



### Love reflections

Actor Regena Cassandra says the joy of loving and being loved exists because those in love understand pain of loss

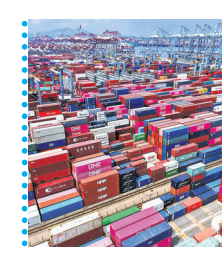
LEISURE | P2



### 250 missing in sea

At least 250 people, including Rohingya refugees and B'deshi nationals, go missing as boat capsizes in the Andaman Sea

INTERNATIONAL | P10



### War hits exports

Exports post the steepest fall in five months, declining by 7.44% in March while imports fall by over 6% due to the West Asia crisis

BUSINESS | P11



### Vaishali scripts history

Grandmaster R Vaishali stages a fine comeback and wins Candidates, to challenge Ju Wenjun for world title

SPORTS | P12

## CBSE CLASS X RESULTS OUT

# 93.7% students pass; 55K score above 95%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 15: More than 93.70 per cent students cleared Class X board exams with over 55,000 of them scoring above 95 per cent marks, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) announced Wednesday. Over 2.20 lakh candidates have scored above 91 per cent marks.

Girls outshone boys yet again with 94.99 per cent of girls clearing the exam, with 1.3 percentage points higher than the pass percentage of boys which stood at 92.69 per cent. Transgender students cleared a pass percentage of 87.50 in the crucial exams.

In line with the recommendations of the National Education Policy (NEP), the CBSE introduced two board examinations for Class X students this year. The first examination was held in February-March and the second is scheduled for May. It was mandatory for

### Odisha: 93.66% pass

Bhubaneswar: Odisha registered a pass percentage of 93.66 as the CBSE Wednesday announced the results of Class X board exams. Students across Bhubaneswar delivered outstanding performances with many schools reporting 100 per cent result and high individual scores. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi extended his heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to all students and encouraged students to remain confident and determined, irrespective of their examination results. He urged them to move forward with a positive mindset, face life's challenges with courage, and maintain strong morale. P4

students to appear in the first edition.

"Traditionally, Class X results are announced in mid-May. However, this year, CBSE evaluated approximately 1.6 crore answer books in record time and the result is being declared a month earlier than usual," said CBSE Examination Controller Sanyam Bhardwaj.



IN RAPTURES: Elated students of SAI International School take a group selfie after the announcement of CBSE Class X board exam results, in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

## IRAN WAR CLOSE TO OVER: TRUMP

REUTERS

Dubai/Washington, April 15: US President Donald Trump said the war with Iran was close to over, telling the world to brace for an "amazing two days", as the army chief of mediator Pakistan arrived in Tehran in a bid to prevent a renewed conflict.

The diplomatic push came as US and Iranian officials weighed a return to Pakistan for further talks after negotiations there ended Sunday without a breakthrough. Pakistan's military confirmed Field Marshal Asim Munir had arrived in Tehran. A senior Iranian source told Reuters that Munir, who had mediated the last round of talks, was heading to Iran "to narrow gaps" between the two sides. P10

# 2 girls die as school boundary collapses

POST NEWS NETWORK

Paralakhemundi, April 15: Two schoolgirls were killed after a boundary wall at the main gate of a government primary school collapsed in Gajapati district Wednesday, officials said.

The incident occurred at Rubudising Government Primary School under R. Udayagiri police limits in Nuagada block while children were playing on the campus after classes. The wall at the school's main gate suddenly gave way, killing two girls from the same village.

The deceased were identified as Idanti Raita, 9, a Class IV student, and Beckyles Raita, 10, a Class V student.

Police officials from R. Udayagiri reached the spot, recovered the bodies and sent them to Paralakhemundi District Headquarters Hospital for post-mortem examination.

Nuagada Block Development Officer (BDO) Lokanath Sabar visited the site and assessed the situation. An ex gratia of ₹20,000 each was provided immedi-



ately to the families of the deceased children from the Red Cross fund. Officials have also ordered an inquiry to ascertain when the wall was constructed and the circumstances that led to the collapse.

Nuagada Tehsildar Monalisa Acharyee, Block Education Officer (BEO) Adikant Gamango, District Education Officer (DEO) Mayadhar Sahu and several other officers also visited the spot.

Meanwhile, villagers alleged that negligence by school authorities contributed to the incident. They said construction and repair work had been underway at the school, during which materials such as bricks, stones and sand were stored on the premises. They claimed that tractors frequently entered the

# Jail inmate dies; kin allege police brutality

POST NEWS NETWORK

Phulbani, April 15: Tension flared Wednesday following the death of an undertrial inmate lodged in the Phulbani Circle Jail, with the deceased's family alleging police assault led to his death.

The deceased has been identified as Heran Nayak of Penji Sahi. Sources said, Nayak was arrested by Model

police April 13 in connection with a theft case along with a minor. Nayak and the minor were allegedly involved in snatching a bag containing ₹10,000 and other items from plainclothes police personnel April 12. He was produced in court the following day and remanded to judicial custody after being denied bail.

However, Nayak reportedly fell ill inside the jail

Wednesday morning, and was rushed to the district headquarters hospital, where he died at around 10am while undergoing treatment.

Family members, who reached the hospital after receiving information, alleged that Nayak had been assaulted in police custody, leading to his death. They also accused police of threatening them and later met the

Superintendent of Police, demanding a thorough inquiry.

Police, however, denied the allegations. Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO) Shubhrajit Biswal said Nayak had not been assaulted and termed the claims "baseless". He added that the exact cause of death would be ascertained after the post-mortem report and that an investigation was underway.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



How can we claim to empower women while demanding to dislodge one from power?

## EROSION DISRUPTS ARRIBADA

# Sea gobbles up key nesting ground at Gahirmatha

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 15: Severe coastal erosion has ravaged the prime nesting site of Olive Ridley sea turtles at Nasi-2 Island in the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary, raising serious concerns over the disruption and unusual delay in this year's annual mass nesting.

With female turtles yet to turn up at Gahirmatha rookery this year for the annual mass nesting, apprehension of the marine species skipping their annual sojourn at the tranquil beaches looms large. Once a preferred destina-

tion where lakhs of female turtles gathered for the spectacular 'arribada' or mass nesting, the beach at Nasi-2 has now been drastically reduced due to relentless battering by strong sea waves. Officials said the 6-kilometre-long uninhabited island has shrunk to barely half a kilometre, leaving the shoreline steep and inhospitable for nesting.

"The sea is steadily eating away the beach almost every day. The slope has become nearly vertical, making it extremely difficult for turtles to climb and lay eggs," said Kapilendra Pradhan, Forest Range Officer of Gahirmatha



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

Gahirmatha, located along the Bay of Bengal coast in Kendrapara district, is recognised as the world's largest-known rookery for Olive Ridley turtles. Every year, millions of these marine creatures arrive along the Odisha coast, including nesting grounds at the Rushikulya and Devi river mouths.

However, the erosion at Nasi-2 has cast uncertainty over this natural phenomenon. "The delay in mass nesting is unusual and worrying. While we are hopeful, there is apprehension that the turtles might not turn up here in large numbers this season," Pradhan added.

Forest officials, however, point to a glimmer of hope. The nearby Agarnasi Island, a five-kilometre stretch, remains unaffected by erosion and could serve as an alternative nesting ground.

Experts say the reasons behind the delayed arrival remain unclear. "There could be multiple factors at play, including illegal fishing activities and unseasonal rainfall over the past fortnight, but these are still speculative," said a wildlife expert.

Last year, the sanctuary witnessed an impressive turnout, with over 6.06 lakh turtles arriving within five days starting March 5.

## VEDANTA PLANT BLAST

Death toll rises to 20

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sakti (Chhattisgarh), April 15: The death toll in a blast at the Vedanta power plant in Chhattisgarh's Sakti district has mounted to 20 with seven more workers succumbing to injuries, while 16 others are undergoing treatment at different hospitals, officials said Wednesday.

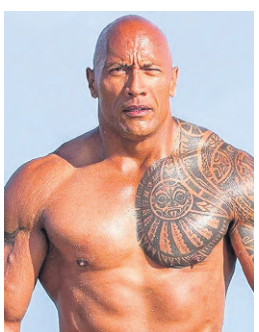
The deceased include six labourers from West Bengal, five from Chhattisgarh, three each from Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh, two from Bihar, and one from Madhya Pradesh.

The explosion occurred Tuesday afternoon in a steel tube carrying high-pressure steam from the boiler to the turbine at the Vedanta Ltd power plant, leaving several workers with severe burn injuries.

OrissaPOST  
BUSINESS EMINENCE AWARDS  
23 APRIL BHUBANESWAR

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# leisure



## DWAYNE JOHNSON'S UNUSUAL PRACTICE

Hollywood star Dwayne Johnson has shared a quirky yet meaningful ritual he follows, revealing that he adds "seven seconds" to tasks as a reminder of his humble beginnings. Johnson said that whenever there is a countdown, be it during cardio workouts or even while using a microwave, he extends it by seven seconds.

## CRUISE CALLS 2026 A PROMISING YEAR

Hollywood action icon Tom Cruise, who showcased a sneak-peek into his upcoming film "Digger" at the Cinemacon, expressed his happiness about the year for cinema, saying 2026 has already kicked off on a strong note for the film industry.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
The yogis have finally succeeded in impressing you. Was it a stint in a Art of Living course? Ganesha gives you the thumbs-up and suggests you join that music or dance class you have been wanting to. Generally a nice day, and success is on the cards.

**TAURUS**  
Armed with ingenuity and lateral thinking, you are all set to take on today with practised ease, feels Ganesha. The toughest of problems will crumble like a house of cards before your intellect. A promotion or salary hike is also likely today. Money lenders and brokers will have a profitable day, says Ganesha.

**GEMINI**  
Your long-term goals seem to be shaping up well. You may also expect some good news, which will change the course of your life. Play a waiting game in matters of auctions and sealed tenders. And memorise these words: Prevention is better than cure.

**CANCER**  
Ganesha advises you to watch your back today. However, he wants to make it clear that you may be at the receiving end of others' actions. Anyway, your cautious and watchful approach will save you from needless discomfiture. In short, life will teach you priceless and precious lessons today, predicts Ganesha.

**LEO**  
You will be in a light-hearted mood today. Be it at the office or at the home, you will be full of joy and will be looking to pass your time leisurely. You will spend time with family and friends. You will be unable to implement your plans for tackling work today in your current mood, says Ganesha.

**VIRGO**  
You will be cool as a cucumber today. Nothing that happens will unsettle that composure, says Ganesha. Your loved ones will stand tall and strong behind you, and inspire you to overcome obstacles. Your work will reflect dedication, says Ganesha. Go ahead and ask for work that is intellectually taxing.

**LIBRA**  
Letting things build up inside you is never a good idea. Learn from this as there is every possibility that today might turn out to be an aggravating and exasperating day for you. You may feel that way due to all the amassed emotions and resentments, so let it all go. It would be a good idea to take a break from the routine and bring in some freshness.

**SCORPIO**  
Today, Ganesha is in the mood to give you health tips. Cultivate healthy eating habits and exercise regularly to stay away from disorders like obesity. Irregular eating habits and unhealthy lifestyle may lead to many other troubles. Eat healthy, stay happy.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
You have been experiencing the adverse effects of stressful lifestyle off-late. But not anymore, as you realise the importance of good health. Maintaining good health will begin with good news of either promotion or increment at work. This leaves you happy and satisfied, says Ganesha.

**CAPRICORN**  
It may seem too far-fetched, but your boss will bank on your brilliance and unmatched abilities to get respite from the existing problems, says Ganesha. Moreover, much to the dismay of your rivals, you will have your way and gain popularity by winning the hearts of your clients. While spending time with your beloved, you may share certain experience that were, until now, locked up inside you.

**AQUARIUS**  
Eat, drink, and make merry. But watch out: don't empty your pockets in one go. Also, guard your reputation. A lot depends on your behaviour, and the big daddies may be watching you. You have a lot at stake, and there should be no regrets later. Let success be your priority for now, says Ganesha. All else will follow.

**PISCES**  
You will feel very emotional about those who are close to your heart. Those people who know you will endear you because of this quality of yours. But Ganesha adds a word of caution: take care of those people whom you hold close to your heart because in your sentiments for them you might not notice their bad qualities or forgive their mistakes.

# Regena: Love is a quiet strength

**CHENNAI:** Pointing out that people often mistake letting things be for being powerless, actress Regena Cassandra, who has made a place for herself in several film in-



dustries across the country with her fine acting, has now stressed on the point that love is a quiet strength.

Taking to her Instagram page to pen her thoughts on the subject, she wrote, "New day, same me, surrendering to love. People often mistake letting things be for being powerless—but love is a quiet strength. Every day is a good day to stand up for yourself with a smile and to remember you deserve to be loved. Don't take it for granted."

She further went on to add, "The joy of loving and being loved exists because we know the pain of losing it—and each gives the other its depth."

The actress, who is known to share her thoughts on issues and life, had only recently penned a note on the power of gratitude.

Taking to her Instagram page a couple of weeks ago, she had said, "Many have said gratitude makes all the difference and they are right. Viewing the world after you put on the gratitude lens feels different."

Here's a bunch of memories from last week (month, but who's counting hehe) views through my gratitude lense!

IAN5

## CHINTA O CHETANA'S SUMMER FESTIVAL

### Baishakhi opens with grand cultural celebrations

**BHUBANESWAR:** The 49th edition of the Baishakhi Festival, organised by Chinta O Chetana, commenced with great enthusiasm here at Rabindra Mandap, Wednesday evening.

The inauguration began with a ceremonial procession as the idol of Lord Jagannath was brought onstage amid the resonant sound of gongs. The idol was placed on a specially prepared podium, followed by a solemn 'aarati', filling the auditorium with a deeply spiritual atmosphere.

The event was graced by several eminent personalities, including celebrated Odissi exponent Aruna Mohanty, Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan, Culture Department Special Secretary Debaprasad Dash, and senior members of Chinta O Chetana - president Sahadev Sahoo and general secretary Surendra Das.

A highlight of the evening was a spellbinding per-



The members of Orissa Dance Academy performed at the inaugural evening of the event held at Rabindra Mandap, Bhubaneswar, Wednesday.

formance by Orissa Dance Academy under Mohanty's artistic direction. The presentation Shivam Dhimahi, a devotional tribute to Lord Shiva in his cosmic form as Nataraja, beautifully depicted

the rhythm of creation and destruction through powerful choreography and expressive 'abhinaya'. Other presentations include Jatra Baramasi, depicting Odisha's seasonal festivals, and Krushna Mad-

huri, portraying episodes from the life of Lord Krishna.

As many as 28 distinguished personalities from diverse fields were felicitated with the National Chinta O Chetana Award.

### LOS ANGELES: The new Game of Thrones (GoT) movie now has a working title, Game of Thrones: Aegon's Conquest.

The title was unveiled as part of Warner Bros.' CinemaCon presentation in Las Vegas last night where the first-ever big-screen Game of Thrones epic was shown as part of Warner Bros.' 2027 and beyond slate, reported Variety.

The movie will follow the original conqueror Aegon I Targaryen from George RR Martin's A Song of Ice and Fire novels. Also known as Aegon the Conqueror, he built the famous Iron Throne at the centre of Game of Thrones by forging the swords of all those he defeated in the battle.

According to Martin's *Blood*, Aegon unite the seven Westeros under

garyen is known dragons and marrying within the family. Their story was also explored in the prequels House of the Dragon and A Knight of the Seven Kingdoms.

*Game of Thrones: Aegon's Conquest* will be written by Beau Willimon, who was previously the showrunner of Netflix's House of Cards and a writer on Disney+'s hit Star Wars show Andor.

The *Game of Thrones* world continues with the release of the third season of House of the Dragon and a second season of A Knight of the Seven Kingdoms.



GoT gets a movie title

## Medha not wary of comparison

**MUMBAI:** Actress Medha Shankr is currently all geared up for her movie *Ginny Weds Sunny 2*, in the capacity of the movie's lead actress.

With her role as the lead in the sequel of the movie, comes inevitable comparisons to Bollywood star Yami Gautam, who headlined the first installment of *Ginny Weds Sunny*.

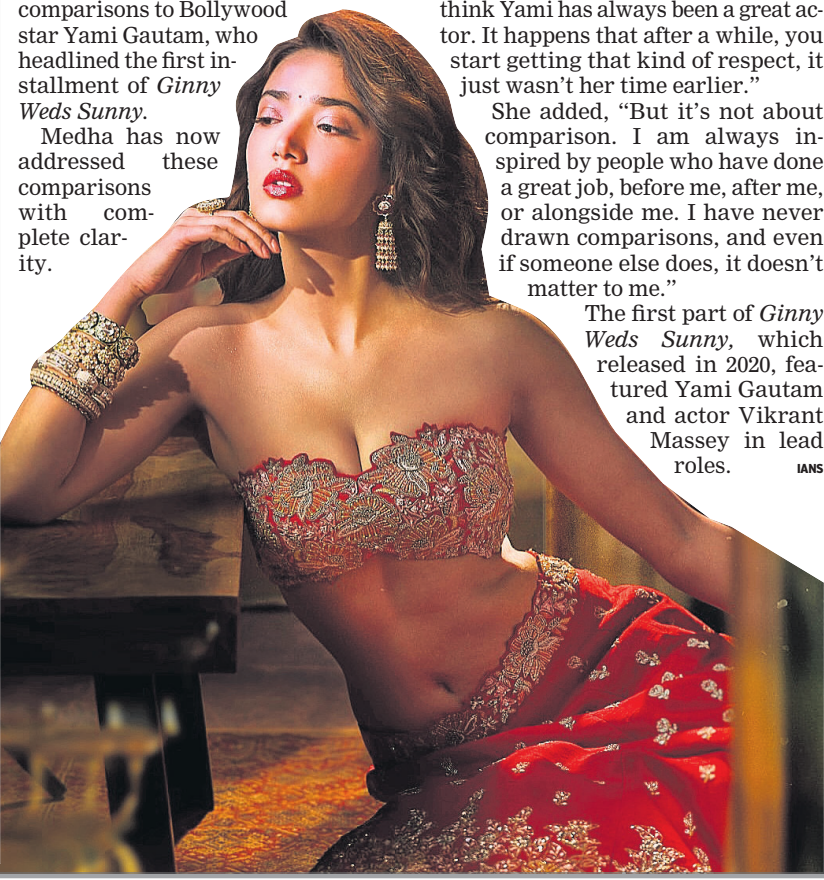
Medha has now addressed these comparisons with complete clarity.

While speaking to this agency in an exclusive conversation, Medha shared,

"Nothing like that. I love Yami Gautam and Aditya Dhar. They are quite aware of how much I admire them. I think Yami has always been a great actor. It happens that after a while, you start getting that kind of respect, it just wasn't her time earlier."

She added, "But it's not about comparison. I am always inspired by people who have done a great job, before me, after me, or alongside me. I have never drawn comparisons, and even if someone else does, it doesn't matter to me."

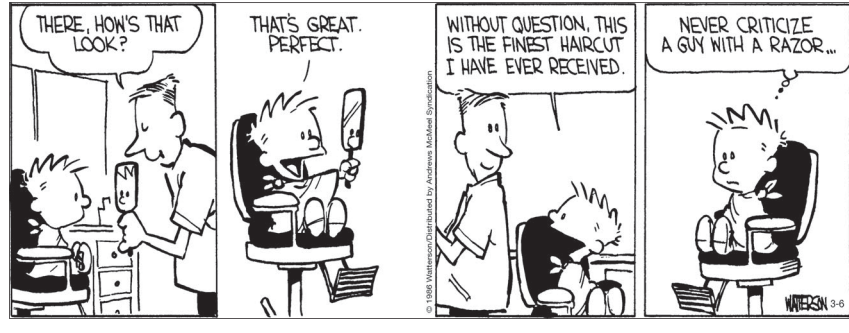
The first part of *Ginny Weds Sunny*, which released in 2020, featured Yami Gautam and actor Vikrant Massey in lead roles.



### PEANUTS



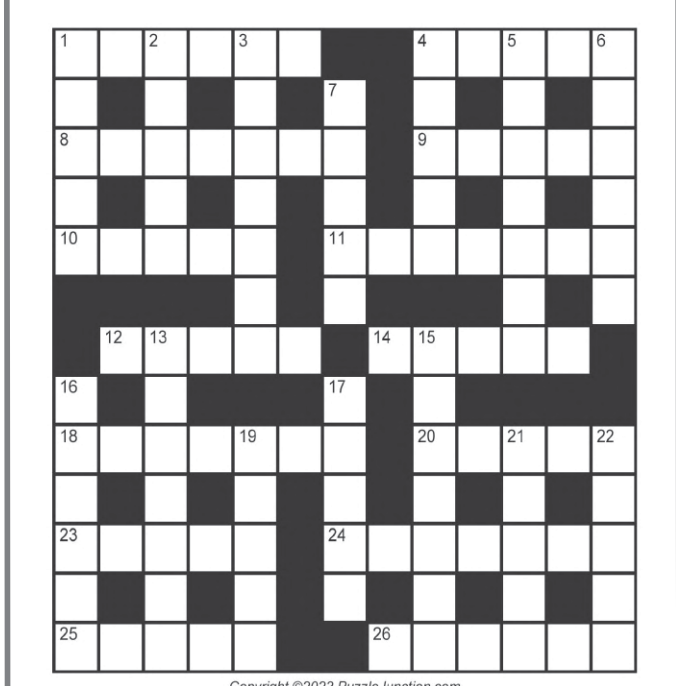
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



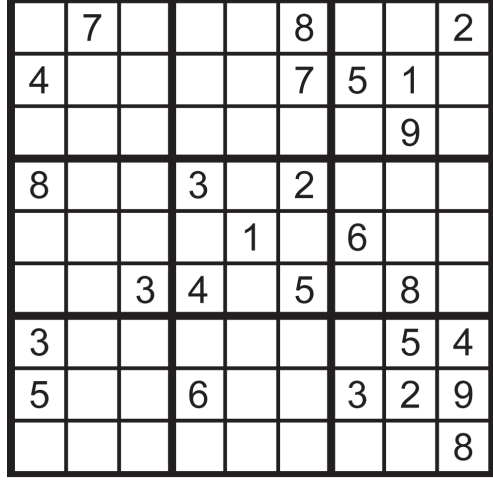
### CROSSWORD



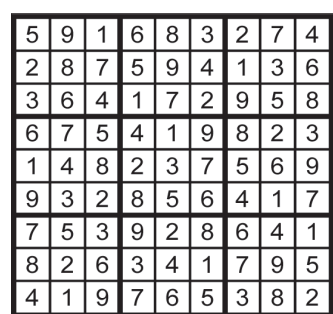
- Across
- 1 Small wound
  - 4 Bind (3-2)
  - 8 Spartan
  - 9 Dashboard feature
  - 10 Israeli port
  - 11 Piggy bank funds (4,3)
  - 12 Rapids transit
  - 14 Bold
  - 18 Discovered
  - 20 Ice skating sites
  - 23 Like Argus
  - 24 Booked
  - 25 Vast chasm
  - 26 Before symbol or quo
- Down
- 1 Slender freshwater fish
  - 2 It contains seaweed
  - 3 Mint family member
  - 4 Ankara natives
  - 5 Infinite
  - 6 Fork features
  - 7 Fencing move
  - 13 School type
  - 15 Vertical
  - 16 Andes denizen
  - 17 Lazybones
  - 19 Musical scale parts
  - 21 Dusk to dawn
  - 22 Factions

### 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



**FOR A CAUSE:** Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi lights the ceremonial lamp to mark the inauguration of 'Nari Shakti Vandan' programme, at Chandrasekharpur in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday. Among others, Deputy CM Pravati Parida, Speaker Surama Padhy and Chief Secretary Anu Garg were present

## Unemployment rate rises to 5.1% in March

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 15:** The unemployment rate (UR) for individuals aged 15 and older rose slightly to 5.1 per cent in March from 4.9 per cent in February this year, mainly due to high joblessness in urban areas, according to government data released Wednesday.

The Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), conducted by the National Statistics Office (NSO) under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), is the primary source of data on activity participation, employment and unemployment conditions of the population.

The PLFS methodology has been modified from January 2025 to provide monthly and quarterly estimates of labour force indicators for the country.

The monthly bulletins for April 2025 to February 2026 have already been released. The present monthly bulletin for March 2026 is the twelfth in the series.

A statement on the PLFS stated that the UR among persons aged 15 years and above rose slightly to 5.1 per cent in March 2026 from 4.9 per cent in February 2026, mainly driven by urban UR, which edged up from 6.6 per cent in February 2026 to 6.8 per cent in March 2026.

Among rural females aged 15 years and above, the UR remained almost stable in March 2026, whereas the male UR in the same age group was marginally higher in March 2026 in comparison to February 2026. At the all-India level, the monthly estimates are based on information collected from a total of 3,75,262 persons surveyed.

- The overall Labour Force Participation Rate among persons aged 15 years and above was reported as 55.4 per cent in March 2026, slightly lower than 55.9 per cent in February 2026
- The overall Worker Population Ratio was estimated at 52.6 per cent in March 2026 compared to 53.2 per cent in February 2026

Urban Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) shows a steady trend.

The overall LFPR among persons aged 15 years and above was reported as 55.4 per cent in March 2026, slightly lower than 55.9 per cent in February 2026.

Rural LFPR was 58 per cent in March 2026 compared to 58.7 per cent in February 2026, while urban LFPR remained almost stable during this period.

Female LFPR in March 2026 was reported as 34.4 per cent against 35.3 per cent in February 2026.

Female LFPR in rural areas was found to be 38.9 per cent in March 2026, while the same stood at 25.2 per cent in urban areas during the month.

The Worker Population Ratio (WPR) in the age group 15 years and above remained broadly stable in urban areas in March 2026.

The overall WPR was estimated at 52.6 per cent in March 2026 compared to 53.2 per cent in February 2026. In rural areas, WPR stood at 55.5 per cent in March 2026 compared to 56.3 per cent in February 2026, while WPR in urban areas stood at 46.8 per cent in March 2026 against 47 per cent in February 2026.

## Opposition set to vote against delimitation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 15:** Several opposition parties Wednesday decided to unite to vote against the delimitation provisions in the Constitution amendment Bill in Parliament, while asserting that they are not against reservation for women in legislative bodies.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said the opposition parties are opposed to the manner in which the Bill is being brought and alleged that it is politically motivated. The leaders of several INDIA constituents, besides the AAP, met at Kharge's residence here Wednesday to evolve a joint strategy in Parliament during its three-day special sitting starting Thursday. The government intends to bring the



women reservation Bill, along with a Constitution amendment Bill, to be taken up for consideration and passage on the first day of the special sitting of Parliament.

"All of us are in favour of the women reservation Bill, but have reservations on the way in which it is being brought. It is politically motivated. Just to gag and suppress opposition parties, the government is doing this," Kharge said.

"We are continuously sup-

porting women's reservation. We are insisting that an earlier amendment that was passed be implemented. They (the BJP-led Centre) are playing tricks with delimitation. Therefore, all parties have taken a decision unitedly to oppose this Bill," Kharge said.

TMC leader Derek O'Brien said on X, "We are doing all what it takes to defeat the stunt being presented as a Bill in the Lok Sabha." CPI(M) Liberation leader Dipankar Bhattacharya

said the Opposition must unitedly defeat this "assault" on the Constitution and stop this "sinister" delimitation design.

Besides Kharge and Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, the other leaders at the meeting included DMK's TR Baalu, RJD's Tejashwi Yadav, TMC's Sagarika Ghosh, Shiv Sena (UBT) leaders Sanjay Raut and Arvind Sawant, and NCP-SP's Supriya Sule, with Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav joining virtually. CPI leader Annie Raja, CPI-M's Nilotpal Basu, AAP leader Sanjay Singh, Independent MP Kapil Sibal, IUML's ET Mohammed Bashir and RSP's NK Premachandran also attended the meeting, besides Congress general secretaries KC Venugopal and Jairam Ramesh.

Tamil Nadu CM MK Stalin announced a state-wide black flag agitation Thursday against the proposed delimitation and warned the Centre of consequences if it did not heed to TN's voice. Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah said that the women's reservation Bill is a long-overdue reform that must be implemented within the existing framework, without being made contingent on delimitation.

## WPI INFLATION RISES TO 38-MONTH HIGH OF 3.88% IN MARCH

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 15:** Wholesale price inflation rose sharply to a 38-month high of 3.88 per cent in March, driven by a sharp spike in rates of fuel, power and manufactured items amid the West Asia crisis.

Government data released Wednesday showed that the Wholesale Price Index (WPI)-based inflation rose for the fifth straight month in March as core inflation accelerated, amid softening of primary food items. As higher energy prices eventually generalise to other commodity prices, we expect WPI inflation to rise further in the coming months. The high WPI inflation in March reflects elevated global commodity prices and the impact of the energy price shock since the beginning of the US-Israel-Iran conflict February 28.

WPI inflation was 2.13 per cent in February, and 2.25 per cent in March last year.

"Positive rate of inflation in March 2026 is primarily due to increase in prices of crude petroleum & natural gas, other manufacturing, non-food articles, manufacture of basic metals and food articles, etc.," the industry ministry said in a statement.

## Minor raped in Konark

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Konark, April 15:** A schoolgirl was allegedly raped by one of her seniors here Tuesday, a police official said Wednesday.

According to the official, the girl, a Class VIII student of a local school and a resident under Ward-5 of Konark NAC, was on her way to attend a coaching class Tuesday evening when a Class X boy, also a minor, of her school allegedly took her to the nearby helipad ground, where

he raped the minor. The girl, however, managed to come home and narrated the entire episode to her family.

Her family approached the Konark police which registered a case (74/26) under relevant Sections of the POCSO Act and launched a probe.

Konark IIC Prasant Kumar Padhiary, along with SI Kedarnath Dora, nabbed the accused from his village and produced him before the Juvenile authorities.

## Paris man wins \$1mn Picasso with a \$117 ticket

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Paris, April 15:** A Parisian art enthusiast could not believe his luck when he found out Tuesday he'd won a Pablo Picasso painting worth USD 1 million with a USD 117 raffle ticket.

"How do I check that it's not a hoax," said Ari Hodara, 58, after organisers called him following the draw at Christie's auction house in the French capital. Hodara described himself as an art amateur fond of Picasso and said he bought his ticket over the weekend after finding out about the charity raffle by chance during a meal in a restaurant.

"First, I will tell the news to my wife, who has yet to return from work," said Hodara, a sales engineer. "And at first, I think I'll take advantage of it and keep it." The third iteration of the 1 Picasso for 100 euros lottery was for Picasso's 'Head of a Woman', a portrait of Picasso's



longtime muse and partner Dora Maar. The gouache-on-paper was painted by the artist in 1941. The online draw offered the chance to win a USD 1 million portrait by the Spanish artist in aid of Alzheimer's research. Organisers said all 1,20,000 tickets were sold worldwide,

netting 12 million euros (USD 14 million). Of that, 1 million euros will be paid to the Opera Gallery, an international art dealership that owned the painting. Gilles Dyan, the gallery founder, said he offered a preferential price for the painting, with the public price at 1.45

million euros. The first raffle in 2013 saw a Pennsylvania man who worked at a fire-sprinkler business win 'Man in the Opera Hat', which the Spanish master painted in 1914 during his Cubist period.

The oil-on-canvas 'Still Life' was raffled off in 2020 and won by Claudia Borgogno, an accountant in Italy whose son bought her the ticket as a Christmas present.

Painted in 1921, that painting was purchased for the raffle from billionaire art collector David Nahmad, who argued in an interview with The Associated Press that Picasso would have approved of his work being raffled. Picasso died in 1973.

The Alzheimer Research Foundation, the charity raffle's organiser, is based in one of Paris' leading public hospitals and says it has become France's leading private financier of Alzheimer-related medical research since its founding in 2004.

Ari Hodara, 58, described himself as an art amateur fond of Picasso and said he bought his ticket over the weekend after finding out about the charity raffle by chance during a meal in a restaurant

The third iteration of the "1 Picasso for 100 euros" lottery was for Picasso's 'Head of a Woman', a portrait of Picasso's longtime muse and partner Dora Maar. The gouache-on-paper was painted by the artist in 1941

The online draw offered the chance to win a USD 1 million portrait by the Spanish artist in aid of Alzheimer's research

**ଚିତ୍ରା ଓ ଚେତନା**

**୪୯ତମ ବୈଶାଖୀ BAISHAKHI**

ଓଡ଼ିଆ ନବବର୍ଷର ଅନନ୍ୟ ମହୋତ୍ସବ

ଓଡ଼ିଶା ତଥା ବେଙ୍ଗାଳ କୋଶ ଅନୁକୋଶରୁ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠିତ ଓ ନୂତନ, ପାଠ୍ୟଗ୍ରନ୍ଥ ଓ ଶାସ୍ତ୍ରୀୟ ନୃତ୍ୟ ସଙ୍ଗୀତ ଦଳ ଏହି ମହୋତ୍ସବର ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠିତ ସମ୍ପାଦକ ସମାଜର ସମ୍ପାଦକ କଳା-ନୈମିତ୍ତିକ ପ୍ରଦର୍ଶନ କରିବେ ।

**ଚିତ୍ରା ଓ ଚେତନା ରାଷ୍ଟ୍ରୀୟ ସମ୍ମାନ ବିଜିତ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ**

କୃତବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟରୁ ପ୍ରଦାନ କରାଯିବ (ବିଗତ ବୃତ୍ତ ବର୍ଷର) ।

ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଅଗ୍ରଗଣ୍ୟ ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦିତ କବିବର ଚିତ୍ରା ଓ ଚେତନାର ଓଡ଼ିଆ ନବବର୍ଷ ମହୋତ୍ସବ **୪୯ତମ ବୈଶାଖୀ** ଏକ ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ମହତ୍ତ୍ୱପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଆୟୋଜନରୁ ବିକାଶଦେବ । ପ୍ରତିଦିନ ସମ୍ପାଦକ ଦେବ ଓ ରାଜ୍ୟର ବିଭିନ୍ନ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରର ଖ୍ୟାତନାମା ଦ୍ୟାକ୍ଷିକିଣେଶ ଅତିଥି ଭାବେ ଯୋଗ ଦେଉଛନ୍ତି ।

**ଅପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ୧୫ ଟଙ୍କା ତାରିଖ ପ୍ରତିଦିନ ସମ୍ପାଦକ ୨ଟା ପୁସ୍ତକ : ରବୀନ୍ଦ୍ର ମଣ୍ଡଳ, ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱର**

**ପ୍ରତିଦିନ ସମ୍ପାଦକ ସତର ଆକର୍ଷଣ ମହାପ୍ରଭୁ ଶ୍ରୀକାନ୍ତାଧ୍ୟକ ବିଦ୍ୟା ପହଞ୍ଚି ଓ ଆରତି**

**ନବବର୍ଷର ଶୁଭେଚ୍ଛା ସହ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ସାଦର ନିମନ୍ତ୍ରଣ**

ଅପେକ୍ଷାରେ

**ଚିତ୍ରା ଓ ଚେତନା ବୈଶାଖୀ ପରିବାର**

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CHHAPANBHOGA

MARUTI REPRINT

ଓଡ଼ିଆ ନବବର୍ଷ ମହୋତ୍ସବ

ODISHA RECORDS 93.66 PASS PERCENTAGE

# City schools shine in CBSE Class X board exams

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, April 15:** The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) Wednesday announced the Class X board exam results, with Odisha recording an impressive overall pass percentage of 93.66 per cent. In region wise pass percentage, Bhubaneswar region got 94.67 per cent.

Students across Bhubaneswar delivered an outstanding performance, with several schools in the City achieving a 100 per cent pass rate along with exceptional individual scores, reaffirming the Capital's reputation as a hub of academic excellence.

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi congratulated all

students who appeared for the examinations and extended his best wishes for their future. In his message, he encouraged students to remain confident and determined regardless of their results, urging them to face life's challenges with courage and maintain a positive outlook.

Emphasising perseverance and dedication, he expressed confidence that students would continue to bring pride to both the state and the nation.

Mother's Public School, Bhubaneswar has reached new heights in academic excellence this year, with all 299 students who appeared for the examination securing a 100 per cent pass result. Of them, 179 students scored 90 per cent and above. Teena Rath emerged as the



state topper with a perfect score of 500/500, followed closely by Akshit Samal, who secured an impressive 99.8 per cent.

SAI International School (SIS) and SAI International Residential School (SIRS) once again demonstrated exceptional academic standards, maintaining their record of 100 per cent first-division results.

At SIS, Priyansu Pritis Dash topped the school with an outstanding 99.6 per cent, followed closely by Soham Mishra with 99.4 per cent. The school reported that all students scored above 60 per cent, with 43.2 per cent securing above 95 per cent, 69.4 per cent above 90 per cent, and 94.3 per cent above 75 per cent. The overall school average stood at an impressive 90.6 per cent.

Students of SIRS also delivered commendable results, with Priyal Gupta leading at 99.2 per cent, followed by Ashvika Sarawagi at 98.8 per cent. The school recorded 100 per cent of students scoring above 60 per cent, with 24.2 per cent above 95 per cent and 46.1 per cent above 90 per cent. The overall average stood at 87.25 per cent.

Students from the SAI group also achieved remarkable subject-wise results, with 32 students scoring a perfect 100 in Mathematics, 21 in Science, 23 in Social Studies, and five in English.

SAI International Education Group Chairperson Silpi Sahoo, said the results reflect "perseverance, purpose, and the strength of a nurturing academic ecosystem," adding that the institution focuses on holistic development beyond academic scores.

KIIT International School also reported excellent results, with Adweya Sarangi emerging

as the school topper with 99.8 per cent. Swastika Mishra secured the second position with 99.4 per cent.

The school achieved a 100 per cent first-division result, with 70 per cent of students scoring above 90 per cent. In the SEN Global category, Satwik Santosh Tripathy led with 95.4 per cent. KIIT and KISS founder Achyuta Samanta congratulated the students and credited the school's consistent success to its high-quality education system and dedicated faculty.

BJEM School celebrated a 100 per cent pass rate among its 251 students. Notably, 90 students scored above 90 per cent, while 90 per cent of students secured first division.

Kalpita Sabat emerged as the school topper with 99.8 per cent (499/500), followed by Koyal Routray with 99.4 per cent. Sagarika Priyadarshini Mishra, Shreyansh Pati, and Afeefa Tasneem jointly secured the third position with 99 per cent.

Students of the ODM Education Group delivered an outstanding performance, achieving remarkable academic success across its institutions.

A total of 312 ODM students appeared for the examination, with three students—Kumari Samudhi Maharana, Kumari Advita Panda, and Ashuman Mohanty—emerging as school toppers by securing an impressive 99.6 per cent. Close behind, five students—Kumari Sanjita Samal, Kumari Kabya Priyadarshani, Kumari Dibyashi Mahapatra, Shreyasham Swain, and Ankit Anurag Nayak—secured the second position with 99.4 per cent.

The school recorded exceptional overall results, with 14 students scoring above 99 per cent,

Similarly, at ODM Global School, Janmeya Gond topped with 98 per cent. The school also reported strong academic outcomes, with seven students scoring above 95 per cent.

ODM Educational Group Chairman Satyabrata Minaketan congratulated the students for their achievements and expressed gratitude to teachers and parents for their continued support and dedication. Students of St. Xavier's High School also delivered an outstanding performance. With a flawless 100 per cent pass result, the school continues to shine brightly. Sriya Samantray topped the school with 99 per cent. Nearly 95 per cent of the students secured above 60 per cent, and more than 50 students achieved scores above 90 per cent.

DPS Kalinga celebrated its resounding success in the exams. Anwesha Mohanty secured an exceptional 99.8 per cent, earning the distinction of Second National and state topper. Akshara Rai stood second in the school with 99.4 per cent. Anupam Sahoo, Anurag Singh, and Janvi Behera jointly secured the third position with 99.2 per cent, while Ashneel Routray secured the fourth position with 99 per cent.

In total, 102 students scored 90 per cent and above. Several students achieved perfect scores (100) in subjects including English, Mathematics, General Science, Social Science, Sanskrit, Hindi, Odia, and Information Technology.

DAV Public School, Unit VIII, recorded an impressive school average of 88.19 per cent in the CBSE Class X results, with all 265 students passing. Of them, 261 secured first division, while 144 scored above 90 per cent.

## Lights Out

What *Aandhi*, *Vishwaroopam*, and *The Voice of Hind Rajab* tell us about cinema's oldest struggle

**P**icture this: a film is running in theatres. Audiences are buying tickets, critics are writing reviews, and the projector is spinning. Then, one day, without warning, the lights go out. Not because the film failed. Because it succeeded a little too well at the one thing cinema does better than any other art form, making you see something you weren't supposed to.

It has happened before. It is happening now. There is a quiet scene in Gulzar's *Aandhi* (1975) where the politician Aarti Devi spots her old caretaker in the hotel lobby where she is staying for an election campaign. Just a face from a simpler life, and on Suchitra Sen's face, an entire interior world collapses and reassembles in seconds. It is a deeply private moment about a woman caught between ambition and longing, and it is precisely this kind of intimacy that made the film, in 1975, feel dangerous. The resemblance between Sen's character and then-Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, right as the Emergency was being declared, was apparently too close for comfort. *Aandhi* returned to screens only after the political weather changed. Today it is considered a masterwork. Back then, it was considered a problem.

Nearly four decades later, Kamal Haasan's *Vishwaroopam* offered a moment of a completely different kind. For most of its first act, the film presents its protagonist as an unlikely, almost comical figure, an effeminate Kathak dance teacher in New York, clearly not to be taken seriously. Then, in a single scene, the mask drops. The dancer vanishes, and in his place stands something else entirely.

Audiences, by all accounts, erupted. It was the film's central argument made visceral that things, and people, are rarely what they first appear. And yet it was this very film, already certified by the CBFC, that was halted by district collectors in Tamil Nadu following protests over its portrayal of a jihadi network, with law and order cited as justification. The irony is worth sitting with. A film whose entire thesis was about mistaken assumptions was itself the subject of one.

What makes the *Hind Rajab* case particularly striking is the nakedness of it, the documentary's raw footage of a six-year-old Palestinian girl's death in Gaza during Israel's 2024 Rafah offensive, rejected outright by the CBFC in early 2025 without even a pretext. *Aandhi* was banned under the Emergency, when the suspension of norms was openly declared. *Vishwaroopam* ban was dressed in the language of public order. The *Hind Rajab* rejection did not bother with a legal framework at all.

Three films. Three different eras. Three competing anxieties orbiting political, communal, diplomatic. One identical outcome: the CBFC certificate, that green light of official approval.

This is what these cases collectively expose about censorship in India. It is something more layered: the question of who a film implicates, and when. A fictional politician during a political emergency. A thriller about extremism in a religiously diverse state. A documentary embedded in an active geopolitical conflict. Cinema here exists at the intersection of art and audience, and of creative vision and collective anxiety. That tension is not unique to India, but here it has a particular intensity, because the country itself contains so many different versions of what is sacred, what is sensitive, and what is simply too close to the bone.

Indian cinema has produced some of its most enduring work precisely by pushing at these boundaries, and has also, at times, pulled back from them. What these films remind us is that cinema does not exist in a vacuum. Every frame is made somewhere, released somewhere, and watched by someone. The conversation between a film and its context is never really over. The lights go out. But the projector keeps spinning.

*Darshim Saxena writes on cinema and culture. She founded The Second Seat, a platform and podcast dedicated to conversations about cinema beyond box office narratives, involving both creators and audiences.*



Darshim Saxena

**A ban during the Emergency. A halt in the name of public order. A rejection without explanation. Through three films across time, this essay examines how censorship evolves not in action, but in how it explains itself**



Mother's Public School



DAV Unit VIII



ODM Public School

"I didn't expect to score full marks, though I was confident of crossing 90. I studied for 10-12 hours a day and received immense support from my parents and school. My goal is to clear the NEET, and I will now focus on preparing for it."



Teena Rath, who scored a perfect 100% (500/500), Mother's Public School, Puri

"I am extremely happy with my results and deeply grateful for the constant support of my teachers and parents. The structured guidance, regular practice and encouragement at SAI helped me stay focused throughout my preparation. This achievement motivates me to aim higher, with my main goal of studying at Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati and becoming a mechanical engineer."



Priyansu Pritis Dash, Class X Topper (99.6%), SAI International School

"I studied for 8-10 hours a day, focusing on concept clarity rather than rote learning. I aspire to become a doctor and am preparing for the NEET exam."



Koyal Routray, (99.4%), BJEM

"I was confident about my performance. I'm a bit disappointed about not scoring 100%, but I'm still happy. I haven't decided on my future goals yet—I'll see what lies ahead."



Kalpita Sabat, (99.8%), BJEM

### WHAT TOPPERS SAY

## CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Executive Magistrate, Bargarh, Dt.15.04.26. I, Smiti Tripathy, At: Amastala, P.O.: Larambha, P.S.: Attabira, Dist.: Bargarh, declare that I have changed my daughter name from Akakhya Tripathy to Akankshya Tripathy. Henceforth she shall be known as Akankshya Tripathy for all purposes. Smiti Tripathy

I Rahim Khatun, W/o- Haroon Rashid Khan resident of Vill- Nuasahi, P/O- Garadpur, P/S- Puruna Bazar, Bhadrak, Pin- 756100 declare by this affidavit No.59, dtd.21.02.2026 that now onwards I shall be known as RAHIMA KHATUN for all future purposes.

## New benchmark in digital governance

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 15:** In a major push toward modernising urban governance, the Housing & Urban Development (H&UD) department has rolled out the Odisha Secretariat Workflow Automation System (OSWAS) across all 115 urban local bodies (ULBs) in the state. The initiative marks a decisive shift from fragmented, paper-based administration to a unified, efficient, and transparent digital governance ecosystem.

The reform spans five Municipal Corporations, 48 Municipalities, and 62 Notified Area Councils (NACs), bringing them onto a single digital platform. Developed in collaboration with Tata Consultancy Services and implemented with technical support from the Odisha Computer Application Centre, OSWAS enables end-to-end digital file management. The system features real-time tracking, role-based workflow routing, and time-bound decision-making, significantly improving efficiency and accountability.

Calling OSWAS a "cornerstone reform," Housing & Urban Development Minister Krushna Chandra Mahapatra

### OSWAS ROLLOUT



said the initiative is central to the state's governance transformation agenda. "By embedding transparency, speed, and accountability into daily administrative processes, we are empowering urban local bodies to deliver faster and better services to citizens. This reflects our commitment to building technology-driven institutions for a Viksit Odisha," he said.

Before OSWAS, municipal administration in Odisha grappled with manual file movement, inconsistent workflows, limited monitoring, and heavy reliance on physical records—often leading to delays and inefficiencies. The new system addresses these gaps through standardised processes, digital audit trails, and automated es-

calation mechanisms, bringing greater discipline and visibility into governance.

The rollout followed a phased strategy, beginning with workflow diagnostics and process mapping, followed by re-engineering of administrative procedures. The platform was then configured with secure access protocols and supported by extensive capacity-building programs. Pilot testing has ensured system reliability before statewide deployment, while continuous feedback loops are helping refine operations.

H&UD department official Chief Secretary Usha Padhee highlighted the broader impact of the reform, stating, "This is not just a technology upgrade but a systemic transformation.

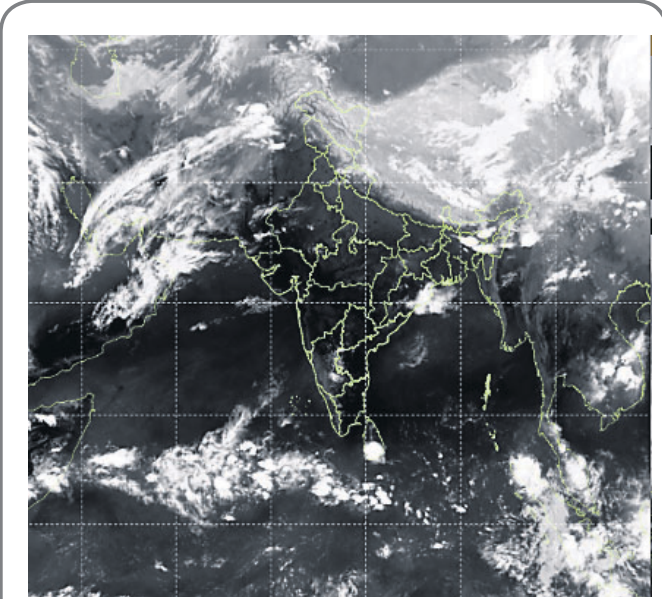
OSWAS standardizes workflows, strengthens accountability, and enables real-time monitoring. It significantly enhances our ability to make data-driven decisions and improve service delivery outcomes across urban Odisha."

A key feature of OSWAS is its real-time dashboard, which allows officials at both state and local levels to track file movement and pendency. This has improved supervisory oversight, reduced delays, and strengthened coordination across departments.

The reform has already delivered tangible results, including faster file disposal, improved transparency through traceable digital records, better accessibility of documents, and the creation of a scalable digital governance framework. By enabling data-driven administration, OSWAS is making urban local bodies more responsive, efficient, and citizen-centric.

With full statewide implementation now complete, Odisha has set a new benchmark in digital governance. The OSWAS initiative is expected to play a pivotal role in advancing the state's vision of Viksit Odisha, strengthening urban administration and enhancing public service delivery in the years ahead.

MARKET WATCH					
CURRENCY		BOURSES		COMMODITIES	
INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION
DOLLAR	93.50 ↓ 0.01	SENSEX	78111.24 ↑ 1,263.67	GOLD	₹154,156 ↓ ₹661
EURO	110.27 ↑ 0.76	NIFTY	24231.30 ↑ 388.65	SILVER	₹252,352 ↓ ₹398



WEATHER			
	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	37.3°	37.0°	Dry weather very likely to prevail over all the districts of Odisha
Min Temp	26.9°	24.8°	
Humidity	78%	83%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	

# ₹8.47L fake notes seized in Sonepur; 2 arrested

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sonepur, April 15:** Police seized counterfeit currency notes worth ₹8.47 lakh and arrested two persons following a late-night operation near the State Bank of India's main branch in Sonepur town, officials said Wednesday.

Acting on a tip-off about the racket, a police team led by Town Police Station IIC Yadav Bag intensified patrolling in the area Tuesday night. During checks, sub-inspector Anil Behera intercepted a black Scorpio Classic S11 (OD34Z-1919). A search of a blue bag inside the vehicle led to the recovery of bundles of counterfeit Rs 500 notes.

Addressing presser held at the district police headquarters, Superintendent of Police Narayan Nayak said the notes could be identified as fake even



on visual inspection, with identical serial numbers printed as "00 00 00". A total of 1,695 counterfeit notes of ₹500 denomination were seized, amounting to ₹ 8,47,500.

The accused were identified as Abhilash Purushottam Satpathy, 21, of Jakhapura area in Jajpur district and Prashant

Das, 34, of Mardarajpur under Khandapada police limits in Nayagarh district. Police also seized the vehicle and two mobile phones from their possession. A case (126/26) has been registered at Sonepur police station. Preliminary investigation suggests links of the racket to Bargarh district and neighbouring Chhattisgarh, Nayak said, adding that further probe is underway to identify other persons involved and assess the scale of circulation.

The seized notes will be sent to the Reserve Bank of India's regional office in Kolkata for examination. The case is being investigated by SI Sukanta Jena.

Frequent recovery of counterfeit notes from different parts of the district has raised concerns among residents.

Additional SP KK Hariprasad was also present at the press briefing.

## Man gets life term for killing wife

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Paralakhemundi, April 15:** A court in Gajapati district has sentenced a 38-year-old man to life imprisonment for murdering his wife following sustained dowry-related harassment. Additional District and Sessions Judge Bibhu Prasad Panda convicted Regati Dhanunjaya, alias Rakoti Dhanunjaya, under Section 302 of IPC and imposed a fine of ₹10,000, with an additional six months' imprisonment in case of default.

The court found him guilty under Section 498A for cruelty, awarding three years' rigorous imprisonment and a ₹5,000 fine. He received a further two-year sentence and a ₹2,000 fine under dowry-related provisions. Dhanunjaya married Regati Pentamma in April 2018. He later demanded more dowry and subjected her to abuse. Pentamma was found dead in November 2019 at their rented house in Gurandi area. The court relied on the testimony of 13 witnesses and documentary evidence to deliver the verdict.

## Villages bear brunt of mining traffic

NARENDRA RAUT, OP

KODINGAMALI BAUXITE MINES



**Koraput, April 15:** Residents of several villages surrounding Kodingamali bauxite mining area in Koraput district have urged the district administration to take steps for installation of a conveyor belt or some other alternative arrangement for transport of bauxite, instead of trucks, citing severe health hazards, road safety concerns, and environmental degradation.

A group of villagers met District Collector Manoj Satyawan Mahajan Wednesday demanding immediate action. The locals maintained that a conveyor belt system would significantly reduce the movement of heavy vehicles and bring relief to the affected villages.

Bibhuti Kumar of Laxmipur stated that earlier, bauxite-laden trucks used to ply from Kodingamali to Kakiriguma via a different route, but recently, the route has been diverted through Singaram, worsening the situation for villagers.

"Frequent movement of trucks has made our life miserable. We are facing health is-

suues such as eye irritation and even heart-related problems. The roads have become unsafe, and we are living under the constant fear of accidents," he said. Kodingamali Bauxite Mining Project, initiated in February 2018 by the Odisha Mining Corporation (OMC), operates within the ecologically sensitive Kodingamali Reserve Forest area. The project had received environmental clearance in May 2008 for undertaking mining in 447.27 hectares. However, concerns over environmental compliance and tribal rights have persisted since its inception.

Tribal communities have long opposed the mining operations, alleging violations of forest clearance norms and

lack of adherence to provisions under Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act.

Villagers claimed that mandatory public consultations were not made and their consent was never obtained prior to the commencement of mining activities.

"We have waited for years, but none of the promised development has materialised. Instead, we are facing pollution, loss of livelihood, and health risks. Authorities are running the mine in illegal manner," Bibhuti Kumar alleged.

The villagers reiterated that installing a conveyor belt system would at least minimise the adverse impact of mining-related transportation.

## ASHRAM SCHOOLGIRL DEATH

### BJD warns Mayurbhanj bandh April 18

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar/Baripada, April 15:** A day after the death of a girl student of state-run Ashram School at Kakabandha under Rasgovindpur block in Mayurbhanj due to food poisoning, the BJD Wednesday sought a judicial probe into the incident and warned of a 12-hour bandh in the district.

More than 100 students fell ill after eating 'stale food', and were rushed to the local CHC, from where 67 of them were shifted to PMR Medical College and Hospital at Baripada, officials said.

"Rupali Besra, a Class V student, had to be admitted to the ICU of the hospital Monday. Despite continuous medical intervention, she died Tuesday morning," said Mayurbhanj Collector Hema Kanta Say.

Fact-finding teams of BJD and Congress Wednesday visited the village and met the family of the deceased student.

The BJD leaders demanded a judicial probe into the incident and ₹50 lakh compensation for the family. If the demands are not fulfilled, the party would call a 12-hour Mayurbhanj district bandh April 18, a BJD leader said.

The Congress team led by Sudarshan Das met the students under treatment and also the family of the deceased girl student. They too demanded ₹50 lakh ex gratia and a government job for her family.

Acting on Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi's directive, revenue divisional commissioner (Central) Sudhansu Mohan Samal visited the school and interacted with staffers, students and parents.

## Govt imposes marine fishing ban till June 14



PNN & AGENCIES

**Kendrapara, April 15:** The state government Wednesday effected a two-month ban on fishing off the state's 484-km coast as part of its annual practice to allow unhindered breeding of fishes.

However, the ban on marine fishing till June 14 is likely to adversely affect the livelihood of the state's countless fisherfolk, even though the government argue the move would benefit them in the long run.

An official said that any violation on the part of the marine fishing communities would be dealt with strictly, including confiscation of the fishing crafts.

The more than 6,000 mechanised fishing vessels, including 1,726 trawlers, registered with the Fisheries department, are legally barred from venturing into the sea from April 15, said Rabi Narayan Patnaik, the Joint Director of the state Fisheries department (Marine).

"The restriction is imposed every year to allow breeding of fishes. It is aimed at the greater interest of the fisherfolk, as it leads to a larger yield," he said.

The ban on marine fishing is promulgated under the Orissa Marine Fishing Regulation Act, and it is also based on directions from the Union government.

## Smuggled betel nuts worth ₹1.5cr seized

**Bhubaneswar:** Indian Coast Guard station at Paradip port town Wednesday made a seizure of betel nuts worth over ₹1.5 crore which were illegally smuggled from Bangladesh to India by sea route. In a swift and meticulously planned operation, Indian Coast Guard apprehended two Indian fishing boats engaged in the illegal activity in Bay of Bengal. The fishing boats were found carrying approximately 710 gunny bags of betel nuts, worth over ₹1.5 crore. The boats were registered with West Bengal and were operating without any valid documents, said Coast Guard officials. The boats along with crew were escorted to Kasafal fishing harbour and were handed over Kasafal Marine Police Station, Odisha for further detailed investigation. The joint operation by Indian Coast Guard and State Marine Police through constant vigil and alertness at sea underscores the Maritime synergy and steadfast commitment in safeguarding the nation's maritime interests.

## Rare brain surgery at MKCG Med College

**Digapahandi:** A rare and complex brain surgery was successfully performed at MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur, where doctors removed a 300-gram tumour from a patient's brain after a three-hour procedure. The patient, Haraprasad Rath, an advocate from Digapahandi in Ganjam district and former president of Khemundi Bar Association, had been suffering from the tumour for a prolonged period. The surgery was conducted under the direct supervision of Prof Rabi Narayan Panda, head of the Neurosurgery department. The medical team included assistant professor Debajyoti Senapati, along with Debashree Mohapatra, Tushar Kanta Rath and P Hariprasad. The anaesthesia team, led by Sanjeeb Patra, also played a crucial role during the operation. Following the successful surgery, Rath has been kept under observation, Panda said. Rath and his family members expressed gratitude to the entire medical team, as well as hospital staff, for their efforts and care.

# OUR CENSUS OUR DEVELOPMENT

## Odisha

### Houselisting & Housing Census

#### 16<sup>th</sup> April to 15<sup>th</sup> May

#### What will you be asked?

**Information of house:**

- Building number
- Materials of the floor, walls & ceiling
- Ascertain use of house- (Residential/ Non-residential)
- Condition of house

**Others:**

- Main Cereal consumed
- Mobile number (Only for Census communication)

**Basic information about family:**

- Number of family members
- Name, sex, caste of the head of the family (SC/ST or others)
- Ownership status of the house
- Number of rooms
- Number of married couples living in the house

**Amenities:**

- Source of drinking water
- Availability of drinking water source
- Main source of lighting
- Access to latrine
- Type of latrine
- Waste water outlet
- Bathroom facilities
- Kitchen & LPG/PNG connection
- Main fuel used for cooking

**Assets:**

- Radio/Transistors
- Television
- Access to Internet Computer/Laptop
- Mobile phone /Telephone
- Two-wheeler/ four-wheeler

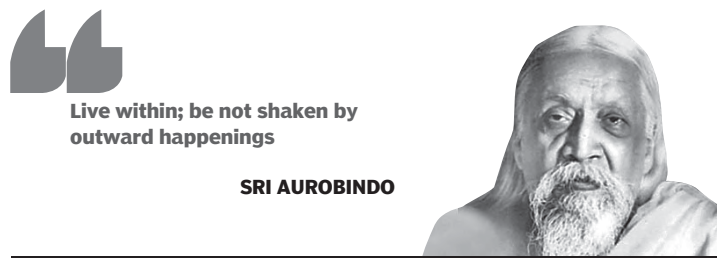
» This stage lays the foundation for population enumeration

» All your information will remain completely confidential and secure

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### Let us fulfill our responsibility and participate in the Census

CensusIndia2027



## Russians Go Home

On the night of April 12th, as Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán conceded defeat after 16 years in power, the crowds along the Danube began to chant. They did not reach for new words. They didn't need to. They reached back four decades for words that had announced a turning point in history: "Ruszkikhaza" ("Russians go home").

But those words meant something different this time. In 1989, when the chant reflected Hungarians' long-standing demand for an end to communist rule, Hungary had spent more than three decades under the Russian boot—and not metaphorically. The Soviet tanks that crushed the 1956 revolution were followed by Soviet troops who never fully left, a Soviet-installed government that functioned as a client regime, and a political and economic system imported wholesale from the USSR. To chant Ruszkikhaza then was to demand the end of foreign occupation, to reclaim sovereignty from an external power that had extinguished it.

Orbán was not a Russian puppet. He was a freely elected leader who, over time, chose to align his country with Vladimir Putin's Kremlin for reasons of ideology, personal affinity, and, above all, financial interest. The Russia that haunted this election did not arrive in tanks. It crept in through gas contracts, oligarchic networks, and the steady corrosion of public life by private enrichment.

In reviving the chant, Hungarians were rejecting a system of plunder that had made Orbán's inner circle fabulously wealthy while hollowing out the state. The enemy was not unfreedom in its classic form, but kleptocracy.

That distinction matters for what comes next. Occupations end when armies leave, whereas kleptocracies do not end with elections. Because such systems become entrenched in courts, media, procurement mechanisms, and local administrations, they can survive even radical changes at the top.

As decisive as Orbán's defeat may be, it does not dismantle the machinery he spent 16 years building. Péter Magyar's victory marks only the beginning of a prolonged institutional and economic struggle, whose outcome will remain uncertain even if his Tisza government secures a constitutional majority in parliament.

Still, the electoral result is extraordinary. A leader who made himself synonymous with "illiberal democracy"—a model admired, studied, and imitated well beyond Hungary—was removed peacefully at the ballot box. In a decade when illiberalism has presented itself as the wave of the future, Hungarians voted overwhelmingly to reverse course.

The irony is stark. Orbán's project depended on preserving the outward forms of democracy even as he hollowed them out. Elections could not be abolished outright, because European Union membership—and the EU subsidies that sustained his patronage network—required at least nominal adherence to democratic procedures. To keep the money flowing, elections had to continue, and now Orbán has been ousted from power as a result.

That result is being rightly celebrated as proof that even entrenched illiberal regimes can be defeated electorally. But it also raises a more difficult question. Under what conditions can such victories endure? In 1989, Hungarians were not leaping into the unknown. They were moving toward a clearly defined destination: the Cold War West. "Rejoining Europe" meant entering a political and security order anchored by American power and ideological confidence. The United States was present not only as a military guarantor but also as a model and a promise.

That context has radically changed. In 2026, the US aligned itself not with the forces of democratic restoration in Hungary, but with Orbán. President Donald Trump and his MAGA movement see Orbán's system as a model to be emulated rather than resisted. They regard Hungary as a site of ideological contestation rather than democratic solidarity.

This broader shift—from an external environment that reinforced liberal transformation to one that threatens to frustrate it—alters the meaning of Hungary's political breakthrough. The question facing Central and Eastern Europe is no longer how quickly it can join the West. It is whether liberal democracy can be rebuilt and sustained within Europe at all, now that its powerful American patron has grown indifferent to the point of colluding with liberal democracy's enemies. Simply put, can Europe shoulder the burden alone?

The EU is an economic colossus and a regulatory superpower, but it was constructed for a different geopolitical era. If Hungary's democratic renewal is to take hold, "choosing Europe" must translate into tangible improvements in everyday life—functioning institutions, economic stability, and visible gains that can compete with and overcome the Orbán regime's legacy of patronage and control. After all, while Orbán may have lost office, he retains a political base, a loyal media ecosystem, and a network of allies at home and abroad. The system he built will adapt to opposition. Its capacity to disrupt, obstruct, and reconstitute itself should not be underestimated.

In 1989, Ruszkikhaza named an external occupier and demanded its departure. In 2026, it aims to expel something less visible and more resilient: a form of governance that operates through networks of dependency, influence, and extraction that cannot simply be driven out. The contest it announces is therefore different in kind. The chant is the same, but its meaning is new. In 1989, it freed a captive nation. In 2026, it keeps the future open, and not for Hungarians alone.

*The writer is Professor of Law at New York University School of Law and the Richard Holbrooke Fellow at the American Academy in Berlin.*

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### WISDOM CORNER

Age is an issue of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter.

MARK TWAIN

Past is gone, present is going, and tomorrow is day after tomorrow's yesterday. So why worry about anything? God is in all this.

RK NARAYAN

Memories are like mulligatawny soup in a cheap restaurant. It is best not to stir them.

PG WODEHOUSE

# HOUSEHOLDS UNDER PRESSURE

FOCUS ECONOMY

The Reserve Bank of India's bi-monthly Inflation Expectations Survey of households in March 2026 shows perceived inflation to be 7.2 per cent. This is more than double the official Consumer Price Index based reading of 3.2 per cent for February. The CPI was revamped recently to be more representative of true inflation. The RBI survey also shows households expect prices to rise 8.5 per cent over the next three months and 8.8 per cent over the year. This is not a statistical quirk or popular pessimism. It is lived experience. And the gap between official data and ground-level perception of reality has rarely been more politically charged.



Ajit Ranade

**THE THREAT TO INDIA'S MANUFACTURING COMPETITIVENESS ALREADY UNDER PRESSURE FROM GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAIN DISRUPTIONS IS REAL**



Stephen Holmes

**THE RUSSIA THAT HAUNTED THIS ELECTION IN HUNGARY DID NOT ARRIVE IN TANKS. IT CREPT IN THROUGH GAS CONTRACTS, OLIGARCHIC NETWORKS, AND THE STEADY CORROSION OF PUBLIC LIFE BY PRIVATE ENRICHMENT**



**The Indian household does not read Consumer Price Index press releases. It reads the price on the cooking oil tin, the gas cylinder bill, the school fee notice, the medical invoice**

This will only tighten domestic availability in the months ahead. Both oils singe the household budget.

The lived experience of inflation in healthcare, medicines, education, transportation and house rents has all been high, for several years, as documented in a new book called "Breakpoint". India's recently revised CPI basket still has a structural blind spot. It captures the rents paid by sitting tenants whose leases escalate by a formulaic 5-10 per cent annually, rather than the market rents faced by new entrants. Brokers and tenants across Indian cities routinely report double-digit rent increases even as official housing inflation remains subdued. The index is measuring the wrong price. The official thermometer is not reporting the correct temperature.

All of this is happening against the backdrop of stagnant real wages, especially in rural India. When everything costs more and wages do not keep pace, households cut nutrition, defer medical care, and pull children from private schools. The violent protests for wage hikes, we are witnessing in Haryana's Manesar and

Noida's industrial clusters are not merely labour disputes. They are inflation's social manifestation.

In Manesar, factory workers boycotted work, clashed with police and drew the government into a dramatic concession. The government announced a 35 per cent hike in minimum wages for unskilled workers. It is barely enough. The protests are a damning verdict on years of inflation outpacing wage growth.

In Noida, workers in garment and hosiery factories turned to stone-pelting, arson and vandalism. They too are asking for a raise in minimum wages just like in Haryana. India has around 400 million internal migrant workers acutely sensitive to food and fuel costs. When a meal doubles in price and LPG becomes scarce, many simply return to their villages. "Once labour leaves, it is very difficult to get them back," is a refrain from the India SME Forum. The threat to India's manufacturing competitiveness already under pressure from global supply chain disruptions is real.

On the macro front, the rupee fell 10 per cent in the last fiscal year against the dollar.

The fall in March was sharp, and the exchange rate crossed 95. The RBI responded with a dramatic crackdown. The RBI has virtually banned domestic bank participation in offshore betting in the rupee dollar rate. This is called the non-deliverable forward (NDF) market, which is technically outside the regulatory ambit of RBI and operates in Singapore, London or New York.

The RBI has expressed its deep displeasure at banks using the offshore-onshore gap to profit from the rupee's weakness. But as any careful observer will note, the offshore NDF market is a symptom, not the disease. The disease is India's structural current account deficit, widened by high oil import bills. This is combined with portfolio outflows of \$26 billion over two years and net FDI that has turned zero or negative. These are real economy vulnerabilities that no amount of derivative-market policing can permanently cure.

The RBI has held the repo rate at 5.25 per cent and projects inflation to average 4.6 per cent in 2026-27. These are carefully calibrated projections. But they will be hard to defend if oil prices remain elevated, if the West Asia ceasefire breaks down, and if the monsoon disappoints—none of which can be dismissed as unlikely.

The Indian household does not read CPI press releases. It reads the price on the cooking oil tin, the gas cylinder bill, the school fee notice, the medical invoice. And it is telling the RBI survey that prices are rising at more than twice the official rate. That is the voice that matters—and it is saying, clearly and urgently, that the singeing is far from over.

*The writer is a noted economist*

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### SPECTRUM INDIA

## Fragile economy faces geopolitical headwinds

The much-touted economic strength of India has come into question. Not just because of reports of GDP over estimation but the future trend of growth, hampered by geopolitical conditions and the rising prices of oil and gas. Stagnant real wages and somewhat static manufacturing growth data revealed that consumption as well as every macro-economic indicator has been growing more slowly over time.



Dhurjati Mukherjee

**ECONOMISTS EXPECT THE GOVERNMENT MAY NOT BE ABLE TO MEET ITS FISCAL GOALS**

It would thus not be wrong to say that if real growth was over-estimated over the last decade or so, then total GDP is smaller than what has been revealed. So, it would not be prudent to say that we are the 4th largest economy, as claimed. Going by government statistics, the average real growth rate over the last decade, excluding the Covid fall and spike has been just 6 per cent. But taking into consideration the decline in consumption, private investment and sales over the past decade, it is amply clear that India's growth story faces a demand problem. Moreover, in the present geopolitical situation, it is doubtful if the 6 per cent figure would be

reached in the current fiscal.

Economists expect the government may not be able to meet its fiscal goals with Standard Chartered expecting a slippage of 0.7-0.9 percentage points of GDP. Meanwhile Prof. Deepanshu Mohan an economist at the O.P. Jindal University in an interview stated that India may have to course correct in its geopolitical alignments to strengthen food and energy security for sustained economic growth. If there is over inter-dependence on the US, specially led by President Donald Trump, it could harm the Indian economy. Painting rosy pictures of the Indian economy in the long-term may be a strategy but what will happen in the coming two years is a big challenge before us.

At present, the RBI faces a delicate balancing act between supporting economic growth and containing inflation as external shocks from the West Assan conflict disrupt macro-economic stability. With crude prices surging and supply chains under strain, the RBI decided to adopt a 'wait and watch' policy and kept the repo rate unchanged at 5.25 per cent

while maintaining its neutral stance.

Meanwhile, what is needed at this juncture is strengthening the manufacturing base for which all types of support, specially highlevels of infrastructure are necessary coupled with induction of cost-effective modern technology. Though India is not lagging, manufacturing has to be geared up in a big way for which research has to be encouraged to innovate and help accelerate the process.

Whatever strategy India adopts, the challenge on the economic front remains due to geopolitical conditions.

There is no doubt that the economy is becoming fragile and recovery in the short-term appears quite unlikely. Analysts are of the opinion that with oil prices touching ranging above \$110 a few days ago the ceasefire brought it down to \$90 presently. Even then, there are expectations that petrol and diesel prices may rise after the recent state elections.

Meanwhile, the government has cut special additional excise duty on petrol and diesel by ₹10 per litre each to limit OMC under-recoveries, reimposed wind-

fall taxes on exports and granted customs duty relief on select petrochemical inputs until June 2026. Government officials are considering austerity measures, including spending curbs in ministries with installed capacity to use allotted funds though spending on roads, railways and airports is expected may not be affected to sustain the growth momentum.

Meanwhile, as some analysts predicted, the much-awaited truce has not materialized as demands of both Washington and Tehran remained poles apart and may be difficult to reconcile, even in the near future. In such a situation, the Hormuz blockade will have serious consequences for the Indian economy. Though he RBI recently stated that crude oil prices may average \$85 per barrel, this may not happen in the first quarter of this fiscal, which is expected to be challenging in view of the global situation. As the RBI governor rightly observed it would be prudent to watch the changing circumstances and the evolving growth-inflation outlook.

INFA

## 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](mailto:edit@orissapost.com)

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

### Grim scenario

Sir, It pains to note that 1.05 billion tonnes of food was 'wasted' globally in 2022, and that India is the second-largest contributor to global food waste, with around 78 million tonnes of food wasted annually, according to United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Food Waste Index Report 2024. The UNEP report emphasizes that this massive waste coexists with high rates of hunger and malnutrition. Food waste has indeed become an issue of great public concern globally. Governments and other international bodies must work in tandem to promote awareness on this critical issue and develop policies to reduce food loss and wastage. There must also be coordination among food supply chain actors—farmers, handlers, processors and traders in collaboration with the public and private sectors and the civil society to prevent food wastage. Educating people in a sustained manner on safe food handling, proper food storage in households and understanding "best before" dates will be of some help in tackling the issue. Discarding food is not sustainable for our earth and the environment.

*Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI*

### Need for policy preparedness

Sir, A recent report by the United Nations Development Programme has raised serious concerns about the wider impact of the ongoing conflict in West Asia. It warns that prolonged instability in the region could push nearly 2.5 million Indians into poverty, highlighting how global crises can directly affect domestic economies. India has strong economic ties with West Asian countries, especially in energy imports and employment. Any disruption in oil supplies can lead to rising fuel prices, which in turn increases the cost of living. Higher transportation and production costs often translate into inflation, affecting essential goods and services. This burden is felt most by low- and middle-income households. Additionally, many Indian workers in the region depend on remittances sent back home. Conflict can threaten jobs and reduce these inflows, weakening family incomes. The report underscores the urgent need for policy preparedness to cushion vulnerable populations. Without timely intervention, external shocks like war could deepen inequality and reverse hard-earned economic progress in India.

*N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE*

Omar refuses to cut tricolour ribbon

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, April 15: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah Wednesday refused to cut an inaugural ribbon in saffron, white and green stripes, instead untying it and handing it to the organisers with the instruction that it be folded and kept with respect.



his advisor Nasir Aslam Wani and a host of others. The ribbon dispensed with, Abdullah went on with the rest of the proceedings at the Kashmir Haat in the heart of the city. The gesture of not cutting the ribbon won him widespread praise on social media platforms. "This is what real respect for the Tiranga looks like. In a time when patriotism is

often reduced to cheap TV debates... actions like these speak louder than words," National Conference leader Gagan Bhagat said on X. Added Sheikh Khalid Jehangir, director and visiting fellow at the International Centre for Peace Studies, "A thoughtful call... reflecting both respect and sensitivity." Congress' social media handler Mir Ilyas lauded Abdullah for his presence of mind. The incident, which raised many eyebrows also led to questions on the oversight by the private organisation handling the event. Said Monica Verma, a PhD student in international relations, "Omar Abdullah decides not to cut the Tricolour put as a ribbon... Did the people who invited him not think this through?"

Amarnath yatra registration begins in Jammu

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, April 15: The registration for the annual Amarnath yatra in south Kashmir Himalayas began Wednesday, with a large number of devotees thronging counters set up here for the pilgrimage. The advance registration is open in both online and offline modes. The 57-day pilgrimage will commence from the twin tracks -- the traditional 48-km Nunwan-Pahalgam route in Anantnag and the 14-km shorter but steep Baltal route in Ganderbal -- July 3 and will conclude on Raksha Bandhan August 28.

Survey records Delhi's fading village traditions

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 15: A 500-year-old fair in Jharoda, the rhythmic build-up of dhons' echoing through Naraina in the days leading up to Holi - fragments of a living past that are now being documented by the MCD before they dissolve into Delhi's expanding urban sprawl.

located at the Town Hall in Chandni Chowk as part of a larger "municipal museum" project. The initiative, launched about five months ago, was briefly paused due to other ongoing projects of the civic body's heritage cell. Recently resumed, the exercise is focused not just on the built heritage but on intangible cultural practices oral histories, rituals, fairs, and community traditions that have defined the identity of these villages over centuries.

A recent survey by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, which has shortlisted 100 of the city's nearly 360 urban villages for documentation, is beginning to surface deeply rooted traditions that continue to survive despite the rapid transformation of villages in the national capital. In its ongoing first phase, the civic body will be covering 25 villages spread across the capital six in Najafgarh, seven in Narela, six in

the South zone, two in Central, three in Civil Lines, and one in Karol Bagh. The list includes Begumpur, Mehrauli, Dhansa, Palam, Rani Khera, Jharoda, Budhpur, Isapur, and Warisabad, among others. Comprising four members from the MCD's heritage cell, the team spends nearly a week in each village, collecting oral narratives, recording 'bhajans', documenting rituals, and gathering old photographs. These documented stories will later be cata-

CAG flags academic, regulatory lapses at University of Jammu

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, April 15: The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India has flagged multiple academic, regulatory and administrative deficiencies in the functioning of the University of Jammu, including running courses without mandatory approvals. The CAG recommended corrective measures and said that the university should strengthen its affiliation process to ensure that only institutions meeting regulatory norms are granted affiliation, along with the preparation of comprehensive inspection

reports to safeguard academic quality. It also drew attention to the issues of poor industry linkages, delays in evaluation and weak placement outcomes. The university was offering a wide range of programmes, including 38 doctoral, 24 MPhil, 50 postgraduate, 19 undergraduate courses, besides diplomas and certificate programmes across eight faculties, the CAG report on Union Territory finances for the year ended March 31, 2024, said. However, the audit noted that the university had obtained approval from the All India Council

for Technical Education for only two technical programmes -- MBA and MCA -- while four other technical courses were being run without approval. "Further, the MCA programme had not been accredited by the National Board of Accreditation, depriving students of quality assurance benefits". The report also highlighted deviations from prescribed academic standards, including non-adherence to the AICTE model curriculum and lack of required infrastructure in programmes such as M Tech Computer Science. On degree norms, the CAG observed that the

Delhi rolls out 'Safe School Campaign'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 15: Delhi Home Minister Ashish Laishla launched a city-wide fire safety awareness drive Wednesday, including the "Safe School Campaign", aimed at strengthening safety mechanisms in schools and hospitals across the national capital. The campaign, organised by the Education Department and the Delhi Fire Service as part of Fire Service Week, being observed from April 14 to 20, seeks to enhance public participation in promoting fire prevention and preparedness, according to a statement. Addressing the programme virtually, Sood noted that ensuring safety is a collective responsibility and called upon citizens to actively contribute towards building a

safer environment. Under the campaign, compliance with fire safety norms in both government and private schools will be reinforced, officials said. Highlighting the significance of Fire Service Week, the minister paid tribute to 66 firefighters who lost their lives in a major fire incident aboard a ship in Mumbai in 1944. He said the observance serves as a reminder of the importance of fire safety and preparedness. Referring to this year's theme focusing on safe schools, hospitals and a fire-aware society, Sood stressed that the safety of children remains a top priority. He said the Delhi Fire Service responded to over 36,000 emergency calls in the past year and is continuously upgrading its technology and training systems. The minister also urged students to remain aware and prepared to deal with

fire-related emergencies and encouraged participation in mock drills and safety demonstrations. More than 1,000 awareness camps have been conducted so far, training over 50,000 people in fire safety measures, the statement mentioned. Sood advised citizens to follow basic precautions such as keeping emergency exits clear, using electrical appliances safely and contacting emergency helplines like 101 or 112 in case of fire. He also called on school authorities to ensure proper training of staff in handling fire safety equipment. Appealing to parents, teachers and students to remain vigilant, the minister said awareness and preparedness are key to preventing fire-related incidents.

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NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the following locker hirers have availed locker facilities from our Bank. They have failed/neglected in making payments towards the locker rentals to the Bank or not operated the locker for a considerable period. The Bank has issued several notices to the below-mentioned locker hirers requesting them to make payment towards locker rentals or operate the locker and/or close the locker facility(ies). The communication in this regard was either duly acknowledged by them and/or returned undelivered.

This is the final notice to notify that if the below-mentioned locker hirers fail to pay the arrears of locker rentals to the Bank or do not operate the locker on or before 15/07/2026, the Bank shall break and open the locks of the locker and take inventory of any items lying in the locker. All such items will be kept in the Bank's custody until such time the arrears of rent along with interest, expenses, charges, etc. are paid to the Bank. This will be done as per the Banking Law and Practice and at locker hirer's risk and responsibility.

If any cash is found in the locker, the Bank reserves the right to adjust the same against the outstanding dues and it shall be treated as proper discharge on part of the Bank and no claims, whatsoever, shall be entertained thereafter in this regard. For the outstanding dues of locker rentals, the Bank reserves its right to proceed legally against the locker hirer(s) for recovery of its dues.

Table with columns: Sr No, Locker No, Name of the Locker Hirer(s), Address, Amount due as on 30-12-2025, Amount due as on 30-12-2025. Multiple entries for various branches like Bhubaneswar, Jagatpur, Kendrapara, etc.

Table with columns: Sr No, Locker No, Name of the Locker Hirer(s), Address, Amount due as on 30-12-2025, Amount due as on 30-12-2025. Multiple entries for various branches like Jagatpur, Kendrapara, etc.



What the government is proposing now has nothing to do with women's reservation. This amendment is an attempted power grab using delimitation and gerrymandering

CENSUS 2027 TO BEGIN IN AP FROM APR 16 IN DIGITAL FORMAT

The self-enumeration process under the Census 2027 will begin across Andhra Pradesh from April 16 under two-phases in digital format, Director of Census Operations J Nivas said Wednesday



of the day quote

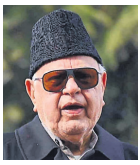
It is the delimitation (Of Lok Sabha seats) which will create a serious situation in the country. The issue of delimitation is contentious and is being done without conducting the Census



Delimitation will take place. Nothing will happen even if I or you say something. The BJP has a brute majority and they will do what they want. The delimitation has to happen in 2026-27 and it will take place



We hope our neighbour realises that nothing can be achieved through conflict. Conflict only brings destruction. They should understand that there has been a long time and they should put an end to it (conflict)



SHORT TAKES

Delhi fire kills couple, toddler

New Delhi: A couple and their two-year-old daughter were charred to death after a massive fire tore through a small cluster of shanties near Munge Ram Park in northwest Delhi's Budh Vihar area in the early hours of Wednesday, officials said.

HC rejects gangster Abu Salem's early release plea

Mumbai: The Bombay High Court Wednesday dismissed gangster Abu Salem's plea for immediate release as "premature and misconceived", even as he claimed to have served 25 years in jail in India as mandated under the terms of his extradition from Portugal.

PM on two-day visit to Sikkim from Apr 27

Gangtok: Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to arrive in Sikkim on a two-day visit from April 27, Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang said Wednesday. Modi is slated to land at the Libing Helipad near Gangtok around 3 pm, Tamang said during an event here.

Stray dog bites 40 in two hours

Beed: A stray dog went on a rampage, biting at least 40 people within a span of two hours in Kajj town in Beed district of Maharashtra, prompting the victims to queue up at a government hospital to secure anti-rabies vaccinations. An official said the canine targeted people in several localities, including Mangalwar Peth, Azippura, Bhimnagar and Roza Mohalla Monday.

Samrat Choudhary sworn in as Bihar's first BJP CM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Patna, April 15: Bihar got its first BJP-led government Wednesday, with Samrat Choudhary taking the oath as the state Chief Minister, marking a major political transition in the state that saw the saffron party go from a supporting role to the centre of governance.



Besides Choudhary, JD(U) stalwarts Vijay Kumar Chaudhary and Bijendra Prasad Yadav also took oath as cabinet members. The two have been designated as deputy chief ministers

Besides Choudhary, JD(U) stalwarts Vijay Kumar Chaudhary and Bijendra Prasad Yadav also took oath as cabinet members. The two have been designated as deputy chief ministers.

All three were administered the oath of office by Governor Syed Ata Hasnain at Lok Bhavan, a day after JD(U)'s longest-serving Bihar chief Nitish Kumar resigned from the top post.

Along with Kumar, Union minister Jagat Prakash Nadda and Union minister Chirag Paswan, who heads LJP(RV), the third largest constituent of the ruling NDA in Bihar, were among those present at the oath-taking ceremony. Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated Samrat Choudhary, who became the first-ever BJP leader to head a government in Bihar, saying his energy, dedication to public service and grassroots experience will prove beneficial for the state.

Choudhary, who briefly interacted with journalists after the swearing-in ceremony, said, "I will get down to work starting today. Rest assured that the model of governance developed by Narendra Modi and Nitish Kumar will be followed in Bihar."

The change of guard in the state was necessitated by Nitish Kumar, 75, becoming a member of the Rajya Sabha, bringing an end to his 20-year tenure as Chief Minister.

In the evening, a cabinet secretariat department notification announced that Vijay

Kumar Chaudhary and Bijendra Prasad Yadav, both of whom have headed the JD(U)'s Bihar unit in the past, were being designated as deputy chief ministers.

According to the notification, the Chief Minister has retained the Home portfolio, and about 30 other crucial departments, including health, agriculture, industry and vigilance. Earlier, the state home ministry was with Samrat Choudhary as a deputy chief minister.

Samrat Choudhary has been in politics for nearly three decades, though the 57-year-old leader joined the BJP only nine years ago.

Among the 10 departments allocated to Vijay Kumar Chaudhary are water resources, parliamentary affairs and information and public relations, all of which he held in the previous government.

Bijendra Prasad Yadav has been allocated eight departments, including power, finance and planning and development, all of which he was handling in the Nitish Kumar government.

Both the Deputy CMs had begun their political career in the 1980s and were counted on by Nitish Kumar for their experience, competence and political loyalty.

After the oath-taking ceremony, the chief minister went to the secretariat, where he held a meeting with government officials, whom he

briefed about the priorities of his administration.

Later, Choudhary also visited the BJP office, where he was felicitated by party workers. Choudhary, who began his political career in 1999 with the RJD, the BJP's principal rival in the state, was teased by the leader of the opposition, Tejashwi Yadav. In a social media post, Yadav, the RJD's working president, whose heated exchanges with Choudhary inside the assembly have made headlines on many occasions, called the BJP leader "a selected Chief Minister" who had "upstaged" Nitish Kumar, the man "elected" to the top post.

The reference was to the NDA having declared during the assembly polls held in November last year that the JD(U) supremo will lead the coalition "from 2025 to 2030 (pachis se tees, phir se Nitish)". Meanwhile, NDA sources said they were expecting a cabinet expansion at the earliest, since the current arrangement left no scope to ensure that different caste groups were represented.

The CM himself is a Koeri, a powerful OBC group, which is said to have played a key role in the BJP central leadership's decision to back him for the top job. Vijay Kumar Chaudhary is a Bhumihar, an upper caste group that is known to be inclined more towards the BJP than his own JD(U).

AMRAVATI SHOCKER

Youth held for exploiting 180 minors, shot 350 videos

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Amravati (Maharashtra), April 15: A man accused of sexually exploiting at least 180 minor girls and recording more than 350 obscene videos has been arrested in Maharashtra's Amravati district, police said.

The accused, identified as Mohammad Ayaz, also known as Tanveer and a resident of Paratwada city, allegedly lured minor girls into a "love trap" before taking them to cities such as Mumbai and Pune, where he is suspected of having recorded objectionable videos of them.

Investigators said these videos were then used to blackmail the victims and force them into prostitution, with some clips reportedly circulated online as well.

According to details shared in a memorandum submitted by BJP Rajya Sabha MP Anil Bonde to Superintendent of Police, Rural, Vishal Anand, the accused systematically targeted minors through social media platforms, including WhatsApp and Snapchat groups.

The MP had also warned of staging protests outside the SP's office if a Special Investigation Team (SIT) was not formed to probe the case.

Police action followed soon after, with the accused being taken into custody and sent to seven days of police custody. His mobile phone has been seized, and officials confirmed that it contains several objectionable videos which are now being examined as part of the investigation.

Authorities are investigating whether the accused shared the videos with associates or a broader criminal network. The Cyber Cell has been involved in tracking and analysing any content that may have been circulated online.

The case has triggered massive outrage in Paratwada and nearby areas. Protests erupted across the city, with various organisations and political groups expressing anger over the scale of the alleged crimes.

A complete shutdown was observed in Paratwada in response to the incident, while heavy police deployment was



Investigators said these videos were then used to blackmail the victims and force them into prostitution, with some clips reportedly circulated online as well

put in place to maintain law and order.

During the course of the investigation, police have also taken four additional suspects into custody, indicating the possibility of a wider network involved in the crime.

Public anger also spread to Achalpur in Amravati district after reports surfaced that the accused had repeatedly uploaded videos depicting the exploitation of young women on social media.

Amid the outrage, civic authorities initiated action against alleged encroachments linked to the accused.

In the presence of BJP MLA Pravin Tayade, bulldozers were deployed on Wednesday to demolish structures built on encroached land associated with him. Officials said other portions of the accused's residence have also been identified as encroachments, and the Municipal Council has issued a 30-day eviction notice.

MLA Tayade stated that if the encroachments are not removed within the specified period, further demolition actions will be taken. The investigation remains ongoing, with police working to uncover the full extent of the exploitation.

Raghav Chadha's Z-plus security cover withdrawn

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, April 15: Days after a verbal spat between MP Raghav Chadha and the AAP over his removal from the post of deputy leader in the Rajya Sabha the Punjab government has withdrawn his Z-plus category security cover, it has been learnt.

Meanwhile, sources in Delhi said that Chadha may be provided a security cover by the central government. Chadha is a Rajya Sabha MP from Punjab and was accorded by the state government a Z-plus category security cover.

The cover was withdrawn a few days ago, sources said. The Aam Aadmi Party April 2 announced the replacement of Chadha with MP Ashok Mittal for the post of deputy leader in Rajya Sabha. Chadha said he had been "silenced, not defeated", attracting a retort by his party, which accused him of engaging in "soft PR" and restraining himself from raising his voice against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Centre in Parliament.

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann said he believed Chadha was "compromised" for denying the party whip. "If Chadha is unwilling to speak on issues like the 'deletion' of votes in West Bengal, stage a walkout from Parliament on important issues or raise a voice against the arrest of several AAP volunteers and leaders in Gujarat, then it is breaking the party line and going against the party whip," Mann earlier said.

TCS NASHIK CONTROVERSY

NCW sets up panel to probe alleged sexual harassment

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 15: The National Commission for Women Wednesday said it has set up a fact-finding committee to probe the alleged incidents of sexual harassment of employees at a Tata Consultancy Services BPO unit in Nashik, Maharashtra.

In a statement, the Commission said the panel will visit the facility April 17 to conduct an on-the-spot inquiry, examine the circumstances leading to the incident and assess the response of the authorities.

"The National Commission for Women (NCW) has taken suo motu cognisance of serious media reports concerning alleged incidents of sexual harassment of women at the Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) BPO unit in Nashik, Maharashtra," the statement read.

"Taking a serious view of the matter, the Commission, in exercise of its powers under Section 8 of the National Commission for Women Act, 1990, has constituted a fact-finding committee to conduct a detailed inquiry into the incident. The committee will visit the place of incident 17th April," it added.

The allegations, which surfaced during an initial inquiry triggered by a complaint related to religious practices, include claims of sexual harassment, rape and attempts at forced religious conversion of female employees by certain individuals in supervisory roles, the Commission said.

SNIPPETS

Delhi court takes cognisance of ED chargesheet against Vadra

New Delhi: A Delhi court Wednesday took cognisance of an Enforcement Directorate chargesheet against businessman Robert Vadra and others in a money laundering case linked to a land deal in Haryana's Shikohpur. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) filed the chargesheet against Vadra, husband of Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, and 10 others last July. It was the first time that any probe agency filed a chargesheet against 57-year-old Vadra in a criminal case. In April 2025, the ED had questioned Vadra for three consecutive days. Special Judge Sushant Changotha said the chargesheet, and a prima facie broader scrutiny of the documents, disclosed sufficient material to proceed further against Vadra and eight other accused persons.

EAM meets Austrian Chancellor Stocker

New Delhi: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar Wednesday met Austria's Federal Chancellor Christian Stocker and discussed ways to bolster the overall ambit of the bilateral ties including in areas of trade and technology. The meeting came a day ahead of Stocker's wide-ranging talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The Austrian Chancellor landed in New Delhi Tuesday on a four-day visit to shore up bilateral cooperation in a range of areas. It is his first official trip to India. "We discussed trade, technology, innovation, and the strategic partnership between the EU and India -- topics that matter more than ever in times of geopolitical uncertainty," Stocker said on social media.



ISRO successfully conducted the Second Integrated Air Drop Test (IADT-02) for Gaganyaan, India's first human spaceflight mission

Over 12L households use self-enumeration for Census

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 15: More than 12 lakh households have successfully availed the self-enumeration facility for the Census 2027 first phase -- houselisting and housing census over the last 15 days, the Centre in a statement said.

With the 15-day exercise concluded, a month-long field operation for the houselisting and housing Census will now begin from Thursday in eight states and Union Territories, it said.

Enumerators in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Goa,

Karnataka, Lakshadweep, Mizoram, Odisha, and Sikkim, along with the NDMC area and Delhi Cantonment Board in the National Capital Territory will conduct house-to-house visits to put forth 33 notified questions to house owners and collecting data. During the period, residents who had availed the self-enumeration facility will have to provide self-enumeration ID (SE ID) to the enumerator during the field visit to complete the HLO process.

Households that did not opt for self-enumeration will be covered during the physical house-



to-house visit by enumerators. "The Self-Enumeration (SE) facility introduced for the first time in Census has received an encouraging response from the public. As part of the digital approach adopted for Cen-

With the 15-day exercise concluded, a month-long field operation for the houselisting and housing Census will now begin from Thursday in eight states and Union Territories

Enumerators in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Goa, Karnataka, Lakshadweep, Mizoram, Odisha, and Sikkim, along with the NDMC area and Delhi Cantonment Board in the National Capital Territory will conduct house-to-house visits to put forth 33 notified questions to house owners and collecting data

sus 2027, so far around 12 lakh households have successfully availed Self-Enumeration facility through the official portal (se.census.gov.in), the government statement said.

The facility was made available to the citizens for a 15-day window immediately preceding the field operations. "The initiative marks a significant milestone in digitising Census operations and has been widely appreciated for offering flexibility, convenience and ease of participation."

In a first, the 16th Census of India is being carried out as

a completely digital exercise, while retaining the traditional door-to-door enumeration framework to ensure comprehensive coverage. Over 32 lakh enumerators will use a mobile application to collect data digitally to ensure higher accuracy and faster processing, the government said. Beginning April 16, the next phase of rollout, the self-enumeration facility will commence in Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Haryana, Chandigarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh, and will be on till April 30, it said.

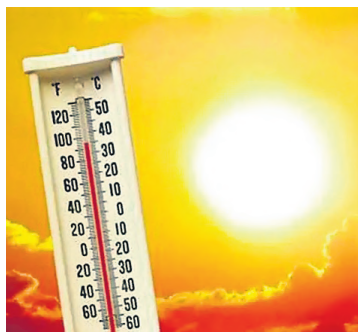
national



Our government has taken several path-breaking initiatives to ensure progress and prosperity for its people. The Punjab government is committed to the holistic development of every corner of the state

AKOLA SEES DAY'S HIGHEST TEMPERATURE

Parts of Maharashtra are reeling under intense heat, with Akola city in the Vidarbha region recording the maximum temperature of 44.2 degrees Celsius Wednesday, the highest in the country for the day, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said



of the day quote

Maharashtra has turned into a 'dubta' (sinking) state, and people will never forgive the government for that

We just hope the NDA fulfils its lofty promises of one crore jobs, stopping migration, and building good schools in every block, among other things

Those BJP leaders who had advocated the public sale and eating of meat and fish in certain places and on certain days, will have to sell fish and meat after May 4

Eight killed as bus overturns

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Fatehgarh Sahib, April 15: A bus carrying devotees from Anandpur Sahib overturned in Punjab's Fatehgarh Sahib, killing eight people, including two women and injuring 19 others, police said Wednesday.

The accident occurred near Himmatpura on the Morinda-Chunni road in the Bassi Pathana area at around 10 pm Tuesday when the devotees -- all residents of Fatehgarh Sahib's Main Majri -- were returning from Anandpur Sahib in Rupnagar district after paying obeisance on the occasion of Baisakhi. The prima facie, it appears that the vehicle developed some malfunction, Fatehgarh Sahib Senior Superintendent of Police Shubham Aggarwal said. Around 40 people were travelling in the bus.

Initially, six people, including a woman, died in the incident, while 21 others were injured. Later, two more victims succumbed to their injuries in a hospital, Fatehgarh Sahib Deputy Superintendent of Police Raj Kumar said. The injured were taken to hospitals in Fatehgarh Sahib, Bassi Pathana and Morinda in Rupnagar district, while some critically injured patients were referred to PGIMER in Chandigarh.

Difficult to declare belief of millions wrong: SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 15: Mulling over maintainability of PILs in matters of religion, the Supreme Court Wednesday said one of the most difficult tasks for a court is to declare that the belief of millions of people is wrong or erroneous, even as the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) argued that public interest litigation pleas cannot be allowed to "become a vehicle" for interpreting religious practices.

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

Senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing in the court for the TDB, submitted before the bench headed by Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant that a PIL should not become a vehicle for interpreting a religious practice or its violation.

One of the questions framed by the bench is whether a person not belonging to a religious denomination or group can question a practice of that denomination or group by filing a PIL.

Singhvi argued that in matters of religion, the normal,



predominant and overwhelming role of the court should be to prevent and discourage PILs filed under Article 32 of the Constitution.

Responding to Singhvi's submission, CJI Kant observed, "The most difficult task is how to give a declaration that the belief of millions of people is wrong or erroneous."

Joining the discussion, Justice B V Nagarathna said PILs should not be entertained when the petitioner is an interloper, adding, "We cannot hollow out religion in the name of social welfare reforms."

Justice M M Sundresh also wondered if the court can decide a religious practice without hearing millions of followers and believers of a faith.

Singhvi told the bench, also comprising Justices Alsonuddin Amanullah, Aravind Kumar, Augustine George Ma-

sih, Prasanna B Varale, R Mahadevan and Joymalya Bagchi, that allowing PILs in matters of religion would fundamentally distort the constitutional scheme governing religious freedoms under Articles 25 and 26, and that the threshold in matters of religion must be "10 times higher" than in ordinary cases. The TDB, which manages the historic Sabarimala temple, told the court that Lord Ayyappa is revered at the shrine as a "Naishtika Brahmachari", a lifelong celibate, and exclusion of women between the age of 10 and 50 years has a direct nexus with the object, identity and manifestation of the deity.

Singhvi submitted before the bench that Sabarimala is the sole temple of Lord Ayyappa where the deity is worshipped as a Naishtika Brahmachari.

"Lord Ayyappa, I am told, has about 1,000 temples in India.

Somebody says 1,499, somebody says 1,000. Let us not get into that. The sole temple of Lord Ayyappa which has him in one form as a Naishtika Brahmachari -- is the Sabarimala temple.

"Now, the very foundation of the fame and the reverence of this deity is in the form of Naishtika Brahmachari. The only reason people revere him is because he has eschewed all forms of Grihastha Ashram and adopted penance of a very high order, which includes celibacy and self-denial to an extreme position," Singhvi told the bench on the fourth day of the hearing.

"That is why, when you go there, you have to do vratam. Ordinary people worship for 40 or 41 days before that. You may or may not do it, that is a different matter, but that is the principle. Now, we have to relate it to Article 14. The main argument is that we are excluding females.

"First, remember, there is no total exclusion of females. Females below 10 and above 50 are allowed. So it is not gender per se. Second, within the band of 10 to 50, you are making a classification of females who cannot go," Singhvi said.

Massive fire guts about 200 shanties in Lucknow

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow (UP), April 15: A massive fire broke out at a slum cluster in the Vikas Nagar area of the state capital Wednesday evening, destroying about 200 shanties and causing widespread panic among locals. The fire was now largely under control, officials said, adding that no loss of life or serious injuries were reported in the initial assessment.

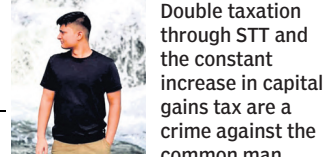
The blaze, which started around late afternoon in a vacant plot near the Ring Road, spread rapidly due to strong winds and the presence of flammable materials in the huts. Locals said that several small LPG cylinders exploded in the heat; however, there was no confirmation about this officially.

Thick plumes of black smoke were seen from several kilometres away. Hotels and various automobile showrooms are located near the area where the fire broke out.

The operation was made difficult by frequent explosions of small cooking gas cylinders kept inside the dwellings, a fire department official said.

Panic gripped the locality as residents scrambled to save their belongings, which were gutted in the fire.

POST OF THE DAY



Double taxation through STT and the constant increase in capital gains tax are a crime against the common man.

The common man should not be punished for trying to protect his savings and grow them a little to beat inflation. The common man doesn't invest to drink alcohol or go to Thailand. They invest to pay for their child's education. The current situation feels like a mafia-type robbery approved by the government.

SHORT TAKE

Bride-to-be critical after acid attack

New Delhi: A wedding celebration turned into a horror story when a 21-year-old bride-to-be was burned with acid, allegedly by the groom's girlfriend in northeast Delhi's Gokalpuri area, police said Wednesday. The victim, who was set to be married April 19 along with her sister, is under treatment for burns on her eyes, face, neck and hand at Guru Teg Bahadur (GTB) Hospital, a police source said. The incident took place around 12.30 pm Tuesday at the victim's house in Indira Vihar, where a "mehendi" ritual was underway. The accused arrived at the house, joined the celebrations without raising suspicion, and attacked her when she got the chance.

5 run over by 2 trains at halt near overbridge in Prayagraj

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Prayagraj (UP): Five persons were Wednesday killed after being run over by two trains near Pachdevra halt overbridge in the Karchana police station area here, officials said. Superintendent of Police (Government Railway Police) Prashant Verma said a man was killed after being run over by the Kalka Express, due to which the train had to stop. Out of curiosity, passengers of the train got down onto the tracks. He said that at the same time, the Purushottam Express arrived on another track and four people were run over by the train. All four died on the spot. So far, three of the deceased have been identified, while efforts are underway to identify the remaining two. Karchana Assistant Commissioner of Police Sunil Kumar said the deceased have been identified as Baliram (36), a resident of Siwan (Bihar); Sunil Kumar (24), a resident of Bishandarpur (Mirzapur); and Akash (17), a resident of Prithvipur Khairgarh (Firozabad). He added that the identities of the other two victims are still being ascertained. The bodies of the deceased have been sent for post-mortem examination.

Cong MLA convicted in BJP leader murder case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore: A Special Court for MPs and MLAs Wednesday convicted Congress MLA Vinay Kulkarni and 16 others in the 2016 murder case of BJP leader Yogesh Goudar, holding them guilty of criminal conspiracy and related offences. Judge Santhosh Gajanan Bhat found the accused guilty of "having entered into a criminal conspiracy to commit the murder of Yogesh Goudar," and convicted them under relevant provisions of the IPC, including Section 120(B) (criminal conspiracy). The court said the accused were also convicted under various sections related to unlawful assembly, rioting, and murder, including Section 302 read with Section 120(B) of the IPC, while several were additionally held guilty of causing disappearance of evidence.

PANCHAYAT SAMITI OFFICE, PALLAHARA

E-Mail ID: ori-pallahara@nic.in Letter No. 1702 Dt. 15.04.2026

TENDER CALL NOTICE NO PLR-01/2026-27

No.19001/23/2627 : Sealed tenders are invited from the interested bidders for the civil work under BDO, Pallahara of Angul District. The details has been uploaded in the District web site www.angul.odisha.gov.in. They have to submit bid documents to the undersigned in the address of "Office of the BDO, Pallahara, At/Po-Pallahara, Dist-Angul, Pin-759119" through Regd./Speed Post or drop in the tender box kept in the office chamber of the undersigned on or before 30.04.2026 (up to 11.00 A.M.). DTCN & other details can be downloaded from the District Website www.angul.odisha.gov.in or can be obtained from the office of the undersigned from 16.04.2026 to 30.04.2026 (up to 1.00 P.M.).

Sd/- Block Development Officer, Pallahara

WORKS DEPARTMENT OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER MAYURBHANJ (R&B) DIVISION, BARIPADA

No. 34001/47/2627 e-mail - bpd\_eerb@rediffmail.com

Government of Odisha "e" Procurement Notice Bid Identification No. S.E. - /2026-27

- 1. Number of Works : Building work
2. Approximate estimated cost : 18.86 lakh
3. Period of Completion : 01 (One) Calendar Month
4. Date & time of availability of bid documents in the portal : Dt.20.04.2026 to 02.05.2026
5. Last date/time of receipt of bid in the portal : Dt.02.05.2026 upto 5.00 P.M.
6. Date of Opening of bid : Dt.04.05.2026 at 11.00 A.M.
7. Name & address of the Officer Inviting Bid : Superintendent Engineer, Mayurbhanj (R&B) Division, Baripada

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in.

Sd/- R.G. Ray Superintendent Engineer Mayurbhanj (R&B) Division

Indian team to visit US next week

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 15: Chief negotiators of India and the US will begin three-day talks in Washington from April 20 on the proposed trade pact, as the agreement finalised in February requires recalibration in view of changes in the US tariff landscape, a senior government official said Wednesday. Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said there is a need for further discussions and follow-up engagements on the pact. "Indian team led by chief negotiator Darpan Jain will be visiting the US from 20th of this month. We are looking at finalising the legal agreement, which is a logical follow-up of the joint statement released February 7," he told reporters here. He further said that the two Section 301 investigations launched by the US last month against a host of countries, including India, will also be discussed during the meeting.

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender No.: MCSIW-Vinyl-26-27-04

Name of the work: APPLICATION OF VINYL GRAPHIC FILM ON EXTERIOR OF TEJAS, HUMSAFAR, DURONTO, DOUBLE DECKER, VISTADOME AND OTHER COACHES AT CARRIAGE REPAIR WORKSHOP, MANCHESWAR FOR A PERIOD OF TWENTY-FOUR MONTHS.

Advertised Value: ₹ 3,41,56,155/-, EMD: ₹ 6,83,200/-, Period of Completion: 24 Months.

Bidding start date: 16.04.2026. Tender closing date & time: at 1500 hrs. of 30.04.2026.

Manual offers are not allowed against this tender and any such manual offer received shall be ignored.

Complete details & tender documents will be available at website www.ireps.gov.in

Dy. Chief Mechanical Engineer/ POH-III/Mancheswar PR-46/R/26-27

S. E. RAILWAY - TENDER

Tender Notice No. : e-TENDER/2026/12, dated 13.04.2026.

e-Tenders are invited by Divisional Railway Manager (Engg), S.E.Railway, Kharagpur-721301 for and on behalf of the President of India for the following works before 15.00 hrs. on the date mentioned against items and will be opened at 15.30 hrs. : Sl. No. & Tender No.; Description of work; Tender Value; Earnest Money : (1) E-KGP-East-15-2026; Construction of (03 Nos.) New 6.00 mtr. wide Foot Over Bridge at Narayan Pakuria Murail, Bhogpur & Nandaigajan Stations under the jurisdiction of Sr. Divisional Engineer (East), Kharagpur; ₹ 13,43,74,998.98; ₹ 26,87,500/- (2) E-KGP-East-18-2026; (1) Construction of 2 Nos. Gates Goomy on Level Crossing No. HA-4, HA-7 in Howrah - Amta section. (2) Construction of Santragachi Store building at Santragachi Coaching Depot under the jurisdiction of Sr. Divisional Engineer (East)/Kharagpur; ₹ 1,53,35,583.62; ₹ 3,06,700/-.

Tender Document Cost : 0.00 for each. Completion period of the work : 12 Months for each. Date of opening : 30.04.2026 for sl. no. 1 and 07.05.2026 for sl. no. 2 & 3. Bidding start Date : From 16.04.2026 and upto 15.00 hrs. on 30.04.2026 for sl. no. 1 and From 23.04.2026 and upto 15.00 hrs. on 07.05.2026 for sl. no. 2 & 3. Interested Tenderers may visit website www.ireps.gov.in for full details/descriptions/specifications of the tenders and submit their bids online. In no case manual tenders for these works will be accepted. N.B. Prospective bidders may regularly visit www.ireps.gov.in to participate in all tenders. (PR-51)

राष्ट्रीय परीक्षा एजेंसी National Testing Agency

स्थापना के अंतर्गत राष्ट्रीय परीक्षा एजेंसी

Online Applications Form for Joint Integrated Program in Management Admission Test (JIPMAT)-2026

The National Testing Agency (NTA) will be conducting the JIPMAT-2026 for admission to 5-year Integrated Program in Management at IIM Bodh Gaya and IIM Jammu for the academic year 2026-27, as per following details :

Table with 2 columns: Application details and dates. Submission of Online Applications Form: 16 April 2026 to 10 May 2026 (upto 11:50 PM). Last date for successful transaction of Examination fee: 11 May 2026 (upto 11:50 PM). Correction in Particulars: 12-14 May 2026 (upto 11:50 PM). Date of exam: 07 June 2026. Timing of exam: 03:00 PM to 05:30 PM. Mode of exam: Computer Based Test (CBT). Paper pattern: Multiple Choice questions.

Scheme/duration/medium/syllabus of examination, eligibility criteria, tentative/duration, reservation of seats, exam cities, important dates, etc., are mentioned in the Information Bulletin hosted on NTA website https://exams.nta.nic.in/jipmat/. Candidates who desire to appear in the exam may read the detailed Information Bulletin for JIPMAT-2026 and apply online only at https://exams.nta.nic.in/jipmat/. Applicants should check the eligibility criteria of the respective IIMs. Candidates are advised to be in touch with the NTA website https://exams.nta.nic.in/jipmat/. Candidates can write to NTA at jipmat@nta.ac.in or call NTA at 011-40759000.

cbc 21354/11/0001/2627 Sd/- Director

Online Applications Form for Joint Integrated Program in Management Admission Test (JIPMAT)-2026

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cbc 21354/11/0001/2627 Sd/- Director

SPORTS AUTHORITY OF INDIA

भारत सरकार / GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

खेल विभाग / DEPARTMENT OF SPORTS

(An Autonomous Body under Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports)

(युवा कार्यक्रम और खेल मंत्रालय के तहत एक स्वायत्त निकाय)

Room No. 210, SAI-Head Office Building, SAI-Headquarter Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium Complex (East Gate No. 10) Lodhi Road, New Delhi - 110003

File No.: 01-04001(01)/1/2026-66/150 Date: 30.01.2026

NOTIFICATION

SPORTS AUTHORITY OF INDIA INVITES APPLICATIONS FOR ENGAGEMENT OF PERFORMANCE ANALYST ON REGULAR BASIS

Sports Authority of India (SAI) invites applications for filling up the 48 posts of PERFORMANCE ANALYST (Direct recruitment) in the Pay Level-06 (Rs.35400-Rs.112400/-) of 7th CPC from the eligible Applicants in 07 Sports Science Disciplines in SAI.

The details of the said post and other relevant information is available on SAI website i.e. https://sportsauthorityofindia.nic.in.

उपनिदेशक (DEPUTY DIRECTOR) मानव संसाधन प्रभाग - II (HUMAN RESOURCES DIVISION-II) भाखेरा मुख्य कार्यालय (SAI HEAD OFFICE) CBC 47103/12/0002/2627

SPORTS AUTHORITY OF INDIA

भारत सरकार / GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

खेल विभाग / DEPARTMENT OF SPORTS

(An Autonomous Body under Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports)

(युवा कार्यक्रम और खेल मंत्रालय के तहत एक स्वायत्त निकाय)

Head Office, Gate No. 10 (East Gate), Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, Lodhi Road, New Delhi - 110003

F. No. 01-04001(03)/1/2026-6601/233 Date: 25.03.2026

Sports Authority of India Recruitment - Assistant Director Posts on Deputation

The Sports Authority of India (SAI), an autonomous body under the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, invites applications for 30 posts of Assistant Director in Pay Matrix Level-10 on deputation basis for a period of 01 year (further extendable upto three years in a cycle of one year at a time, subject to requirement and availability of vacancies in the borrowing department) at its Head Office, New Delhi and various field units. Eligible officers may submit applications in the prescribed format, along with required documents, to the Director (Human Resources Division-I), SAI, J.N. Stadium Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi - 110003. Last date for receipt of applications is 22.04.2026 (5.00 P.M.). Detailed advertisement, eligibility criteria, proforma and instructions will be available on the SAI website (www.sportsauthorityofindia.nic.in).

उपनिदेशक (DEPUTY DIRECTOR) मानव संसाधन प्रभाग - II (HUMAN RESOURCES DIVISION-II) भाखेरा मुख्य कार्यालय (SAI HEAD OFFICE) CBC 47103/12/0001/2627

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT MAHARAJA KRISHNA CHANDRA GAJAPATI MEDICAL COLLEGE HOSPITAL, BERNAMPUR - 760004, GANJAM, ODISHA

Tel.: 0680-2292624, Fax: 0680-2292752

E-mail: supdtmkcg@gmail.com, supdtmkcg-bam@gov.in

No. 6654 MCH/CS/XIX/2026 Date: 10.04.26

TENDER CALL NOTICE

No. 10001/42/2627: The Superintendent, MKCG Medical College Hospital, Berhampur-760004, Dist., Ganjam, Odisha invites sealed tenders in the prescribed proforma from the registered and reputed manufacturers, authorized suppliers, dealers, stockiest and wholesaler for 'Supply of PRP Machine for PAIN Clinic, MKCG MCH, Berhampur'. The tenderer should submit the tender in two sealed covers (i) Price Bid. The Technical bid shall contain (1) Bank Accounts details, (2) List of bid items, (3) valid MD 42 licence, (4) valid PAN Card, (5) valid GSTN Certificate as per the Govt. rule. (6) valid USFDA/CE/ISI/ISO/GMP Certificate (7) valid manufacturing licence and authorization certificate in prescribed format & (8) E-mail ID & Contact No. The price bid should be submitted as per proforma enclosed. The intending tenderers should submit their tenders separately in two sealed covers duly superscribed as Technical Bid for 'Supply of PRP Machine for PAIN Clinic, MKCG MCH, Berhampur' & Price Bid for 'Supply of PRP Machine for PAIN Clinic, MKCG MCH, Berhampur' putting in a single sealed cover.

The bidders may download the tender papers from websites: www.mkcgmch.org. The last date of receipt of tenders through Regd. Post/Speed Post/Courier is on or before 28.04.2026 at 05.00 P.M. and will be opened on 29.04.2026 at 12.00 Noon. The date of opening may be differed/postponed in case of unavoidable circumstances. The Superintendent, M.K.C.G. Medical College Hospital, Berhampur reserves right to accept/reject/cancel any or all the tenders in full or part without assigning any reason thereof.

Sd/- Superintendent MKCG Medical College Hospital Berhampur

OIPR-10001/10028/1/26-27/0001

# international



In the face of a once-in-a-century change, China and Russia must, through closer and more robust strategic cooperation, resolutely defend the legitimate interests of both countries, uphold the unity of the Global South

XI JINPING | PRESIDENT, CHINA

## BURJ AL ARAB HOTEL TO SHUT

Luxury hotel Burj Al Arab in Dubai will shut during a major 18-month renovation, a staff member confirmed Wednesday, its first since opening in 1999 and at a time when tourism in the region has slowed due to the US-Israeli war with Iran



### of the day quote

Iran has a very ambitious, wide nuclear programme so all of that will require the presence of IAEA inspectors. Otherwise, you will not have an agreement. You will have an illusion of an agreement



RAFAEL GROSSI | DIRECTOR GENERAL, IAEA

There is broad agreement on the dire need to reform the UN Security Council. It is evident that a structure designed more than 80 years ago does not meet the requirements of the current geo-political realities



PARVATHANI HARISH | INDIA'S PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UN AMBASSADOR

We are going to defend Mexicans at every level. There are many Mexicans whose only crime is not having papers



CLAUDIA SHEINBAUM | PRESIDENT, MEXICO

### SHORT TAKES

#### Saudi Arabia to give \$3bn to Pakistan

Islamabad: Saudi Arabia will deposit \$3 billion into Pakistan's central bank, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb said Wednesday. The funds will provide a much-needed financial boost to Pakistan, where the economy has come under strain during regional tensions linked to the conflict between the United States and Iran. Aurangzeb is in Washington to attend meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Aurangzeb said an existing \$5 billion Saudi deposit will no longer be subject to an annual rollover arrangement and will instead be extended for a longer period, a government statement said. Pakistani authorities said earlier this month that the country would return \$2 billion deposited by the United Arab Emirates in Pakistan's central bank in 2019.

#### 4 Indian fishermen arrested in Sri Lanka

Colombo: Four Indian fishermen have been arrested, and their trawler seized for allegedly poaching in Sri Lankan waters, the island nation's Navy said Wednesday. Sri Lanka's North Central Naval Command, in a statement, said it spotted a group of Indian fishing boats engaged in fishing activities in the Sri Lankan waters and deployed personnel to drive them away from the island's waters off Mannar on Monday. "A compliant boarding made by naval personnel resulted in the seizure of the Indian fishing boat and apprehension of four Indian fishermen who continued to engage in illegal fishing in Sri Lankan waters," the statement said. So far this year, 18 trawlers and 128 Indian fishermen have been arrested for poaching in Sri Lankan waters, according to the Navy. At least 12 Indian fishermen were arrested and their trawler confiscated on April 11.

#### Russian drones swarm Ukraine

Kyiv: Russia attacked Ukraine overnight with hundreds of drones and three ballistic missiles, targeting port infrastructure in the south, killing one and wounding at least seven people, Ukrainian officials said. Russia launched 324 drones in the period since 6 pm Tuesday and three ballistic missiles, Ukraine's air force said. Air defence units shot down or neutralised 309 drones, but the missiles and 13 drones hit at nine locations, it said. On Tuesday, Ukraine and Germany agreed defence cooperation plans and Kyiv also agreed on drone production in Norway.

# IRAN WAR 'CLOSE TO OVER': TRUMP

REUTERS

Dubai/Washington, April 15: US President Donald Trump said the war he launched with Israel on Iran was close to over, as the army chief of mediator Pakistan arrived in Tehran to try to prevent a renewal of the conflict.

The diplomatic push came as US and Iranian officials weighed a return to Pakistan for further talks after negotiations there ended Sunday without a breakthrough.

Pakistan's military confirmed Field Marshal Asim Munir had arrived in Tehran. A senior Iranian source told Reuters that Munir, who had mediated the last round of talks, was heading to Iran "to narrow gaps" between the two sides.

"I think you're going to be watching an amazing two days ahead," Trump told ABC News reporter Jonathan Karl, according to a post by the reporter on X, adding he did not think it would be necessary to extend the ceasefire.

"I think it's close to over, yeah. I mean I view it as very close to over," Trump said in an interview on Fox Business Network conducted Tuesday and broadcast Wednesday. "We'll see what happens. I think they want to make a deal very badly."

Officials from Pakistan, Iran and Gulf states also said both sides could return to Islamabad in coming days.

The talks last weekend broke down without an agreement to end the war, which Trump began alongside Israel February



PAKISTAN'S ARMY CHIEF IN TEHRAN TO NARROW GAPS BETWEEN US AND IRAN

US BLOCKADE DISRUPTS IRANIAN OIL EXPORTS, IRAN THREATENS TO HALT REGIONAL TRADE FLOWS

NUCLEAR DEAL TALKS STALL OVER SUSPENSION LENGTH, WITH MISTRUST AND REGIONAL CONFLICTS PERSISTING

28, triggering Iranian attacks on Iran's Gulf neighbours and reigniting a conflict between Israel and Iran-backed Hezbollah in Lebanon.

TANKERS INTERCEPTED During the first 48 hours of the US blockade on ships entering and exiting Iranian ports, no vessels have made it past U.S. forces, the U.S. military said. Additionally, nine vessels have complied with direction from U.S. forces to turn around and return toward an Iranian

port or coastal area.

However, Iran's Fars News agency said an Iranian super-tanker subject to US sanctions crossed the strait towards Iran's Imam Khomeini port despite the blockade. Fars did not identify the tanker or give further details of its voyage.

Iran's joint military command warned it would halt trade flows in the Gulf, the Sea of Oman and the Red Sea - which connects to the Suez Canal - if the US blockade continued.

Trump has also threatened to escalate if the war resumes. He told Fox Business Network: "We could take out every one of their bridges in one hour. We could take out every one of their power plants, electric power plants, in one hour. We don't want to do that...so we'll see what happens."

MISTRUST ON NUCLEAR ISSUE Trump told the New York Post

## Back-to-back school shootings shock Turkey

Student kills 9 in Turkey's second school shooting in 2 days

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ankara, April 15: A student opened fire on two classrooms at a middle school in Turkey Wednesday, killing nine people and wounding 13 others, the interior minister said, in the country's second such shooting in two days.



The 14-year-old gunman was killed. He arrived at the school armed with guns believed to belong to his father, a retired police officer, Kahramanmaraş provincial Gov Mukerrem Unluer said. He was carrying five firearms and seven magazines.

The motive of the attack wasn't immediately known. It was not clear whether the gunman was killed by police or killed himself.

Six of the 13 people wounded were in serious condition, Interior Minister Mustafa Ciftci said. The attack came a day after 16 people, mostly students, were wounded when a former student opened fire at a high school in nearby Sanliurfa province. The assailant later killed himself.

Until this week, school shootings were rare in Turkey. State-run broadcaster, TRT, identified the latest shooter as Isa Aras Mersinli and said his father was detained for questioning. Turkish authorities imposed a ban on the broadcast of "traumatic" images from the shooting, warning media organizations to limit coverage to statements from officials.



New young German police officer trainees throw their hats after taking their oath of service and thus officially enter the service for security, law and democracy in Cologne, Germany, Wednesday

PTI PHOTO

# 'Abandoned crisis': Sudan enters fourth year of war

Sudan has been described as the world's largest humanitarian challenge, notably in terms of displacement and hunger. There is no end in sight to the fighting between the military and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces that witnesses and aid groups say has laid waste to parts of the vast Darfur region

ASSOCIATED PRESS



Cairo, April 15: Famine. Massacres. And now badly needed food and other supplies are under strain. Sudan Wednesday enters a fourth year of war that's being called an "abandoned crisis", as a new conflict in the Middle East throws into shadow the fighting that has forced 13 million people to flee their homes.

Sudan has been described as the world's largest humanitarian challenge, notably in terms of displacement and hunger. There is no end in

sight to the fighting between the military and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces that witnesses and aid groups say has laid waste to parts of the vast Darfur region.

Growing evidence shows regional powers like the United Arab Emirates backing combatants behind the scenes. Attempts by the United States and regional powers, now distracted by the Iran war, have failed to establish a ceasefire.

"A plea from me: Please don't call this the forgotten crisis. I'm referring to this as an abandoned crisis," the top UN official in Sudan, Denise Brown, said Monday, criticising the international community for failing to focus on ending the fighting.

War could spill over The war exploded from a power struggle that emerged following Sudan's transition to democracy after an uprising forced the military ouster of longtime dictator Omar al-Bashir in April 2019.

The tensions sparked between military chief

General Abdel-Fattah Burhan, who chairs the ruling sovereign council, and RSF commander General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, who was Burhan's deputy there.

Sudan is now essentially divided between a militarily-backed, internationally recognised government in the capital, Khartoum, and a rival RSF-controlled administration in Darfur.

Neither side can achieve a decisive victory, said Shamel Elnoor, a Sudanese journalist and researcher, adding that Sudanese "have become powerless and are subjected to foreign dictates".

The military has established control over the north, east and central regions, including Sudan's Red Sea ports and its oil refineries and pipelines. The RSF and allies control Darfur and areas in the Kordofan region along the border with South Sudan. Both regions include many of Sudan's oil fields and gold mines.

While Egypt supports Sudan's military, the UAE is ac-

cused by UN experts and rights groups of providing arms to the RSF. The UAE has rejected the accusation.

Unabated war crimes Three years of fighting have seen widespread atrocities including mass killings and rampant sexual violence including gang rapes.

The International Criminal Court has said it was investigating potential war crimes and crimes against humanity, particularly in Darfur, a region that two decades ago became synonymous with genocide and war crimes.

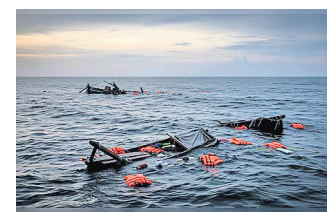
"We have no reason at all to believe it will stop the mass atrocities that we saw in el-Fasher," Brown said.

The military's seizure of Khartoum and other urban areas in central Sudan in early 2025 did allow the return of about 4 million people to their homes, the UN migration agency said in March. But they struggle with damaged infrastructure and other challenges.

"It's not really a return to normal. It is trying to survive amidst a new normal," said Tjada D'Oyen McKenna, CEO of aid group Mercy Corps.

## 250 missing after boat sinks in Andaman Sea

OVERCROWDING, STRONG WINDS AND ROUGH SEAS CAUSED THE VESSEL TO LOSE CONTROL



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhaka, April 15: At least 250 people, including Rohingya refugees and Bangladeshi nationals, were missing after a boat capsized in the Andaman Sea recently on the way to Malaysia, according to the United Nations' refugee and migration agencies.

While details remained sketchy, Bangladesh Coast Guard spokesperson Sabbir Alam Suzan told The Associated Press Wednesday that nine people, including three Rohingya and six Bangladeshis, were rescued April 9.

Suzan said the Bangladesh flag carrier MT Meghna Pride rescued the nine people when the crew found them floating at sea after the capsizing.

When the boat sank and the status of any search Wednesday were unclear.

The UN high commissioner for refugees and the International Organisation for Migration in a joint statement said Tuesday that the trawler departed from Teknaf in the southern Ban-

gladeshi district of Cox's Bazar carrying a large number of passengers to Malaysia.

Shari Nijman, a UNCHR communication officer in Cox's Bazar, said Wednesday that the agency had no other updates.

Another coast guard media official told the AP by phone Wednesday that the rescued people, eight men and one woman, were all safe after being handed over to the coast guard, who brought them to the police in Teknaf.

The official said the rescue was not part of any official search operation as it is outside Bangladesh territory, and that the crew of the MT Meghna Pride saved the people while it was on its way to Indonesia from Bangladesh's Chittagang.

UNHCR and IOM said the disappearance reflected the protracted displacement of Rohingya people and the absence of durable solutions.

They said ongoing violence in Myanmar's Rakhine state has made the Rohingya's safe return to Myanmar uncertain, while limited humanitarian assistance, as well as restricted access to education and employment in refugee camps, continue to push vulnerable Rohingya refugees to choose risky sea journeys, often based on false promises of higher wages and better opportunities abroad.

## PAK LEGALISES USE OF VIRTUAL ASSETS, INCLUDING CRYPTOS

KARACHI: Pakistan's Central Bank has legalised the use of virtual assets, including crypto currencies, by introducing the Virtual Assets Act 2026, marking one of the biggest changes in the country's digital financial landscape in recent years. Under the new law, the State Bank of Pakistan has established the Pakistan Virtual Asset Regulatory Authority (PVARA) as the statutory body responsible for licensing, regulating, supervising, and overseeing all virtual asset-related activities in the country. "Subject to strict compliance with the conditions outlined herein, SBP Regulated Entities (REs) may open bank accounts of entities duly licensed by PVARA as Virtual Asset Service Providers (VASPs)," said a circular issued by the central bank Tuesday. It said that the new instructions will take effect immediately. The move effectively creates Pakistan's first formal legal framework for crypto and digital asset businesses.

FINANCIAL OVERHAUL

### NUMBERS TELL A TALE OF PAIN

- 59,000: At least this many people have been killed, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data, or ACLED. Aid groups say the true toll could be much higher as access to areas of fighting across the vast country remains limited.
- 11,000: The number of missing people over the course of the war, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross.
- 4.5 MILLION: About this many people have fled the country to places like Egypt, South Sudan, Libya and Chad.
- 9 MILLION: About this many people remain displaced in Sudan.
- 19 MILLION: More than this many people face acute hunger, according to the World Food Programme.
- 4,300+: About this many children have been killed or maimed in the war, according to UNICEF.
- 8 MILLION: At least this many children are still out of school, according to UNICEF.
- 63%: This many of Sudan's health facilities are fully or partially functioning, according to World Health Organization.
- 217: This is the number of verified attacks on health facilities since the war began, according to the WHO.
- 1,032: This was the number of civilians killed by air and drone strikes in 2025, according to ACLED, as a surge in drone strikes took a growing toll.



**India is entering a moment where anyone with an idea can build a product in hours with AI**  
**SHASHANK KUMAR** | CO-FOUNDER AND MD, RAZORPAY

## OPENAI UNVEILS GPT-5.4-CYBER

OpenAI unveiled GPT-5.4-Cyber, a variant of its latest flagship model fine-tuned specifically for defensive cybersecurity work, following rival Anthropic's announcement of frontier AI model Mythos. Mythos, announced April 7, is being deployed as part of Anthropic's "Project Glasswing", a controlled initiative under which select organisations are permitted to use the unreleased Claude Mythos Preview model for defensive cybersecurity purposes



## of the day quote

**With government security (G-sec) and corporate bond yields expected to remain elevated in the near term due to an uncertain macroeconomic environment, corporate bond interest rates are likely to continue to be higher than bank lending rates in the initial part of this fiscal at least**



**MALVIKA BHOTIKA** | DIRECTOR, CRISIL RATINGS

**India's office market has carried forward the momentum of 2025 into the first quarter of this year**



**ANSHUL JAIN** | CHIEF EXECUTIVE, INDIA, SEA, MEA & APAC OFFICE AND RETAIL, CUSHMAN & WAKEFIELD

**Brazil holds strategic importance in our international growth road-map. It is a market defined by scale, strong travel fundamentals, and increasing digital adoption**



**VIKASH GOVAL** | CHIEF STRATEGY OFFICER, EASEMYTRIP

# West Asia crisis derails exports

*April is also set to be a tough month for exports due to the conflict, which is hampering ship movements in international waters*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 15:** Exports posted the steepest fall in five months, declining by 7.44 per cent in March to \$38.92 billion, while imports fell by over 6 per cent due to the West Asia crisis, official data released Wednesday showed.

The trade deficit, however, narrowed to a nine-month low of \$20.67 billion in March due to lower imports.

Imports dipped by 6.51 per cent to \$59.59 billion in March, driven by a significant decline in inbound shipments of crude oil and gold, the data showed.

For the full 2025-26 fiscal year, exports grew 0.93 per cent to an all-time high of \$441.78 billion, while imports rose 7.45 per cent to \$775 billion. The trade deficit ballooned to \$333.2 billion due to a jump in gold and silver imports during the last fiscal.

Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal told reporters that the country's goods and services exports increased by an estimated 4.22 per cent to an all-time high of \$860.09 billion in 2025-26 against \$825.26 billion in 2024-25.

He said that despite global



**We hope the challenges that we face today will not sustain for long, and we may have smoother trades across the world in months to come**

**RAJESH AGRAWAL** | COMMERCE SECRETARY

challenges, Indian exporters are showing resilience and are registering positive growth.

### Middle East slump

The secretary said that India's exports to the Middle East region fell 57.95 per cent in March.

India exports goods worth \$6 billion to the Middle East in a month. However, supply disruptions due to the war in-

volving the US, Israel and Iran, which began February 28, led to outbound shipments declining

to about \$2-2.5 billion, driven by a fall in shipments of gems and jewellery, rice, engineering

### MARCH TRADE DATA

- Exports plunge 7.44%, steepest fall in five months
- Trade deficit narrows to nine-month low of \$20.67bn
- Hit by oil, gold, imports drops by 6.51% to \$59.59bn

goods, petroleum products and electronic items.

Imports from the region fell 57.95 per cent in March.

Crude oil imports in March dipped 35.91 per cent to \$12.18 billion, while in 2025-26, it declined 6.37 per cent to \$174 billion.

Gold imports in March dipped 31.63 per cent to \$3.06 billion, while in 2025-26, these rose by 24 per cent to \$71.97 billion.

The war in the Middle East region has disrupted the movement of oil and gas through the Strait of Hormuz, which has pushed up the freight and insurance costs for exporters.

## China surpasses US as India's biggest partner

China has overtaken the US to emerge as India's largest trading partner in 2025-26, with bilateral trade reaching \$151.1 billion, while the country's trade deficit with Beijing widened to \$112.16 billion during the period, government data showed. The US was India's largest trading partner for four consecutive years till 2024-25. India's exports to China rose 36.66 per cent to \$19.47 billion during the last fiscal year, while imports increased 16 per cent to \$131.63 billion. The trade deficit swelled to an all-time high of \$112.6 billion in 2025-26 as against \$99.2 billion in 2024-25. On the other hand, the country's outbound shipments to the US grew marginally 0.92 per cent to \$87.3 billion during the last fiscal year, while imports increased 15.95 per cent to \$52.9 billion. The trade surplus declined to \$34.4 billion in 2025-26 from \$40.89 billion in 2024-25. According to commerce ministry data, China was India's top trading partner from 2013-14 till 2017-18 and also in 2020-21. Before China, the UAE was the country's largest trading partner. The US has been the largest partner since 2021-22. The major trading partners with which India recorded negative exports growth in 2025-26 include the Netherlands, the UK, Singapore, Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, Australia, France, South Africa, and Malaysia. However, exports to the UAE, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, Nepal, Brazil, Spain, Belgium, and Vietnam registered positive growth last fiscal year. The major trading partners with which India recorded negative imports growth in 2025-26 include Russia, Iraq, Indonesia, Australia, Qatar, and Taiwan. However, imports from the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Hong Kong, Switzerland, Singapore, Japan, Korea, Germany, Thailand, and Malaysia registered positive growth in the last fiscal year.

## Malabar launches Chitrangi collection



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 15:** Ahead of Akshaya Tritiya, Malabar Gold & Diamonds launched its East India-focused collection, Chitrangi across showrooms in Odisha here Wednesday.

Chitrangi draws inspiration from the cultural and artistic heritage of Eastern India, celebrating the region's distinctive visual language through finely crafted gold jewellery. The design language is influenced by temple carvings, alpina motifs, and the flowing forms of the shankh, reflecting

architectural and decorative traditions seen across Bengal and Odisha.

Commenting on the occasion, MP Ahammed, Chairman, Malabar Group, said, "Akshaya Tritiya holds deep cultural significance for customers across India, particularly in regions where jewellery is closely linked to tradition and long-term value. With Chitrangi, we have focused on bringing together designs that reflect the artistic identity of Eastern India while ensuring relevance for today's customer. Our effort remains centered on offering jewellery that is root-

ed in heritage, yet aligned with evolving preferences."

To mark the festive occasion, Malabar Gold & Diamonds is offering up to 30% off on making charges of Gold, Uncut, and Gemstone jewellery, along with up to 30% off on Diamond value, enabling customers to make their Akshaya Tritiya purchases with added value.

Customers can also benefit from Malabar's advance booking options, allowing them to plan their purchases ahead of the festive day with price protection benefits as per applicable terms.

## Investors' wealth rises by ₹9.41L-cr

*Shares hit one-month high as stock markets surge over 1% on hopes of resumption in US-Iran talks*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 15:** Investors' wealth surged by Rs 9.41 lakh crore Wednesday as benchmark indices rebounded sharply amid hopes of renewed diplomatic engagement between the US and Iran.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 1,263.67 points or 1.64 per cent to settle at 78,111.24. During the day, it zoomed 1,422.85 points or 1.85 per cent to 78,270.42.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies jumped by ₹9,41,461.6 crore to ₹4,58,55,016.77 crore (\$4.91 trillion).

The 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 388.65 points or 1.63 per cent to end at 24,231.30.

"Market sentiment strengthened further after US President Donald Trump indicated that a second round of discussions could be on the table," according to Bajaj Broking

### MARKETS REBOUND

- Sensex jumps 1,263.67 points or 1.64% to settle at 78,111.24
- Nifty climbs 388.65 points or 1.63 per cent to end at 24,231.30

Research.

Among the 30-Sensex firms, InterGlobe Aviation, Eternal, Power Grid, Adani Ports, Tech Mahindra and Tata Consultancy Services were the major gainers.

Bharti Airtel and ICICI Bank were the laggards.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading at \$95.72 per barrel, up by 0.98 per cent. The BSE SmallCap Select index jumped 2.62 per cent and MidCap Select index climbed 2.55 per cent.

Services jumped 3.30 per cent, Focused IT (3.09 per cent), industrials (2.90 per cent), power (2.87 per cent), Consumer Durables (2.84 per cent), IT (2.78 per cent), Capital Goods (2.54 per cent) and Utilities (2.52 per cent).

A total of 3,585 stocks advanced while 802 declined and 126 remained unchanged on the BSE.

## Russian LNG under US sanctions heads for first time to India

REUTERS

**London, April 15:** A cargo of liquefied natural gas from Russia's Portovaya plant on the Baltic Sea that is under US sanctions is on its way to India, LSEG shipping data showed Wednesday.

If it reaches its destination, it would be the first such delivery to India since US President Donald Trump last year said Prime Minister Narendra Modi had assured him India would stop buying Russian energy.

India has never publicly confirmed any such pledge and has said its buying decisions are guided by price, supply security and consumer interests. As one of the world's biggest energy importers, it is now greatly exposed to the disruption and price rises caused by the Middle Eastern war and the resulting closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

The small-scale Portovaya plant, which has a production capacity of 1.5 million tons of LNG per year, started operations in September 2022.

Exports from the plant have been interrupted by additional sanctions over the Ukraine war that were imposed in January 2025 to disrupt Russia's ability to produce and export LNG and reduce its revenue from the trade.

So far Russia has supplied LNG under sanctions to China's port of Beihai from Portovaya and also from its Arctic LNG 2 plant.

Earlier Wednesday, Russian energy giant Gazprom delivered a second post-sanctions LNG cargo from Portovaya plant to China, LSEG data showed.

If India is buying Russian LNG, that would provide another market as Russian President Vladimir Putin seeks to divert LNG from Europe before the European Union enforces its import ban on Russia's LNG from 2027.

Kunpeng, a 138,200 cubic metre tanker, is heading to Dahej LNG import terminal in western India, according to LSEG data.

## Silver surges ₹11,800, gold jumps ₹3,000 ahead of Akshaya Tritiya

**New Delhi:** Silver prices surged by ₹11,800 to ₹257 lakh per kg while gold advanced by ₹3,000 to ₹1.58 lakh per 10 grams in the national capital Wednesday, driven by fresh buying from jewellers and stockists ahead of Akshaya Tritiya. Akshaya Tritiya, considered an auspicious day to buy precious metals, will be celebrated April 19 this year. According to the All India Sarafa Association, the white metal soared by ₹11,800, or 4.81 per cent, to ₹2,57,000 per kg (inclusive of all taxes) from Monday's closing level of ₹2,45,200 per kg. Gold of 99.9 per cent purity also jumped ₹3,000, or nearly 2 per cent, to ₹1,58,000 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes). The yellow metal had settled at ₹1,55,000 per 10 grams in the previous market session. The local bullion market was closed Tuesday for a holiday.

# FX restrictions, earnings risks spook foreign investors

*Foreign investors have sold about ₹211bn of government debt since the war began Feb 28*

REUTERS

**Mumbai, April 15:** India's foreign exchange restrictions have made it costlier and more complex for overseas investors to hedge against rupee swings, denting the appeal of Indian bonds, while a war-driven hit to earnings prospects is adding fresh pressure on equities.

Steps taken by the Reserve Bank of India to steady the rupee — including curbs aimed at limiting arbitrage trades — have eased pressure on the currency, but at the cost of higher hedging expenses for foreign bond investors in both the

onshore over-the-counter and the offshore non-deliverable forward (NDF) markets.

One-year hedging costs in the onshore market have risen by about 30 basis points since the measures were introduced. The increase has been steeper offshore, with NDF hedging costs climbing nearly 70 basis points.

In the immediate aftermath of the RBI's move, NDF hedging costs hit their highest level in more than 12 years.

Liquidity in the NDF market, a key channel through which foreign investors manage rupee exposure, has thinned, making hedging both more expensive



and harder to execute.

Eastspring, an Asia-focused asset manager with about \$280 billion under management, is currently neutral on Indian bonds. The RBI's measures have further darkened sentiment toward India at a time

when surging oil prices following the outbreak of the Iran war were already weighing on the economic outlook. India imports roughly 90% of its oil needs and remains heavily dependent on supplies from the Middle East.

India's FX curbs raise hedging costs, dampen foreign demand for bonds

- Foreign investors accelerate bond, equity outflows on war-driven oil price surge
- Brokerages cut earnings forecasts, warn of further downside if oil prices stay high
- Nomura cuts Nifty 50 target by 15%, citing risks from sustained high oil prices

Foreign investors have sold about Rs 211 billion (\$2.26 billion) of Indian government debt since the war began February 28, with sales accelerating after the FX curbs were announced, according to data from the clearing house.

Some investors say that, after the RBI's recent actions and their impact on currency hedging, oil prices may no longer be

the sole trigger for a return of foreign inflows.

### EARNINGS UNDER PRESSURE

Higher oil prices are amplifying concerns among equity investors, who have sold about \$38 billion of Indian shares since the start of 2025.

Foreign outflows from equities totalled a record \$12.7 billion in March alone.

The Iran war has intensified concerns that were already building, said Angela Lan, senior strategist of investment strategy and research at State Street Investment Management.

Nomura has warned of a 10-15% downside risk to consensus earnings estimates for the current financial year if oil prices remain at current levels, and has cut its December 2026 target for the Nifty 50 index by 15% to 24,600. The index has fallen more than 7% so far this year.

**HISTORIC TRIUMPH**

# Vaishali clinches Candidates crown

*Vaishali becomes first Indian woman to win Candidates, to face Ju Wenjun for World Championship title*

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Cyprus, April 15:** India's R Vaishali Wednesday won the FIDE Women's Candidates Tournament 2026, becoming the first Indian to claim the title and earning her the chance to compete for the World Championship against Ju Wenjun later this year.

By finishing first, Vaishali is guaranteed a winner's prize of €28,000, marking one of the biggest paydays of her career so far.

The 24-year-old secured her win in dramatic style, defeating Kateryna Lagno 8.5/14 in the final round with white pieces.

She played calmly and effectively, finishing half a point ahead of the competition. This victory marked an incredible turnaround; she had started the tournament as one of the lowest-rated players.

Vaishali's journey mirrored D Gukesh's fairytale run in 2024, when he also overcame the odds to win the Candidates.

After finishing joint-second in 2024 with 7.5 points, Vaishali improved by one point this time, claiming the top prize.

In her decisive game, Vaishali maintained her composure. Her opening strategy worked flawlessly, giving her an early advantage that she methodically turned into a win. With a pawn lead, she played the middlegame with great accuracy and executed several crucial moves around the second time control.



**With D Gukesh already holding the Open world title, India will now be represented in both championship matches**

Each move required careful precision to preserve her lead, and any mistake could have allowed her opponent to catch up. However, Vaishali stayed focused and finished the game nearly flawlessly.

Although her win was critical, she needed some favorable results to secure her victory. Fellow Indian player Divya Deshmukh played a key role by drawing against Bibisara Assaubayeva. Since Assaubayeva started the round with the same number of points as Vaishali, this draw ensured Vaishali's win was decisive.

Vaishali's triumph is even more remarkable considering how close she came to

not participating.

After a tough performance at the Chennai Grand Masters last August, where she scored only 1.5 points, she thought about skipping the Grand Swiss.

Even after scoring just half a point in her last two games before the final round, Vaishali stepped up on the biggest stage. Key moments earlier in the tournament, especially her games against Tan Zhongyi, also played a vital role in her success.

**RESULTS**

**Men:** R Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 6) drew with Hikaru Nakamura (USA 6.5); Andrey Esipenko (Rus, 4.5) lost to Fabiano Caruana (USA, 7); Matthias Bluebaum (Ger, 5.5) lost to Anish Giri Ned, 8); Javokhir Sindarov (Uzb, 9.5) drew with Wei Yi (Chn, 6).

**Women:** R Vaishali (Ind, 8.5) beat Kateryna Lagno (Rus, 6.5); Bibisara Assaubayeva (Kaz, 8) drew with Divya Deshmukh (Ind, 6); Anna Muzychuk (Ukr, 6.5) playing Zhu Jiner (Chn, 7); Tan Zhongyi (Chn, 5.5) playing Aleksandra Goryachkina (Rus, 6.5).

# All-round RCB outclass LSG

*Kohli's 49, pace bowlers' excellence power RCB to comfortable win against LSG*

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Bangalore, April 15:** Impact player Virat Kohli top scored with 49 runs as Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) chased down a small target of 147 runs in just 15.1 overs while losing five wickets against Lucknow Super Giants in the 23rd match of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 played at the M.Chinnaswamy Stadium Wednesday.

With this win, RCB are back at the top of the points table with 8 points in five games.

Chasing a modest target, Royal Challengers Bengaluru got off to a slow start, managing just six runs in the opening over. Phil Salt, who survived a close run-out chance on the final ball of the first over, attempted to accelerate but was clean bowled by Prince Yadav in the following over for 7 off 8 balls.

Virat Kohli then shifted gears, breaking the shackles with three consecutive boundaries off Mohammed Shami, who had earlier bowled a tight opening over. Kohli continued his aggressive approach, smashing four boundaries in the next over against Prince Yadav to put the opposition under pressure. His attacking intent helped RCB race to 60/1 at the end of the powerplay, with Kohli contributing 40 off just 20 balls.

With Rishabh Pant unavailable after sustaining an elbow injury in the first innings,

used his aggressive approach, smashing four boundaries in the next over against Prince Yadav to put the opposition under pressure. His attacking intent helped RCB race to 60/1 at the end of the powerplay, with Kohli contributing 40 off just 20 balls.

Prince was the most suc-

**INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE**



Nicholas Pooran led Lucknow Super Giants on the field. Despite being sloppy in the field, LSG managed a breakthrough in the eighth over when Avesh Khan dismissed Devdutt Padikkal for 10.

Kohli continued to anchor the innings, rotating the strike effectively, while Rajat Patidar played the aggressor's role. However, Kohli fell just short of a half-century, getting caught at long-on for 49 off 34 balls in the 13th over, an innings that included six fours and a six.

Following his dismissal, Patidar and Jitesh Sharma accelerated the scoring. Jitesh struck two sixes and two fours in a single over, while Patidar added a quick 27 off 13 balls before both fell in quick succession to Prince Yadav.

In the end, Tim David and Romario Shepherd remained unbeaten on 14 each, guiding RCB to victory with 29 balls to spare. Avesh Khan chipped in with two important wickets for LSG.

Prince was the most suc-

IPL STANDINGS					
TEAMS	P	W	L	NRR	PTS
RCB	5	4	1	1.503	8
RR	5	4	1	0.889	8
PBKS	4	3	0	0.720	7
SRH	5	2	3	0.576	4
DC	4	2	2	0.322	4
GT	4	2	2	-0.029	4
LSG	5	2	3	-0.804	4
CSK	5	2	3	-0.846	4
MI	4	1	3	-0.772	2
KKR	5	0	4	-1.383	1

cessful bowler for LSG as he finished with good figures of 3-32. While Avesh Khan also took two crucial wickets.

Earlier, asked to bat first, LSG struggled to get going as openers Mitchell Marsh and Aiden Markram found it tough against the tight new-ball spell from Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Josh Hazlewood, reaching just 14/0 after two overs. Marsh

briefly shifted momentum with a towering six, but Markram departed for 12 after mistiming a slower ball from Rasikh.

LSG suffered a significant setback when captain Rishabh Pant injured his elbow and retired hurt after facing only three deliveries. Nicholas Pooran failed to capitalise on the opportunity, falling cheaply to Hazlewood.

Rasikh wrapped up the innings efficiently, finishing with four wickets, while Bhuvneshwar claimed three and Hazlewood maintained excellent control. Their collective effort ensured RCB restricted LSG to a modest total.

**BRIEF SCORES**

**Lucknow Super Giants** 146/10 in 20 overs (Mitchell Marsh 40, Mukul Choudhary 39; Rasikh Dar 4-24, Bhuvneshwar Kumar 3-27) lost to **Royal Challengers Bengaluru** 149/5 in 15.1 overs (Virat Kohli 49, Rajat Patidar 27; Prince Yadav 3-32, Avesh Khan 2-23) by five wickets

## Moody, 19, qualifies for World Snooker C'ships

**New Delhi:** The 19-year-old British player Stan Moody has qualified for the World Snooker Championships for the first time after beating China's Jiang Jun, a day after discharging himself from hospital with tonsillitis. Moody, long touted as a star of the future, will be the first British teenager to play at the Crucible since Judd Trump in 2007. He made a fantastic century in the last frame to beat Jiang Jun 10-9. From 6-5 down, world number 44 Moody fired runs of 71, 70, 113 and 127 to go 9-8 ahead, then missed match-winning chances in frame 18, but made amends with a superb 104 in the decider. His victory was all the more remarkable given that he was in hospital with tonsillitis last night, but discharged himself and played through the discomfort to book his place on the biggest stage.

## FIFA SERIES Blue Tigresses bag third spot



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, April 15:** The Indian women's national team secured a thrilling 3-2 victory over Malawi in the third-place play-off of the FIFA Series 2026 at the Nyayo National Stadium in Nairobi Wednesday.

Astam Oraon (18), Aveka Singh (45+1), and substitute Priyadharshini Selladurai (84)

were on target for the Blue Tigresses, while Khumalo Ireen (42') and Henry Deborah (60') scored for Malawi.

India started brightly, enjoying early possession. Their attacking intent paid off in the 18th minute. Nirmala Devi Phanjoubam delivered a floated corner from the right, and Malawian goalkeeper Esther Maulidi came off her line but

failed to make contact.

The ball bounced off Aveka Singh and fell kindly to Astam Oraon, who reacted quickest to poke it into the net and live India the lead. It was the 21-year-old's first goal for the national team.

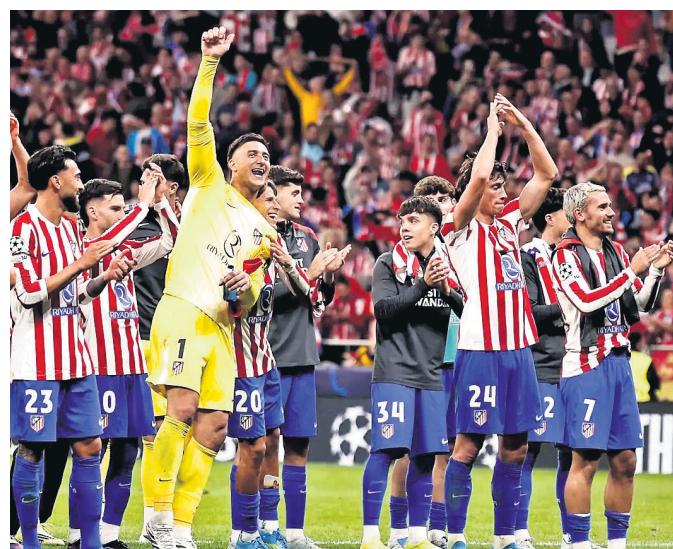
After going behind, Malawi grew into the game and began to enjoy more possession in the Indian half. Their pressure paid off in the 42nd minute when Sanfida Nongrum brought down Bernadetta Mkandawire on the edge of the box, conceding a free-kick in a dangerous position.

The Blue Tigresses held on to their lead to secure a hard-fought victory and confirm a third-place finish in the FIFA Series 2026.

India had earlier suffered a 0-2 defeat to Kenya in the semi-finals, while the hosts are set to face Australia in the final later in the day.

**ROAD TO PUSKÁS**

## Atlético survive Barca comeback



*Simeone's side withstands Barcelona's early blitz to reach first UCL semifinal in nine years*

REUTERS

**Madrid, April 15:** Atletico Madrid reached their first Champions League semi-final in nine years Tuesday, squeezing past Barcelona 3-2 on aggregate despite a nerve-racking 2-1 home defeat that had the Metropolitan crowd holding its breath until the final whistle.

Diego Simeone's side thought they had done much of the heavy

lifting with a 2-0 win at the Camp Nou in the first leg but that cushion was wiped out by an early Barca blitz as the visitors struck twice in the first half to level the tie.

Lamine Yamal capitalised on a Clement Lenglet error to open the scoring in the fourth minute, finishing neatly past goalkeeper Juan Musso after Ferran Torres set him up.

Torres then made it 2-0 in the 24th, racing clear onto Dani Olmo's pass and driving the ball into the top corner.

Atlético, rocked but not floored, found a lifeline in the 31st minute. Marcos Llorente burst down the right and drilled

a low cross to the far post where Lookman outpaced his marker and fired inside the left post to restore the hosts' aggregate lead.

Barcelona dominated possession after the break and had a third goal ruled out for offside against Torres as Pedri and Gavi controlled the midfield.

Barca finished with 10 men after a last-man challenge brought a red card for defender Eric Garcia and Atletico held on to secure a place in the last four against Arsenal or Sporting who play Wednesday with the London side leading 1-0.

**Dembele's brace lights up Anfield to take PSG through**

**O**usmane Dembele struck twice to confirm Paris St Germain's place in the Champions League semi-finals with a 2-0 victory over Liverpool Tuesday, sealing a 4-0 aggregate win in their quarter-final tie at a rain-soaked Anfield. The holders soaked up sustained second-half pressure from Liverpool, who were roared on by a raucous home crowd, but built on the advantage they established in the first leg in Paris last week to book their fifth semi-final berth in seven seasons. PSG will meet either Bayern Munich or Real Madrid in the next round, with the German side leading 2-1 ahead of Wednesday's quarter-final second.

**TWILIGHT OF A TITAN**

## Badminton's 'Great Dane' calls quits

**OLYMPIC & WORLD CHAMPION VIKTOR AXELSEN ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT OVER INJURY WOES**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 15:** Two-time Olympic and world champion Danish badminton great Viktor Axelsen announced his retirement on Wednesday, saying that his injury-ravaged body has told him to "stop".

The 32-year-old has not competed since October last year due to a back problem which had needed surgery and left him in chronic pain.

"As most people know, I have been struggling with my back for quite some time. After I had surgery in April last year and went through a long rehabilitation process, I unfortunately had a setback in October," Axelsen, a three-time European champion, told 'Badminton Europe'.

"Since those tournaments, I have not been able to play or train at the level required. I



have not been able to play or train due to pain, and that is why I am unfortunately forced to make this extremely difficult decision," he said.

Axelsen, who held the world number one position for 183 weeks which is the third longest run of all time, said that with the pain not subsiding and doctors warning him of

**Making this decision has been extremely difficult and at times felt unfair. At the same time, my body has done an incredible job over many years, and I see it as a huge privilege to have been able to play, train, and win so many major tournaments at the highest level**

another surgery if he continued, he finally had to listen to his body.

The affable Dane, who has managed asthma throughout his career, won consecutive gold medals at the Tokyo and Paris Olympics and finished on top in the 2017 and 2022 World Championships. He was also a part six gold-winning Danish teams in the European Championships.

Despite the painful circumstances of his retirement, Axelsen said he would look back at his career with joy.

"Making this decision has been extremely difficult and at times felt unfair. At the same time, my body has done an incredible job over many years, and I see it as a huge privilege to have been able to play, train, and win so many major tournaments at the highest level. Very few people get to experience what I have experienced and meet so many amazing people. That's why I look back on my career with joy," he said.

**SECOND-LEG BATTLES**

**Gunners hope to seal SF berth vs Sporting at home**

**A**rsenal will be hoping to put their recent slump behind them when they host Sporting CP Wednesday, with a place in the Champions League semifinal against Atlético Madrid on the line. Arsenal take a 1-0 first-leg lead into the tie against Sporting after their first-leg victory. Arsenal have lost three of their last four games, exiting the FA Cup and slipping in the Premier League title race, with their only win in that run coming against Sporting CP. Their latest in a damaging 2-1 to AFC Bourne-

severely denting their title hopes. Sporting have been in solid enough form, winning four of their last five games, as they sit second in the Liga Portugal table, five points behind leaders Porto with a game in hand.

**Veteran Neuer primed for one final showdown with rivals Real Madrid**

**B**ayern Munich veteran Manuel Neuer is saddling up for Wednesday's Real Madrid quarterfinal second leg at home in what could be his final season before riding off into the sunset. Though not the risk-hungry, 'sweeper keeper' of his prime, the two-time Champions League winner was outstanding in Bayern's 2-1 first-leg victory in Madrid. Named man of the match, Neuer made nine saves and succeeded in keeping Real's danger men Kylian Mbappe and Vinicius Junior at bay, for the most part. Heading into Wednesday's return leg, Neuer is the only current Bayern player to have experienced victory over two legs against Madrid. Since getting past the Spaniards in the 2012 semi-finals, Bayern had not even won a match against Los Blancos in their eight meetings - up until last week.