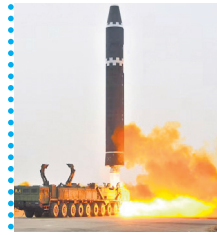




New narratives

Actor Kriti Sanon says the roles that are written for women are no longer seen through a man's lens

LEISURE | P2



NK fires ballistic missiles

North Korea fires multiple short range ballistic missiles as Pyongyang dismisses Seoul's diplomacy hopes

INTERNATIONAL | P10



D-St cheers ceasefire

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty surge nearly 4 per cent after the US and Iran announce a two-week ceasefire

BUSINESS | P11



GT bag thriller

Gujarat Titans beat Delhi Capitals by one run despite KL Rahul's heroic 92 off 52 balls in an Indian Premier League match

SPORTS | P12

Patra resigns as BJD's RS leader

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 8: In a significant political development, Sasmit Patra, a Member of Parliament in the Rajya Sabha from the Biju Janata Dal (BJD), has resigned as the party's parliamentary leader in the Upper House, a move that has stirred speculation about internal dynamics within the party.

Patra submitted his resignation Wednesday to BJD president Naveen Patnaik.

His exit comes days after the induction of Sanrupt Misra into the Rajya Sabha. Misra, who was sworn in earlier this week, is widely seen in political circles as a potential successor.

The development comes amid reports that several MPs of the party had written to the leadership, expressing their desire for a change in leadership in the Upper House.

Patra had been serving as the parliamentary party leader since 2022, playing a key role in coordinating the party's stance in the Upper House.

The BJD has not issued an official statement on Patra's resignation, leaving open questions about the party's next move in the Upper House.

India drops bid to host COP33

NEW DELHI: India has withdrawn its offer to host the United Nations' annual climate Conference of the Parties (COP33) in 2028, sources said Wednesday.

During his address at COP28 in Dubai in 2023, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had proposed India as the host country for COP33. Usually, the venue for a COP edition is decided two years in advance.

Sources confirmed that the decision was officially communicated to the concerned earlier this week that India is withdrawing its bid to host COP 33. They, however, did not state any specific reason behind the government's decision.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Polls will be fear-free, violence-free, intimidation-free... shall I also add voter-free

TO THE MOON AND BACK

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Houston (US), April 8: Still aglow from their triumphant lunar flyby, the Artemis II astronauts made more history Tuesday calling their friends aboard the International Space Station hundreds of thousands of miles away as they headed home from the moon. It was the first moonship-to-spaceship radio linkup ever.

NASA's Apollo crews had no off-the-planet company back in the 1960s and 1970s, the last time humanity set sail for deep space.

"We have been waiting for this like you can't imagine," Artemis II commander Reid Wiseman called out.

For Christina Koch on Arte-



This image released by NASA shows Earth setting beyond the lunar horizon as seen from the Orion spacecraft during a lunar flyby. The Artemis II crew, NASA astronauts Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover, and Christina Koch, along with Canadian astronaut Jeremy Hansen, named the moment "Earthset" in reference to the famous "Earthrise" photograph taken during the Apollo 8 mission in 1968 (See P10)

Ceasefire at risk

Israel expands Lebanon strikes, Iran closes strait again

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tehran, April 8: The United States demanded Wednesday that Iran immediately reopen the Strait of Hormuz after the Islamic Republic closed the waterway in response to Israeli attacks against the Hezbollah militant group in Lebanon.

Iran's move cast doubt over whether an already precarious ceasefire to end more than a month of war would hold.

The United States and Iran both claimed victory after reaching the agreement, and world leaders expressed relief, even as more drones and missiles hit Iran and Gulf Arab countries.

Israel also intensified its attacks in Lebanon, hitting several commercial and residential areas in Beirut without warning. At least 112 people were killed and hundreds were wounded in one of the deadliest days in the latest Israel-Hezbollah war.

The fresh violence threatened to scuttle what US Vice President JD Vance called a "fragile" deal.

"Aggression towards Lebanon is aggression towards Iran," Gen. Seyed Majid Mousavi, aerospace commander of Iran's Revolutionary Guard,

wrote on X. He warned that Iranian forces were preparing a "heavy response" without revealing details.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi insisted that an end to the war in Lebanon was part of the ceasefire agreement with the US.

"The world sees the massacres in Lebanon," he said in a post on X. "The ball is in the US court, and the world is watching whether it will act on its commitments."

US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth said American and Israeli forces had achieved a "capital V military victory" and that the Iranian military no longer posed a significant threat to US forces or the re-

gion. The Iranian military said the country forced Israel and the US to accept its "proposed conditions and surrender."

Much about the agreement was unclear as the sides presented vastly different visions of the terms.

Iran said the deal would allow it to formalise its new practice of charging ships passing through the strait, a crucial transit lane for oil. But the details were not clear, nor was it known whether vessels would feel safe using the channel or whether ship traffic had resumed. It also was unclear whether any other country agreed to this condition. The White House said Trump is opposed to tolls for ship passage

INDIANS TOLD TO EXIT IRAN EXPEDITIOUSLY

Dubai: India Wednesday advised its nationals in Iran to expeditiously exit the country using routes suggested by its mission in Tehran in light of the recent developments. In an advisory, the Indian embassy in Tehran also reiterated that there should be no attempt to approach any international land border without prior consultation and coordination with the Embassy. "In continuation of the advisory of 07 April 2026, and in light of recent developments, Indian nationals still in Iran are strongly advised to expeditiously exit Iran, in coordination with the Embassy and using the routes suggested by the Embassy," the Indian mission said in a post on X. The embassy also provided emergency contact numbers (+989128109115; +989128109102; +989128109109, and +989932179359) and email (cons.tehran@mea.gov.in) for those in need. The advisory came hours after the US and Iran agreed on a conditional two-week ceasefire that included the opening of the Strait of Hormuz for shipping. According to official data, around 9,000 Indians, including students, were in Iran when the conflict began February 28. Nearly 1,800 Indians have returned to India so far.

CRUDE OIL PRICES NOSEDIVE 20 PC

Global crude oil prices Wednesday plunged sharply up to 20 per cent, after US President Donald Trump announced a two-week ceasefire with Iran that includes a pledge to restore navigation through the Strait of Hormuz -- the narrow waterway at the heart of the world's most acute energy crisis in decades. The international benchmark Brent crude futures shed nearly 16 per cent or \$17.39 to \$91.88, hitting an intraday low, while US WTI crude declined almost 20 per cent or \$21.90 to \$91.05. The conflict had triggered an unprecedented surge in oil prices in March, with gains exceeding 60 per cent during the period.

through the strait.

Pakistan, which helped to mediate the deal, and others said fighting would pause in Lebanon, where Israel has launched a ground invasion against the Iran-backed Hezbollah militant group. Israel said it would not, and strikes hit Beirut Wednesday.

The fate of Iran's missile and nuclear programs - the elimination of which were major objectives for the US and Israel in going to war - also remained unclear. Trump said the US would work with Iran to remove buried enriched uranium, though Iran did not confirm that.

CM launches 36 industrial projects worth ₹40,811cr



PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 8: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Wednesday launched 36 industrial projects worth ₹40,811 crore, which are expected to generate 59,000 jobs, officials said.

Of the 36 projects, Majhi inaugurated 11 industrial units and laid foundation stones for 25 others in the presence of senior officials and industry leaders.

The projects span sectors including green energy equipment, metal and downstream industries, textiles and apparel, plastics, tourism, agriculture and food processing, defence manufacturing, IT, automobiles, and cement.

Before launching the projects, the Chief Minister held a roundtable with leading industrialists from across the country and assured them of all necessary facilities - land, power, water, connectivity, and

timely approvals.

"We have a dedicated team to facilitate industries to set up their projects in the state. If there is any difficulty, the industries may directly take up the matter with the Chief Minister's Office for immediate resolution," Majhi told industrialists and urged them to expand existing units in the state and help grow small-scale industries around their projects.

Addressing a public meeting at Bhuinpur near Begunia in Khurda district, Majhi asserted that Odisha is no longer merely a state of potential but is now actively experiencing the touch of prosperity.

This is a new and significant chapter in the golden journey of 'Samruddha Odisha', he said.

Majhi highlighted that in the last 18-20 months, the government has laid foundations and inaugurated 109 projects worth nearly ₹2.5 lakh crore, creating 1.76 lakh jobs.

Astronauts make 1st ever moonship-to-spaceship call

ASSOCIATED PRESS

mis II and Jessica Meir aboard the space station, it marked a joyous space reunion despite being 230,000 miles (370,000 km) apart. The two teamed up for the world's first all-female spacewalk in 2019 outside the orbiting lab.

Koch told her "astro-sister" that she'd hoped to meet up with her again in space "but I never thought it would be like this -- it's amazing." "I'm so happy that we are back in space together," Meir replied, "even if we are a few miles apart."

Houston's Mission Control arranged the cosmic chitchat between the four lunar travellers and the space station's three NASA and one French residents.

Koch described being awe-



struck by not just the beauty of Earth, "but how much blackness there was around it."

"It just made it even more special. It truly emphasised how alike we are, how the same thing keeps every single person on planet Earth alive," she told the space station crew. "The

specialness and preciousness of that really is emphasised" when viewing the home planet from the moon.

By late Tuesday afternoon, the Artemis II astronauts had beamed back more than 50 gigabytes' worth of pictures and other data from the previous day's

lunar rendezvous, which set a new distance record for humanity. The highlight -- an Earthset photo reminiscent of Apollo 8's Earthrise shot from 1968.

"While they are inspirational and, I think, allow all of us to really feel a little bit of what they were feeling, there's also a lot of science hidden inside of those images," said Mission Control's lead lunar scientist Kelsey Young. "The conversations and the science lessons learned are just beginning."

During a debriefing with Young, the astronauts recounted how they spotted a cascade of pinpricks of light on the lunar surface from impacting cosmic debris. The flashes lasted mere milliseconds and coincided by chance with Monday evening's

total solar eclipse.

Young said it was too soon to know whether the crew witnessed an actual meteor shower or more random, run-of-the-mill micrometeoroid hits. Either way, there were "audible screams of delight" in the science operations centre, she said.

The first lunar explorers since Apollo 17 in 1972, Wiseman and his crew are aiming for a splash-down off the San Diego coast Friday to wrap up the nearly 10-day test flight. The recovery ship USS John P. Murtha left port Tuesday for the target zone. It sets the stage for next year's Artemis III, a lunar lander docking demo in orbit around Earth. Artemis IV will follow in 2028 with two astronauts attempting to land near the lunar south pole.

6 B'DESHI WOMEN DETAINED IN CITY

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 8: Police have detained six Bangladeshi women in Bhubaneswar for allegedly staying in India without valid documents, following an input shared by Military Intelligence, official sources said Wednesday. According to the sources, the women were detained during an operation conducted Tuesday in the city.

Preliminary investigation indicated that the women had allegedly been residing in Bhubaneswar and some other parts of Odisha for a considerable period and were suspected to have used fake Aadhaar cards bearing Indian identities. A case has been registered at Badagada PS and further investigation is on, sources said.

leisure



KATIE PRICE HIT WITH SEVENTH DRIVING BAN

Former glamour model Katie Price has been banned from driving for a seventh time after she failed to respond to police letters regarding a speeding ticket she received last year. The 47-year-old was driving at 80mph in a 70mph stretch of the A64 near the village of Stutton, North Yorkshire, in October 2025.

IT'S SO UNCERTAIN BEING AN ACTOR: MERYL STREEP

Hollywood star Meryl Streep says that successes in the film business are precarious. The 76-year-old actress, said, "It's so uncertain being an actor. You're chronically unemployed. And then there's no sort of climb, because fame is something you have in a second."



FORTUNE FORECAST

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

ARIES
You will be impulsive today, and this may throw up unexpected results. In a rush of enthusiasm, you may finish pending work and even be left with enough time to plan long-term goals. You may also realise and make amends for your past mistakes, says Ganesha.

TAURUS
You are likely to stick to basics instead of letting your imagination run wild today, says Ganesha. At work, you may feel some pressure from your peers to do things differently. Think things out and be certain before you take any decision, advises Ganesha.

GEMINI
It's time you took stock of your personal life. Is there someone you want to propose but are afraid to do so? Ganesha advises you not to let the fear of rejection stop you from making an effort. There are strong indications that you will be accepted if you speak your heart today. So let him/her know how you feel. The time to make your dream come true is now.

CANCER
Ganesha believes that you are likely to have a heightened interest in the study of philosophy and the working of the metaphysical world. This may be mere curiosity or a part of your effort to improve your professional skills. Your ability to read the human mind and understand human nature better than anyone else will help you take charge when needed.

LEO
It's fun, fun and more fun on the horizon! Ganesha foresees you taking time out for some leisure and frolic today. Broaden your horizon with a bit of travel since you are very likely to be going on a small trip to recharge your batteries. When it comes to work — which you seem to have put on hold — it is a matter of pride for you to play the role that you essay within your company.

VIRGO
Today you need to carry on with your success without resting on your past laurels. You will also need to stay focused and organised to continue with the same success level that you enjoyed in the past. Pay attention to your relationship matters as they are the quintessential of your success and peace of mind.

LIBRA
It is very likely that you will arouse immense jealousy in others with your success and growth in business. Your business rivals may attempt to dent your credit worthiness in one way or the other. You may prefer to deal with them subtly rather than confront them openly, feels Ganesha.

SCORPIO
You may find yourself at crossroads, wondering which path to take. Crucial decisions regarding your personal life may numb your thoughts. Let this not interfere with your routine or it may lead to complications at work and with loved ones.

SAGITTARIUS
You seem to be on a self-appreciation mode today. Grooming, makeover and attracting attention in on your cards today, you make extra efforts to get that glamorous look for your self. And as Ganesha says, it will surely not go unnoticed as you bag a lot of compliments for it. One of the fortunate days in store for you!

CAPRICORN
You regret spending hefty amount of money on branded items and luxuries, but you'll see a ray of hope today, feels Ganesha. Your bank account is strengthened by some heavy cash flow, and needless to say, it will give you a great relief. Now, you'll understand the value of money and curb on your urge to spend lavishly.

AQUARIUS
Today is your day! Your performance will speak for itself and everyone at work, including bosses, will appreciate your efforts, says Ganesha. Work will not seem burdensome any more, in fact you will enjoy your job like never before. You may wish to contact some old friends and be in touch with them once again.

PISCES
You are likely to feel a lot of tension and stress today. You will feel down owing to some disagreement with someone or due to some unfathomable reason. Even that special someone will be unable to chase away your blues. A little meditation will help you to bounce back and get into your daily routine, says Ganesha.

KRITI leads narrative shift

MUMBAI: Kriti Sanon is of the most bankable forces in Hindi cinema today. Audiences as well as critics have praised the emotional depth she brought to her character.

Reflecting on the evolving landscape for women in cinema, Kriti shared while speaking to a news portal, "We have made con-

siderable progress. The roles that are written for women are meatier now; they are no longer seen through a man's lens. Women artists are also picking meatier roles; not just the coy, damsel in distress roles. They are not afraid to lead a film and such movies are doing well at the box office, and all this gives us more confidence to essay such roles."

She added, "I myself tend to get attracted to strong characters that have an identity of their own. For instance, in *Tere Ishk Mein*, the character Mukti was not all white or black; she had shades of grey. I got excited about a project like *Do Patti* also because I felt it had so many shades to both characters." Her words underline a clear shift towards nuanced storytelling, where female characters are no longer one dimensional but rich with complexity, ambition, vulnerability.

Looking ahead, Kriti is set to headline *Cocktail 2*, a project that is already creating strong buzz. Directed by Homi Adajania, film also stars Shahid Kapoor and Rashmika Mandanna.



MUMBAI: Cine icon Amitabh Bachchan shared that he spent a "quiet contemplated day" as he reflected on the uncertainties of life and the constant search for meaning.

Big B drops cryptic note on life

He wrote on his blog: "A quiet contemplated day .. with the self and the surroundings .. so many thoughts and chatters within the self .. addressing to the self .. seeking answers .. getting some responses .. but mostly almost none and vague .."

Pondering over his thoughts and unanswered questions, he spoke about the elusive nature of definitive answers and the ongoing journey of self-introspection.

"Each day in the quiet of the moment, the wonder of the World, the wonder of the why what and where .. but never secure in the responses it keeps manufacturing .. so many have spent their life in finding out the why .. the how .. but even they converge on some words that seem to analyse the thought, but never is able to give a finite definitive response.."

He added: "...true .. for if the response was without question, it would not be a response .. it would be the finality of the thought that has provoked you .. in short, there is just one and only one finality ..you came empty handed .. and shall leave similar .."

MUMBAI: There was a time when a spouse attending a trial show, making a private phone call, or celebrating quietly at home was considered normal. In 2026, that is no longer enough. Now the relationship must be uploaded, time-stamped, and publicly consumable. If there is no Story, no grid post, no emoji-laced public applause after your partner's blockbuster, the internet begins filing for emotional insolvency. That is the new celebrity tax: proof of life through digital validation.

DEEPIKA DISCARDS VALIDATION CULTURE



The current Deepika Padukone discourse is revealing for precisely that reason. Chatter built around the fact that she had not publicly posted about Ranveer Singh's *Dhurandhar 2*, even as multiple outlets reported the film crossing the Rs 1,000 crore India-net milestone. Her response "I watched it way before any of you did" was not just witty. It was a clean, almost clinical rejection of the idea that private support is invalid unless converted into public content.

What made the moment powerful was its simplicity. Deepika did not over-explain, over-emote, or perform the ritual that the internet had demanded from her. She did not offer an essay on marriage, loyalty, or support. She merely punctured the assumption. The point was brutal: your access to a star's work does not entitle you to access to a star's domestic performance. Fans may feel emotionally invested in celebrity couples, but parasocial intimacy has slowly mutated into surveillance. What used to be curiosity is now expectation; what used to be fandom is now audit culture.

Sanya, Rishab call it quits

MUMBAI: Actor Sanya Malhotra and sitarist Rishab Rikhiram Sharma's relationship has come to an end after being together for over a year. It has been some time that the duo decided to walk their separate paths without making any noise about this.

Reliable sources confirm that Sanya and Rishabh, who reportedly started dating earlier in 2025, parted ways keeping it lowkey. The two have also unfollowed each other on social media.

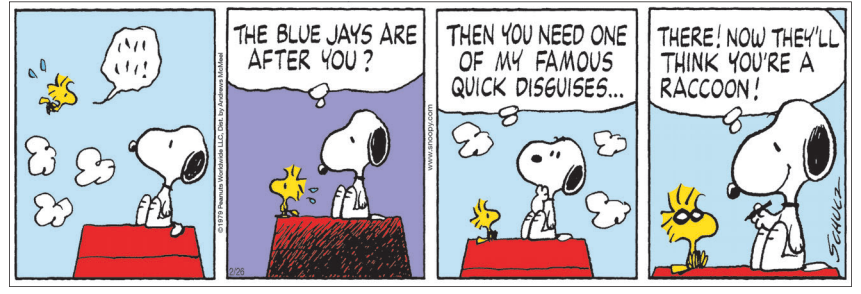


Another source tells us, "Rishab is now dating someone else but keeping it hush hush". Sanya and Rishab never did

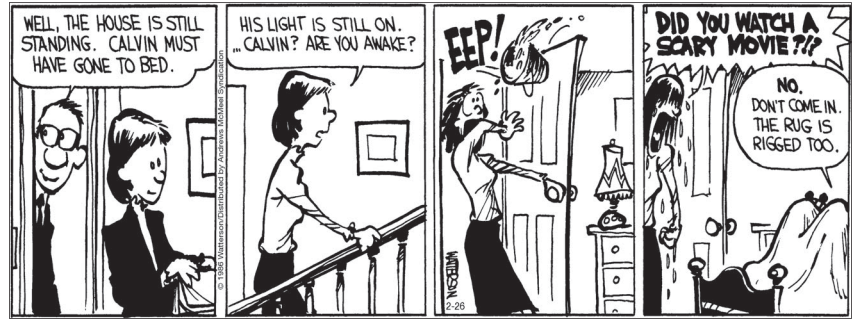
a hard launch of their relationship. Infact, the two also ensured that they never got seen together. However, the paparazzi have spotted the former couple coming out of the same venue separately, a traditional celebrity culture to avoid getting clicked together.

In January 2025, a Reddit user shared a few pictures of Sanya and Rishab spending time together. In one of the photos, Sanya and Rishab were spotted together as the sitarist clicked a photo with a fan.

PEANUTS



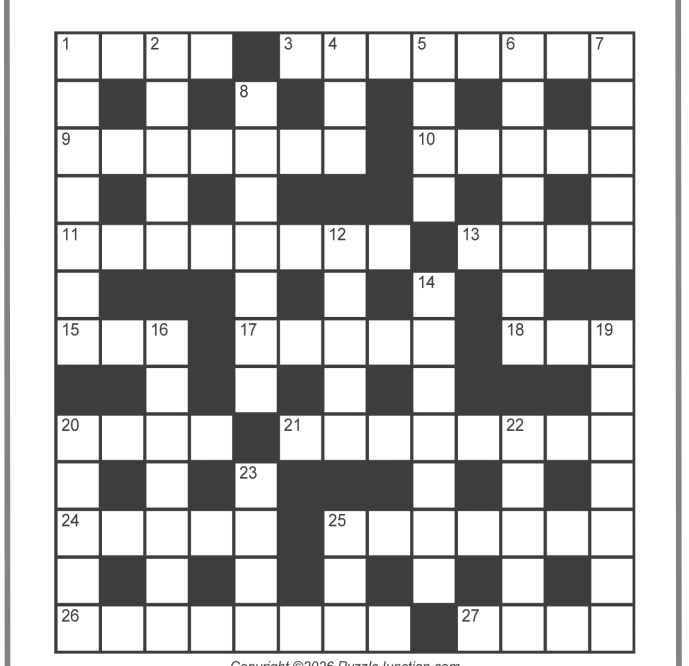
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



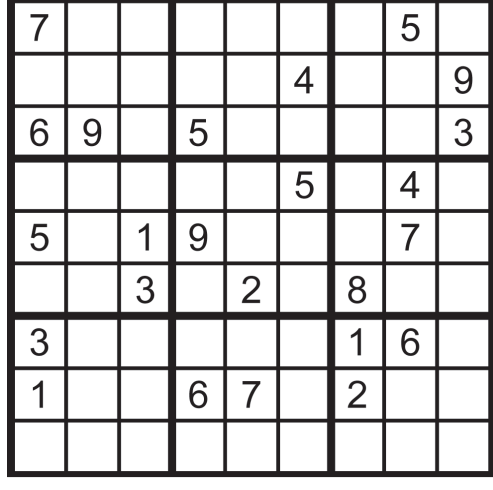
CROSSWORD



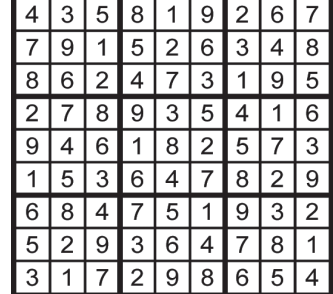
- Across**
- 1 Out of town
 - 3 Under pressure
 - 9 Character of the land
 - 10 Playground
 - 11 Likely
 - 13 Chances
 - 15 Beast of burden
 - 17 Kitchen appliance
 - 18 Shoot the breeze
 - 20 River of Hades
 - 21 Magician
 - 24 Sight-related
 - 25 Drinking vessel
 - 26 Fiends
 - 27 Attention-getter
 - 5 Comfort
 - 6 Big bash
 - 7 Exploits
 - 8 Firearm measurement
 - 12 Vernacular
 - 14 Chinese capital
 - 16 Inert gas
 - 19 Tedium
 - 20 Tempest
 - 22 Achieve
 - 23 Highlander
 - 25 High craggy hill
- Down**
- 1 Coroner's job
 - 2 Mystiques
 - 4 Plating material

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

Ratna Bhandar: Second phase inventory begins

AGENCIES

Puri, April 8: The second phase of inventory of Sri-mandir's Ratna Bhandar commenced Wednesday, officials said.

A selected team of servitors, gemologists and goldsmiths, along with Ratna Bhandar committee chairman Justice Biswanath Rath and Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) chief administrator Arabinda Padhee, entered the sacred treasury at 11.30 am.

The inventory exercise, the first in 48 years, began March 25, when the daily-use ornaments of the deities were documented. "During the first phase, the entire process was documented through videography, photography, and 3D mapping to ensure transparency. A digital catalogue of the daily-use ornaments was prepared and stored in separate chests, categorised by metal type," Padhee said.

The current phase focuses on the Bahar Ratna Bhandar, where festival ornaments and jewellery are stored. Justice Rath said this inventory includes the famous 'Suna Besha' (golden attire) ornaments used on the chariots and four other occasions.

According to the 1978 list, the treasury holds 111 items - 78 gold-mixed articles and 33 silver-mixed jewellery pieces.

The inventory process will continue until April 11, with subsequent sessions April 13 and from April 16 to 18, Padhee said.

The SJTA chief said the temple rituals will continue uninterrupted, and devotees will have darshan from the 'Bahara Katha' (outer barricade) for security reasons. The inventory is being done as per the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) set by the state government.

The SOP divides Ratna Bhandar into three categories. While the Category I covers the Bhitara Ratna Bhandar (inner chamber) where the ornaments have been stored for centuries, the Category II covers the Bahar Ratna Bhandar (outer chamber) holding the festival ornaments. The outer chamber which holds daily-use items falls under Category III. While the Category III storage was inventoried March 25, the current exercise is for the Category II storage.

Assam, Kerala, Puducherry vote today



Polling officials carrying EVMs and other election materials depart to their respective polling stations on the eve of Assam Assembly election, in Guwahati, Wednesday

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 8: Over 6.1 crore voters are expected to exercise their franchise, as Assam, Kerala and Puducherry head to the Assembly polls in a single-phase voting schedule Thursday.

The election in this

round will cover 140 seats in Kerala, 126 in Assam and 30 in Puducherry, with the phase serving as a political soundboard and mid-term test for regional and national parties alike.

Results will be declared May 4 alongside outcomes for Tamil Nadu, where polling will

take place April 23 along with West Bengal, and for the latter, with another phase April 29.

In Assam, the BJP is hoping to form a government with NDA allies for the third time in a row. Incumbent Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma is leading the charge

this time.

Meanwhile, Congress is eyeing a revival in Assam with its state president Gaurav Gogoi at the head of a six-party bloc.

Assam has over 2.5 crore voters, comprising almost an identical representation of male and female electors at around 1.25

Retired officer kills wife in City



MANOJ KUMAR JENA, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 8: A retired government officer allegedly killed his wife by slitting her throat over a trivial issue at their residence in Swostik Nagar area under Airfield police limits here Wednesday.

Sources said Debaraj Sarangi, 62, who worked as a senior accounts officer at the Accountant General (AG) office here, and his wife, Priyambada Sarangi, 54, had moved into their new house in Swostik Nagar area a year ago. They have a daughter who is married and lives with her family in Patrapada area of the City.

Debraj was suffering from diabetes, high blood pressure, and kidney ailments, and was also experiencing depression. "He had suicidal thoughts and sometimes contemplated leaving home," family

sources said. "Debaraj tried to go out at noon, but Priyambada opposed him. Soon, they got into an argument. An infuriated Debaraj slit her throat, leading to her instantaneous death," police said.

On being informed, Airfield police, along with a forensic team, reached the spot and recovered the body.

"We have sent the body for postmortem. Debaraj has been taken into custody. The murder weapon—the knife with bloodstains—has also been recovered from the spot," ACP (Zone II) Krushna Chandra Palei said.

Debaraj's daughter, who filed the police complaint, said that her father had given her some ornaments and money in the morning. She was completely unaware of the incident until the police informed her.

RBI cuts FY27 growth forecast

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 8: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Wednesday projected country's GDP growth for the current financial year (2026-27) at 6.9 per cent, lower than 7.6 per cent estimated for 2025-26, amid elevated commodity prices and supply chain disruptions originating from the West Asia crisis.

Unveiling the first bi-monthly monetary policy for 2026-27, RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra said the merchandise exports may be adversely impacted by disruptions in key shipping routes and the concomitant rise in freight and insurance costs.

On the other hand, sustained momentum in the services sector, the persisting impact of GST rationalisation, rising capacity utilisation in man-

CENTRAL BANK HOLDS RATES

The RBI kept its key policy rate unchanged Wednesday, adopting a cautious wait-and-watch stance as policymakers assessed the fallout from the six-week Iran conflict on energy supplies, inflation and growth. The central bank's six-member Monetary Policy Committee voted unanimously to keep the benchmark repo rate at 5.25 per cent, flagging heightened uncertainty after the West Asia conflict drove crude prices sharply higher, weakened the rupee and disrupted trade flows. RBI's policy stance was retained at neutral.

ufacturing, and healthy balance sheets of financial institutions and corporates should continue to support domestic demand, he said.

"India's macroeconomic fundamentals exuded confidence with buoyant growth and low inflation. Conditions turned adverse in March with the widening of the conflict zone and its intensification," Malhotra said.

He emphasised that the fundamentals of the Indian economy are on a stronger footing at the current juncture than in previous crisis episodes, as well as relative

to many other economies, providing it with greater resilience to withstand shocks.

Malhotra said higher input costs associated with an increase in energy prices and international freight and insurance costs, along with supply-chain disruptions that would constrain availability of key inputs for downstream sectors, would impair growth.

Also, the government has taken several measures targeted at supporting exports and protecting supply chains. This should mitigate the adverse im-

act of the conflict. "The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) opined that the intensity and the duration of the conflict and the resultant damage to the energy and other infrastructure add risk to the inflation and growth outlooks," he said.

Taking all these factors into consideration, the RBI said real GDP growth for 2026-27 is projected at 6.9 per cent, with Q1 at 6.8 per cent; Q2 at 6.7 per cent; Q3 at 7 per cent; and Q4 at 7.2 per cent.

Risks to the baseline projections are tilted to the downside, with uncertainty remaining elevated due to the ongoing West Asia conflict, Malhotra said.

He also said merchandise exports may benefit from the recent trade agreements, while services exports are expected to remain resilient.

SABARIMALA CASE

SC says it can define religious superstition; Centre opposes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 8: The Supreme Court Wednesday observed that it has the right and jurisdiction to hold what is a superstitious practice in a religion.

This came in response to the Centre's submission that a secular court cannot decide the issue as judges are experts in the field of law, not religion.

A nine-judge constitution bench, headed by CJI Surya Kant, is hearing petitions related to discrimination against women at religious places, including the Sabarimala temple in Kerala, and on the ambit and scope of religious freedom practised by multiple faiths.

At the outset, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta,



appearing for the Centre, asked how the court decides what a superstitious practice is. "Even assuming that there is a superstitious practice," he said, "It is not for the court to determine that it is superstition. Under Article 25(2) (b) of the Constitution, it is for the legislature to step in and enact a reform law." "The legislature can say that a particular practice is superstition and requires reform. There are several such statutes and laws, for

the prevention of black magic and other such practices," Mehta told the bench.

Responding to Mehta's submission, Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah of the bench said the statement is too simplistic, as the court has the right and the jurisdiction to hold whether something is superstitious.

"What will follow is for the legislature to deal with. But, in court, you cannot say that whatever the legislature decides is the last word. That cannot be," he said. Mehta said a secular court cannot decide that a religious practice is mere superstition, because the court may not possess such scholarly competence.

"Your Lordships are experts in the field of law, not religion," he said.

Climate stress affecting economy, aggravating health risks: Report



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 8: India lost an estimated 160 billion labour hours to heat exposure in 2021, equivalent to 5.4 per cent of its GDP, according to a new report.

It also revealed that heatwaves were linked to an 11.7 per cent increase in cardiovascular-related death risk, a concern in India where heart disease already accounts for around 28 per cent to 30 per cent of all deaths.

The report, 'Under the Weather: India's Cli-


cent increase in the odds of preterm birth, alongside links to stillbirths and newborn hospitalisation," said the analysis.

It also highlighted that climate impacts interact with existing inequities and disproportionately affect those who are already vulnerable, including women, children, informal workers, rural communities, and those with weaker access to healthcare.

"In this sense, climate stress acts as a multiplier, deepening existing burdens rather than creating entirely separate ones," added the analysis.

The findings indicate that to tackle climate impacts in India, there is a need to view climate action, public health preparedness and resilience-building together.


An integrated action can generate co-benefits across systems, improving health outcomes while also strengthening productivity, preparedness, and community resilience, according to the report.



Aditya Aluminium

(A Unit of Hindalco Industries Ltd.)

The Flagship Unit of Hindalco Industries Ltd., having its Smelter and Captive Power Plants in Odisha, the Land of the Sun Temple.



Aditya means Sun, the Primal source of Light and Energy

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Fax: 912269477001/69477090
Corporate ID No. L27020MH1958PLC011238

Aditya Aluminium
At/ Po.- Lapanga
Dist- Sambalpur
Odisha -768212
Tel.: 0663-2536247, Fax : 0663-2536499

LPG CRISIS

CPI, BKMU allege consumer hardship, protest in Capital

Minister Krushna Chandra Patra asserts no LPG shortage; 5 kg cylinders to be available at petrol pumps to improve access and curb black marketing



Bhubaneswar, April 8: Leaders of the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Bharatiya Khet Mazdoor Union (BKMU) staged a protest Wednesday, alleging a severe crisis in the supply of government-run LPG cylinders and accusing authorities of failing to address consumer hardship.

the public distribution system are encouraging black marketing, claiming that consumers are being exploited. They demanded immediate steps to streamline LPG distribution and ensure availability of 5-kg

cylinders without procedural hurdles.

Meanwhile, Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Krushna Chandra Patra Wednesday asserted there is no LPG shortage in the state and announced that 5 kg cylinders will be made available at petrol pumps to improve access and curb black marketing.

He said the government has streamlined distribution of small "Chhotu" cylinders, especially for students, migrant workers and small households. Authorised petrol pumps and LPG distributors will sell 5 kg Free Trade LPG (FTL) cylinders, allowing purchase or exchange with valid ID without requiring local address proof.



107 cylinders seized in raid

BHUBANESWAR: In a major crackdown on illegal LPG storage, the Civil Supplies Enforcement Squad Wednesday raided a timber workshop in the Samantarapur area under Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) limits and seized 107 cylinders stored in violation of safety norms. Acting under the guidance of Khurda Civil Supplies Officer Jnanendriya Mishra, the squad, along with BMC civil supplies staff, carried out the operation at Tarini Timber Shop with support from the Commissionerate Police and an Executive Magistrate. During the raid, officials detected an unauthorised LPG storage point within the workshop premises, where cylinders were stacked in a highly unsafe manner, posing a serious risk to workers and nearby residents. The seized stock included 78 domestic LPG cylinders, five commercial cylinders and 24 small (5 kg) cylinders. Officials said the illegal storage not only violated safety norms but also indicated possible diversion and black marketing of subsidised LPG. Authorities confiscated the cylinders and initiated legal proceedings against those involved. Officials reiterated that strict action will continue against illegal LPG storage and distribution to prevent potential hazards and ensure public safety. Further investigation is underway to trace the source and intended distribution network of the seized cylinders.

Pension Adalat held in City

BHUBANESWAR: The Office of the Principal Accountant General, in collaboration with the Home department, successfully organised a Pension Adalat at OSAP 7th Battalion, Chandrasekharpur here Wednesday.

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Notary Public, Rairakhol, Dt.30.03.2026 I, Sanjeeb Meher, S/o- Padmalochan Meher, R/o, At/Po-Kuanarmunda, P.S/Dist-Sundargarh, declare that in order to correct the Birth Certificate of my daughter, henceforth she shall be known as Anvesha Meher instead of Prachishree Meher for all purposes. Sanjeeb Meher

LOST

I, Nilakantha Behera, S/o.- Late Nirakar Behera & Late Jayanti Behera, resident of At-Kasoti, Pandiri, P.O.-Pandiri, P.S.- Sadar, Dist.- Kendrapara-754211 hereby declare that my Class-X Pass Certificate (2018) issued by St. Joseph's School, Kendrapara (Unique ID No. 6783914, dated 14.05.2018) has been damaged by white ants and is not recoverable. Therefore, I request the concerned authority to issue a duplicate/original certificate for future use. Sd./- Nilakantha Behera Ph - 8260628510



MINING PROTEST: MLA Ranendra Pratap Swain, along with activists and members of the public under the banner of the Concerned Citizens' Forum, stage a protest in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday condemning the use of excessive force against Adivasis opposing Vedanta's mining project in Sijimali, Rayagada



FOR A CAUSE: Blood donation camp on the occasion of Odia Pakshya celebration at Red Cross Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday



RAISING VOICE: Members of Odisha Prathamika Shikshak Mahasangha protest at Lower PMG in Bhubaneswar Wednesday, pressing for fulfillment of their charter of demands

H&UD orientation for IAS probationers

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 8: As part of ongoing administrative training, IAS probationers participated in a comprehensive orientation programme organised by the Housing and Urban Development (H&UD) department here Wednesday to strengthen their understanding of urban governance and service delivery systems.



The programme began with an interactive session with Additional Chief Secretary Usha Padhee, Municipal Administration Director Arindam Dakua, and other senior officials. The officers provided an overview of the department's key achievements, flagship initiatives, and priority focus

areas, offering insights into policy frameworks, institutional structures, and implementation strategies across urban sectors. The session also facilitated a meaningful exchange of ideas, enabling probationers to better understand inter-departmental coordination, programme execution, and the evolving chal-

lenges in urban development. As part of the field exposure, the probationers visited Buddha Vihar to assess affordable housing projects under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY). The visit offered them a first-hand perspective on ground-level implementation and beneficiary-oriented

approaches in urban housing. The itinerary further included visits to Odisha Urban Academy, a Faecal Sludge Treatment Plant (FSTP), and a Water Treatment Plant (WTP). During these visits, officials briefed the probationers on urban sanitation and water supply systems, detailing treatment processes, operational mechanisms, infrastructure management, and service delivery frameworks.

The initiative was designed to bridge the gap between policy and practice, equipping IAS probationers with practical insights into urban infrastructure and governance. The exposure is expected to enhance their capacity to handle administrative responsibilities effectively in their future roles.

Vig sleuths raid properties of senior engineer in DA case

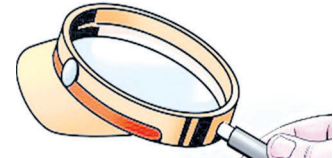
PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 8: Officials from the Odisha Vigilance Wednesday carried out multiple raids at properties linked to an additional chief engineer over allegations of possessing disproportionate assets.

The officer, identified as Rajesh Chandra Mohanty, is currently serving as Additional Chief Engineer of the Central Irrigation Circle. According to Vigilance sources, simultaneous searches were conducted at several locations by teams led by one

Additional Superintendent of Police, 11 Deputy Superintendents of Police, nine Inspectors, eight Assistant Sub-Inspectors, and other supporting staff.

The raids were carried out on the basis of search warrants issued by the Special Judge, Vigilance, Cuttack. During the operation, officials unearthed a triple-storeyed residential building at Baramunda Housing Board Colony here. A paternal house in Kolhasingh village of Jajpur district and a relative's residence in Deula Sahi, Jubilee Town in Dhenkanal district were also searched.



Raids were further conducted at Mohanty's office chamber here, where he serves as ACE (Dam Safety). Additionally, a double-storeyed building and a farmhouse spread over approximately 1.71 acres, along with another building measuring around 4,000 square feet at Bimbol in Dhenkanal district, were inspected. The Vigilance sleuths also

identified five valuable land plots, including one in Bhubaneswar and four located in Bimbol and Bhapur areas of Dhenkanal district.

Officials stated that the measurement and valuation of the buildings, farmhouse, and plots are currently being carried out by the Vigilance Technical Wing. Apart from immovable assets, the teams recovered cash amounting to ₹6.23 lakh, bank deposits worth ₹60.09 lakh, and gold ornaments during the search operations. Further investigation into the case is underway.

State to recruit 1,363 JRAs

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 8: In a bid to further strengthen state's revenue administration, state government has approved direct recruitment of 1,363 Junior Revenue Assistants (JRAs), during a committee meeting chaired by the Finance department Principal Secretary.

In this regard, Revenue and Disaster Management department Additional Chief Secretary Arabinda Padhee has written to all the District Collectors. The recruitment process shall be carried out across all the 30 districts

through direct selection.

The letter also mentions district-wise vacancies along with provisions for reservation for Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBCs), as well as women, persons with disabilities (PwDs), ex-servicemen and sportspersons.

District Collectors have been instructed to coordinate with the Odisha Sub-ordinate Staff Selection Commission (OSSSC) and ensure that the online application process is initiated at the earliest.

BMC DRIVE FOR NARROW LANES Pedal trolleys for waste collection

from interior by-lanes. Officials said the initiative will help cover more areas in less time and ensure smoother transfer of garbage to designated disposal points, improving overall sanitation efficiency across the City.



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 8: Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), in a move to strengthen the City's cleanliness drive under the Swachh Survekshan campaign, Wednesday launched a new initiative to enhance door-to-door waste collection. Beginning with this effort, three-wheeled sanitation trolleys have been introduced to ensure garbage collection from narrow lanes where conventional vehicles cannot reach. Replacing earlier hand-pushed carts, the newly introduced pedal-operated three-wheeled trolleys will enable more efficient waste collection

The trolleys were inaugurated at the BMC headquarters by Mayor Sulochana Das and Commissioner Chanchal Rana at a special programme. Sanitation Standing Committee Chairman Biranchi Narayan Mahasupakar, Additional Commissioner Kailash Chandra Das, corporators, sanitation workers and members of Team BMC were among those present. According to BMC, each

trolley features separate compartments for wet and dry waste, along with a dedicated unloading mechanism. As many as 44 such vehicles have been deployed across 67 wards in the three zones under the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation to streamline waste collection.

Officials said the initiative aims to ensure quick and easy waste collection from all lanes across the City during the Swachh Survekshan period. Mayor Das and Commissioner Rana expressed confidence that sanitation workers will be able to carry out their duties more efficiently and with greater dignity using the new three-wheeled trolleys.

SMUN 6.0 concludes

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, April 8: The sixth edition of the two-day Stewart Model United Nations (SMUN 6.0) concluded at Stewart School here Wednesday.

The inaugural ceremony was graced by alumnus CA Snehil Garg, inspiring 114 delegates and 15 organising members. Secretary General Biswajit Das led the event, supported by Deputy Secretaries General Sweta Mishra and Swapna Ghosh, with key guidance from senior advisors and directors.

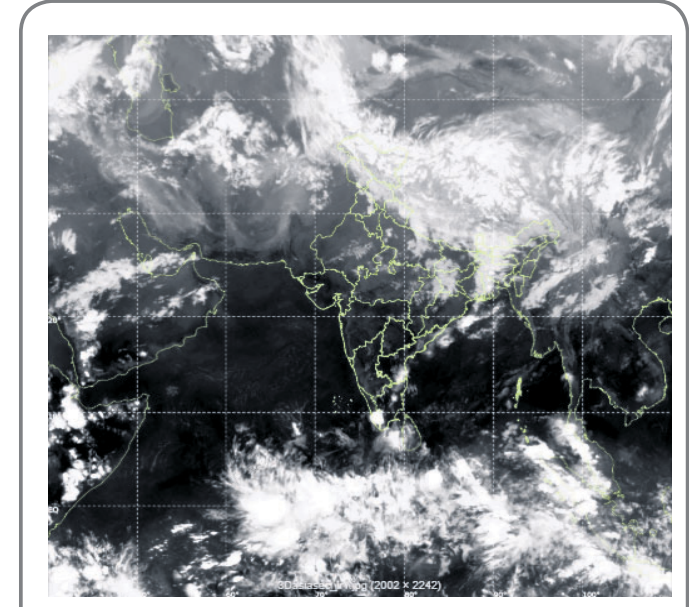
Held under the leadership of Principal D Martina and Coordinators Shilpa Sahu, Reshma Pradhan and AS Khan, the conference maintained a high standard academic rigour.

The UNHRC committee discussed digital technologies' impact on adolescent mental health, focusing on ethical design and regulation, while the AIPPM debated social media regulation without curbing free expression.

The closing ceremony was graced by chief guest Moushumi Pattnaik, head of the PG department of Political Science at Sailabala Autonomous College, Cuttack.



MARKET WATCH table with columns for CURRENCY, BOURSES, and COMMODITIES.



WEATHER table with columns for Max Temp, Min Temp, Humidity, Rainfall, BBSR, CTC, and FORECAST.

SILENT INVASION

Prawn dykes threaten Bhitarkanika ecosystem

PNN & AGENCIES

Kendrapara, April 8: The fragile ecosystem of Bhitarkanika Sanctuary is under serious threat due to rapid rise in illegal prawn dykes over the past year, in clear violation of Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

According to the Assistant Conservator of Forests (ACF) of Kanika Forest Range Manas Kumar Das nearly 2,500 to 3,000 prawn gherries have been constructed on both private and government land since 2025.

These constructions violate Sections 27, 29, and 32 of the Act and are located on the fringes of Bhitarkanika National Park.

Das further stated that these dykes have been established in blatant violation of standing orders issued by the Orissa High Court. The court had directed the authorities concerned to remove all illegal prawn dykes within the sanctuary and restore mangrove forests.

It also warned that any attempt to rebuild such structures would lead to criminal proceedings against the encroachers.

Additionally, the High Court instructed that if local authorities lack sufficient police personnel, special forces from the state should be deployed to prevent further encroachment.

In 2022, forest officials successfully removed illegal prawn dykes spread over 300 to 400 hectares of land within the sanctuary. They also carried out mangrove plantation across 100 hectares of government land. As a result, no prawn dykes were reported near riv-



ers within the sanctuary during 2023 and 2024.

However, the situation deteriorated again in 2025 and 2026, with thousands of illegal dykes reappearing near rivers and other water bodies, once again violating environmental laws.

Environmentalists have alleged that many of these illegal operations are backed by influential people with political connections.

They warn that untreated toxic effluents from these prawn farms are being discharged into rivers, creeks, and estuaries, causing severe damage to aquatic ecosystems. This pollution has led to declining fish populations and poses a serious threat to biodiversity.

The operators of these highly profitable prawn farms reportedly use excessive chemicals and fertilizers. When released into natural water bodies, these substances disrupt ecological balance, killing aquatic life and destroying critical habitats. Environmentalists also point out that these dykes obstruct the natural flow of water, further harming aquatic species.

Local farmers have submit-

ted multiple petitions to the Forest department, demanding demolition of these illegal structures.

They claim that pollution from the dykes has caused significant losses to paddy cultivation. Notably, a forest team led by ACF Manas Kumar Das March 28 visited Gopaljew Patna village to remove illegal dykes. During the operation, four associates of a local political leader allegedly attacked forest personnel Arjun Dalei, leaving him seriously injured.

He was first taken to Rajnagar Community Health Centre and later referred to SCB Medical College and Hospital for advanced treatment.

Although a complaint was filed at Talachua Marine Police Station, no significant action has reportedly been taken so far. Following the incident, forest officials have suspended eviction drives owing to safety concerns and lack of police support.

When contacted, Kendrapara Superintendent of Police Sidharth Kataria stated that the investigation into the assault case is currently ongoing.

Olive Ridley nesting at Rushikulya Rookery dips

DWARKA PRASAD PATNAIK, OP

Chhatrapur, April 8: Rushikulya rookery witnessed a sharp decline in mass nesting of Olive Ridley turtles as it registered 2.05 lakh turtles laying eggs in this season (2026), as against an all-time high of 9 lakh in 2025 season.

Natural factors including shrinkage of beach width, soil erosion across the estuary, sudden rise in sea surface temperature and absence of southern wind created a huge impact on the delay in arrival of the endangered species, Assistant Conservator of Forests Dibya Ranjan Behera said. Podampeta sheltered a huge number of eggs in the previous year which saw the large congregations of the sea turtles. However, environmentalists and researchers found significant erosion of beach soil that added to the shrinkage of beach width across a wide stretch till Prayagi this year.

This prompted the turtles to begin sporadic nesting during the early phase this year on the island beach. Gradually, the mass nesting zone shifted more towards Rushikulya estuary rather than a spacious sand bed that was unfortunately wiped out just before the nesting, the officials added.

Pertinent to mention here that mass nesting was zero in year 2023. Similarly, nesting number was poor in 2024. On the contrary, 2025 witnessed a record number of arrival of these turtles for nearly 10 days.

This year saw just four days of mass nesting. Wildlife enthusiasts, environmentalists, forest officials, volunteers and locals are hopeful for a huge turnout next year based on the history of the previous years.

The next challenge posed before the officials is the conservation and protection of eggs before the hatchlings move into the sea after 45-50 days of nestling period that concluded March 17 this year.

Flashover at Nalco CPP injures five

POST NEWS NETWORK

Banarpal, April 8: Five employees sustained critical burn injuries in a flashover incident during an electrical repairing work at captive power plant (CPP) of Nalco in Angul district late Tuesday night.

The injured were identified as technical officers Sushant Kumar Samal, Anil Gadnayak, Soubhagya Bal, employee Gajendra Chhatra and contractual worker Manoj Pradhan. All were initially admitted to the Nalco hospital and later shifted to a private hospital in Cuttack for advanced treat-

ment.

According to reports, the incident occurred around 12am in the ESP switchgear area of the CPP after a sudden electrical fault disrupted power supply across the unit. Work came to a halt, prompting authorities to call in experienced contractual worker Manoj to help restore the system.

A technical team was carrying out modular changes in



the ESP power system when the flashover occurred, leaving five personnel with severe burn injuries. They were rescued by co-workers and rushed to the hospital.

Following preliminary treatment, all the injured were transferred to a private medical facility in Cuttack.

After the incident, plant authorities tightened safety measures and launched an investigation. Initial findings suggest that a technical fault or high voltage may have triggered the flashover. Efforts to contact Nalco officials for comment were unsuccessful.

Central team reviews Koraput development

Koraput: Satyajit Mishra, Central in-charge for Koraput district and joint secretary of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, conducted an extensive review of key sectors under the Aspirational District and Aspirational Block programmes. He visited the Urban Primary Health Centre in Gandhinagar, interacting with patients and staff to assess healthcare delivery, including the availability of medicines, infrastructure and patient care. At PM SHRI Government Girls' High School, Pujariput, Mishra reviewed academic standards and implementation of education schemes, encouraging students to make full use of learning opportunities. Focusing on livelihoods, he inspected a millet processing unit at Rajput in Semiliiguda block, a coffee nursery at Daleiguda and a strawberry cultivation project at Karaniguda in Pottangi block, highlighting crop diversification and income generation. He also reviewed infrastructure at Deomali tourist destination and a tunnel project under the Bharatmala initiative, stressing timely completion and quality standards.



Nayagarh blast toll mounts to 4



POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh, April 8: The death toll in the April 3 firecracker explosion in Nayagarh district has gone up to four, with a 15-year-old boy succumbing to injuries during treatment in Bhubaneswar Wednesday.

The deceased, identified as Amit Sethi of Gereda in Ganjam district, was among six persons critically injured in the blast. Three others who had earlier died were: Bapi Nayak,

35, of Minagadia, Niranjan Sahoo alias Bapuni Nahak, 40, of Korada, and Hadibandhu Sethi, 60, owner of the illegal firecracker unit.

The explosion took place at Korada under Nuagaon police limits while firecrackers were being assembled in a banana grove near a house. All six injured persons were initially admitted to the District Headquarters Hospital in Nayagarh and later shifted to Bhubaneswar after their condition worsened.

According to reports, Sethi had been illegally manufacturing firecrackers at his residence with the help of his son and a few labourers from nearby villages. The firecrackers were being prepared for local festivals when the explosion occurred around noon.

With four fatalities so far, the incident has once again highlighted the dangers posed by illegal firecracker manufacturing units in rural areas.

CRPF cop dies as tree falls on him

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bonai, April 8: A Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) constable of CoBRA 210 Battalion died after a tree fell on him while he was resting at a camp along Odisha-Jharkhand border.

The incident occurred late Tuesday night at Babudera CRPF camp under Jareikela police station area. The constable, Rakesh Kumar, was asleep when a large tree uprooted and fell on him, causing severe head injuries.

Fellow CRPF personnel rushed Kumar to a hospital in Ranchi where he succumbed to his injuries during treatment.

Authorities have initiated an inquiry into the incident. Local administration officials said safety measures at the camp are under review to prevent such occurrences in the future.

Fellow personnel paid tribute to Kumar, remembering him as a dedicated member of the force whose untimely death has deeply affected the entire unit.

Infant kidnapped from rly platform

POST NEWS NETWORK

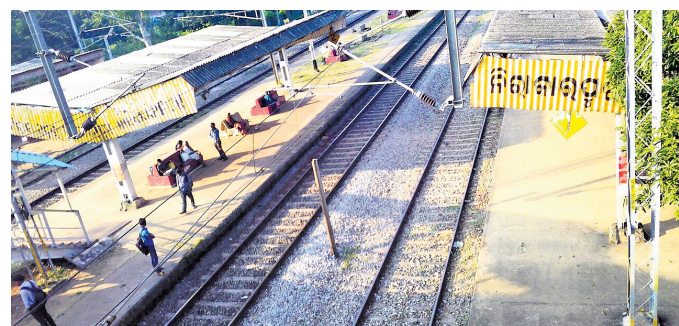
Nirakarpur, April 8: A four-month-old baby boy was allegedly kidnapped from Nirakarpur railway station premises under Khurda railway division, police said Wednesday.

According to reports, the incident occurred when the infant's parents were taking rest on Platform No-3 of the railway station. The child was reportedly taken from the mother's lap when the parents were asleep.

The infant's father, Prashant Pradhan, a resident of Kalamatia village under Ranpur police limits in Nayagarh district, was travelling with his wife, Chinulata Parida, and their four-month-old son to Tamil Nadu. The family had first reached Kalupadaghat station and later arrived at Nirakarpur by a DMU train. They were waiting to board a train to Tamil Nadu in the morning.

During the night, while the couple was asleep on the platform, an unidentified miscreant allegedly made away with the child.

After waking up and finding



Parents alleged that the RPF did not assist them and instead asked them to leave the platform

their son missing, the parents searched extensively on the premises before approaching the Railway Protection Force (RPF) personnel at the station. However, they alleged that the RPF did not assist them and instead asked them to leave the platform.

Later, the couple approached Nirakarpur police station late at night but were directed to the Government Railway Police (GRP), as the incident

occurred under railway jurisdiction. The parents alleged that their complaint was initially not registered by the GRP either.

Following sustained efforts and mounting pressure from local residents, the GRP registered a case (31/26) and launched an investigation.

The incident, reportedly the first-of-its-kind in Nirakarpur area, has triggered concern among the locals. Authorities have urged people to remain vigilant and report any suspicious activity, particularly involving infants.

The distraught parents have appealed to authorities to trace and rescue their child at the earliest.

'Thieves flee Bhadrakali shrine on hearing anklet jingles'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhadrak, April 8: Two miscreants arrested for allegedly committing theft at Maa Bhadrakali Temple here have made startling revelations before the police, stating that they were forced to abandon part of the stolen items and flee after hearing the "sound of anklets" from inside the shrine.

According to reports, the accused — Dipun Behera and Sipun Barik of Gadi Samantrapur village — entered the temple premises Sunday night. The donation box (hundi) was found broken the following morning. Acting on a complaint, Bhadrak Rural police launched an investigation and arrested the duo Monday afternoon. They were later taken to the shrine for further questioning.

During interrogation, Behera and Barik recounted what they described as a frightening experience Sunday night — a claim



At that moment, he claimed to have sensed someone approaching and heard the jingling of anklets, while lights inside the temple reportedly flickered. Frightened, he abandoned the jewellery and attempted to escape. Though he called out to his accomplice, there was no response.

He then broke open the hundi, collected the cash, tied it in a cloth belonging to the deity, and climbed back over the gate. After exiting, he further claimed that a large figure rushed towards him, prompting both suspects to flee. During their escape, some of the stolen money reportedly fell on the ground. A theft case (283/26) was registered based on a complaint filed by the temple trustee and the Sub-Collector.

Bhadrak SP Manoj Rout said Maa Bhadrakali is a deeply revered deity and that the statements made by the accused are being examined as part of the probe.

5 CHC employees held for ₹2cr fraud

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Berhampur, April 8: Vigilance department Wednesday arrested five employees of Kodala community health centre (CHC) in Ganjam district for allegedly misappropriating over ₹2 crore in government funds between 2023 and 2025, officials said.

The accused, posted at the CHC allegedly prepared fraudulent arrear salary bills in the names of hospital employees to siphon off funds, said an officer of the anti-corruption wing said.

He said a case was registered against all the accused, including three women, in Berhampur Vigilance police station, following allegations that staff of CHC Kodala falsified records to draw unauthorised arrear salary bills between 2023 and 2025.

"Five arrests have been made so far. Vigilance officials are currently investigating the matter to determine the full extent of the syndicate and identify the involvement of any other officials," a Vigilance department statement said.

J-17011/658/2025-IC-Part(2)
Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports
(Department of Youth Affairs)
GPOA-3, Netaji Nagar, New Delhi-110023
Website: <https://yas.gov.in>

WALK-IN-INTERVIEW

Walk-in-Interview for recruitment of Consultants on contract basis to be held on 13th April, 2026 at Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, GPOA-3, Netaji Nagar, New Delhi-110023.

NB: For vacancies, other details and corrigendum, if any, please visit frequently our website <https://yas.gov.in>. No separate notice in this regard shall be published in Newspaper.

Sd/- Under Secretary to the Govt. of India

Cbc 47107/11/0001/2627

PUBLIC NOTICE OF M/S LA DEVELOPERS ENVIRONMENTAL CLEARANCE

This is to inform the general public that the State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA), Odisha has granted Environmental Clearance for a Residential and Commercial Project to be developed over Plot No. 1392 and 41 others under Khata No. 1 and 30 others, situated at Mouza - Nayapalli & Madhusudan Nagar, Tahasil - Bhubaneswar, District -Khordha, Odisha.

The project is undertaken by M/s LA Developers, which has now been renamed as M/s Evos Developers, retaining the same Registration No. 18202101330.

A copy of the Environmental Clearance granted vide EC Identification No. EC22B038OR177370 dated 22.07.2022 is available for reference with the State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA), Odisha and the Odisha State Pollution Control Board (OSPCB). The same may also be accessed on the official websites of the respective authorities.

The Environmental Clearance has been granted under the provisions of the EIA Notification, 2006.

For M/S LA Developers (Now renamed as M/s Evos Developers) (Kalinga Keshari Rath) Managing Partner M/s Evos Developers

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR, NANDANKANAN ZOOLOGICAL PARK
P.O.-BARANG, DIST.-KHURDA, PIN-754005,
PHONE NO.-9437022023
Email : deputydirector.kanan@gmail.com
Web : www.nandankanan.org

TENDER NOTICE
Notice No. 18/NKZP/2026-27 Date: 04.04.2026

No.8001/8/2627 : The Nandankanan Zoological Park Authority, Bhubaneswar invites tender in sealed cover from individuals/ firms etc. for the supply of Animal Feed & Fodder to Nandankanan Zoological Park, Bhubaneswar for financial year 2026-27 for Zoo animals and birds. The detailed terms and conditions along with tender documents shall be available at the website: www.nandankanan.org from 04.04.2026 onwards. The last date of submission of bid is up to 18.04.2026 at 05.00 PM and date of opening is on 20.04.2026 at 11.30 AM.

Nandankanan Zoological Park Authority reserves the right to cancel this invitation and issue fresh Bid with or without amendments to this invitation, without any liability / obligation for such invitation and assigning any reason. NKZP reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals without assigning any reason whatsoever.

Sd/- Deputy Director
Nandankanan Zoological Park

OIPR-8001/80701/26-27/0001

S. E. RAILWAY - TENDER

Tender Notice No.: CKP-EAST-26-27-02, dated 07.04.2026. e-Tender is invited by Divisional Railway Manager/Engg/Chakradharpur, S.E. Railway, Chakradharpur for & on behalf of the President of India against open tender for the following work. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Name of work: Upgradation/modernization of infrastructure at existing Goods shed at GUMI (Gorumahisani) station. Tender value: ₹ 10,16,28,109.67. EMD: ₹ 20,32,600/-. Cost of Tender Form: 0.00. Date of Opening : 30.04.2026. The tender can be viewed at website <http://www.ireps.gov.in> The tenderer/bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate & must be registered under on IREPS portal. Only registered tenderer/ bidder can participate on e-tendering. Note: e-Tender Forms shall be issued free of cost to all tenderers. (Authority-Railway Board's letter No. 2020/CE-I/CT/3E/GCC/Policy dtd. 16.07.2020). (PR-26)

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender No. MCSW-Sanitation-26-27-01
NAME OF WORK : SANITATION AND GUARDING OF TRAINING CENTRE CUM INSPECTION BUNGALOW, SUB-ORDINATE REST HOUSE & PREMISES INCLUDING GYMNASIUM, CLEANING OF TOILETS, COMMON AREAS, SSE CHAMBERS & ADJACENT COMMON AREAS IN WORKSHOP COMPLEX AND CLEANING OF TOILETS, COMMON AREAS, ROOMS & CHAMBERS IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING AT CARRIAGE REPAIR WORKSHOP, MANCHESWAR.

Advertised Value : ₹ 1,38,93,597.21, EMD : ₹ 2,19,500/-, Cost of Tender Document : ₹ 5,000/-, Period of Completion : 36 Months.

Bidding Start Date : 09.04.2026.
Tender Closing Date and Time : At 1500 Hrs. of 23.04.2026.

Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Complete information including e-Tender documents and corrigendum is available in website www.ireps.gov.in

Dy. Chief Mechanical Engineer (POH-II), PR-18/R/26-27 CRW/Mancheswar

EAST COAST RAILWAY

File No. DRM/Engg/KUR/26-27/
E-Tender/02, Dt. 06.04.2026

(1) Tender No. etenderhkur-377-2025, Dtd.: 26.03.2026
DESCRIPTION : UPGRADATION OF ROAD SURFACE BY RUBBERIZED SURFACE PADS AT 20 NOS. OF LEVEL CROSSINGS AT VARIOUS LOCATIONS BETWEEN KHURDA ROAD - PURI SECTION OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.
Approx. Cost of the Work : ₹ 454.00 Lakhs, EMD : ₹ 9,08,100.00

(2) Tender No. e-tender-CENTKUR-383-2025, Dtd.: 27.03.2026
DESCRIPTION : PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION OF 8 NUMBER OF GOOMTIES IN CONNECTION WITH PROVIDING OF MSDAC IN COACHING YARDS AT JORANDA ROAD, SADASHIBPUR, DHENKANAL AND TEACHER ROAD OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.
Approx. Cost of the Work : ₹ 319.95 Lakhs, EMD : ₹ 6,39,900.00

Completion Period : 08 (Eight) Months (for Sl. No. 1) and 12 (Twelve) Months (for Sl. No. 2).

Tender Closing Date and Time : At 1500 Hrs. of 17.04.2026 (for all the Tenders).

No manual offers sent by Post / Courier/ Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration. Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website : www.ireps.gov.in

Note : The prospective tenderers are advised to visit the website 10 (Ten) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / corrigenda issued for this tender. The tenderers/bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate and must be registered on IREPS Portal. Only registered tenderer/ bidder can participate on e-tendering.

Divisional Railway Manager (Engg) / PR-24/R/26-27 / Khurda Road

FOCUS GEOPOLITICS

ON THE BRINK



The two-week ceasefire represents an abrupt but not entirely unexpected last-minute turn from the shocking position of the US that 'a whole civilization will die tonight'

had an edge both on the strategic as well as tactical levels.

Trump has been hard-pressed to seek fresh options to continue the war, yet desperately looking for off-ramps. His statements on talks with Iran through intermediaries while calling for boots on the ground have shown him as vacillating and self-contradictory.

In addition, the Houthis, supported by Iran, had opened another front by launching ballistic missiles at Israel while threatening to block the Babel el Mandeb passage to the Red Sea and Suez Canal. The two-week ceasefire therefore represents an abrupt but not entirely unexpected last-minute turn from the shocking position of the US that "a whole civilization will die tonight."

The war has been clearly Netanyahu's doing with Trump falling for it without thinking about its consequences. The refusal of America's NATO allies to grant over flight or usage of American bases has been the last straw, forcing Trump to veer in favour of withdrawing from the region with the Strait still under Iranian control. A retreat no doubt will reverberate in the domestic politics of America with the "No Kings" protest having drawn more than eight million protesters all over USA standing up against excessive use of force by ICE agents and the war with Iran.

Faced with dire consequences to its economy and the growth story, India may seek to re-evaluate its strategic relationships with both America and Israel. That is, if India is serious in formulating a just and balanced foreign policy. Hosting both the BRICS and Quad summits followed by a Leader's Summit with Russia this year, India in its quest for leadership paradoxically finds itself relegated to the sidelines today amid the most consequential developments in its near neighbourhood.

The writer is a retired diplomat and foreign policy analyst.

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The war in West Asia, perhaps the most debilitating in over two decades, has got to its second month on an aggressive and dangerous pitch with both sides, Israel-USA and Iran, fighting an asymmetric war whose objectives have seen rapid swings with no coherence. Amidst this mad destruction and killing of humans, by now over 3000 including several expat Indians, and targeting of universities, nuclear, power and energy centres, the war has seen a rapid escalation and regionalisation with ramifications far beyond the Gulf. The two-week pause in hostilities announced by President Trump on 8 April comes as a respite but it will not change the new geopolitical dynamic marked by the collapse of the international rules-based order. When the war will end is uncertain, but what is certain is the region's architecture will never be the same again.



Malay Mishra

THE WAR HAS BEEN CLEARLY NETANYAHU'S DOING WITH TRUMP FALLING FOR IT WITHOUT THINKING ABOUT ITS CONSEQUENCES

The war plan devised by the Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu, that Iran, being the fountainhead of terrorism and patronising non-state actors, Hamas, Hezbollah, Houthis and the militias in Iraq and Syria, was an existential threat and had to be destroyed, found ready acceptance by the mercurial US President fresh from his adventure in Venezuela and outrageous demands to take over Greenland. The month-long riots in January which had seen a mass popular upsurge quelled down with a heavy hand by the Islamic regime provided an ideal backdrop and regime change became the first declared war goal of the aggressors when in a targeted assassination Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was killed along with 40 top military and security officials and close members of his family on 28 February, the very first day of the war. The son Mojtaba Khamenei, who was to be soon elected as the third Supreme Leader of Iran, escaped with severe injuries and has been leading the war efforts with the strong backing of the Iranian

Revolutionary Guard Corps and clergy.

The plan of Israel and USA, calling on the Iranian people to rise up and take over their government, boomeranged badly. Instead, the dastardly killings have galvanised the people to rally around the flag and support the IRGC in fighting the "enemies" of the revolution. For Iran it has been a war of survival, the regime had to protect itself against the insidious, illegal, and totally uncalled attack on its sovereignty. Iran had been preparing for this eventuality for over 20 years and with the experience of the 12-day war last June with Israel, backed by the USA in savagely attacking Iranian nuclear sites, had drawn several lessons.

The unified Iranian command system changed to a decentralised command and control structure wherein all the 30 provinces formed their own militaries under separate commanders who were to fight autonomously under the overall direction of the Supreme Leader located in the Central command in Tehran. Besides, the power groupings were designed to take over if the top layer was eliminated. Secondly, having constructed elaborate underground tunnels throughout the length and breadth of the country including the Persian Gulf coastline, they could keep their missile and drone production capability intact while launching attacks in a coordinated and escalatory

manner initially using their older missiles for depleting the enemy interceptors and air defence systems while keeping their latest technologically superior missiles and drones for later use. With the express support of two Great Powers, China and Russia, Iran has been fighting a 21st century war against a powerful America. Iran knows it can't defeat the America-Israel combine but it can exact heavy costs on them and their allies in the region. It can endure pain and sacrifice but in return inflict pain too and fight till the finish.

It is a moot point that America's war started without the authorisation of the Congress or the UN, as a show of power projection by Trump who had chosen to align completely with Netanyahu, with the objective of decimating Iran's nuclear programme and missile and drone production capability. The powerful Jewish lobby in America had worked overtime in securing Washington's full backing for Israel.

Geography and energy have been Iran's biggest weapons through the war. With complete control over the Strait of Hormuz, the jugular vein of global energy through which over 20% of global oil and gas pass, Iran has zeroed in on the centre of gravity by attacking US bases in the region and high-value military, civilian and nuclear targets of Israel with absolute precision. Satellite support by China and Russia having provided air superiority, Iran has

SPECTRUM DEMOCRACY

Party or people: What's more important?

Rajya Sabha deputy leader from Aam Admi Party (AAP) Raghav Chadha has been removed from his position. In an official communication to the Rajya Sabha secretariat, the party leadership requested that Chadha should not be allotted speaking time from AAP's quota in the Rajya Sabha.



Pratigyan Das

CRITICS ARE OF THE VIEW THAT INDIA HAS MOVED FROM PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY TO PARTY DEMOCRACY, WHERE PARTY LEADERS ARE MORE POWERFUL THAN MPs

Raghav Chadha, a Rajya Sabha, MP from Punjab, who has been associated with the AAP since its inception, has off late raised issues related to 'aam admi' in Rajya Sabha—from highlighting menstrual hygiene to the practice of 'sarpanch pati', and right to recall, including spending a day with gig workers working as a delivery partner to understand their challenges.

Therefore, his being barred from speaking from his party's time quota came as a surprise to many. Though it's an internal matter of the AAP, it has raised questions about an MP's identity vis-a-vis his party.

In a parliamentary democracy, an MP is elected to the Lok Sabha by the people from a party

ticket. There are also provisions for an individual to contest as an independent candidate.

As an MP, one can raise questions on the floor of the House as a party member. Their speaking time in debates is usually allotted party-wise, not MP-wise. The party decides which MP will speak and the MP is expected to toe the party line. In other words, most debate speaking time comes through party quota.

MPs are controlled by party whips, which is an official instruction issued by a party to its MPs on how to conduct themselves in Parliament, especially how to vote. If an MP defies the party whip, especially by going against the party in voting, they can be disqualified.

Over the years, control of parties over MPs has increased. Critics are of the view that India has moved from parliamentary democracy to party democracy, where party leaders are more powerful than MPs. While this has strengthened political parties, many argue that the voices of people have been lost in the process, which in turn is creating deep

problems for democracy.

Parliament is a forum of debate. When the MPs are denied the opportunities to speak because of their party leadership, this foundational purpose collapses. Bills are passed without adequate discussion.

Besides, with adjournments becoming a norm in both the House, thanks to sloganeering, many MPs fail to get a chance to speak, which in turn affects their image among the voters in their constituency. In other words, MPs are increasingly finding themselves accountable to party leadership rather than to the electorate.

Moreover, it has led to the rise of a 'high command culture'. Decision-making is increasingly becoming centralised in a handful of leaders. Lobbying has become rampant. MPs, regardless of their experience or expertise, are either getting sidelined or being reduced to political functionaries. This has resulted in weak debates in both the Houses. This is leading to a steady erosion in the quality of parliamentary functioning.

So, what is the way forward?

Well, the solution lies in adopting a balance while keeping the party discipline in place.

Parliament must move from party-controlled speech to member-based participation. MPs should be given time to speak beyond the party quota. In other words, each MP should get a minimum number of speaking slots per session; there should be guaranteed time in zero hours or special mentions.

Special committees should be given more power by making their recommendations binding. The MPs should be selected based on their expertise instead of loyalty.

The 10th schedule of the Constitution that deals with anti-defection law should be revamped. It should be limited to voting rights during no-confidence motions, money bills or important issues related to the survival of government.

In short, political parties must ensure discipline to maintain stability of government but not at the cost of silencing their own members.

The writer is a journalist.



To love is not to possess, but to give oneself.

THE MOTHER



Vulnerable Superpower

In a rambling address to the American people on 1 April, US President Donald Trump claimed that the US war against Iran has been a success, vowing to "finish the job ... very fast." It was a statement in obvious conflict with the facts. Trump is still pretending that Iran is just another small US adversary that can only absorb punishment, lash out locally, and ultimately buckle under sustained military and economic coercion. In reality, Iran has upended the model on which US interventionism has long relied.

For decades, the United States has nurtured the belief that it could wage wars abroad without exposing itself to the risk of serious retaliation. This was made possible by the careful selection of targets—such as Grenada, Panama, Iraq, Libya, and even Venezuela—that lacked the capacity to impose significant costs beyond their borders, such as by striking US assets or allies in a sustained or meaningful way. Even when insurgencies wore down US forces, as in Vietnam and Afghanistan, the conflicts remained geographically contained.

This "asymmetric cost" model—a war the US starts will ultimately cost the other side far more—has proven vital in sustaining the illusion of American invincibility and limiting domestic political resistance to US military adventurism. Now, Iran has broken it.

Iran's security doctrine is built on "forward defense," which makes use of asymmetric military capabilities—including ballistic and cruise missiles, drones, and a network of partners and proxies—to protect itself and project power beyond its borders. When the US and Israel attacked, Iran was able to leverage this strategic depth to retaliate immediately against targets across the region, including US allies, military bases, and forward-deployed assets.

By threatening infrastructure, airbases, and economic chokepoints, such as the Strait of Hormuz and Bab al-Mandeb across the Gulf, Iran is effectively forcing US partners to share the costs of conflict. As the Gulf states, which have long hosted US bases in exchange for a place under America's vaunted security umbrella, bear the brunt of Iran's response, strategic friction is growing within America's coalition. Thanks to Iran, allies that once enabled the US to project power in the Middle East now have a strong incentive to restrain it.

The US should have seen this coming. Following the US assassination of Iranian Major General Qassem Soleimani in 2020, Iran responded not with proxy action or deniable escalation, but with a direct ballistic-missile attack on a US military installation: the Al-Asad Airbase in Iraq. This should have dispelled any doubt that Iran could retaliate against American forces with precision and without fear of immediate retribution. Since then, Iran has only refined its strategy of distributed retaliation.

The Trump administration failed to anticipate this perfectly predictable response partly because of another longstanding illusion among US military planners and politicians: that higher military spending automatically confers battlefield superiority. America could strike its "enemies" with such overwhelming force that they would have no choice but to heed its demands almost immediately. Yet, from the Vietnam War to the 20-year war in Afghanistan, the US has instead found itself trapped in expensive wars of attrition that it could neither decisively win nor politically sustain, resulting in its humiliating withdrawal.

Nonetheless, the illusion has persisted. With Iran's defense budget amounting to a small fraction of America's, the Trump administration apparently assumed that the country could not possibly put up much of a fight. What it failed to recognise is that Iran does not need parity; it needs disruption. Its arsenal of low-cost, high-impact systems is tailored not for a conventional victory, but for strategic denial. Swarms of relatively inexpensive drones or missiles can overwhelm even the most sophisticated air-defense systems, as Israel is learning.

With this strategy, Iran has turned America's greatest strength—its global military footprint—into a source of vulnerability. It has also exposed a fundamental weakness in the American way of war: dependence on high-value, high-cost assets that can be degraded by persistent asymmetric pressure. The imbalance is both tactical and economic. The US is now being forced to spend vast sums to defend its assets and allies against weapons that cost very little to build and launch.

The US waged war on Iran with a framework honed against weaker, more isolated adversaries. It assumed that military force, combined with economic pressure, would ensure submission. Instead, it encountered a state that had spent years preparing for precisely this kind of confrontation and could absorb punishment while steadily ratcheting up the costs of escalation. Yet Trump continues to anticipate a quick capitulation.

The Trump administration's strategic miscalculation extends beyond underestimating Iran's retaliatory capabilities. It reflects a fundamental misreading of the nature of modern conflict. In a world of economic interconnectedness, geographically dispersed military capabilities, and low-cost weapons systems, a country that appears weak in conventional terms can cause serious harm. The message is clear: the age of relatively cost-free US wars is over.

The US can still unleash overwhelming force and inflict immense devastation. But it can no longer control the consequences or contain the fallout. What Iran has demonstrated is not just resilience, but the ability of a weaker state steadily to erode a superpower's advantages. A superpower that once felt invulnerable must now reckon with adversaries that can drain its coffers, bleed its allies, and upend its strategic calculations.

The future of the Middle East—and of American power—hinges on whether the US internalises the lessons of its miscalculation in Iran. If it fails to do so, it will continue to stumble into wars it cannot decisively win, cheaply sustain, or strategically justify.

The writer is Professor Emeritus of Strategic Studies at the New Delhi-based Center for Policy Research and Fellow at the Robert Bosch Academy in Berlin.

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WISDOM CORNER

The only way to have a friend is to be one.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Always keep that happy attitude. Pretend that you are holding a beautiful fragrant bouquet.

EARL NIGHTINGALE

The path of least resistance is the path of the loser.

HG WELLS

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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

Manipur again

Sir, This refers to "Manipur tense again" (Orissa POST, April 8). I am sorry to say that the peace claims to have been prevailing in Manipur by the ruling party at the Centre are totally superficial. The new Chief Minister of Manipur Yumnam Khechhand Singh has miserably failed to address the genuine grievances of the people of the state. Neither the Prime Minister nor the Union home minister has shown enough concern for the Manipur unrest resulting in loss of precious human lives. Enough is enough. It is the responsibility of the government at the Centre to restore normalcy in Manipur at any cost.

Arun Gupta, KOLKATA

Faith & right

Sir, The Centre's defence of curbs on women's entry to the Sabarimala Temple raises disturbing constitutional questions. By arguing that faith overrides equality, it risks diluting Articles 14 and 25, which guarantee non-discrimination and freedom of worship. While tradition deserves respect, it cannot justify exclusion based on biology. The Supreme Court had earlier upheld women's right to enter the temple, calling such bans unconstitutional. Reversing this spirit under the guise of religious autonomy sets a dangerous precedent. A modern democracy must harmonise faith with fundamental rights, not privilege one over the other. Otherwise, equality remains a hollow promise.

Sidhartha Kar Mohapatra, BARIAPADA

Nuclear capability

Sir, The recent criticality of the 500 MW Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR) at Kalpakkam marks a major, though delayed, milestone in India's three-stage nuclear programme, placing the country among a select group of nations like Russia and China with advanced breeder reactor capabilities. Despite a 15-year delay and significant cost escalation, the achievement is technologically significant, as the PFBR is designed to "breed" more Plutonium-239 than it consumes by converting Uranium-238 derived from existing reactors. This capability strengthens India's long-term nuclear strategy by creating a crucial bridge toward the thorium cycle, where abundant domestic thorium resources can be transformed into fissile Uranium-233, thereby enhancing energy security and reducing external dependence. Now, the real challenge lies in demonstrating sustained operational safety, economic viability, and strategic relevance within an evolving energy landscape.

Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH

Damp weather boosts wild mushroom yield in J&K

Collecting the mushrooms from the forest and selling them to local vegetable markets fetch up to ₹3,000 a day each for a large number of women from the Baderwah valley along the dense cedar forest



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Baderwah (J&K), April 8: Damp weather conditions over the past fortnight have transformed Baderwah's coniferous forests in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district into a harvesting cluster for a seasonal wild mushroom, opening an earning avenue for local women and offering a delicious culinary experience for others. Kundi mushroom, or earth cup fungus, which had largely disappeared from Himalayan forests over the past few years due to prolonged dry weather, has made a strong comeback this season, growing in abundance amid the prevailing damp weather conditions. Collecting the mushrooms from the forest and selling them to local vegetable markets fetch up to Rs 3,000 a day each for a large number of women from the Baderwah valley along

the dense cedar forest. Women living in villages of Bhudda, Chinta, Duggi, Kansar, Ghuraka, Chinchora, Jatani, Thubba, Dhumanda, Sartingal, Katyara, Mathola, Hanga and Shankhoja make it their routine, harvesting the fungi at dawn and selling them in the market by the dust on a daily basis. Selling the mushrooms would fetch them Rs 400 to 700 per kg during the entire season. "Kundi, the season's most cherished harvest that we used to collect from forests soon after the snow melted, had been missing for the past two to three years. Its absence was deeply felt across the village, as many families traditionally depend on it during early spring," said 67-year-old Kalyana of village Bhudda. She said, its abundant return this year has brought immense joy. "Our group has been col-

lecting Kundi for the past 20 days, and it is not only reviving a tradition but also providing us with a good source of income." According to Ajay Kumar of village Chinta, the incessant rains in the recent past have turned the forests into a treasure trove of Kundi, making the otherwise quiet forests lively and vibrant. The sale of Kundi provides livelihood for many families, while most of the vegetable vendors display it as a key attraction during the season. "This year, I have recorded my highest-ever sales of Kundi since starting my business a decade ago. Most of the stock in my shop is already pre-booked, with orders coming not only from locals but also from Delhi," said Anil Kumar, a vegetable vendor from Jaie Road, Baderwah. He said over the past 20 days, he has sold Kundi mushrooms worth around Rs 5 lakh, and women are earning around Rs 3,000 a day by collecting and supplying them to his shop. Kundi is often found growing in shaded, humid areas after the melting of snow in the post-winter and a spell of rain during spring. Apart from being a tasty seasonal kitchen staple, Kundi is also known for its medicinal properties.

K'taka sees drop in groundwater use, surge in recharge capacity

Overall groundwater extraction has reduced from 68.44 per cent in 2024 to 66.49 per cent in 2025, indicating more responsible and sustainable usage patterns across the state

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, April 8: Karnataka has recorded a significant decline in groundwater usage alongside a notable increase in annual recharge capacity, reflecting the impact of sustained water conservation efforts and good rainfall, Minister NS Boseraju said Wednesday. Releasing the 2025 Groundwater Assessment Report at Vikas Soudha, he said the gains are the result of good rainfall, focused policy interventions, and large-scale water conservation initiatives implemented over the past two years under the leadership of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar. According to the report, overall groundwater extraction has reduced from 68.44 per cent in 2024 to 66.49 per cent in 2025, indicating more responsible and sustainable usage patterns across the state. At the same time, annual groundwater recharge capacity has increased from 18.74 billion cubic metres (BCM) in 2024 to 19.28 BCM in 2025, while annual extractable groundwater resources rose from 16.88 BCM to 17.41 BCM, the minister's office said in a statement. "This simultaneous reduction in usage and increase in recharge reflects our government's commitment to long-term water sustainability," the



Minor Irrigation, Science and Technology Minister said. The improvement has been driven largely by the expansion of water conservation structures (WCS) across the state. Recharge through such structures increased by 29.11 per cent, from 0.81 BCM to 1.04 BCM within a year, the report stated. Notably, the number of water conservation works has risen sharply from 3.15 lakh in 2024 to 3.94 lakh in 2025, strengthening the state's groundwater recharge ecosystem. The report indicates improvement in groundwater status across 11 taluks, with several regions moving to safer categories. Highlighting these changes, the minister pointed out that

Chamarajanagar taluk has improved from "over-exploited" to "critical". Similarly, taluks including Athani, Channapatna, Molakalmuru, Ranabennur, Savanur, and Shiggaon have successfully transitioned from "semi-critical" to "safe" status. Domestic groundwater extraction has also declined by 0.58 per cent, dropping from 1,21,731 hectare-metres (ham) in 2024 to 1,21,023 ham in 2025. Officials attribute this to increased reliance on surface water under the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM). Boseraju said that initiatives such as lake rejuvenation, year-round water supply through treated and surface water, sustained public awareness campaigns, and good rainfall have

played a key role in reducing over-extraction and enhancing recharge. "Instead of depending solely on the 120-day monsoon, we are ensuring water availability throughout all 365 days through scientific management. This has strengthened long-term water security for both farmers and urban residents," he said. Announcing a major technological step forward in future governance, the minister added, "To further safeguard our resources, we are rolling out the Digital Water Stack (DWS) initiative. Under this framework, we will soon initiate space technology and AI-based satellite surveillance to obtain real-time data for continuous groundwater monitoring."

Omar's morning jog through border village sparks fitness buzz

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, April 8: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah Wednesday went jogging along the streets of Bishnah, a border village near Jammu, garnering much public attention and inspiring enthusiasm among locals. The move was widely seen as a message against the drug menace, and comes within a fortnight of the chief minister's participation in the Jammu Half Marathon. The sight of Omar Abdullah -- dressed in sportswear and flanked by his security team -- running along the Jammu airport road during the early hours elicited positive reactions among onlookers who took to social media to express excitement. His unannounced run through the locality created a buzz, with people stepping out of their homes to catch a glimpse. Several residents were seen taking photos and recording videos on their mobile phones as Abdullah passed through Bishnah before moving to KC Morh along the Jammu airport road. The morning run quickly became a talking point in the area, with locals appreciating the gesture and many expressing motivation to incorporate fitness activities into their daily routine. "Message to all of us: let's prioritise health and fitness by incorporating activities like morning runs into our daily routine. Good health matters, and it makes a difference to our overall well-being and productivity," a social media user posted after watching a video of the chief minister on Facebook. Another user said it was remarkable to see the chief minister running down the roads, describing him as a source of inspiration. Many social media users praised Abdullah's fitness, commending his active lifestyle and describing his morning run as both motivating and exemplary.



A fisherman casts a net in Dal Lake amid rain, in Srinagar, Wednesday

PTI PHOTO

AARTI, BOATING, LASER SHOW PLANNED

Jammu to host 3-day 'Tawi Mahotsav' next week

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, April 8: A three-day 'Tawi Mahotsav' will be held along the Tawi riverfront here from April 14 to mark Baisakhi, with aarti, boating and a laser show set to be the key attractions, Commissioner, Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC) Devansh Yadav said Wednesday. He said the entire left bank of the Tawi riverfront will remain open to the public during the festival, also featuring a range of cultural, recreational and traditional activities. "Baisakhi, celebrated every year with great enthusiasm in Jammu, is approaching, and on this auspicious occasion, the 'Tawi Mahotsav' will be held by JMC from April 14 to 16 in collaboration with the Department of Tourism and the Department of Information and Public Relations," Yadav told reporters here. He said the key highlights of the event include Tawi Aarti, boating, laser show, wrestling (Dangal), Dogri cuisine, handloom and handicraft stalls,



provide a permanent boating facility for the public," the JMC Commissioner said. He said the introduction of Shikaras (boats) will be decided at a later stage. "Once we receive the final NIWS report detailing the scope for water sports and related activities, we will proceed accordingly," he said, adding that a permanent infrastructure is expected to be set up within two to three months after the report is received. Besides SDRF deployment, Yadav said each boat will have a trained life rescuer and no one will be allowed without a life jacket, adding that with water depth of two to three metres, adequate rescue teams will be stationed to ensure safety. On measures to keep the Tawi river clean, he said the department has significantly stepped up enforcement this year, imposing several times more fines on violators who were caught throwing garbage into the water body. "In several instances, commercial establishments were shut down for disposing of left-

over food into drains. Now, over 40 such establishments have adopted on-site composting. Major temples, including the historic Raghunath Temple and Bawe Mata Temple, are also sending ritual waste to Narwal, where it is processed into compost," he said. He said efforts are being made to curb the immersion of ritual materials into the Tawi, which contributes to its pollution.

HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT Karnataka minister calls for sterilisation of select species

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, April 8: Karnataka Minister Eshwar Khandre Wednesday said that rising human-wildlife conflict has created a need to consider sterilising specific species, and that the issue should be publicly debated. He clarified that no decision has been made so far and that discussions will be held with officials and stakeholders. "There is an increase in the number of select wildlife. In my opinion, putting some curbs on their numbers is necessary due to increased conflicts, loss of lives, and urbanisation. So there is a proposal to conduct sterilisation surgery or vaccination on select wildlife," Minister for Forest, Ecology and Environment said. Speaking to reporters, he added that no list has been prepared yet and that he plans to hold discussions on the matter with senior officials. Noting that a related issue

is pending before the Supreme Court, the minister said there are plans to submit a proposal after due deliberation. "We intend to protect wildlife while ensuring that human lives are not lost. No decision has been made yet; it is still under consideration. In areas with a high number of wildlife, we are thinking about controlling it for a year or two. Other states are considering similar measures. There is a need for public debate on this," he added. Khandre also said the government is seriously considering the voluntary relocation of forest dwellers who wish to move out of the forest. He has asked officials to prepare a list of those willing to relocate. "Once the list is ready, I will discuss the required funding with the CM, and the government will make a decision. Relocating forest dwellers will expand wildlife habitats and integrate those living without basic facilities into mainstream society," he said.

OFFICE OF THE PANCHAYAT SAMITI, BARGAON DIST-SUNDARGARH
e-mail id: ori-bargaon@od.gov.in, PIN-770016
BID IDENTIFICATION NO-2026-PRBGR-127361
Notice No.910, Date 06.04.2026
No.19001/16/2627: The Block Development Officer, Bargaon, Sundargarh on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites in "ONLINE MODE Percentage Rate Bids (Double Cover)" for the civil works under Bargaon Block of Sundargarh District. The detail of works, eligibility, estimated cost and cost of tender paper alongwith detailed documents/ terms and conditions will be available in the website <http://tendersodisha.gov.in>. The bidder should be B & C Class Contractor. The date of availability of tender paper will be from date 09.04.2026 to date 24.04.2026 in the website <http://tendersodisha.gov.in> and last date of online bid submission will be 24.04.2026 (5.00 PM). The Bids will be opened on dated 28.04.2026 at 10.00 AM.
Sd./- Block Development Officer Bargaon
OIPR-19001/19338/1/26-27/0002

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL MANAGER, WATCO DIVISION-II, BHUBANESWAR
Near Rajiv Bhawan, Unit-V, Bhubaneswar-751001, Odisha, India
Telefax : +91-674-2390322, E-mail : gmdivtwoatco@gmail.com
NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-PROCUREMENT
Invitation For Bids (IFB)
GMWATCO-II/03/2026-27 DL06.04.2026
No.13001/113/2627

SN	Name of Work	Appx. Estimated Cost (Rs. in Lakh)	Period of Completion	Availability of Bid Document for Online Bidding		Name & address of Officer Inviting Bid
				From	To	
1	Improvement of Water Supply for laying of 100mm dia pipe line of Newly Developed area at Gada Mahavir under Ward No-58 & including Protection Work at Kapileswar Pump House and Supplying and Installation of Air Blower Pump with Electric motor at Fitter House & Improvement of Chlorine Leak Absorption System at Bhuasuni Treatment Plant, Samantarapur, Old Town, BBSR, (Laying) of Pipeline at Gada Mahavir	21.78	02 (Two) Months	11.00 Hrs. of 09.04.26	17.00 Hrs. of 23.04.26	The General Manager, Watco Division-II, Unit-V, BBSR, Odisha

Name & Address of Officer Inviting Bid : The General Manager, WATCO Division-II, Unit-V, BBSR, Odisha
Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement portal <https://www.tendersodisha.gov.in>.
OIPR-13001/13089/1/26-27/0001 **Sd./- GENERAL MANAGER, WATCO**



“In 2001, former Prime Minister Vajpayee deferred delimitation for 25 years in the national interest. What is Prime Minister Modi’s answer to the just and reasonable demand of southern states to follow the same path today?”

M K STALIN | TN CM

SAMAY RAINA ANNOUNCES ‘INDIA’S GOT LATENT 2’

Popular comedian Samay Raina has teased a second season of his controversial show “India’s Got Latent” in a new stand-up special where he spoke about the controversy that led to multiple FIRs against him and other panelists on the show



of the day quote

During online implementation of various government schemes, lack of bandwidth was a major issue. Especially when online application processes for farmers were started, sudden increase in internet traffic could lead to system failure



In today’s competitive era, academic excellence alone is not enough. A healthy body and a balanced mind are equally essential



Public transport should be made affordable and efficient with greater adoption of electric buses playing a crucial role in reducing operational costs and improving service delivery



SHORT TAKES

LeT operatives sent to police custody

Srinagar: A local court Wednesday sent five operatives two Pakistani nationals and their three local supporters affiliated with proscribed Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terror outfit to 10 days police custody here, an official said. The five were arrested following the uncovering of a “deep-rooted” interstate LeT module headed by Pakistani terrorist Abdullah, alias Abu Hureira, who had been on the run for 16 years and successfully established bases outside the Union Territory. Hureira, along with another Pakistani terrorist Usman alias Khubaib and three Srinagar residents identified as Mohammad Naqeeb Bhat, Adil Rashid Bhat, and Ghulam Mohammad Mir alias Mama, was arrested Tuesday.

4 dead as van rams into stationary truck

Surat: Four members of a family were killed after their van crashed into a stationary truck near Palsana in Gujarat’s Surat Wednesday, police said. The accident occurred at 12.30 am, Bardoli Division Deputy Superintendent of Police H L Rathod said. “The van rammed into a truck that was stationary due to its punctured tyre,” he said. After being alerted, police from Palsana rushed to the accident site and the bodies were sent to a government hospital for post-mortem, they said.

Two killed as family feuds; accused held

Ranchi/Medininagr: Two persons were hacked to death in separate family disputes in Jharkhand’s Ranchi and Palamu districts, police said Wednesday. In Ranchi, an elderly man was hacked to death allegedly by his son after he refused to give him money early Wednesday, a police official said.

Delhi HC rejects Michel James’ plea

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court Wednesday dismissed a petition by alleged middleman Christian Michel James in the Rs 3,600-crore AgustaWestland VVIP chopper scam case seeking his release from jail. A bench of Justices Navin Chawla and Ravinder Dubeja said there was no merit in the petition by the British national, who was extradited from Dubai in December 2018. A detailed copy of the verdict is awaited.

High lead levels detected near battery recycling units: Study

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 8: A new study has found high levels of lead contamination in soil near battery recycling units across Delhi-NCR, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh, raising concerns about public health and environmental safety.

The analysis, ‘Soiled with Lead: from Battery Recycling,’ was carried out by Toxics Link, an environmental research and advocacy organisation, and published Wednesday.

The authors examined 23 soil samples collected near lead-acid battery recycling units in selected cities, including locations close to residential areas, local communities,

and primary schools. “All samples showed evidence of widespread lead contamination ranging from 100 parts per million (ppm) to 43,800 ppm,” said the analysis.

With reference to the Environment Protection (Management of Contaminated Sites) Rules, 2025, the findings indicated that 52 per cent (12 out of 23 samples) of the collected soil samples contained lead concentrations exceeding the 5,000 ppm benchmark for a Hazardous Contaminated Site.

Also, 31 per cent of the samples surpassed the permissible limits for industrial areas as prescribed in the rule.

“Unexpectedly, higher average lead levels were detected in samples collected from autho-



rising recycling units (formal units) compared to those collected from the unauthorised units,” said the study.

Lead-acid batteries have been around for more than 150 years

and are used in automobiles, backup power systems such as inverters, uninterruptible power supplies (UPS), telecommunications, and railway networks. “The spent batteries are sent

◀ A new study reveals alarming levels of lead contamination in soil near battery recycling units in Delhi-NCR, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh

◀ Soil samples near both authorised and unauthorised battery recycling units showed lead contamination ranging from 100 ppm to 43,800 ppm

◀ Over half of the soil samples exceeded the hazardous contaminated site benchmark for lead concentration, raising serious environmental concerns

to recycling units or smelting facilities, both authorised (formal) as well as unauthorised

(informal) set-ups, to recover lead, plastic components, etc. These recovered materials are often reintroduced into battery manufacturing cycles,” according to the study. However, improper handling and poor practices, particularly in the unauthorised sector, can lead to the uncontrolled release of lead into the air, soil, and water. This is an issue because lead is one of the most toxic heavy metals, and severely impacts human health and the environment.

According to a 2016 study by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), lead exposure leads to 540,000 deaths annually across the globe, with the highest burden borne by low-and middle-income countries.

India welcomes US-Iran ceasefire



India’s reaction came hours after Iran and the US agreed on the conditional ceasefire that included the opening of the Strait of Hormuz, the strategically key waterway between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman that handles roughly 20 per cent of global oil and LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas)

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 8: India Wednesday welcomed the two-week ceasefire between the US and Iran and called for unimpeded freedom of navigation and flow of commerce through the Strait of Hormuz, while hoping that lasting peace will return to West Asia.

New Delhi said it continuously advocated that dialogue and diplomacy are essential to bring an early end to the hostilities. The conflict was triggered by US-Israeli strikes against Iran February 28.

India’s reaction came hours after Iran and the US agreed on the conditional ceasefire that included the opening of the Strait of Hormuz, the strategically key waterway between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman that handles roughly 20 per cent of global oil and LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas).

“We welcome the ceasefire reached and hope that it will lead to a lasting peace in West Asia. As we have continuously advocated earlier, de-escalation, dialogue and diplomacy are essential to bring an early end to the ongoing conflict,” External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

“The conflict has already caused immense suffering to people and disrupted global energy supply and trade networks.” “We expect that unimpeded freedom of navigation and global flow of commerce would prevail through the Strait of Hormuz,” he said.

Jaiswal said India hopes that the “development” in West Asia will also encourage peace efforts in Ukraine. The announcement on the ceasefire resulted in a fall in the global crude oil prices and a rally in stock

markets. Global oil and gas prices had surged after Iran virtually blocked the Strait of Hormuz. The move severely impacted energy supplies to countries around the world including India.

In a social media post, Trump said the US had agreed to “suspend the bombing and attack of Iran for a period of two weeks” provided Iran agreed to reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

The announcement on the ceasefire came amid growing outrage over Trump’s ultimatum to Iran that “a whole civilisation will die tonight” if Tehran does not reopen the key waterway.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said the movement of ships through the Strait will be allowed under Iranian military supervision.

In Islamabad, Pakistan Prime Minister Sharif said the US and Iran have agreed to come to Islamabad April 10 to hold negotiations to settle all disputes.

The prime minister expressed hope that the proposed “Islamabad Talks” would help achieve sustainable peace and stability in the region.

In his remarks, Jaiswal said India has always been in favour of peace.

The spokesperson also made a mention of the fresh advisory issued by the Indian embassy in Tehran urging Indians to expeditiously exit the country. “We are given to understand that we have around 7,500 Indian nationals who continue to remain in Iran. As of Tuesday, 1,864 Indians, including 935 students and 472 fishermen, exited through Armenia and Azerbaijan,” he said.



Low clouds cover a hill town during rainfall, in Shimla, Himachal Pradesh

Cong’s dig at PM over Pak role in war pause

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 8: Taking a swipe at the government, the Congress Wednesday said the role played by Pakistan in bringing about the ceasefire between the US-Israel and Iran is a “severe setback” to Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s “highly personalised diplomacy” and asked what happened to “papa ne war rukwa di”.

The Opposition party also asked why Modi, who claims very special friendship with the US, Israel, Iran, and the Gulf countries and who also holds the BRICS plus presidency this year, was not in the picture at all during the ceasefire negotiations.

Congress general secretary (communications) Jaiward Ramesh said Modi’s “cowardice is demonstrated by his silence not only on Israel’s belligerence, but on the completely unacceptable and disgraceful language being used by his good friend in the White House”.

He said the entire world will cautiously welcome the two-week ceasefire in the West Asia conflict between the US and Israel on the one side and Iran on the other.

“The conflict had begun February 28th with the targeted assassinations of the topmost echelons of the regime in Iran. These had started just two days after Prime Minister Modi had completed his much-trumpet-

ed visit to Israel, a visit that diminished India’s global stature and standing,” Ramesh claimed. Modi had said nothing about Israel’s “genocide” in Gaza and its aggressively expansionist policies in the occupied West Bank, he said.

“The role played by Pakistan in bringing about the ceasefire is a severe setback to both the substance and style of Mr Modi’s highly personalised diplomacy,” he said.

The policy to isolate Pakistan for its continuing support to terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir and to convince the world that it is a failed state has clearly not succeeded unlike what Manmohan Singh had accomplished after the Mumbai terror attacks, Ramesh claimed.

That a bankrupt economy dependent entirely on the largesse of external donors and a broken country in so many ways was able to play such a role calls into question Modi’s strategy of engagement and narrative management, he said.

In another post on X, Ramesh said, “Why is the PM of India -- who claims very special friendship with the US, Israel, Iran, and the Gulf countries and who also holds the BRICS+ Presidency this year -- not in the picture at all during the ceasefire negotiations? How and why was India not pivotal during the ceasefire negotiations?”

Oppn questions rejection of notice seeking removal of CEC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 8: Senior Congress leader Abhishek Manu Singhvi Wednesday criticised the rejection of the Opposition’s notice for moving a motion in Parliament to remove Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar from his post, alleging that the decision undermines constitutional processes and weakens accountability in a democracy.

Addressing a press conference here along with other Opposition leaders, Singhvi said the move to reject the notice at a preliminary stage amounted to “strangling” the entire impeachment mechanism envisaged in the Constitution.

He was accompanied by Trinamool Congress (TMC) leaders Derek O’Brien and Sagarika Ghose, Rashtriya Janata Dal’s (RJD) Manoj Jha, Aam Aadmi Party’s (AAP) Sandeep Pathak, DMK’s Yogesh and NCP-SP’s Rajeev Jha.

“When accountability is adjoined intelligently, then democracy itself stands impeached,” Singhvi said, adding that if the Election Commission’s (EC) position was strong, there should be no fear of scrutiny.

The Congress leader argued that the presiding officers of Parliament had committed a “fundamental conceptual error” by collapsing a multi-stage constitutional process into a single decision at the admission stage. He maintained that the Constitution provides for a detailed procedure involving an initial admission, the formation of a judicial committee, framing of charges, the submission of a report, parliamentary discussion and finally, a decision.

He further alleged that specific charges raised by the Opposition, including those related to alleged electoral irregularities and delays in complying with judicial directions, were not adequately addressed in the rejection order. Calling the issue “a very serious matter”, Singhvi said the decision casts “a shadow on the glory of Parliament” and raises concerns about the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party’s (BJP) willingness to allow a scrutiny of the EC.

FSSAI tightens safety; states step up enforcement

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 8: The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) conducted 3,97,009 inspections across food establishments in 2025-26, official sources said Wednesday.

The agency, in collaboration with state authorities, analysed 1,65,747 food samples (up to the third quarter), of which 17.16 per cent were found non-conforming, triggering prompt regulatory action, they said.

Legal enforcement also gathered momentum. “As many as 23,580 adjudication cases were decided, while

1,756 criminal convictions were secured, reinforcing accountability across the food business ecosystem,” a source said.

Financial penalties amounting to Rs 154.87 crore were imposed, serving as a strong deterrent against violations, the person said. In a decisive consumer protection measure, 945 food recalls were initiated during the year, preventing unsafe products from reaching the public. At the core of this nationwide push is a clear delineation of roles “while FSSAI sets standards and regulatory principles, the on-ground responsibility for licensing, inspections,



and enforcement rests predominantly with states.”

Nearly 98 per cent of Food Business Operators (FBOs) fall under state licensing regimes, indicating that food safety enforcement is largely a



state-driven function, the source stated. A key highlight of FY 2025-26 has been the integration of the informal food sector into the regulatory framework. Over 10 lakh street food vendors were brought under for-

mal oversight, improving hygiene standards and reducing food safety risks at the grassroots level, the source said.

Simultaneously, licensing norms were rationalised based on turnover thresholds.

According to the source, FSSAI expanded the country’s food testing capabilities by notifying 18 laboratories, including advanced facilities in Singtam (Sikkim) and Tirumala (Andhra Pradesh). These labs are equipped with enhanced microbiological testing systems, enabling faster and more accurate detection of contaminants.



In states like Maharashtra and Bihar, cash transfer schemes were announced or fast-tracked just before elections, directly benefiting voters. Yet the ECI remained silent. This is not neutrality-it is complicity

BOMBAY HC CANCELS PONDA BYPOLL IN GOA The Bombay High Court Wednesday quashed the Election Commission of India's notification for the byelection to Ponda Assembly seat in Goa a day ahead of polling, citing violation of the Representation of the People Act as the legislature's term is set to expire in less than a year



of the day uote

Due to issues such as atrocities against women, farmers not receiving the benefits of MSP, a sense of insecurity among the general public and a deteriorating law and order situation, people there are ready for change

While Vasudev Ghat, along with other restored ghats such as Asita, Baansera and Yamuna Biodiversity Park, have emerged as eco-friendly, sustainable and green public spaces on the floodplains, attracting thousands of Delhi residents

In 11 years of MUDRA, the government led by Shri Narendra Modi has empowered small traders and startups by providing collateral-free loans, thereby giving new strength to self-employment and small industries...

EC, TMC trade charges after acrimonious meeting



Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar with Election Commissioners S S Sandhu and Vivek Joshi during a meeting with Trinamool Congress delegation members

New Delhi, April 8: A Trinamool Congress delegation's meeting with the Election Commission Wednesday to raise issues related to SIR in West Bengal saw acrimonious exchanges, with the party leaders claiming the Chief Election Commissioner asked them to "get lost" and the poll panel accusing them of "shouting".

The meeting, which barely lasted seven minutes, was followed by a terse statement from the Election Commission (EC), saying it gave a "straight-talk" to the Trinamool Congress (TMC) delegation that "this time, the elections in West Bengal would surely be: fear-free, violence-free, intimidation-free, inducement-free".

Hitting back, the TMC, which has accused the EC of acting at the behest of the BJP, said the elections must be free from "Delhi's control, political bias and targeted persecution".

The TMC delegation - comprising its Rajya Sabha leader Derek O'Brien, deputy leader Sagarika Ghose, MPs Saket Gokhale and Menaka Guruswamy - met the full bench of the Election Commission to raise the issue of alleged disenfranchisement of voters during the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls in poll-bound

West Bengal. EC sources accused O'Brien of shouting at the election commissioners and said that he asked Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar not to speak. "The CEC requested Derek O'Brien to maintain decorum in the commission room. Shouting and indecent behaviour are not appropriate," they said.

After submitting their memorandum, the TMC leaders told the CEC that they did not want just words, but action on the ground, party sources claimed, adding the CEC accused O'Brien of speaking loudly and told them to "get lost". In a sharp retort, the poll panel said on X that it gave a "straight-talk" to the TMC delegation. It is rare for the EC to use such words in a statement and equally unusual to name any party in an official report.

The EC said it told the TMC that "this time, the elections in West Bengal would surely be: fear-free, violence-free, intimidation-free, inducement-free and without any 'chappa, booth-jamming and source-jamming' (electoral malpractices)". Talking to reporters after the meeting, O'Brien said they handed over nine letters written by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to the CEC, which the MP said have not been acknowledged.

They also apprised the Elec-

TMC will move court over SIR: Mamata

Kolkata: "At times, I feel like starting practising law again," West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said Wednesday, targeting the BJP and the poll panel over large-scale name deletions from voter rolls under the SIR, while asserting the TMC would move court over the issue. Banerjee, who has an LLB degree, argued in the Supreme Court February 4, urging it to intervene in the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls to "save democracy", alleging that West Bengal was being targeted. She was the first serving chief minister to argue in the top court. "You will not be able to defeat the TMC by deleting names. We will move court again to resist the exclusion of names," the TMC supreme said, attacking her principal challenger, the BJP, over the SIR process.

tion Commission of specific instances showing certain poll officials' alleged links with the BJP, and demanded that they be transferred. "We gave him six examples of officials who are part of the election process and have links with the BJP," O'Brien claimed. Among the examples cited was that of the Chief Electoral Officer being accompanied by a local BJP leader in Nandigram. A memorandum was submitted in this regard, he said.

"We asked the CEC how he can ensure the conduct of free and fair elections when such tainted officers are being appointed in Bengal. To this, his answer was 'Get lost,'" said O'Brien.

"We told the CEC we would not listen to him because he does not allow his colleagues to speak. We have attended eight to nine meetings like this, where none other than the CEC speaks," O'Brien said. At the end of the brief meeting, a TMC leader "congratulated Gyanesh Kumar on being the first CEC in history to have notices seeking his removal submitted in Parliament", O'Brien said.



A flock of starlings flies over the Kartavya Path during sunset, in New Delhi

SNIPPETS

B'desh, India discuss strengthening ties

New Delhi: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar Wednesday conveyed to his Bangladeshi counterpart Khalilur Rahman India's desire to engage "constructively" with the new government in Dhaka and further strengthen bilateral ties. In their meeting, Jaishankar and Rahman deliberated extensively on charting a new path of cooperation, leaving behind more than 18 months of heightened diplomatic tension witnessed during the tenure of Bangladesh's interim government. Rahman, accompanied by the Bangladesh prime minister's advisor for foreign affairs, Humayun Kabir, arrived in New Delhi Tuesday.

PM to address three rallies in Bengal today

Kolkata: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will intensify the BJP's election campaign in West Bengal Thursday with rallies in Haldia, Asansol and Siuri. The choice of venues underlines the BJP's attempt to consolidate its support in areas where it has made major gains while also pushing into regions considered strongholds of the ruling TMC. According to the schedule shared by the BJP, Modi will address his first rally at 9.30 am in Haldia Township in Purba Medinipur district, followed by another at the Outdoor Stadium in Polo Ground in Asansol at noon. The third public meeting is scheduled to be held at Chandmari Field in Siuri town of Birbhum district at 2 pm.

Manipur CM chairs Unified Command meet

Imphal: Manipur Chief Minister Y Khechamand Singh Wednesday chaired a Unified Command meeting to review the prevailing law and order situation in the state, a day after fresh violence left four persons dead in Bishnupur district, officials said. In a post on X, Singh said, "Chaired a Combined Headquarters Security (Unified Command) Meeting today at the Secretariat, attended by Hon'ble Home Minister Shri K. Govindas, the Chief Secretary, Security Adviser, DGP, and senior officials from the Army, Assam Rifles, CRPF, BSF, ITBP, and SSB." "The meeting undertook a comprehensive review of the prevailing law and order situation and associated security concerns. Measures, in accordance with constitutional provisions, were deliberated in detail to effectively respond to the current challenges and to ensure the restoration and maintenance of peace, stability, and public safety," the CM said.

Pawan Khera moves T'gana HC seeking anticipatory bail

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hyderabad, April 8: Congress leader Pawan Khera Wednesday moved the Telangana High Court seeking anticipatory bail in a case filed against him by the Assam government on his allegations against Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's wife.

Khera, who showed his residential address in Hyderabad, requested the court to release him on bail in the event of his arrest.

The petition was filed April 7. It will be taken up by the court April 9.

Khera named the DCP of Guwahati Crime Branch Police Station and Telangana government as respondents to his petition.

The case was registered in the Guwahati Crime Branch Police Station against Khera under several sections of the BNS, including 175 (false statement in connection with an election), 35 (Right of private defence of the body and of property) and 318 (cheating).

The Congress leader on April 5 alleged that Sarma's wife, Riniki Bhuyan Sarma, has multiple passports and foreign property, which were not declared in the chief minister's election affidavit. An Assam Police team had earlier visited the Delhi residence of Khera for questioning in connection with the case.

Khera's advocate Ponnamp Ashok Goud told PTI that anticipatory bail was sought as the FIR copy has not been uploaded on police website as per Supreme Court's orders, and that the former's Delhi house was searched with an intention to arrest.

Sarma Tuesday slammed the Congress for "not verifying" the documents based on which it brought allegations against him and his family.

The CM asserted that Khera had "run away" to Hyderabad, but the Assam Police will "hunt him down even from 'pataal' (netherworld)".

Union Cabinet clears draft Bill for amendments to Women Reservation Act

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 8: The Union Cabinet is learnt to have cleared Wednesday the draft bill for amendments to the Women's Reservation Act that will ensure an increase in the number of Lok Sabha seats to 816 with 273 reserved for women, and its implementation in the 2029 general elections.

Sources privy to the development said that a meeting of the Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the draft bill for the amendments to the law, Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, more commonly known as the Women's Reservation Act.

The government has extended the budget session of Parliament and a special three-day sitting will be held from April 16 to 18, where the amendment bill is expected to be passed.

The provision to provide 33 per cent reservation to women in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies was brought by amending the Constitution in 2023, but it would have come into effect after the completion of the delimitation exercise on the basis of the 2027 Census. Therefore, it was expected to come into force only in 2034 if the present law remains as it is.

According to the broad contours available, the number of Lok Sabha seats would be increased from the present 543 to 816, with 273 seats reserved for women. The reservation will also be done on a "vertical basis" with seats allocated for SCs and STs.

The redrawing of the constituencies will be done on the basis of the 2011 census rather than the proposed 2027 census.

A similar exercise will be carried out for state assemblies, where seats will be reserved on a pro-rata basis.

SARADHA PONZI SCAM

Calcutta HC grants bail to Sudipta Sen

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, April 8: The Calcutta High Court Wednesday granted conditional bail to multi-crore Saradha ponzi scam accused Sudipta Sen in the last two of the over 300 criminal cases against him, paving the way for his release from jail after 13 years.

The court observed that the right to a speedy trial is inalienable under Article 21 of the Constitution, which guarantees the fundamental right to protection of life and personal liberty.

A division bench of the high court granted bail to Sen in two cases pertaining to the Barasat police station in North 24 Parganas district of West Bengal.

"When an individual is detained for 13 years, a period



Calcutta High Court building

indefinite life sentence without conviction," the bench said.

The court directed that Sen be released upon furnishing a bond of ₹5,00,000 with two sureties of like amount each, one of whom must be local.

The Saradha group, headed by Sen, allegedly defrauded lakhs of people through a number of ponzi schemes. He was arrested in April 2013 in Jammu and Kashmir after financial misappropriations to the tune of hundreds of crores of Rupees were unravelled.

The division bench directed that in view of the magnitude of the financial scam and the necessity to safeguard public interest, Sen must surrender his passport to the trial court if not already in the custody of any other agency.

Govt approves indigenous high-altitude rescue UAV for IAF

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 8: The government has envisioned design and development of an unmanned combat search and rescue aircraft -- a runway-independent UAV -- for the IAF that can be used in missions to rescue aircrew without risking piloted aircraft, according to officials.

The indigenous autonomous system, as planned, should also be a platform which can be deployed to ferry logistic material and other supplies in forward areas and inhospitable terrains, including snow-bound heights, where conventional helicopters struggle, they said.

The project, envisioned under Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020, has been "approved in principle", a senior official said. The move also aims to boost the country's 'Atmanirbharta' in the defence sector and strengthen the combat readiness of the Indian Air Force, another official, aware of the project, said.

Under the proposed project, a "runway-independent UAV" (unmanned aerial vehicle -- combat search and rescue (CSAR) drone -- is to be designed and developed that "can go into operations, and rescue aircrew without risking manned aircraft," the official added.

The project is structured under 'Make-I' category, wherein the government supports 70 per cent of development costs while Indian vendors cover the remaining 30 per cent, they said.

After successful development, procurement will follow the 'Buy (Indian-IDDMM)' route, ensuring at least 50 per cent indigenous content in material, components, and software, the officials said. IDDMM stands for Indigenously Designed Developed



Indigenous autonomous UAV

The indigenous autonomous system will be capable of ferrying logistic material and supplies in difficult terrains, including snow-bound areas

The project, approved under Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020, aims to boost 'Atmanirbharta' (self-reliance) in the defence sector.

and Manufactured. As per the specifications for the planned platform, it should be able to operate from the sea level to 16,000 ft (with 20,000 ft if desirable), and have a radius of action of at least 200 km with 45 minutes loiter time, the officials said.

It should be able to carry at least 400 kg, including four passengers and stretchers.

The runway-independent UAV should have the ability to "auto-takeoff, navigate, and land, with capability to search, locate, and land using integrated Emergency Locator Transmitter (ELT)," the officials said.

The platform should be able to launch from unprepared surfaces, and fly in Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS)-denied conditions, they said.

These specifications project the "CSAR drone" as one of the most advanced indigenous UAVs in India's defence ecosystem, "combining AI-driven au-

tonomy, all-weather resilience, and combat-oriented utility," the senior official said.

Indian vendors with experience in aviation-related MRO (maintenance, repair and overhaul), UAV manufacturing, and defence quality assurance stand to gain, they said. The CSAR drone will need "rigorous military airworthiness validation," the senior official said.

The 'Make-I' mechanism is for Indian defence start-ups and MSMEs.

It allows private firms to lead the design, development, and manufacture of a system, while the IAF acts as a strategic partner through funding, feedback, and eventual procurement, the officials said. The CSAR drone project will add to India's growing fleet of indigenous defence drones, reduce foreign dependence, and create high-tech jobs in design, testing, and UAV manufacturing, they said.

POST OF THE DAY

The reason Indian technology is so far behind the rest of the world is because rent-seeking crony capitalists like Ambani and Adani impede progress because they don't want competition. And they have the government in their pocket.

SHORT TAKES

ED raids 7 sites linked to Kolkata real estate firm

Kolkata/New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate searched the premises of Kolkata-based realty company Merlin Group and its promoters Wednesday as part of a money laundering investigation, officials said. About seven premises linked to the group and its promoters, Sushil Mohita and Saket Mohita, were raided under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), they said. A response from the company on the searches is awaited. The promoters and the company are under the federal probe agency's scanner on charges of fabricating a "false" chain of title using "forged" documents, leading to allegations of land grabbing.

Student goes missing during family trek

Chikkamagaluru (Karnataka): A search operation was launched after a Class X student from Kerala went missing during a family trip to Manikyadhara Falls in the Chandradrona hill range, police said Wednesday. The girl was part of a group of around 40 relatives who had travelled from Palakkad, officials added.

Surprise check at GST office

New Delhi: Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta conducted a surprise inspection of the Trade and Taxes Department office at ITO Wednesday and expressed displeasure over the absence of officers during office hours, officials said. Interacting with the staff present, she enquired about their reporting time and sought a detailed report on the department's attendance records, they said.

international



President Donald Trump's threat to destroy Iranian civilization was 'truly unacceptable' and any attacks on civilian infrastructure violate international law

CHINA SURPASSES US IN GLOBAL APPROVAL RATINGS

China has overtaken the US in global approval ratings in 2025 as the disapproval of American leadership under President Donald Trump rose to a record 48 per cent, according to a worldwide survey by Washington-based analytics and advisory firm Gallup. While neither China nor the US command broad support, the survey found a median of 36 per cent approval rating of Chinas leadership, compared with 31 per cent for the American leadership



of the day quote

'Against the backdrop of yesterday's rather harsh statements from various sides, which caused significant reactions around the world, we certainly welcome this news of a ceasefire and support the decision not to move further along the path of armed escalation... especially the decision not to strike civilian facilities or Iran's economic infrastructure'



DMITRY PESKOV | KREMLIN SPOKESMAN

US could strike again if Iran does not hand over enriched uranium. The Pentagon chief did not offer any details about whether Iran had agreed to Trump's statement that the US would work with them to 'dig up' the buried material



PETE HEGSETH | DEFENCE SECRETARY, US

Pakistan has entered into a new era after arranging peace between the US and Iran. We will have stability and peace' Pakistan is now being recognised as a 'credible and trusted' mediator both in the region and globally



KHAWAJA ASIF | DEFENCE, PK

Ready to resume fighting if diplomacy fails: US

REUTERS

Washington, April 8: The top US general said Wednesday US troops stood ready to resume fighting if Tehran failed to strike a negotiated settlement as the Trump administration sought to portray the war as a decisive victory against Iran.

The remarks came a day after President Donald Trump from the brink of a threatened civilization-ending assault on Iran Tuesday night, two hours before a deadline he had set for Tehran to open the blockaded Strait of Hormuz. US and Iranian officials are set to meet in Pakistan for talks Friday.

"We hope that Iran chooses a lasting peace," General Dan Caine, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told a Pentagon news conference. "A ceasefire is a pause and the joint force remains ready, if ordered or called upon, to resume combat operations -- with the same speed and precision as we've demonstrated over the last 38 days."

Despite the ceasefire, Saudi Arabia's crucial East-West oil pipeline, currently its only outlet for crude exports, was hit in an Iranian attack. Saudi Arabia said it intercepted nine drones over the past few hours while Kuwait said a number of facilities were attacked by Iranian drones.

TACTICAL US GAINS, BUT STRATEGIC WIN?

US CLAIMS MAJOR TACTICAL WINS, DESTROYING MUCH OF IRAN'S MILITARY INFRASTRUCTURE. IRAN DECLARES HISTORIC VICTORY, ENTERS TALKS DISTRUSTFUL OF US INTENTIONS. EXPERTS NOTE IRAN'S REGIME REMAINS INTACT, TEHRAN MAY BE EMBOLDENED

Tehran, which demonstrated its ability to cut off Gulf energy supplies through its grip on the strait, has claimed victory and says it is entering the talks without trust in US negotiators.

"The enemy, in its unjust, illegal and criminal war against the Iranian nation, has suffered an undeniable, historic and crushing defeat," Iran's Supreme National Security Council said in a statement.

US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, however, portrayed Iran as militarily defeated and without any option but to strike



IRAN'S 10-POINT PLAN

- non-aggression
continued Iranian control over the Strait of Hormuz
acceptance of enrichment
lifting all primary and secondary sanctions
termination of all resolutions passed by the UN Security Council and Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency
withdrawal of US combat forces from the region
cessation of war on all fronts, including against the Islamic resistance in Lebanon

a deal. Hegseth and Caine spoke about the destruction of Iran's defense industry, its navy and its missile capabilities.

Hegseth said the US military was "hanging around" in the Middle East to ensure Iran complies with the two-week ceasefire and to monitor the country's enriched uranium

'Ketamine Queen' to be sentenced in death of Matthew Perry

REUTERS

Los Angeles, April 8: A Los Angeles drug dealer known as the "Ketamine Queen" is scheduled to be sentenced Wednesday for illegally supplying the dose of the prescription anesthetic that led to the drowning death of "Friends" actor Matthew Perry.

Jasveen Sangha, 42, pleaded guilty in September to five felony counts related to Perry's death in his hot tub in 2023. Federal prosecutors argue that Sangha should be sentenced to 15 years in prison.

"While defendant worked to expand and profit from her drug trafficking, she knew -- and disregarded -- the grave harm her conduct was causing," prosecutors said in court documents.



Defense attorneys are advocating for a sentence of time served, telling a judge in a court filing that Sangha has taken responsibility for her actions and worked to rehabilitate herself. Sangha, who they said has a history of substance abuse, has been in prison since August 2024.

"She has maintained sustained and exemplary sobriety, and actively engaged in recovery-oriented and rehabilitative programming while in custody," her attorneys said.

Indian-origin healthcare worker called 'auntie', wins harassment claim

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, April 8: An Indian-origin healthcare assistant employed with the UK's National Health Service (NHS) has won a harassment claim over being called "auntie" by a nurse colleague of Ghanaian heritage.

Watford Employment Tribunal Judge George Elliott upheld that Ilda Esteves was harassed on the grounds of age and sex and directed the West London NHS Trust to pay her a total of 1,425.15 pounds in damages for "injury to feelings".

A three-judge panel, which heard the case last year and issued detailed reasons behind the judgment last month, accepted that "auntie" is a term of respect for older people in Ghanaian culture. However, staff nurse Charles Oppong was responsible for leading the teams on the ward and should not have made such comments.

"We find that Charles Oppong's purpose was probably an offensive attempt at humour," notes the judgment.

Trump meets NATO chief as Iran war strains alliance

Washington/Brussels: President Donald Trump welcomes NATO chief Mark Rutte to the White House Wednesday, as the war with Iran has pushed US relations with other members of the military alliance to a crisis point.

The Republican president has threatened to withdraw from the 32-member transatlantic alliance and denounced Washington's European allies in recent weeks for what he said was inadequate support for the US-Israeli bombing campaign in Iran. Trump said Tuesday the attacks would be paused after the two sides agreed to a two-week ceasefire. Trump has called for countries that depend on oil from the Gulf region to break Iran's chokehold on the Strait of Hormuz, but European countries are unlikely to join mine-clearing or other missions to free up navigation as long as hostilities continue, according to two European diplomats. Iran has vowed to obstruct the vital chokepoint with mines until the war ends. Rutte, known in Europe as a "Trump whisperer," has cultivated a warm relationship with Trump despite the tensions and referred to him last year as a "daddy" handling a schoolyard brawl between Israel and Iran. Another European diplomat described Rutte's approach to Trump as deferential but effective.



Taiwan Oppn leader visits tomb of party founder in China

Taiwan Oppn leader pledges reconciliation at memorial for founding father in China

REUTERS

Nanjing, China, April 8: Taiwan opposition leader Cheng Li-wun pledged Wednesday to channel the spirit of her party's founder Sun Yat-sen and seek reconciliation with China, offering praise at his tomb for the country's achievements following the communist revolution.

Cheng, chairwoman of the Kuomintang (KMT), Taiwan's largest opposition party, is in China at a time of increased Chinese military pressure on Taiwan, which Beijing views as its own territory, and as the opposition-dominated parliament stalls a government plan for \$40 billion in extra defence spending.

In a moment filled with symbolism on her first full day in the country, Cheng laid a wreath at Sun's mausoleum in the eastern city of Nanjing, also the capital of the KMT-led Republic of China government before it fled to Taiwan in 1949 having lost a civil war with Mao Zedong's communists.

"The core values of Sun Yat-sen's ideal that 'all under heaven are equal' have always been equality, inclusiveness, and unity," Cheng said, in footage carried live on Taiwanese television channels.

"We should work together to promote reconciliation and unity across the (Taiwan) Strait and create regional prosperity and peace."



KMT-led government fled to Taiwan in 1949 at end of civil war. China claims democratically governed Taiwan as its own

TAIWAN OFFICIALS WARY

Wu Cheng, a spokesperson for Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party, said if the KMT really wanted stability across the strait it should stop blocking defence spending in parliament.

"Peace has never come from the charity of dictators; it must be safeguarded by Taiwan's own strength," he said in a statement.

Lai's government has said Cheng should also tell Chinese officials, including President Xi Jinping should she meet him, to stop China's regular military harassment of the island and respect the Taiwanese people's right to choose their own future. Speaking to reporters at parliament in Taipei earlier Wednesday, Taiwan National Security Bureau Director-General Tsai Ming-yan said he couldn't comment on what political parties do, but added China uses a carrot-and-stick approach.



Earthrise is a photograph of Earth that was taken from lunar orbit by astronaut William Anders on December 24, 1968, during the Apollo 8 mission. Nature photographer Galen Rowell described it as "the most influential environmental photograph ever taken"

North Korea fires ballistic missiles

Pyongyang dismisses Seoul's diplomacy hopes

REUTERS

Seoul, April 8: North Korea fired multiple ballistic missiles Wednesday, adding to a launch a day earlier, South Korea's military said, extending a series of tests that have strained hopes in Seoul for easing tensions.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said North Korea fired an additional unidentified missile at around 2:20 pm (0520 GMT) Wednesday from the Wonsan area towards waters off its east coast.

The missile flew about 700 km (435 miles), it said.

Earlier Wednesday, North Korea launched several unidentified short-range ballistic missiles also from near the same area, the JCS said.

The missiles flew about 240 km (150 miles), it said, adding



that South Korean and US authorities were conducting a detailed analysis. South Korea's military also said it had detected the launch of a suspected ballistic missile from near Pyongyang Tuesday.

South Korea's presidential

Blue House convened an emergency National Security Council meeting Wednesday, calling the earlier launches a provocation that violated UN Security Council resolutions, according to media reports. It urged Pyongyang

to end such tests. The Japan Coast Guard said the latest missile fell into the sea about 10 minutes after launch. Tokyo said no missiles entered its territorial waters or exclusive economic zone.

Pyongyang's actions "threaten peace and security in the region and the international community," Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Minoru Kihara said.

According to South Korea's Yonhap news agency, citing military officials, the projectile launched Tuesday was probably a ballistic missile that flew eastwards before showing signs of an abnormality in the early stage of flight and disappearing.

The incidents mark North Korea's fourth, fifth and sixth ballistic missile launches this year, following two launches in January and a third in March.



“The ceasefire and reopening of the Strait of Hormuz bring immediate relief to exporters by easing shipping disruptions, high freight rates, and insurance costs”
SC RALHAN | PRESIDENT, FIEO

MMTC-PAMP LAUNCHES INDIA'S FIRST ORGANISED SILVER BUYBACK SERVICE

Bullion refiner MMTC-PAMP Wednesday launched what it called the industry's first organised buyback programme for silver coins, bars and jewellery, initially covering seven cities before a planned nationwide rollout. The service will begin at select exclusive brand stores and purity verification centres in Kolkata, Bhubaneswar, Guwahati, Ludhiana, Ahmedabad, Mumbai, and New Delhi, with an expansion across all its stores planned for the next fiscal year



of the day quote

Coal stock at the power plants is around 55 million tonnes as of yesterday (Tuesday), adequate for 24 days of uninterrupted power generation based on the average consumption of last seven days. So we have absolutely no deficit at the power generation side

SANJEEV KUMAR KASSI | COAL JOINT SECRETARY

By partnering with Swiggy, we are combining our deep understanding of train travel with Swiggy's strong restaurant network and delivery expertise to further strengthen our existing "Food on Train" feature

SRIPAD VAIDYA | COO, IXIGO TRAINS & CONFIRMTKT

Economic development advances when participation in markets becomes broader, deeper and more efficient. The convergence of DPI and formal credit systems has significantly transformed how economic participation is recorded and financed

NIDHI CHHIBBER | CEO, NITI AAYOG

SHORT TAKES

Silver, gold script sharp comeback

New Delhi: Silver prices surged Rs 11,000 to Rs 2.51 lakh per kilogram in the national capital Wednesday, while gold advanced to Rs 1.56 lakh per 10 grams amid strong global cues after the US and Iran agreed to a two-week ceasefire. According to the All India Sarafa Association, the white metal zoomed by Rs 11,000, or nearly 5 per cent, to Rs 2,51,000 per kg (inclusive of all taxes) from Tuesday's closing level of Rs 2,40,000 per kg. Gold of 99.9 per cent purity also appreciated by Rs 3,200, or 2.09 per cent, to Rs 1,56,400 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes). It settled at Rs 1,53,200 per 10 grams in the previous market session. Analysts said bullion prices strengthened as geopolitical tensions in West Asia eased, triggering a broader relief rally across global financial markets

Hyundai to hike prices by up to 1%

New Delhi: Hyundai Motor India Ltd Wednesday said it will hike prices of its vehicles by up to 1 per cent across its portfolio from next month citing various cost escalations. The company has planned to increase the prices of its cars up to 1 per cent across the portfolio, effective May 2026, Hyundai Motor India Ltd said in a regulatory filing. The price revision is attributed to a combination of various cost escalations, it added.

Banks' bad loans decline to 2%: RBI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 8: Indian scheduled commercial banks' gross non-performing assets (NPAs) ratio declined further to 2 per cent in December 2025, the Reserve Bank said Wednesday.

Gross NPAs - which represents the proportion of loans unpaid for over 90 days - for the banking system had stood at 2.5 per cent in the year-ago period, as per the bi-annual Monetary Policy Report released by the central bank.

The improvement in asset quality was across sectors, including retail loans, services, industry, and agriculture.

NPAs in retail loans eased to 1 per cent, services eased to 1.7 per cent, industry eased to 1.8 per cent, and agriculture eased to 5.7 per cent in Decem-

US-IRAN CEASEFIRE

Equities soar 4%

Rallying for the fifth day in a row, Sensex registers best trading day in five years while Nifty sees highest single-day rally in 11 months

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 8: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty surged nearly 4 per cent Wednesday, following an impressive rally in global markets and a drop in crude oil prices after the US and Iran announced a two-week ceasefire.

The RBI decision to keep the policy repo rate unchanged, heavy buying across all sectors and a strengthening rupee against the US dollar also improved investor sentiment, traders said.

Rallying for the fifth day in a row, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 2,946.32 points or 3.95 per cent to settle at 77,562.90, registering its best trading day in five years. During the session, it surged 3,018.96 points or 4 per cent to 77,635.54.

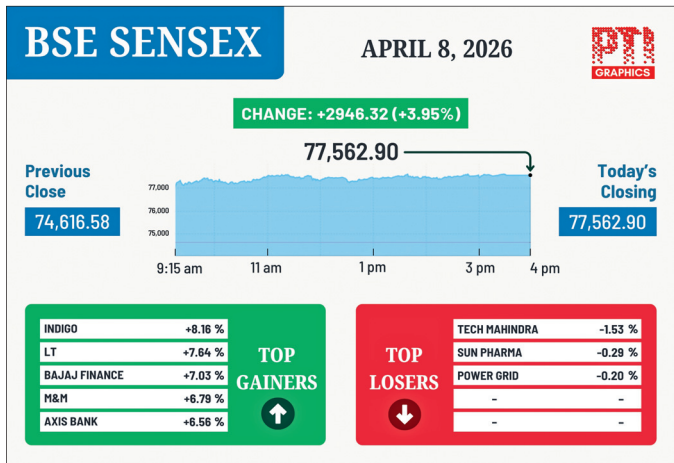
The 50-share NSE Nifty soared 873.70 points or 3.78 per cent to end at 23,997.35, the highest single-day rally in 11 months. It rallied 901.5 points or 3.89 per cent to 24,025.15 during intra-day trade.

From the Sensex pack, InterGlobe Aviation jumped the most by 8.22 per cent. Larsen & Toubro, Bajaj Finance, Mahindra & Mahindra, Axis Bank and Maruti were also among the prominent gainers.

In contrast, Tech Mahindra, Sun Pharma and Power Grid were the laggards.

All sectoral indices ended higher. Realty index jumped 6.76 per cent, auto (6.55 per cent), BSE PSU Bank (5.79 per cent), Bankex (5.72 per cent), Private Banks index (5.62 per cent), Financial Services (5.48 per cent), Services (5.22 per cent), Consumer Discretionary (5.11 per cent) and Industrials (4.87 per cent).

On the other hand, the BSE MidCap Select index jumped 4.93



Investors' wealth rises by ₹16.25L-cr

New Delhi: Investors' wealth swelled by Rs 16.25 lakh crore Wednesday, mirroring a sharp rally in the stock market where the BSE Sensex jumped nearly 4 per cent, after the US and Iran announced a two-week ceasefire. Thanks to the sharp rally in equities, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies surged by Rs 16,25,093.09 crore to Rs 4,45,51,401.85 crore (\$4.81 trillion). A total of 3,859 stocks advanced, while 537 declined and 101 remained unchanged on the BSE.

per cent, and the SmallCap Select index rallied 4.01 per cent.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, tumbled 13.89 per cent to \$94.09 per barrel.

The rupee appreciated 52 paise to close at 92.54 against the US dollar Wednesday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 8,692.11 crore Tuesday, according to exchange data. Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs), however, bought stocks worth Rs 7,979.50 crore.

On Tuesday, the Sensex jumped 509.73 points or 0.69 per cent to settle at 74,616.58. The

The rally was primarily driven by a sharp improvement in global sentiment following the announcement of a temporary ceasefire between the US and Iran, which led to a significant cooling in crude oil prices and eased concerns around inflation and global growth

AJIT MISHRA | SVP, RESEARCH, RELIGARE BROKING LTD

Nifty climbed 155.40 points or 0.68 per cent to end at 23,123.65.

Global markets cheer

Stock markets are surging worldwide, and oil prices are plunging back toward \$90 per barrel after President Donald Trump pulled back from his threat to force a "whole civilization" to die in the war with Iran.

The S&P 500 leaped 2.6 per cent after Trump, Iran and Israel agreed to a two-week ceasefire, just hours before a deadline Trump had set for Iran to open the Strait of Hormuz and allow oil to flow freely again from the Persian Gulf to customers worldwide.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average was up 1,383 points, or 3 per cent, as of 9:35 am Eastern time, and the Nasdaq composite was 3.3 per cent higher following even bigger gains in European and Asian stock markets.

In Asia, where countries are more reliant on oil from the Middle East, South Korea's Kospi stock index surged 6.9 per cent. Japan's Nikkei 225 leaped 5.4 per cent, and Hong Kong's Hang Seng jumped 3.1 per cent.

European stock indexes rose nearly as much, with Germany's DAX returning 5.2 per cent and France's CAC 40 rising 4.9 per cent.

Dream, determination, dedication drive entrepreneurship: Bhala

Bhala Chandra Mohanty is a prominent industrialist and the Managing Director of Oriclean Private Limited. Since founding the company in 1990, he has transformed a small-scale unit in Cuttack into a multi-crore manufacturing powerhouse. Under his leadership, Oriclean has become a critical strategic partner for global giant Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL), producing household staples like Vim, Surf Excel Easy Wash, Sunlight and Active Wheel. Beyond chemicals, Mohanty has diversified his business empire into food processing, seafood, and logistics. Known for his operational expertise and commitment to Odisha's industrial growth, he also contributes to academia as a member of the DRIEMS University Academic Council. Excerpts...



BHALA CHANDRA MOHANTY
MANAGING DIRECTOR, ORICLEAN PRIVATE LIMITED

■ Since Oriclean Pvt Ltd procures raw materials from HUL-authorized suppliers, how do you manage supply chain disruptions to maintain the strict delivery timelines required by a major FMCG client?

■ We manage supply chain disruptions by maintaining alternative procurement options with HUL-approved vendors under similar terms and conditions, ensuring continuity in raw material supply. Our principal-to-principal (P2P) relationship with HUL, built over more than three decades, enables seamless coordination and helps us consistently meet strict delivery timelines.

■ Beyond core brands like Active Wheel, Vim, and Domex, are there plans to expand into other cleaning categories such as liquid detergents or specialized industrial cleaners?

■ We are currently manu-

facturing leading home care brands such as Surf Excel, Sunlight, Wheel, and Domex. While our primary focus remains on these established categories, we are actively exploring opportunities to expand further. Discussions are underway with HUL and other large national and multinational companies in the home care segment, including potential entry into liquid detergents and other emerging cleaning categories to diversify our portfolio.

■ What specific eco-friendly manufacturing processes or waste management protocols have been implemented at your Cuttack units to align with global ESG standards?

■ We follow stringent eco-friendly manufacturing practices at our Cuttack units, aligned with global ESG standards. We have obtained certifications from reputed national and international bodies, including BIS, ISO 9001:2015, ISO 14001:2015, and ISO 45001:2018. These certifications reflect our commitment to quality, environmental management, and occupational health and safety, ensuring responsible production processes and effective waste management protocols.

■ You recently received approval for a ₹88 crore project to manufacture sauces, jams, and jellies. What is the expected timeline for this facility to become oper-

ational in Tangi-Choudwar?

■ Due to certain techno-commercial challenges, we have currently kept the proposed ₹88 crore project for manufacturing sauces, jams, and jellies in abeyance. However, as part of our expansion strategy, we have established a new unit under the name ORIBAKE Private Limited to manufacture biscuits and bakery products with a capacity of 4,500 TPA. The project is nearing completion, and we expect to commence commercial production before the end of the current financial year, while also exploring tie-ups with reputed brands.

■ How has been your journey so far? As an entrepreneur, why did you choose to enter this line of business and what advice will you give to the new entrants?

■ My entrepreneurial journey has been both challenging and fulfilling. I believe entrepreneurship is not just a profession but a responsibility, and only a few get the opportunity to create and serve at a larger scale. I chose this path to contribute meaningfully to society while building value. A true entrepreneur not only creates wealth but also supports socio-economic development. My advice to new entrants is to follow the three Ds—Dream, Determination, and Dedication—as these are essential for long-term success.

Singh Deo inaugurates Malabar's CSR programme

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 8: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, Wednesday announced its East Region Scholarship Programme at Rama Devi Women's University here.

The initiative will support 2,000 students with an investment of Rs 1.8 crore, as part of its Rs 200 crore National CSR from the commitment for FY 2026-27. The National CSR programme spans 3,000+ locations across 19 states and is expected to benefit over 2 lakh people, with a strong focus on education alongside initiatives in hunger relief, healthcare, housing, and environmental protection.

Key efforts include scholarships for 33,000 girls, expansion

of micro-learning centres for street children in partnership with Pratham Education Foundation, and implementation through the Malabar Charitable Trust.

The event was held in the presence of Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo, Deputy Chief Minister, Odisha, along with senior representatives from the group, invited dignitaries, and members of the academic community.

Commenting on the initiative, Singh Deo, said, "Initiatives that focus on education, nutrition, and access to essential resources play an important role in strengthening communities at the grassroots level. Programmes such as these con-



tribute meaningfully towards improving access to education and supporting inclusive development."

At the regional level, the group's CSR initiatives across East India extend beyond scholarships to include programmes in hunger eradication, education support, and

access to essential resources. In Jharkhand, it operates 217 micro-learning centres supporting 9,169 students, provides 7,109 meals per day across two locations, and has developed 25 drinking water wells benefiting 1,065 individuals.

In Odisha, 183 micro-learning centres support 5,738 students,

along with 5,017 meals per day across five locations and 132 drinking water wells benefiting 2,511 individuals. In West Bengal, the Group runs 192 micro-learning centres supporting 7,501 students, provides 6,292 meals per day across two locations, and has developed 402 drinking water wells benefiting 9,446 individuals.

MP Ahammad, Chairman, Malabar Group, said, "Education remains one of the most effective ways to create long-term impact at both an individual and community level. Through our scholarship programmes, we aim to support students who have the ability to succeed but require financial assistance to continue their studies."

RM Motors bags award at Triumph Dealer Conference

Sambalpur: RM Motors was honored with a prestigious award at the recent Triumph Dealer Conference held under the leadership of the Vice President of Probiking India. The award was received by Gurudev Pradhan, Business Head of Probiking Sambalpur, on behalf of RM Motors, recognising the dealership's outstanding performance and commitment to excellence. This recognition highlights RM Motors' consistent dedication to delivering superior customer experiences in the premium motorcycle segment. The award reflects the team's



hard work, passion, and customer-centric approach that have set new benchmarks in sales, service, and overall dealership operations. The conference also marked a significant milestone for Triumph, as the all-new Tracker 400 model was officially launched. Alongside this, Triumph also unveiled its new range of 350cc models, further strengthening its portfolio in the mid-capacity motorcycle segment. Speaking on the occasion, the management of RM Motors expressed gratitude to Triumph Motorcycles India for this esteemed recognition. "This award is a testament to our team's relentless efforts and the trust our customers have placed in us. We remain committed to raising the bar and continuing to deliver excellence in every aspect of our operations."

AM/NS India observes World Health Day

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar: ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India (AM/NS India) observed World Health Day across its operational locations in Odisha, in alignment with this year's global theme, "Together for health. Stand with science."



Through engaging activities, awareness workshops, free tests and consultations, the company reaffirmed its strong commitment to the health and well-being of its employees, partners as well as the nearby community members. At the Paradeep Complex, the day commenced with an energising zumba fitness session for employees. This was followed by office ergonomics and meditation practices, reinforcing the importance of holistic well-being. The journey toward better health continued throughout the day with consultation sessions that addressed specific concerns such as ortho and joint-related issues, along with guidance on managing sitting posture conditions. The programmes were graced by AM/NS India leadership including USR Raju, Head-Odisha Operations, Rajarshi Sinha, Head-Power Plant and Dr Ajit Jena, Chief Medical Officer-Odisha Asset. At the Bhubaneswar office, several meaningful initiatives were organised, including an Oral Health Camp, a Neuro Consultation, and a Spine Health Awareness Session, all graced by the presence of Dr Debabrata Dash, Head-HR (East), AM/NS India. Similarly, at the Dabuna Beneficiation Plant in Keonjhar, impactful awareness sessions were conducted for employees and associates at the New Hostel Building. These sessions emphasised on oral health awareness, highlighting the harmful effects of tobacco and betel nut. The programme was held in the presence of Jaiwardhan Paroha, Head-Beneficiation Plant, Dabuna. The Mining Division of AM/NS India, under its CSR initiative, observed the day at Saheed Ratan Pradhan UP School, Thakurani, and Kalmang Village, Sagasahi, with active participation from the community and school children.

Vedanta boosts irrigation in Kalahandi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar: Vedanta Aluminium, India's largest producer of aluminium, has strengthened agricultural livelihoods and water security in Odisha's Kalahandi district by enabling irrigation across more than 800 acres of farmland, benefiting over 9,000 people in 41 villages through its integrated watershed initiative, Project Sangam.



The initiative has created over 11 lakh cubic meters of water recharge through the development of 61 water structures, significantly improving groundwater availability and ensuring sustained water access for farming and domestic use in one of the state's most climate-vulnerable regions. Designed to address water scarcity, Project Sangam adopts a scientific and community-centric approach to watershed management. The programme focuses on the revival of traditional water bodies, creation of sustainable irrigation infrastructure, and efficient capture of monsoon runoff, helping replenish groundwater tables and reduce farmers' dependence on erratic rainfall. Commenting on the same, Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya, CEO, Vedanta Alumina Business, said, "Water security is fundamental to sustainable development, especially in regions like Kalahandi where communities are deeply dependent on agriculture. Through Project Sangam, we are integrating scientific watershed management with community participation to create enduring water assets." Krushnacharan Mali, a local farmer from Balabhadrapur, said, "For years, our farming depended entirely on uncertain rainfall. Through Project Sangam, we now have assured irrigation for our fields, which has transformed our farms and our lives. With water available year-round, we are growing better crops, earning more, and no longer worry about leaving our land during dry months."

GT win last ball thriller

Prasidh trumps Miller as Gujarat Titans inch past Delhi Capitals by one run

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 8: Gujarat Titans secured their first win of the season following a roller coaster last over as a rampaging David Miller's momentary indiscretion cost Delhi Capitals dearly in an IPL match here Wednesday.

Miller refused the single off the penultimate delivery of the final bowled by Prasidh Krishna underlining his lack of trust in partner Kuldeep Yadav. Prasidh bowled a pace-off slower which Miller missed and Jos Buttler having taken one glove off broke down the stumps before Kuldeep could make it.

Delhi Capitals finished agonisingly short on 209 for 8 in pursuit of 211.

Jos Buttler (52 off 27) returned to his ballistic ways with a six laden half century

TEAMS	P	W	L	NRR	PTS
RR	3	3	0	2.403	6
PBKS	3	2	0	0.637	5
RCB	2	2	0	2.501	4
DC	3	2	1	0.811	4
SRH	3	1	2	0.275	2
GT	3	1	2	-0.270	2
LSG	2	1	1	-0.542	2
MI	3	1	2	-0.715	2
KKR	3	0	2	-1.964	1
CSK	3	0	3	-2.517	0

before captain Shubman Gill (70 off) and Washington Sundar (55 off 32) powered Gujarat Titans to 210 for four.

Rahul (92 off 52) and Patham Nissanka (41 off 24) provided an ideal platform for Delhi Capitals with a 76-run stand off 49 balls. However, Rashid Khan struck thrice in the middle overs to wrest the momentum from Delhi Capitals.

Titans had all under control until the 19th over with the home needing 36 off the last two overs.



It was a tough ask but with Miller (41 not out off 20) returning to the centre after treating his finger in the dressing room, there was hope.

Miller singlehandedly brought back Delhi Capitals in the game with a couple of cracking sixes and a four in a 23-run penultimate over from Mohammed Siraj.

With majority of Titans pac-

ers' proving expensive on the night, the experienced Prasidh Krishna was left to defend 13 off the last six balls. Vipraj Nigam departed after a four off the first ball, leaving Miller with 8 to get off the last three balls.

What followed was mammoth hit over long-off that almost sealed the deal for Delhi Capitals. Such was Miller's state of mind that he refused a single

on the penultimate ball and that proved to be decisive in the end.

With 2 needed off the final ball, Prasidh went for a slow bouncer that was not connected by Miller, who went for the run leaving Kuldeep Yadav short of his crease. The review was called for a wide but it was deemed a fair delivery, leaving Miller disappointed. It was the first loss of the season for Del-

hi Capitals in as many games while Titans finally logged home full points in third attempt.

Earlier, Buttler smashed five sixes at the Kotla. Four of those maximums came off medium pacer Mukesh Kumar (2/55 in 4 overs), who had an off day after starring in the previous game against Mumbai Indians.

Buttler went hard at Mukesh in the fifth over of the innings, collecting 23 runs via three hits that went all the way. His onslaught helped Delhi Capitals reach 68 for one in the power-play. He was dismissed against the run of play, off a long hop from Kuldeep Yadav.

Gill, a mere spectator when Buttler was batting, took the onus on himself to clear the ropes after Buttler's departure.

Titans have been labelled as a top heavy team with middle order not being tested enough.

TODAY'S MATCH

KKR vs LSG

TIME: 7:30 PM

Star Sports channels & JioHotstar

Washington Sundar Wednesday played his part well at number four. He reached his half century with a six over deep square leg off T Natarajan.

At 161 for two in 15 overs, Titans were on course for 220 but fell short. Lungi Ngidi was the pick of the bowlers for Delhi Capitals, ending with frugal figures of 24 for one in four overs.

BRIEF SCORES

Gujarat Titans: 210 for 4 in 20 overs (Shubman Gill 70, Washington Sundar 55, Jos Buttler 52; Mukesh Kumar 2/55, Lungi Ngidi 1/24) beat **Delhi Capitals:** 209 for 8 in 20 overs (KL Rahul 92, Patham Nissanka 41, David Miller 41 not out; Rashid Khan 3/17) by one run

CANDIDATES CHESS

Vaishali beats Divya to share lead with Zhu



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Paphos (Cyprus), April 8: R Vaishali kept Indian hopes alive defeating compatriot Divya Deshmush in the ninth round of the womens Candidates Chess Tournament here Wednesday.

After what could be best prescribed as a sedate start, Vaishali has been pushing hard for a win in every game but this victory kept her in lead alongside Jiner Zhu of China on 5.5 points out of a possible eight.

With five more rounds to come in the women's competition, early leader Anna Muzychuk is in close pursuit of the two leaders a half point behind while Divya, Kateryna Lagno of Ukraine and Bibisara Assaubayeva are not far behind.

The one player out of contention here is former world women's champion Zhongyi Tan, who is still looking for the winning touch.

In the open section, Anish Giri almost ended the hopes of pre-event favourite Fabiana Caruana of the United States scoring a brilliant win yet again.

The leader Javokhir Sindarov played the catch-me-if-you-can game with the followers as he took another draw, albeit, hard fought

against Matthias Bluebaum of Germany.

As things stand in the open section, Sindarov has seven points from nine games and he is only followed by Giri of Holland, who has reinvented himself to be on 5.5 points.

It remains to be seen if Giri can catch up with Sindarov but the Uzbek has three games out of the remaining five with white pieces now.

R Praggnanadhaa tried to prove a point against Wei Yi of China but the Indian clearly spoiled a much better position in the middle game as the match is still on.

Results round 9: R Praggnanadhaa (IND, 2) playing Wei Yi (CHN, 3.5); Anish Giri (NED, 5.5) beat Fabiano Caruana (USA, 4.5) Javokhir Sindarov (UZB, 7) drew with Matthias Bluebaum (GER, 4); Hikaru Nakamura (USA, 3) playing Andrey Esipenko (RUS, 2.5).

Women: R Vaishali (IND, 5.5) beat Divya Deshmukh (IND, 4.5); Jiner Zhu (CHN, 5.5) beat Kateryna Lagno (RUS, 4.5); Aleksandra Goryachkina (RUS, 4) drew with Bibisara Assaubayeva (KAZ, 4); Anna Muzychuk (UKR, 5) drew with Zhongyi Tan (CHN, 3).

SHORT TAKES

Shooting WC: Air pistol shooters disappoint

Granada: Indian shooters endured a disappointing outing in the men's 10m air pistol event at the ISSF Pistol/Rifle World Cup here Wednesday, with all three participants failing to qualify for the finals, just a day after clinching the mixed team gold with a world-record performance. Young Mukesh Nelavalli, who had shattered the world record en route to winning gold in the 10m air pistol mixed team event on the opening day Tuesday, finished 14th with an aggregate score of 579, missing out on the eight-shooter final by a considerable margin.

BJK Cup: India take 2-0 lead against NZ

New Delhi: Young debutant Vaishnavi Adkar and Sahaja Yamalapalli notched up convincing wins as India bounced back in style, blanking New Zealand 3-0 in their second Asia/Oceania Group I tie of the Billie Jean King Cup here Wednesday. Vaishnavi and Sahaja had endured contrasting defeats as India went down 1-2 to Thailand in their rain-hit opener. However, the hosts scripted a swift turnaround, with both players showing composure under pressure in their respective singles matches against New Zealand, who are without their star player Lulu Sun.

Warner admits drinking wine

Sydney: Fresh details have emerged in the drink-driving case involving former Australia opener David Warner, with reports revealing that the veteran cricketer told police he had consumed alcohol shortly before being stopped in Sydney's eastern suburbs. Warner allegedly informed officers that he had been drinking with a friend prior to getting behind the wheel on Easter Sunday, stating he had consumed three glasses of wine before attempting to drive back to his residence in Maroubra, NewsCorp reported. The 39-year-old was intercepted during a random breath-testing operation, where police observed a van stopping and parking just short of the checkpoint.

Deepika, Savita return for hockey tour to Argentina

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 8: Salima Tete will continue to lead India, while drag-flicker Deepika and experienced goalkeeper Savita make a comeback to the 24-member national women's hockey squad announced Wednesday for the tour of Argentina later this month.

The tour will also see the return of defender Jyoti and forward Mumtaz Khan, strengthening both ends of the field.

India will play four matches against Argentina from April 13 to 17 in Buenos Aires in what will be a key exposure tour ahead of the World Cup and the Asian Games later this year. The biggest boost for the squad is the return of fit-again forward Deepika after a period of rehabilitation and she is set to resume her role as the team's primary drag-flicker.

In her absence, players like Navneet Kaur, Manisha Chauhan, Udita and Annu had stepped up during the qualifiers.

Deepika's return now adds depth and experience to the attack. Goalkeeper Savita missed



the recent qualifiers and her comeback will bolster the defence against a strong Argentine attack. Bichu Devi Kharibam, who did well in regular goalkeeper Savita's brief absence, retains her place.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Savita, Bichu Devi Kharibam.

Defenders: Nikki Pradhan, Ishika Chaudhary, Sushila Chanu Pukhrambam, Manisha Chauhan, Lalthantluangi, Jyoti, Udita.

Midfielders: Vaishnavi Vitthal Phalke, Sakshi Rana, Sunelita Toppo, Salima Tete, Neha, Deepika Soreng, Rutuja Dadaso Pisal, Ishika.

Forwards: Baljeet Kaur, Navneet Kaur, Deepika, Annu, Beauty Ddungdung, Lalremsiami, Mumtaz Khan.

1ST LEG OF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE QUARTERFINALS

Kane leads Bayern to win over Real Madrid

Kane has scored 22 Champions League goals since the start of the 2024-25 season, the most of anybody

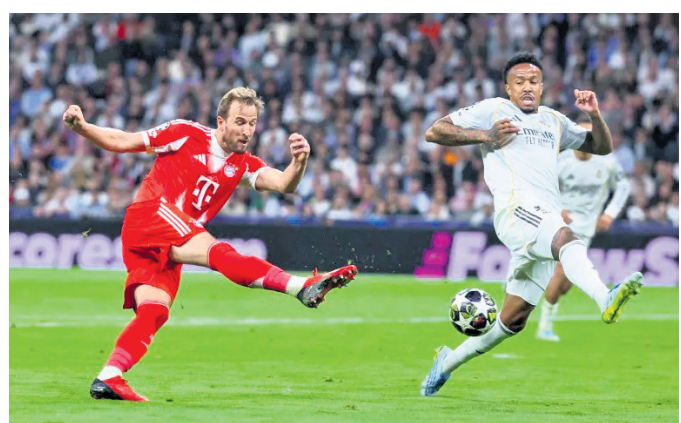
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Madrid, April 8: Harry Kane delivered for Bayern Munich on his return from injury, scoring a goal and helping set up another in his team's 2-1 win at Real Madrid in the first leg of the Champions League quarterfinals Tuesday.

Kylian Mbappe scored Madrid's goal after the visitors had taken a two-goal lead at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium.

Kane had been listed as a gameday decision after missing the team's Bundesliga match last weekend because of an ankle injury.

The result left Bayern with an edge ahead of the second leg in Germany next week as it tries to reach the Champions League semifinals for the first time since



2023-24, when it was eliminated by eventual champion Madrid.

Arsenal won 1-0 at Sporting Lisbon in the other quarterfinal Tuesday.

Madrid and Bayern are playing their sixth knockout-stage meeting in 14 seasons, with the Spanish powerhouse having won four of their five two-leg matchups since the 2011-12 season.

Kane participated in the buildup of Bayern's first goal in the 41st minute, exchanging passes with Serge Gnabry who ultimately fed a through ball for

On Wednesday, Barcelona will host Spanish rival Atletico Madrid, and Liverpool will visit defending champion PSG

finding the net from close range after a pinpoint low cross by Trent Alexander-Arnold.

Mbappe leads the scoring this season with 14 goals, which is double the forward's total last season. He is three goals shy of the most goals in a single Champions League campaign achieved by Cristiano Ronaldo with Madrid in 2013-14.

The German champion lost to Inter Milan in the quarterfinals last season. Record 15-time European champion Madrid was eliminated by Arsenal in the last eight last year.

Bayern is unbeaten in its last 14 games in all competitions, with 12 wins. Madrid was coming off a 2-1 loss at Mallorca Saturday that hurt its La Liga title hopes.

BWF to test out synthetic shuttlecocks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 8: The Badminton World Federation (BWF), the sport's global governing body, has approved the use of synthetic shuttlecocks from two top companies at BWF Grade 3 tournaments and Junior International tournaments.

This initiative forms part of BWF's long-term approach to evaluating synthetic feather shuttlecocks for potential use at the elite level.

BWF is working with the companies to assess the quality and performance of synthetic shuttlecocks in higher-level competitive settings, with a particular focus on ensuring that flight and playing characteristics align with current competition standards, the



BWF said in a news item on its official website.

The approved products for use during this trial phase are: VICTOR New Carbon Sonic Max Synthetic Shuttlecock (SC-NCS-MAX-12), YONEX CROSSWIND 70 Synthetic Shuttlecock.

The trial will include the collection of manufacturer performance data, alongside feedback from players, technical officials, and event organisers.

This information will support BWF's ongoing assessment and inform future decisions regarding the potential use of

synthetic shuttlecocks at top-tier tournaments.

The BWF has repeatedly come under attack from animal protection groups over the use of goose or duck feathers for making shuttlecocks.

Currently, a shuttlecock is made from 16 or so overlapping feathers, usually goose or duck, embedded into a rounded cork base. Feathers are plucked from the wings of a live goose or duck, a method which has been deemed cruel by animal rights activists. To ensure satisfactory flight properties, it is considered preferable to use feathers from the right or left wings only in each shuttlecock, and not mix feathers from different wings, as the feathers from different wings are shaped differently.

BADMINTON ASIA CHAMPIONSHIPS

Ayush stuns world No 7; Sindhu, Prannoy triumph

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ningbo (China), April 8: India's Ayush Shetty stunned world No 7 Lin Shi Feng of China in straight games to enter the second round of the men's singles competition at the Badminton Asia Championships here Wednesday.

World No 25 Ayush, who had won the US Open Super 300 title last year, registered a 21-13 21-16 victory in 51 minutes.

Lin raced to a 4-1 lead early on, but Ayush clawed back to level at 7-7 before gradually taking control to pocket the opening game.

After the change of sides, the Chinese again moved ahead 4-1 and extended it to 12-9, but Ayush turned the tide with a six-point burst to surge to 18-13.

Lin closed the gap to 16-18, but the Indian held his nerve to shut the door on his fancied opponent.

PV Sindhu defeated Malaysia's Wong Ling Ching in women's singles 15-21, 21-11, 21-19 in 1 hour and 7 minutes.

She will next face World No 2 Wang Zhi Yi of China in the pre-quarterfinals both having 3-3 win-loss in past meetups.