incidents where QR codes in CBSE exams went viral on social media for reasons unrelated to the examination. "The QR codes printed on CBSE question papers are not intended to function as direct internet hyperlinks. These codes are part of internal systems for authentication, tracking, and examination integrity, and do not open as web links when scanned. Rather, they show the intended text," said CBSE Examination Controller Sanyam Bhardwaj. "However, if the user opts to use Google search on the text, Google search suggests certain other words. This doesn't occur if standard browsers such as Chrome are used," he added. The board further emphasised that any unrelated web results are algorithm-driven outputs and bear no connection to the CBSE or its examination processes.



This is not 'Amrit Kaal', but a period of crisis. There is a threat to the Constitution, and we will take this discussion to the villages

CM UNVEILS DELHI'S AIR POLLUTION MITIGATION PLAN

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta Friday unveiled the Air Pollution Mitigation Action Plan 2026, announcing a series of measures including strict enforcement of the "No PUC, No Fuel" rule, curbs on polluting vehicles and a push for cleaner transport and dust control



of the day uote

The passage of the Jan Vishwas Bill in Parliament marked a decisive shift towards trust-based governance, highlighting the Centre's efforts to reduce criminalisation and simplify laws to improve ease of doing business

The Congress had been in power for 60 years in Assam. But it only encouraged infiltration, violence and riots. It put the local culture and heritage under threat

Census of India - 2027' has officially begun with its first phase. Today, at residence in Delhi, I completed my self-enumeration registration

POST OF THE DAY

India is a strange country. If you are poor you get free ration. If you are rich you save tax. If you are a politician you get power. If you are a government officer you get authority. If you are middle class you pay for everything and still stand in line for everything. Taxpayer in India is not treated like a customer. He is treated like an ATM.

SHORT TAKES

15 'linked' to Bishnoi gang held in Khargone

Khargone: Fifteen persons were arrested in Khargone in Madhya Pradesh for allegedly spreading terror and seeking extortion in the name of gangster Lawrence Bishnoi, a police official said Friday. The probe into the issue began after three motorcycle-borne persons fired at the home of industrialist Dilip Rathore in Bhilgaon under Kasrawad police station limits here on March 16 and then sought Rs 10 crore as extortion from him the next day, the official said. "The Rs 10 crore extortion demand was made through a WhatsApp call from a foreign number. The callers had claimed they were part of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang. They had also sent a video of the shooting at the industrialist's home," the official said.

4 manufacturing units catch fire

Chandigarh: A major fire engulfed four manufacturing units in the Kundli Industrial Area in Haryana's Sonapat district Friday though no one was injured in the blaze, police said. The fire broke out in one unit and soon spread to the other three units, helped by a strong wind, they said. It is suspected that an electrical short circuit triggered the blaze, though the exact reason will be ascertained after the investigation, police said.

NSUI members protest

Jaipur: Tense scenes unfolded outside the Rajasthan University Friday after NSUI members staged a protest against a programme on women's empowerment on campus, linking it to the ideology of the RSS. The demonstration turned tense as some protesters tried to jump barricades to enter the campus, prompting police to use mild force to disperse them.

TN POLLS

BJP releases candidate list; drops Annamalai

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Chennai, April 3: The BJP Friday released a list of 27 candidates for the Tamil Nadu Assembly polls, fielding Union Minister L Murugan from the Avanashi seat and former Telangana Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan from Mylapore. Though it was speculated that former state party chief K Annamalai would be fielded, he had asked the party to relieve him of the responsibility of campaign manager, citing his father's health.



In March, he had said that he had not sought an opportunity to contest. In the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, they asked me to contest. Now, nobody has asked me to contest. I did not seek an opportunity, and I am carrying out the tasks assigned to me. If the party decides and asks me to contest, I will," Annamalai told reporters in Coimbatore last month.

He unsuccessfully contested from Aranthangi. In the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, they asked me to contest. Now, nobody has asked me to contest. I did not seek an opportunity, and I am carrying out the tasks assigned to me. If the party decides and asks me to contest, I will," Annamalai told reporters in Coimbatore last month.

He unsuccessfully contested from Aranthangi in the 2021 Assembly election and also lost the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. Congratulating the party candidates, Annamalai, who has retained his campaign seat in Kannur in neighbouring Kerala, said they carried the support of every "brother and sister of Tamil Nadu" who are "tired of corruption, complacency, and the DMK's betrayal."

"Under the visionary leadership of our Hon'ble PM Narendra Modi, India has moved forward with strength, scale, and purpose. While the nation progresses, Tamil Nadu has been held back by a failed, arrogant, and self-serving DMK government," Annamalai said in a post on 'X' on Friday.

"As a karyakarta, I will stand shoulder to shoulder and campaign for all our winning BJP and NDA candidates, with the aim of the NDA winning 210 seats in the upcoming Assembly elections," he added.

Rajya Sabha MP Murugan, currently Union Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting, had contested from the Dharapuram constituency and lost by a narrow margin in 2021.

He also unsuccessfully contested the 2024 Lok Sabha election from the Nilgiris. Former state president Tamilisai Soundararajan, who will contest from Mylapore, resigned as Governor and returned to party work ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. She is the daughter of veteran Congress leader Kumari Ananthan and a doctor by profession.

Indian Navy gets its third indigenous nuclear submarine

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 3: India Friday commissioned its third indigenously-built nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine, INS Aridaman, significantly bolstering the naval component of the nation's nuclear triad, authoritative sources said.

There is no official word yet on the commissioning of the boat that came amid a rapidly evolving regional security environment.

India's nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) programme is a closely guarded project. INS Arihant was the first boat under the SSBN project that was followed by another boat, INS Arighat.

INS Arihant is India's first home-made nuclear submarine. It was launched in July 2009 and was quietly commissioned in 2016. The navy commissioned its second indigenous SSBN, INS Arighat, in August 2024. The SSBN stands for ship submersible ballistic nuclear or nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines.

The SSBN programme is a key element of India's nuclear deterrence capability.

The induction of INS Aridaman is seen as a major milestone to enhance India's strategic strike capabilities.

India is among a select group of countries that possess nuclear-powered submarines. The countries that have such assets are the US, Russia, the

Vaishnaw lauds railway zones that maintained high level of punctuality

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 3: Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw Friday congratulated zones that have maintained high levels of punctuality and appreciated those which have improved their performance by ensuring more than 85 per cent punctuality despite operational challenges.

Vaishnaw, who chaired a review meeting on various operational issues with railway officials across the country at Rail Bhawan here, congratulated the entire Railway family for their commendable performance last year. "He (Vaishnaw) emphasised that providing a good travel experience to the poor and middle class remains the top priority of Indian Railways. He called upon all officials to work collectively towards this goal," a press note from the Railway Ministry said.

"He highlighted that the historic reduction in rail accidents and record freight loading have significantly improved the image of Indian Railways across the country," it added.

Officials said that while discussing special train services, he appreciated the effective operation of a large number of special trains during festivals, which helped meet the increased demand for travel. Highlighting the importance of passenger experience, Vaishnaw asked officials to keep stations clean



and well-maintained, ensure optimal utilisation of funds to enhance passenger facilities and manage crowds during peak periods, especially festivals, so that passengers can reach platforms and board trains smoothly and without inconvenience.

Officials said that the issue of pending land acquisition for ongoing railway projects was also discussed and the railway minister directed officials to expedite the process and, if required, seek the expertise of experienced retired officers of the state revenue and forest departments to overcome bottlenecks.

Addressing the sensitive issue related to people living near railway tracks, the Union minister emphasised that livelihoods must not be adversely affected.

"He directed railway officials to adopt a humane and sensitive approach in resolv-

ing such matters in coordination with the state governments. He noted that this is a significant issue in many urban areas and requires timely and compassionate resolution," the note said.

The meeting also reviewed the earlier decision regarding the construction of rail underpasses ('pullyas'). It was decided that, wherever feasible, convenient and accessible underpasses should be prioritised over foot overbridges for crossing railway tracks, both within station premises and outside.

The minister noted that underpasses are more user-friendly and are likely to be used more frequently by the public, a senior official part of the review meeting said. He added, "It was further decided to undertake pilot projects in different parts of the country to construct such underpasses. These will be designed to facilitate movement not only for pedestrians but also for cycles, scooters and motorcycles, and in some cases, wider structures will allow movement of tractors and other vehicles."

Designs will be tailored to meet the requirements of both urban and rural areas.

Vaishnaw reiterated that with sustained efforts, efficient planning and a passenger-centric approach, the Indian Railways will continue to enhance safety, service quality and overall travel experience for passengers across the country.

Balkrishna received 'Vishwa Ayurveda Ratna' award



Haridwar, April 3: Revered Acharya Balkrishna, who has been continuously working to give global recognition to Ayurveda and to preserve India's knowledge tradition, has been honored with another international award.

He was conferred with the title of "Vishwa Ayurveda Ratna" under the Earth Award and High Impact Sustainability Dialogue 2026, organised by the Net Green Foundation.

The prestigious ceremony was held at UNESCO House in New Delhi, with many distinguished personalities from India and abroad in attendance. Although Acharya Balkrishna could not be personally present at the event, he dedicated this honor to the great tradition of Ayurveda, which for thousands of years has guided humanity toward holistic health and a balanced life. He stated that this award does not belong to an individual, but to that rich Indian tradition which has embodied the principle of "Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah" (May all beings be happy).

Vijay faces scrutiny over discrepancies in affidavits

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, April 3: Discrepancies have surfaced in two separate election affidavits submitted by actor and TVK founder Vijay, potentially inviting legal and political scrutiny ahead of the Assembly elections.

The contrasting documents, prepared for the Perambur and Tiruchirappalli East constituencies, reveal contradictory declarations regarding his pending criminal cases and designated election bank accounts.

The affidavit prepared for the Perambur Assembly constituency, which was notarised in Chennai March 30, explicitly claims that the political leader has no pending criminal cases against him. Conversely, a subsequent affidavit drafted for the Tiruchirappalli East constituency, notarised three days later in Tiruchirappalli, declares two pending First Information Reports (FIRs).

According to the Tiruchirappalli document, the disclosed cases include an FIR registered at the Koodakovil Police Station in Madurai district, and another at the Peravallur Police Station in Chennai. The latter involves allegations of



public nuisance and injuries caused by bouncers during a recent campaign event.

In addition to the criminal record discrepancy, the financial declarations related to election expenditure also differ.

The Perambur document lists a single bank account opened for election expenses at the Indian Overseas Bank, Saligramam branch, containing a deposit of Rs 1 lakh. The Trichy affidavit, however, lists two separate accounts, maintaining the Saligramam account for Perambur and adding another account at the Indian Overseas Bank Tiruchirappalli Main branch with a balance

Top court asks Centre if disabled cadets can be treated as ex-servicemen

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 3: The Supreme Court has asked the Centre if military cadetes who become unfit due to disabilities sustained during training can be given ex-servicemen status, enabling them to avail reservation benefits in government and semi-government jobs.

A bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan said a majority of the military cadetes were below the age of 30 and would need employment.

"During the course of submissions, one of the aspects that was discussed was as to whether the boarded-out cadets could also be considered as ex-servicemen or ex-military personnel for the purpose of having the benefit of reservation for such persons in various governmental and semi-governmental jobs and posts," the bench said.

"Learned ASG to seek instructions on this aspect, so that the scope of the ex-military personnel could also include the boarded-out cadets, since a majority of them are in their 20s, 30s", it said.

Additional Solicitor General N Venkataraman, appearing for the Union of India, said it would give a comprehensive response to the issue. The top court was hearing a suo motu case related to the difficulties faced by cadets who were boarded out due to injury or disability during training.

On August 18 last year, the apex court said it wants defence forces to have "braveheart cadets" who should not be deterred by injuries or disabilities suffered during training, and directed the Centre to explore the possibility of providing them with insurance covers for such exigencies.



My message is clear. To the United States and Israel, it is high time to stop the war that is inflicting immense human suffering and already triggering devastating economic consequences. To Iran, to stop attacking their neighbours

KAZAKHSTAN RELEASES ENDANGERED SAKER FALCONS With a loud thwack of their wings, the falcons took flight, quickly soaring high above the rocky desert landscape of Altyn-Emel National Park in southeastern Kazakhstan.



of the day quote

Repeated rhetoric reflects not strength, but visible strategic anxiety as the anniversary of the Pahalgam

I have a list of key draft laws that are critical for securing funding. I believe that members of parliament from all parties must understand the importance of these bills for Ukraine's budget

Since the Pakistan-Afghanistan conflict escalated again, China has made mediation efforts in its own way, maintained close communication with both sides via multiple channels and at multiple levels, and created conditions and provided platforms for dialogue between the two sides

US fighter jet shot down over Iran

Washington, April 3: A US fighter jet has been shot down over Iran and search-and-rescue efforts have so far recovered one of two crew members who ejected, a US official told Reuters, in the first known incident of its kind in the nearly five-week-old war.



ONE F-15E CREW MEMBER RECOVERED, SEARCH CONTINUES FOR SECOND AFTER EJECTION OVER IRAN IRAN URGES CIVILIANS TO FIND SURVIVORS, OFFERS COMMENDATION FOR THEIR CAPTURE OR KILLING WAR REMAINS UNPOPULAR IN US, MAJORITY FAVORS QUICK END

The Pentagon and US Central Command did not respond to requests for comment.

The prospect of a US pilot being alive and on the run inside Iran raises the stakes for the United States in a conflict that, according to opinion polls, has struggled to win popular support among Americans.

It also presents a challenge to the US military, which faces the twin goals of trying to save the life of an American behind enemy lines while safeguarding anyone involved in perilous rescue missions.

Iranian officials called on civilians to be on the lookout for survivors and have flooded social media with images that purport to show wreckage from the aircraft.

Two US officials said the aircraft was an F-15E fighter jet, which has two seats: one for a pilot and the second for a weapons systems officer. It was unclear which of the two

was recovered, and the US official who confirmed the recovery did not offer any details on how it took place.

William Goodhind, a forensic imagery analyst with Contested Ground, said images of the plane's tail fin seen in photos posted on social media are consistent with that of an F-15E Strike Eagle, which carries two crew.

The governor of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province

said anyone who captured or killed the crew "would be specially commended," Iran's semi-official news agency ISNA reported.

The incident follows threats by US President Donald Trump to bomb the country back to the "Stone Age," including attacking Iran's energy infrastructure and desalination plants, as he presses Tehran to end the war on US terms.

So far, 13 US military service

members have been killed in the conflict and more than 300 have been wounded, according to the US Central Command. No US troops have been taken prisoner by Iran.

While Trump has repeatedly sought to portray the Iranian military as defeated, Reuters has reported on US intelligence showing Iran retains large amounts of missile and drone capability.

As of last week, the United States could only determine with certainty that it has destroyed about one-third of Iran's missile arsenal. The status of about another third was less clear but bombings likely damaged, destroyed or buried those missiles in underground tunnels and bunkers, Reuters sources said.

The US and Israeli war with Iran has spread across the Middle East, killing thousands of people and hitting the global economy with soaring energy prices that are fuelling fears of inflation in countries around the world. The war is unpopular with Americans, with two-thirds believing the US should work to end its involvement in the conflict quickly, even if that means not achieving the goals set out by the Trump administration, a Reuters/Ipsos poll showed this week.

Myanmar junta chief elected president

Bangkok, April 3: Myanmar junta chief Min Aung Hlaing was elected president Friday after breezing through a parliamentary vote, formalising his grip on political power in the war-torn nation five years after he ousted an elected government in a coup.



His carefully choreographed journey from top general to civilian president follows a lopsided election in December and January that was won in a landslide by an army-backed party and derided by critics and Western governments as a sham to perpetuate military rule behind a veneer of democracy.

The 69-year-old general has had a torrid time in power since he toppled the administration of Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi in 2021 and put her under arrest, sparking widespread protests that morphed into nationwide armed resistance against the junta.

Lawmakers from the dominant Union Solidarity and Development Party and the military's quota of appointed armed forces legislators coalesced to back Min Aung Hlaing, with the former commander-in-chief winning the vote by a huge margin Friday.

Despite initially trailing Nyo Saw, a retired general and the junta's prime minister, Min Aung Hlaing pulled ahead to win 429 votes to Nyo Saw's 126.

The civil war that has wrecked Myanmar and its economy for much of the last

five years is still raging, with the military under Min Aung Hlaing's command accused by human rights groups and United Nations experts of atrocities against the civilian population, which the junta has denied.

The prosecutor of the International Criminal Court in 2024 sought an arrest warrant for Min Aung Hlaing over the alleged persecution of the minority Muslim Rohingya, after more than a million fled to neighboring Bangladesh to escape a military crackdown in 2017.

"He may exchange his military fatigues for civilian attire, but this changes nothing with respect to his suspected responsibility for serious crimes under international law," Amnesty International said.

Some anti-junta groups, including those comprising remnants of Suu Kyi's party and longstanding ethnic minority armies, this week formed a new combined front to take on the military.

MIN AUNG HLAING WINS PARLIAMENTARY VOTE BY HUGE MARGIN JUNTA LEADER STEPPED DOWN AS MILITARY CHIEF ON MONDAY GENERAL EXPECTED TO CONSOLIDATE POWER, SEEK INTERNATIONAL LEGITIMACY UNDER CIVILIAN GUISE CHINA EXTENDS ITS CONGRATULATIONS, PLEDGES SUPPORT TO NEW GOVERNMENT CIVIL WAR PERSISTS; SOME RESISTANCE GROUPS UNITE AGAINST 'DICTATORSHIP'

SHORT TAKES

India, Nepal sign MoU for 7 projects

Kathmandu: India Thursday signed an agreement with Nepal to undertake seven high-impact development projects in the Himalayan nation under a grant assistance of NRS 4.73 million. The Indian Embassy here and Nepal's Ministry of General Administration signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to undertake the projects in areas such as agriculture and health. The projects include the construction of cold stores, construction of school buildings, and a birthing centre, in various provinces of Nepal, according to a statement by the Indian Embassy.

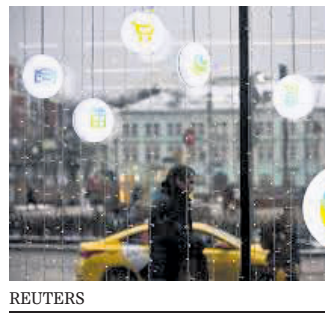
SK, France to deepen defence, energy ties

Seoul: South Korean President Lee Jae Myung and French President Emmanuel Macron said Friday they planned to boost defence cooperation and work together to address the economic and energy crises triggered by the war in Iran. Macron arrived in South Korea Thursday for a two-day state visit after also visiting Japan, and held a summit in Seoul Friday. It is the first state visit by a French president since 2015 and French officials have said the trip aims to strengthen France's strategic and economic role in the region at a time of "strong international and regional tensions." "President Macron and I agreed to share policy-related experiences and strategies in order to jointly address the economic and energy crises triggered by the Middle East war," Lee said after the summit.

Meloni visits Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE

Rome: Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni flew to Saudi Arabia Friday for a previously unannounced trip that will also include meetings in Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, a government official said. The two-day visit is aimed at showing support for Gulf partners facing Iranian attacks and to protect Italy's own energy supplies, the official said. It is the first trip by a European Union leader to Saudi since the conflict launched by the United States and Israel at the end of February and comes at a time of rising concern in Rome over the security of oil and gas flows. Before the war, about 10% of Italy's total gas consumption was covered by Qatari liquefied natural gas, while Middle East oil accounted for around 12% of Italy's total oil imports last year.

Payment outage disrupts shopping, travel in Moscow



Moscow, April 3: A problem with payment systems sowed chaos Friday for some Russian shoppers, forcing the turnstiles on the Moscow metro to allow people to enter without payment and even forcing a regional zoo to ask visitors to use cash.

The cause of the payment system problem was not immediately clear but shoppers and retailers said that they experienced problems with Sberbank, the country's biggest bank, and with payments with QR codes.

The central bank did not reply to a request for comment. Sberbank said problems had been resolved but gave no details on what caused the problems.

Shops and petrol stations asked customers for cash for about an hour Friday, citing a problem with payment systems, Reuters reporters said.

The Moscow metro turnstiles let people enter for free at one point, TASS reported. A zoo in Belgorod said card payment systems were down, and asked visitors to pay cash.

Moscow and the surrounding region has a population of 22 million people.

CHINA INVESTIGATES EX-XINJIANG CHIEF MA XINGRUI FOR CORRUPTION

Beijing, April 3: The ruling Communist Party of China's former Xinjiang chief, who is also a member of the influential Politburo, is under investigation over suspected violations of discipline and law, the latest senior official to face scrutiny by the anti-corruption watchdog.

Ma Xingrui has been placed under disciplinary and supervisory investigation, an official statement said Friday.

Ma, also deputy head of the

Leading Group for Rural Affairs of the CPC, is being investigated by the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, an anti-corruption watchdog, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. He is part of the 24-member Politburo, a top decision-making body of the party headed by President Xi Jinping.

He is the third member of the elite political body to come under investigation in the current term that began in 2022, a situation unseen in decades. The military, headed by Xi,

has witnessed the recurring purges. He Weidong, the former vice-chairman of the powerful Central Military Commission (CMC) headed by Xi, was expelled from the party and military in October. He is also under investigation.

Senior-most General Zhang Youxia, another CMC vice chairman and also a member of the Politburo, was placed under investigation for suspected serious violations of party discipline and law, which sent shockwaves down the military.



Palestinian Muslims attend Friday prayers outside Jerusalem's Old City due to restrictions linked to the Iran war

China targets digital humans in new AI safety push

The Cyberspace Administration of China's proposed rules would require prominent 'digital human' labels on all virtual human content and prohibit digital humans from providing 'virtual intimate relationships' to those under 18, according to rules published for public comment until May 6

Beijing, April 3: China's cyberspace regulator issued draft regulations Friday to oversee the development online of digital humans, requiring clear labelling and banning services that could mislead children or fuel addiction.

The Cyberspace Administration of China's proposed rules would require prominent "digital human" labels on all virtual human content and prohibit digital humans from providing "virtual intimate relationships" to those under 18, according to rules published for public comment until May 6.

The draft regulations would



also ban the use of other people's personal information to create digital humans without consent, or using virtual humans to bypass identity verification systems, reflecting

security, inciting subversion of state power, promoting secession or undermining national unity, the draft rules said.

Service providers are advised to prevent and resist content that is sexually suggestive, depicts horror, cruelty or incites discrimination based on ethnicity or region, according to the document. Providers are also encouraged to take necessary measures to intervene and provide professional assistance when users exhibit suicidal or self-harming tendencies.

China made clear its ambitions to aggressively adopt AI throughout its economy in the new five-year policy blueprint issued last month. The push

comes alongside tightening governance in the booming industry to ensure safety and alignment with the country's socialist values.

The new rules aim to fill a gap in governance in the digital human sector, setting clear red lines for the healthy development of the industry, according to an analysis published on the cyberspace regulator's website.

"The governance of digital virtual humans is no longer merely an issue of industry norms; rather, it has become a strategic scientific problem that concerns the security of the cyberspace, public interests, and the high-quality development of the digital economy," it added.

Congo in talks with US over third-country deportations: Sources

Kinshasa, April 3: Democratic Republic of Congo is in talks with the Trump administration about receiving deportees from other countries, two government sources in Kinshasa told Reuters, in what would be the latest of several such agreements reached in Africa.

The discussions, also described by three UN sources and two diplomats briefed by US officials, underscore Washington's growing reliance on so-called third-country deportations to speed up removals of migrants who entered or remain in the United States without authorisation.

The arrangements are often negotiated quietly, with limited public detail on their scope or terms.

The talks with Congo are coinciding with an effort by the Trump administration to implement a peace deal between Congo and Rwanda and an agreement ensuring US access to Congolese critical minerals.

The United States has sent third-country deportees to African countries including Ghana, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea and Eswatini, drawing criticism from legal experts and rights groups over the legal basis for the transfers and the treatment of deportees sent to countries where they are not nationals.

Some of the migrants have been forced home despite receiving court-ordered protection in the US meant to prevent that from happening.

The talks with Congo have not yet resulted in an agreement and key details remain unresolved, the Congolese sources said. It is not yet known when the first deportation flights might take place, how many migrants could be involved or their nationalities



Industrial liquid waste is not a burden, it is a resource waiting to be unlocked. Water is not scarce because it is absent; it is scarce because accessibility is limited where it matters most
MALU KAMBLE | MD, KEP ENGINEERING SERVICES

PV SALES MAY MODERATE

India's passenger vehicle industry growth is expected to moderate to 4-6 per cent in FY27, largely due to the high base and evolving macroeconomic conditions, ratings agency ICRA said Friday. For FY26, the industry is estimated to report wholesale volume growth of around 7-9 per cent, supported by strong festive demand, GST rate cuts and multiple new model launches, ICRA said



of the day **quote**

Indian firms producing branded or speciality drugs, or supplying inputs for patented medicines, could face tariff pressure. The larger concern is future uncertainty if tariffs are extended to generics
AJAY SRIVASTAVA | FOUNDER, GTRI



India's real estate sector is at an inflection point, with urbanization set to rise from 35% to nearly 50% by 2047, fundamentally reshaping demand and development patterns
NIRANJAN HIRANANDANI | CHAIRMAN EMERITUS, NAREDCO MAHARASHTRA



Consequently, the measure falls short of fully addressing the import substitution objective or significantly incentivising domestic procurement by SEZ units for manufacturing for DTA (domestic tariff area) requirements
GULZAR DIDWANIA | PARTNER, DELOITTE INDIA



Crude above \$100 risks inflation spike, interest rate hike



Amid speculation ahead of next Wednesday's monetary policy announcement on whether the RBI uses interest rates to defend the rupee, the HSBC report suggested risks of such a move

when the growth drag becomes non-linear and intensifies quickly with higher oil prices," it said.

The economists recommended adopting a "neutral" stance on both the monetary and fiscal fronts for now, as the supplies are yet to be cleared and stimulating demand can stoke inflation.

Pointing out that doing so would be akin to the experience during the Covid pandemic, the report said stimulating demand before supply was repaired led to high and sticky inflation back then.

"The lesson now is clear: avoid boosting demand too early. But this is a delicate balance. Policymakers don't want to overstimulate, but they also can't tighten so much that the growth slowdown deepens," it added.

Elaborating on the "neutral" prescription, it said this would mean keeping the fiscal deficit close to FY26 levels and raising petrol and diesel prices to help contain the fiscal deficit.

On the monetary side, the "flexible" inflation targeting framework allows inflation to stay within the 2-6 per cent range, it added.

If the ongoing energy shock persists for a few more weeks, the growth drag could begin to outweigh the inflation shock, it said.

WEST ASIA CRISIS

Russia offers to scale up oil, LNG supplies to India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 3: With the West Asia crisis continuing to drive volatility in the global energy market, Russia has offered to increase supply of crude oil and natural gas to India even as the two sides agreed to further enhance the overall bilateral ties.

The energy cooperation figured prominently in meetings Russia's First Deputy Prime Minister Denis Manturov held with National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Thursday, people familiar with the matter said.

Manturov also held talks with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi last evening. A Russian readout of the First Deputy Prime Minister's engagements in New Delhi said special attention was accorded to bilateral cooperation in the oil and gas sector.

"Denis Manturov confirmed that Russian companies have the capacity to steadily increase supplies of oil and liquefied natural gas to the Indian market," it said.

The comments came as the West Asia crisis continued to put strain on global energy market largely due to disruptions in supplies of crude oil and gas through the Strait of Hormuz.

Global oil and gas prices have surged after Iran virtually blocked the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow shipping lane between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, that handles roughly 20 per cent of global oil and LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas). West Asia has been a major source of India's energy procurement.

Various issues relating to bilateral ties were deliberated extensively at the India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation (IRIGC-TEC). It was co-chaired by Manturov and Jaishankar. Expanding mutually beneficial trade, investment, and industrial cooperation was one of the key topics on the agenda, the Russian readout said.

MASTER YOUR CRAFT: NIGAMJYOTI

Nigamjyoti Pathy is the visionary entrepreneur behind Namaste Baripada, a venture born from a lifelong passion for culinary arts. Amidst the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, founder Nigamjyoti and his brother channelled their love for cooking into a cloud kitchen, transforming a period of uncertainty into a thriving business. What began as a small initiative to serve the community has evolved into a symbol of resilience and authentic flavour. Under Nigamjyoti's leadership, Namaste Baripada has grown into a celebrated destination, blending traditional local tastes with a modern spirit, driven by the simple joy of feeding people well. Excerpts...



NIGAMJYOTI PATHY
FOUNDER, NAMASTE BARIPADA

■ How do you differentiate Namaste Baripada in a competitive local market?

■ What truly sets us apart is our ability to blend traditional flavours with modern dishes. For us, it is not just about serving food but creating an experience where people taste something familiar yet refreshingly different. When we started, Baripada already had well-established restaurants, and gaining recognition was our biggest challenge. However, over time, the quality and uniqueness of our food began to speak for itself. Gradually, our dishes became our identity, and strong word-of-mouth appreciation has become our biggest strength in the local market.

■ How do you balance pricing strategy with maintaining quality standards?

■ Balancing prices has always been a challenge for us, especially with constant market fluctuations. We cannot price our dishes the same way as restaurants in bigger cities like Cuttack or Bhubaneswar, as it would not suit our local customers. At the same time, maintaining quality is non-negotiable for us. So, we focus on keeping our pricing reasonable and accessible for the people of Baripada while ensuring that the ingredients and taste of our food are never compromised.

■ How has been your journey so far? Are there plans for expansion or franchising in the near future?

■ The journey has certainly had its share of challenges, but it has been incredibly rewarding. Seeing people enjoy our food and return for more continues to motivate us. At present, we are focusing on making our business model more sustainable while planning for expansion and franchising. Our goal is to introduce our dishes to a wider audience across the country. At the same time, we are committed to preserving the authenticity of our recipes so that every outlet delivers the true taste and experience of Namaste Baripada.

■ As an entrepreneur, why did you choose to enter this line of business? What advice will you give to new entrants?

■ I chose this field because of my genuine love for cooking and serving people. It was never just a business decision; it came from the heart. My advice to new entrants is simple—follow what you are truly passionate about and good at. With time, dedication turns passion into expertise. For those entering the food industry, it is important to keep learning, understand different cuisines, and study what people enjoy. Building your business around that understanding is what ultimately leads to long-term success.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 3: Crude oil sustaining above \$100 per barrel will push the headline inflation above 6 per cent, the upper level of RBI's tolerance band, and trigger rate hikes, a foreign brokerage has said.

Economists at HSBC said that consumer price inflation (CPI) will remain below 6 per cent if oil prices average below \$100 per barrel, as per its modelling.

"... Sustained oil above \$100/bbl would push inflation beyond 6 per cent, likely triggering rate hikes," the economists said, adding that we are at "crossroads" as Brent has averaged \$100 in March.

Amid speculation ahead of next Wednesday's monetary policy announcement on whether the RBI uses interest rates to defend the rupee, the report suggested risks of such a move.

"An interest-rate defence for the INR can be expensive

New Toyota dealership inaugurated in City

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 3: Trupti Group inaugurated its new Toyota dealership, "Trupti Toyota," in Bhubaneswar amidst much enthusiasm and participation from dignitaries, customers, and well-wishers.

The showroom, located at Bhipur, Unit-6 (near Airport Square), along with its workshop at Khandagiri, marks a significant addition to the City's automobile landscape.

The inauguration ceremony was graced by Mayor Sulochana Das, who attended as the chief guest and formally inaugurated the showroom with a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Senior officials from Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM), including Sachin Sharma, Vice President; Vinay Kumar, Gen-



eral Manager - East; Animesh Nag, Manager - Odisha and Bengal, and Deep Panda, FSM, were present on the occasion. The event was also attended by managing director Bimalendu Mohanty and Dealer Principal Ankit Mohanty, along with other distinguished guests and local corporators.

The regional manager of Union Bank of India, Niran-

jan Barik, was also present on the occasion. Speaking on the occasion, the management expressed confidence that Trupti Toyota will offer a comprehensive automotive experience by providing services such as sales, service, spare parts, insurance, finance, exchange (U-Trust), accessories, and extended warranty under one roof, along with pick-and-drop facilities.

LPG supply stable: IOC

The firm warns against panic booking amid global tensions

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 3: Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), the nation's biggest oil firm, Friday said liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) supply in India remains stable and adequate despite geopolitical disruptions to global energy markets, adding that domestic availability continues to be its top priority.

The company said it is delivering around 28 lakh LPG cylinders daily, in line with normal levels prior to the current tensions, with uninterrupted supply to households.

IOC added that nearly 87 per cent of refill bookings are being

made through digital platforms, while deliveries are being authenticated through OTP-based systems to ensure correct distribution. "India's LPG supply remains stable, adequate, and under close monitoring, despite ongoing geopolitical developments impacting global energy markets. Domestic LPG (supply) continues to be accorded the highest priority," the company said in a statement.

The current deliveries of around 28 lakh LPG cylinders daily are "consistent with normal delivery levels prior to the onset of current geopolitical tensions," it said.

Customers are encouraged to use digital modes such as SMS and IVRS for booking LPG refills. At present, nearly 87% of bookings are received through digital platforms.

Forex kitty drops by \$10.29 billion to \$688.06 billion

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 3: India's forex reserves dropped by \$10.288 billion to \$688.058 billion during the week ended March 27, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said Friday.

In the previous reporting week, the overall reserves had declined by \$11.413 billion to \$698.346 billion.

The kitty had expanded to an all-time high of \$728.494 billion during the week ended February 27 this year, before the onset of the West Asia conflict.

The rupee has come under pressure since the start of the West Asia conflict, and the RBI has been intervening in the forex market through dollar sales and has also taken some surprising policy measures to harness the fall.

For the week ended March 27, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, decreased by \$6.622 billion to \$551.072 billion, the central bank's data showed.

Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include effects of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units, such as the euro, pound, and yen, held in the foreign exchange reserves.

Value of gold reserves decreased by \$3.666 billion to \$113.521 billion during the week, the RBI said.

The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were up \$17 million to \$18.649 billion, the apex bank said.

India's reserve position with the IMF was down by \$17 million to \$4.816 billion in the reporting week, according to the apex bank's data.

RBI's fresh FX curbs trap banks in trades once seen low risk

Bankers estimate sizeable positions are outstanding. Of the estimated \$30 billion-\$40 billion in arbitrage exposure, only around 50%-60% were unwound Monday, leaving a substantial overhang in the system

REUTERS

Mumbai, April 3: Indian banks are set to face heightened uncertainty Thursday after the central bank's curbs on corporate activity made it costlier for lenders to cut arbitrage positions, potentially saddling them with larger losses.

Late Wednesday, the Reserve Bank of India barred banks from offering rupee non-deliverable forwards to resident and non-resident clients.

The move was aimed primar-

ily at halting a surge in corporate-driven arbitrage activity seen Monday, four bankers said, requesting anonymity since they are not authorised to speak to the media.

With corporates no longer able to arbitrage between the onshore and NDF markets from Thursday, banks will find it harder and more expensive to unwind positions the RBI has asked them to cut, they said.

The central bank, in effect, was directing lenders to cut



arbitrage positions that were considered lucrative and low-risk and were compounding the pressure on the rupee.

On Monday, banks had relied on corporate arbitrage flows to help reduce exposures in line with the RBI's earlier directive.

"Banks that did not cut on Monday and chose to wait will now have to pay a much steeper price," a senior treasury of-

■ RBI BANS BANKS FROM OFFERING RUPEE NDF TO CLIENTS

■ BANKS WITH OUTSTANDING ARBITRAGE POSITIONS FACE STEEPER LOSSES

■ RBI'S MOVE TARGETS SPECULATIVE ACTIVITY AND RUPEE CONTROL: BANKER

ficial at a private sector bank said. "The market knows they need to cut positions and have little choice, and will demand a premium."

Bankers estimate sizeable positions are outstanding. Of the estimated \$30 billion-\$40 billion in arbitrage exposure, only around 50%-60% were unwound Monday, leaving a substantial overhang in the

system. The treasury official said his bank, along with most foreign banks, had reduced positions to within RBI limits Monday, while most state-run banks were yet to fully exit.

STEEP COST

Banks saddled with positions now face a tougher exit path following Wednesday measures.

The cost of cutting positions to RBI levels largely depends on the spread between the onshore market and the offshore NDF. A wider spread raises the cost of unwinding positions, and consequently, increases losses.

The spread in the 1-month tenor had widened to nearly 100 paise Monday before narrowing to around 30-40 paise, helped by corporate arbitrage activity.

At 11, Indian-origin Bodhana claims England chess throne

With this milestone, she has also broken into the world's top 100 women for the first time, currently sitting at number 72

has 2366 FIDE rating points. The primary school student based in North London has overtaken four-time British women's champion, Lan Yao, who is 25, at the top of the FIDE list for England.

With this, she has also broken into the world's top 100 women for the first time, currently sitting at number 72, stated the English Chess Federation in a press release.

"It is an extraordinary rise for a Harrow schoolgirl who took up the game during (the 2020 COVID-19) lockdown after finding a chessboard and set in a bag her father wanted to throw out," the release added.

Former British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, who is also of



REWRITING HISTORY

The primary school student based in North London has overtaken four-time British women's champion, Lan Yao, who is 25, at the top of the FIDE list for England

10-year-old Bodhana Sivanandan made history at the 2025 British Chess Championships in Liverpool, becoming the youngest female ever to defeat a grandmaster. She beat 60-year-old Peter Wells, breaking the previous record by six months. Bodhana is now recognized as an international master—just one step below grandmaster

In 2024, the youngster became the youngest person ever to represent England internationally in any sport when she was selected for England Women's Team at the Chess Olympiad in Hungary

Indian origin, congratulated Sivanandan and recalled the time he played a game with

her at his official residence. "Huge congratulations to Bodhana Sivanandan on becoming England's top female chess player at just 11 years old. We once played each other in the Downing Street garden. Let's just say her success has not come as a

shock," he posted on 'X'. Sivanandan became a Woman International Master last year.

She went on to outwit Ukraine's former world champion, Grandmaster Mariya Muzychuk, at the European Club Cup in Rhodes, Greece.

"She is blazing a trail not just for women and girls in the game, but for all chess players in England. Across all sports, she must be one of the most prodigious talents England has ever produced," Richard Walsh, CEO of the English Chess Federation, said.

"We cannot wait to see what she can do in her career. Bodhana has worked so hard, and now she is competing at the highest level flying the flag," he added.

SAFF U20 final: India lose to B'desh on pens

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Male (Maldives), April 3: The Indian football team suffered a heartbreaking 3-4 defeat to Bangladesh on penalties in the final of the SAFF Men's U20 Championship at the National Stadium here on Friday.

This was Bangladesh's second SAFF Under-20 Championship title.

The summit showdown went to penalty shootout after both teams were locked at 0-0 at the end of regulation time, having failed to break the deadlock despite coming close on a few occasions.

Following a 1-1 draw in the group stages, the result marked a second consecutive tournament loss for the Indian U-20 side against Bangladesh.

Defending champions India entered as favourites, having topped the group earlier in the tournament, but Bangladesh held their nerve in the crunch moments to emerge triumphant.

After an impressive performance in the tournament, India's Rishi Singh Ningthoukhongjam saw his penalty saved, and Omang Dodum missed his effort in the shootout. But Samuel Raksam hit the target to bring India back in the contest.

Following a 1-1 draw in the group stages, the result marked a second consecutive tournament loss for the Indian U-20 side against Bangladesh

Ronan Sullivan score the decisive goal for Bangladesh to break Indian hearts.

India began their campaign with a 3-0 win over arch-rival Pakistan before drawing 1-1 with Bangladesh.

Then in the last-four stage, the Indians thrashed Bhutan 5-0 to comfortably sail into the title decider.

Placed in Group B alongside India and Pakistan, Bangladesh started their campaign with a 2-0 win over Pakistan, before playing out a 1-1 draw with India.

In the semifinals, Bangladesh beat Nepal 1-0 to book a place in the summit clash.

SHORT TAKES

Advani stuns reigning champ to enter semis

Ludhiana: Ace cueist Pankaj Advani, winner of the 9-ball event three days ago, powered into the semifinals of the 10-ball national championships, stunning reigning champion Shivam Arora here Friday. Advani carried far too many guns for Arora in the quarterfinals, reflected in his lopsided 8-2 victory and it set up a last-four showdown with fellow PSPB cueist Shahbaaz Adil Khan. The latter prevailed by a similar margin over Punjab's Sumesh Jhangra in the other quarters. The other semifinal will be played between Railways' Pushpender Singh and Aayush Kumar of Punjab. While Pushpender edged out Divya Sharma of Punjab 8-6, Aayush overcame Chetan Chabra of Telangana 8-7. Advani was on song from the get-go, not giving his fancied rival much chance in the race-to-8 clash.

Abhishek fined 25% of match fee

Kolkata: Sunrisers Hyderabad vice-captain Abhishek Sharma has been fined 25 per cent of his match fees and has also accumulated one demerit point for breaching the IPL Code of Conduct during his team's IPL match against Kolkata Knight Riders here. He admitted to the Level 1 offence under Article 2.3 and accepted the match referee's sanction. For Level 1 breaches of the Code of Conduct, the match referee's decision is final and binding. He scored 48 runs off 21 deliveries to get SRH to a flier in the powerplay. SRH registered their first win of IPL 2026, with a thumping 65-run win, with Abhishek played his part with the bat, hitting four fours and as many sixes. But he was sanctioned for showing dissent on TV umpire Nitin Menon decision after Varun Chakaravarty took a diving catch off Blessing Muzarabani the ninth over but there seemed to be no conclusive evidence that the catch was taken cleanly. But Menon deemed the catch to be legal which the batter disagreed and expressed his disappointment while walking off.

Pragg held by Espenko, Sindarov surges ahead

Paphos (Cyprus): R Pragganandhaa, the lone Indian in the fray, played out a draw with Andrey Espenko, while Javokhir Sindarov maintained his winning momentum and defeated Hikaru Nakamura to retain a full-point lead after the fifth round of the Candidates Tournament here Friday. It turned out to be another dramatic day as Pragganandhaa, who needed to win, opted for an unconventional opening not prescribed in the books. While the middlegame promised excitement, the Indian ace decided against taking any risks, and the game ended in a draw in just 31 moves via repetition.

INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE

Iyer orchestrates chase

Punjab captain's fifty centrepiece in 5-wicket win over CSK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, April 3: Skipper Shreyas Iyer's half-century draped in elegance and aggression in equal measure was the centrepiece in Punjab Kings' five-wicket win over Chennai Super Kings in their IPL match here Friday.

Shreyas (50, 29 balls) and his 59-run alliance with Nehal Wadhwa for the fourth wicket helped Punjab end up at 210 for five while chasing a competitive 209 on a dew-less Chepauk night, also consigning the hosts to their second successive defeat.

It was Punjab's second win on the trot, but there were other heroes too on the night for the PBKS.

Chasing a target at a run-rate closer to 11 required consistent and calm run-making and that was what PBKS precisely did through their top-order, with just about everyone chipping in.

Priyansh Arya (39, 11 balls), Prabhsimran Singh (43, 34b), Cooper Connolly

(36, 22b) all came up with mentionable contributions. Arya was quite brutal while vandalising CSK attack - Khaleel Ahmed was put away for a 4 and six while Matt Henry was dispatched for 4, 6, 4 in his first over that leaked 20 runs.

TODAY'S MATCH

DC VS MI

TIME: 3:30 PM

GT VS RR

TIME: 7:30 PM

Star Sports channels & JioHotstar

Arya and Prabhsimran cracked 61 runs in just 4.2 overs that gave a strong portent to the route the match was taking.

The Delhi batter was cleaned up by Henry to give a token relief to CSK, but none was more significant in PBKS's march than their skipper Shreyas, who unfurled his full range of shots.

Shreyas started a bit slow reaching 8 off 9 balls, as Connolly was doing the bulk of the work. But once the Australian fell to Anshul Kamboj, Shreyas took over the chase.

As expected, he hammered the spinners, and the shot of the innings was an inside-out six off leg-spinner Rahul Chahar.

Shreyas brought up his fifty in 26 balls with a boundary off Kamboj, but soon fell to the bowler, chasing a wide delivery.

Wadhwa fell in the first ball of the next over to Henry as PBKS slipped to 186 for five from 186 for three.

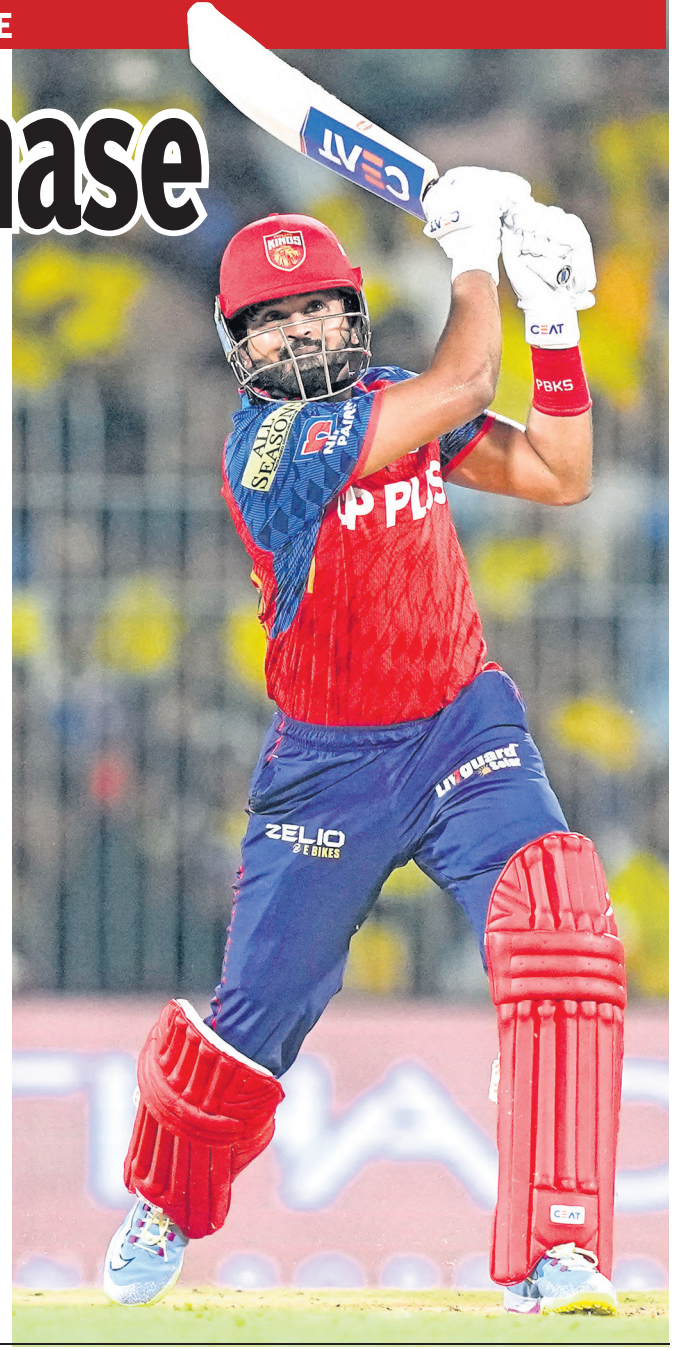
However, that proved a minor aberration.

Earlier, Ayush Mhatre showcased his abundant talent with a 43-ball 73, powering the Super Kings to a competitive 209 for five.

At 18 years and 261 days, he became the youngest player to score a fifty at Chepauk. He broke the previous record held by Suresh Raina, who was 21 years and 148 days old when he scored a fifty at the same venue.

BRIEF SCORES

Chennai Super Kings: 209 for 5 in 20 overs (Ayush Mhatre 73, Shivam Dube 45 not out, Sarfaraz Khan 32) lost to Punjab Kings: 210 for 5 in 18.4 overs (Shreyas Iyer 50, Prabhsimran Singh 43) by 5 wickets



ASIAN BOXING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Nikhat, Priya, Preeti enter semifinals

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Ulaanbaatar, April 3: India confirmed three medals at the Asian Boxing Championships 2026 as Nikhat Zareen, Priya, and Preeti Pawar registered impressive victories to advance to the semifinals on Day 5 here Friday.

Leading the charge, Nikhat was in complete control in the women's 51kg quarterfinal, sealing a first-round RSC victory over Xian Baguhin (PHI) in a dominant outing. She now faces her toughest test yet against China's Wu Yu, the Paris 2024 Olympic gold medalist, in the semifinals.

In the women's 60kg category,

Pugilists assure three medals

continuing her impressive run in the tournament. She will next take on Mongolia's Namun Monkhor for a place in the final.

Meanwhile, in the women's 54kg category, Preeti Pawar, the gold medalist at the World Boxing Cup Finals, delivered one of the most clinical performances of the day, outclassing Munguntsetseng (MGL) with a 5-0 unanimous decision victory.

Preeti is set to face a formidable opponent in Korea's Im Aej, the Paris 2024 Olympic bronze medalist and 2025 World Championships bronze medalist, in what promises to be a gripping semifinal clash. In the men's 70kg category, Deepak exited the competition following a 1-4 defeat to Jordan's Zeyad Eashash in the quarterfinals.

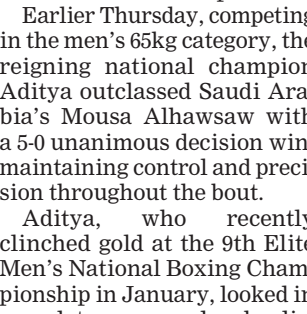
With three medals already secured and a place in the finals at stake, India's campaign continues to gather momentum at the continental showpiece.

Earlier Thursday, competing in the men's 65kg category, the reigning national champion Aditya outclassed Saudi Arabia's Mousa Alhawsaw with a 5-0 unanimous decision win, maintaining control and precision throughout the bout.

Aditya, who recently clinched gold at the 9th Elite Men's National Boxing Championship in January, looked in complete command as he dictated the pace and showcased superior technique against his opponent.

He will take on Uzbekistan's Abdulloh Madaminov in what is expected to be a closely contested bout.

Odisha's stellar show at inaugural KITG



Odisha's men's athletics team poses with the trophy after a dominant display at the Khelo India Tribal Games

The state ranks 2nd with 57 medals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

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OUTSTANDING OUTING
 ■ Odisha finish campaign with 21 gold, 15 silver and 21 bronze
 ■ Only contingent to cross a half century of medals
 ■ Only contingent to have won at least one gold medal in all the six sports disciplines, including eight in athletics and seven in swimming

Raipur, April 3: Karnataka emerged the overall champions with 23 gold medals while Odisha finished second with 21 gold, 15 silver and 21 bronze medals in the inaugural Khelo India Tribal Games (KITG) here.

Odisha were the only contingent to cross a half century of medals, finishing with 57 medals. Jharkhand were third with 16 gold, eight silver and 11 bronze.

Hosts Chhattisgarh also gave a strong performance with three gold, 10 silver and six bronze medals to finish ninth.

Overall champions Karnataka led the medals tally from the opening day as they dominated the swimming events, winning 15 gold, five silver and three bronze medals. They added five gold in athletics and three in wrestling to ensure that neither Odisha nor Jharkhand could catch up with them.

Karnataka's Manikanta L was the most successful athlete

India pips Kenya in AIU's list of ineligible athletes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 3: India has surpassed Kenya to top the Athletics Integrity Unit's (AIU) list of ineligible persons due to doping violations with 148 suspended track and field athletes, which is two more than the African nation.

The latest updated list is for the period up to April 1 this year. Russia took the third spot with 66 suspended athletes.

Prominent Indian athletes in the list include women's 100m national record holder Dutee Chand, who has been serving a four-year suspension since December 2022, middle distance runner



Parvej Khan, whose six-year suspension will run till July 2030, and Tamil Nadu sprinter Sekar Dhanalakshmi who was suspended for eight years in 2025.

The list includes persons serving a period of ineligibility as a result of national level

The country has suspended 148 track and field athletes, which is two more than the African nation

is an independent anti-doping watchdog established by the World Athletics. It has jurisdiction over international level athletes and their support persons.

In order to tackle the doping menace, the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) has taken up strict measures, including tracking down those centres in the country which are linked

to the menace.

Asserting that trainers also play a big role in doping of their wards, the AFI has also asked all the coaches to register with it. Unregistered coaches will be blacklisted, and their trainees will be deemed ineligible for national awards.

After the 2024 Paris Olympics, the AFI has decentralised the national camps. Currently, the AFI is only conducting national camps for relay teams.

All other elite athletes have chosen private organisations like Reliance, JSW, Tatas or government departments like Army, and Navy for training.