



## Sharvari on cloud 9

Actress Sharvari says working in Yeh Prem Mol Liya is her biggest dream comes true

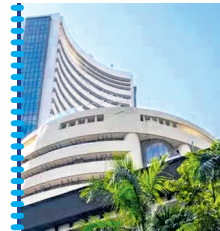
LEISURE | P2



## NATO slams Russia, China

NATO criticises Russian and Chinese nuclear stances, urges both countries to work with the United States

INTERNATIONAL | P10



## Indices soar

Sensex jumps 753 points and Nifty closes above 24,550 following a drop in crude oil prices

BUSINESS | P11



## Tennis stars honoured

Carlos Alcaraz & Aryna Sabalenka were named sportsman and sportswoman of the year at the Laureus Awards

SPORTS | P12

## Prez unveils ₹158cr projects in Rourkela

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Rourkela, April 21: President Droupadi Murmu Tuesday inaugurated projects worth around ₹158 crore at Rourkela in Sundargarh district. The projects include a planetarium and science centre, the Nirmal Munda Parivesh Path, the Integrated Command and Control Centre, a tribal museum and a recreational park. Murmu, who was in the Steel City on a day-long visit, inaugurated the Planetarium and Science Centre, Nirmal Munda Parivesh Path, the Tribal Museum and the Integrated Command and Control Centre.

Addressing a function here on the occasion of 'Adi Paraba-2026' in the tribal hinterland of Odisha, the President said that women comprise half of the country's population and they need to be empowered in order to achieve the goal of 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047 and 'Sambrudh Odisha' by 2036. P3

## SDPO shunted

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh, April 21: A few days after a woman lodged a complaint with the DGP accusing Khandapada Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO) Madan Mohan Pradhan of seeking sexual favour and intimidation, the SDPO was transferred to the district headquarters Tuesday.

The victim had approached the DGP's grievance cell in Bhubaneswar and submitted an audio clip purportedly featuring Pradhan making obscene remarks and suggesting the woman to visit him at night, implying a physical relationship. DGP YB Khurania took cognisance of the complaint and ordered a probe. Additional SP Subash Chandra Panda conducted a preliminary inquiry.

A case (120/26) was registered at Fatehgarh police station April 20 over the issue.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Your position in the party is in trouble, sir. Others are saying far more foolish things than you ever have



HARVEST OF GOLD: A labourer winnows freshly harvested wheat at a mandi in Gurugram, Haryana, Tuesday

PTI PHOTO

## Kharge targets Modi, retracts 'terrorist' remark

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, April 21: Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge Tuesday stepped up his attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, initially referring to him as a "terrorist," but later softening his stance and accusing him of "terrorising" political parties and the public by allegedly misusing government machinery and central agencies to stifle the opposition.



Addressing a presser in Chennai alongside AICC General Secretary (Organisation) KC Venugopal, Kharge initially referred to the Prime

## PRIVILEGE NOTICE AGAINST PM

New Delhi: Congress leader KC Venugopal Tuesday submitted a privilege notice against PM Narendra Modi to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla for allegedly casting aspersions on MPs during his address to the nation after the failure of Bills to implement women reservation. In his notice submitted under rule 222 of Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha, he noted that April 18, the PM addressed the nation on national television, following the defeat of the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026 in Lok Sabha April 17, which failed to secure the required two-thirds majority.

Minister as a "terrorist" while criticising the AIADMK's alliance with the BJP. However, when pressed by reporters to clarify the

context of the remark, the Congress chief stated he meant the Prime Minister was "terrorising" the democratic fabric of the country.

"He is terrorising people and political parties. I never said he is a terrorist (in the literal sense). Terrorising this... he is misusing his power and government machinery and abusing, malingering opposition parties," Kharge said.

He alleged that the Election Commission has become an "extension of the BJP office" and accused the PM of violating the Model Code of Conduct in the final stages of the election campaign.

## Nearly 1K couples tie knot under MKBY

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 21: Women and Child Development department successfully organised mass marriages of approximately 1,000 couples across 27 districts in a single day under 'Mukhyamantri Kanya Bibaha Yojana' (MKBY).

Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida, who also holds the Women and Child Development portfolio, attended the district-level mass marriage ceremony in Balasore as the chief guest. The event was organised jointly by the district administration and implementing agency at Padmavati Amusement Water Park, where 56 newly-wed couples were blessed.

Addressing the gathering, the Deputy Chief Minister expressed her happiness over



the solemnisation of marriages of more than 50 couples on the sacred soil of Balasore. She also called upon parents and the younger generation to work towards eliminating social evils like child marriage and dowry from society.

Several dignitaries, including Balasore MP Pratap Chandra Sarangi, Chairperson of the State Commission for Women Sobhna Mohanty, Government Deputy Chief Whip Gobinda Chandra Das, local MLAs, and District Collector Surjyabanshi Mayur Vikas, along with other dignitaries and officials were present and extended their blessings to the couples. As many as 67 couples in Puri and 17 in Malkangiri district tied the knot. MKBY aims to support families facing financial constraints or social pressures in conducting their daughters' marriages. Under the scheme, financial assistance of ₹60,000 is provided per eligible beneficiary. Of this, ₹45,000 is transferred to the beneficiary's bank account through DBT, while ₹15,000 is utilised for organising and managing the wedding ceremony.

## 13 KILLED IN KERALA CRACKER UNIT BLAST

Thrissur: At least 13 people were killed and several others injured in a blast at a fireworks manufacturing unit at Mundathicode in central Kerala's Thrissur district Tuesday. Thirteen injured persons, three of them women, are undergoing treatment. Five of them are in critical condition with over 70 per cent burn injuries, authorities at Government Medical College, Thrissur, said. P9

## ₹ PLUNGES 28 PAISE

Mumbai: Rupee declined 28 paise to close at 93.44 against the US dollar Tuesday, weighed down by a steady American currency and volatile crude oil prices amid uncertainties over the progress of West Asia peace negotiations. Positive domestic equity markets failed to boost local currency, forex analysts said.

## Lucknow hosp's ₹200 beard fine raises eyebrows

AGENCIES

Lucknow, April 21: A bizarre directive has been issued by an outsourcing agency engaged at Dr Ram Manohar Lohia Institute of Medical Sciences, Lucknow, imposing a ₹200 fine on male employees for keeping beards and a similar penalty on female employees if they fail to tie their hair. The move has sparked criticism and widespread anger among the workers.



the order lays down a detailed penalty structure for various violations, according to a report by 'India Today'. "Employees who fail to wear identity cards

or nameplates during duty hours will be fined ₹100, while those not in uniform will be charged ₹200 per day," the order states. According to the direc-

hair in a bun or wear a hairnet," it adds.

The order also prescribes stricter penalties for misconduct. A fine of ₹500 will be imposed for sleeping, smoking, or consuming alcohol during duty hours. In serious cases, it provides for termination and the filing of an FIR.

Additionally, leaving the workplace without prior permission or remaining absent can attract fines of up to ₹500. Unauthorised absence without prior notice may lead to a penalty of ₹2,000.

The directive also mandates that computer operators posted at counters must deposit their mobile phones

during working hours. Authorities have warned of strict disciplinary action against those who fail to comply with these rules.

Meanwhile, irate employees have criticised the order, arguing that similar restrictions are not enforced on outsourced staff at other major institutions such as King George's Medical University (KGMU) and Sanjay Gandhi Postgraduate Institute of Medical Sciences (SGPIMS).

Workers have demanded that the order be withdrawn, alleging that the rules unfairly target outsourced employees and impose excessive penalties.

## Uncertainty hangs over possible talks

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Islamabad, April 21: Last-minute ceasefire talks between United States and Iran looked uncertain Tuesday as a two-week truce is set to expire and both countries warned that, without a deal, they are prepared to resume fighting.

A US official said Vice President JD Vance's trip to Islamabad for potential ceasefire talks with Iran has been called off and put on hold, but cautioned that President Donald Trump could change his mind at any minute. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal administration deliberations, said Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff and son-in-law Jared Kushner were expected in Washington Tuesday afternoon for consultations about how to proceed.

Earlier in the day, two regional officials said Washington and Tehran had signaled they would hold a second round of talks, with Vance leading the US team and Iranian parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf as its top negotiator. Both spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to brief reporters.

But Pakistan's information minister, Attaullah Tarar, said later Tuesday on X that Iran had not formally confirmed its participation, which was set to expire Wednesday. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei told



Iran's state TV there has been "no final decision" on whether to attend because of "unacceptable actions" by the US, apparently referencing its recent blockade in the Strait of Hormuz.

Vance had policy meetings scheduled at the White House Wednesday morning, said a White House official who was not authorised to speak publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity. The vice president's office and the White House did not immediately respond to messages asking whether Vance still intends to travel to Pakistan.

## Lots of bombs will start going off: Trump

US President Donald Trump has warned that "lots of bombs" will "start going off" if there's no agreement before the ceasefire deadline, and Iran's chief negotiator said that Tehran has "new cards on the battlefield" that haven't yet been revealed.

The ceasefire, which began April 8, could be extended if talks resume, though Trump said in an interview Tuesday with CNBC: "Well, I don't want to do that." "We don't have that much time," Trump said, adding that Iran "had a choice" and "they have to negotiate".

OrissaPOST

# BUSINESS EMINENCE AWARDS

6th EDITION

23 APRIL BHUBANESWAR

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# leisure



## MADONNA'S GRATITUDE TO SABRINA FOR CONFESSIONS II

Queen of pop Madonna, who made a return to Coachella joining headliner Sabrina Carpenter, thanked the Espresso hitmaker for helping her bring her upcoming album *Confessions II* on stage. Madonna took to Instagram, where she shared a string of images featuring her and Carpenter from their performance at Coachella

## ANNE HATHAWAY TOPS PEOPLE'S BEAUTY LIST

Anne Hathaway has been named *People* magazine's 'World's Most Beautiful Star 2026', celebrating her effortless elegance and lasting appeal. She acknowledged the honour on Instagram following a striking cover shoot. The actor is also set to reunite with Meryl Streep and Emily Blunt, returning to the iconic world of *The Devil Wears Prada*.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
You are an imaginative and enterprising person, and today you may taste success. Ganesh says that you are ambitious but warns you not to take on more work than you can handle. You are positive about your capabilities, so work sincerely and have faith in God.

**TAURUS**  
Today, you are likely to be more reckless than ever in splurging your hard earned money. Ganesh strongly advises you to leave your credit card at home today. Using it for making purchases will only make matters worse. Money wise, be very careful in your business dealings, about the commitments you make.

**GEMINI**  
Your mind will be uneasy and anxious due to some reason today. You will be unable to express your anxieties. You will be able to secure the love of your partner by sharing your feelings. You need to let go of the past and strive to keep on moving forward with confidence, says Ganesh.

**CANCER**  
You will tend to try new recipes at home. Family members will take advantage and enjoy it. You will indulge in pastimes. Arrival of guests will bring in an air of festivity and happiness, says Ganesh.

**LEO**  
You will seek the opinion of others in a lot of matters today. You need to patiently listen to others and keep your lips sealed during the course of conversations today. Your self-confidence may take a beating today, hence do not take any important decisions. It is time for a major change in your work or field of work, says Ganesh.

**VIRGO**  
Today you may understand the utter uselessness of your dogged efforts and feel extremely anxious about success eluding you constantly. However, Ganesh advises you not to lose hope, but to re-energise your mind, give a boost to your curiosity and pay attention to long-term goals.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesh says you will showcase your ability and skills today in your work field and impress people. You will develop and express your inner love for art and artistic things and you will purchase a new work of art today. Ganesh showers you with all his blessings.

**SCORPIO**  
A series of events at work front may keep you busy throughout the day. You may be unable to manage the clutter and confusion created by too many things at the same time. However, you emerge a fighter because of your power of resilience. Ganesh advises to go slow, yet steady; take one problem at a time and sort it out.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Ganesh predicts a day full of romantic developments today. Mushy talks and whispering sweet nothings in your beloved's ears may give you little joys of life. However, brace yourselves as there are times when relationships do not workout, and you may experience this soon.

**CAPRICORN**  
You are busy as a beaver. It is extremely difficult for you to think for yourself as you are all tied up by the demands of your work. You want to be creative, but again, the workload will not let you have that freedom, says Ganesh. You have learnt the art of time management. So, you have properly lined up your priorities and success is waiting for you.

**AQUARIUS**  
You will hit the bull's eye, today. From the smallest to the biggest, all of your plans will turn into reality. Don't get disheartened if there are some obstacles on your path; you are fully armed to face the challenges and come out triumphant. Get yourself in the top gear, you will surely succeed, says Ganesh.

**PISCES**  
Your planetary configuration not being favorable, you are advised not to start any new projects today. The benefits accrued by any project you take up today might not justify the risks associated with it. Businessmen need to be extra careful in all their dealings. Personal life should be peaceful with Ganesh's blessings.

## Sharvari's biggest dream comes true

MUMBAI: Actress Sharvari has shared an emotional note about her upcoming film *Yeh Prem Mol Liya*, calling the project 'very very special' and describing the opportunity to work with filmmaker Sooraj Barjatya as a dream come true. The film, which also stars Ayushmann Khurrana, is scheduled to release in cinemas November 27, 2026.

Backed by Rajshri Productions in association with Mahaveer Jain Films, the movie is being positioned as a theatrical family entertainer, a genre closely associated with Sooraj Barjatya's filmmaking legacy. Known for stories rooted in relationships, values and emotional

drama, Barjatya's latest project has already generated curiosity for bringing together a fresh lead pairing.

Taking to Instagram after the release date announcement, Sharvari opened up about her experience working on the film. She wrote, "The journey of *Yeh Prem Mol Liya* - a very very special film has been filled with gratitude, blessings, positivity and all things amazing!! To be directed by Sooraj sir is my biggest dream come true! And sharing this journey alongside Ayushmann makes it even more special. Can't wait for you all to experience this on 27th November 2026, in theatres!"

For Sharvari, *Yeh Prem Mol Liya* is another significant addition to her growing slate of theatrical releases. The actress has steadily built momentum with recent projects and is increasingly being seen as one of the younger names to watch in Hindi cinema.



## MRUNAL ON HER 'GODMOTHER'

MUMBAI: Mrunal Thakur has spoken about her close bond with Tamannaah Bhatia, describing their relationship as one built on trust, comfort, and mutual support. In a recent interaction, Mrunal referred to Tamannaah as her "god-mother," offering a glimpse into their off-screen equation.

"She's my god-mother. I just call her any time of the day," Mrunal said, highlighting the ease and familiarity they share. The actor has often spoken about the importance of female friendships, and her bond with Tamannaah reflects that shift in perspective.

Recalling her earlier views, Mrunal admitted that she once found it difficult to connect with women. "It's really nice to have a girl as your best friend because, growing up, I always felt like I could never be friends with girls," she shared. She added that her friendship with Tamannaah has changed that outlook, allowing her to embrace a more open and supportive dynamic. "I can be completely unfiltered with her," she said.

Their relationship, as described by Mrunal, goes beyond industry connections and is rooted in personal understanding and encouragement. The actor also emphasised how such friendships create space for growth, honesty, and shared experiences.

On the work front, Mrunal was recently seen in *Dacoit* alongside Adivi Sesh.

## Alfia calls OTT a space for creative freedom

MUMBAI: Alfia Jafry is set to make her acting debut with *The Pyramid Scheme*, choosing the OTT space as her entry point into the industry.



medium offers greater creative freedom and opportunities to explore layered storytelling.

Speaking about her decision, Alfia said, "OTT gives actors the freedom to experiment with nuanced storytelling, and that's something I truly value as a performer. You get to explore characters in depth, take creative risks, and be part of stories that are not restricted by conventional formats." She added that this flexibility played a key role in shaping her debut choice. "I wanted my debut to be something where I could really push myself and not be confined to a certain image or expectation. OTT allows that space, it encourages you to be real, to be subtle, and to truly immerse yourself in the character," she said.

With *The Pyramid Scheme*, Alfia steps into a narrative that demands emotional depth and authenticity, positioning it as a project that aligns with her approach to acting. The series is expected to explore complex themes, giving her the opportunity to showcase a more grounded and detailed performance.

The actor's comments reflect a broader shift in the industry, where many newcomers are turning to streaming platforms to establish themselves through content-driven roles rather than conventional formats.

## Fire horse yawns; dark horse whinnies

Aloha! my readers. We meet on the right side of the first quarter century, wishing that someone did not always wake up on the wrong side of the bed and start wars. As per Chinese Zodiac, this is the year of the fire horse that symbolises courage, intensity and transformation. A neat game of 'trick or treat' happened to 2026, and now all we do is bear mute witness to puzzling actions by the trickster; one that does not hold his horses at all, and brandishes fire power at ALL. Courage and intensity-yeah sure, overflowing in abundance, out to choke civilisations and transform world geography.

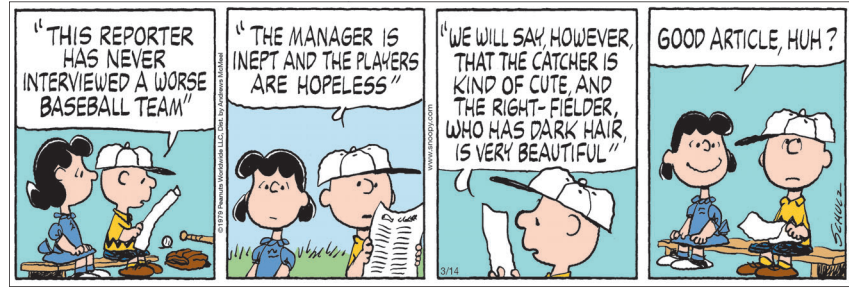
This *KGF-1* dialogue "If you think you are bad, I am your dad" straight out of Rocky bhai's mouth stares right at us in today's time, in the form of a badass weirdo with strange looking hairdo, who loves taking the gas out of kick-ass economies. Unaffected by dire state of many a state, the game of open

and shut being played at the Strait by the prankster diminishes the chances of any open and shut case scenario. Straight-forward solution seems to be going out of every window or down every waterway. I however straighten up in delight at the hat-trick of awards clinched by an Odia horror comedy; no trick this, a cinematic treat all the way. The horrors and

comedy unfolding elsewhere seems to fade away for a while. The grand win of three awards for this hilarious movie indulges my Odia soul but loss of the *thirty-three* aches the woman's soul.

Upcoming delimitation exercise may be a raging debate. But what is beyond debate is the fact that Odisha ceases to be *Incredible India's* best-kept secret. It has claimed the national and global stage, pushed limits and shattered standoffish perceptions of being lesser to any. Teeming with tremendous cultural, culinary, technological and entrepreneurial horse power, it is the year of the dark horse for sure.

### PEANUTS



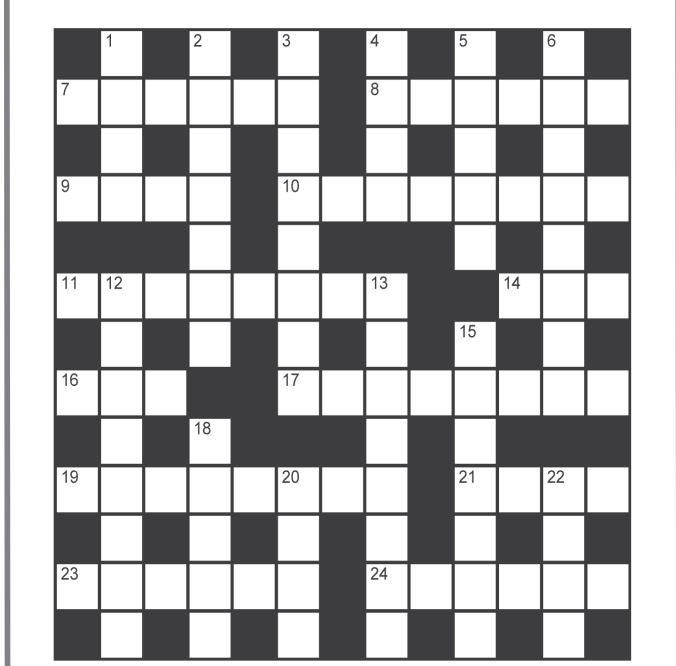
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



### FUN POST CROSSWORD



- Across
- 7 Heavenly
  - 8 Latin dance (3-3)
  - 9 Datum
  - 10 Anthill scrounger
  - 11 Liver infection symptom
  - 14 Frigid
  - 16 Query
  - 17 Single great stone
  - 19 Table linen (5,3)
  - 21 Wheelbarrow
  - 23 Coral reefs
  - 24 Spain and Portugal
  - 4 Stigma
  - 5 Purple shade
  - 6 Map find
  - 12 Complete
  - 13 Father of modern physics
  - 15 Trite remarks
  - 18 Reprimand
  - 20 Perfume additive
  - 22 Surprise attack
- Down
- 1 Slave girl of opera
  - 2 Cold weather wear
  - 3 Showy flower

### 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.

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

### SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

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

SUDOKU

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

## 2 dead as pickup van, bike collide

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Boipariguda, April 21:** Two youths were killed and another sustained critical injuries when their motorcycle collided head-on with a pickup van in Koraput district Tuesday.

The accident occurred near Kaliajholi Square under Ramgiri police outpost in Boipariguda police limits. The deceased were identified as Rabinanda Masti, 20, of Majaguda village and Maheswar Pendapadia, 17, of Kandalibeda village. Krishna Hantal, 19, of Dumuriguda village sustained critical injuries.

According to police, the three were returning home on a motorcycle (OD10AC2259) when it collided head-on with a pickup van (OD10P4349) coming from the opposite direction.

All three injured were initially taken to Ramgiri PHC and later shifted to Boipariguda CHC. Doctors there declared Rabinanda and Maheswar dead. Krishna was later referred to the district headquarters hospital in Jeypore for advanced treatment. A case (99/26) has been registered at Boipariguda police station



**AMID UNREST:** Security personnel patrol after dispersing a group of people advancing towards the BDO office in Thoubal district, Manipur, Tuesday. Many parts of the state have been witnessing protests following the killing of two children April 7

## Tim Cook to step down as Apple CEO

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**San Francisco, April 21:** Apple CEO Tim Cook is stepping down from the job that he inherited from the late Steve Jobs, ending a 15-year reign that saw the company's market value soar by more than \$3.6 trillion during an iPhone-fueled era of prosperity.

Cook, 65, will turn the CEO duties over to Apple's head of hardware engineering, John Ternus, September 1 while remaining involved with the Cupertino, California, company as executive chairman.

"It has been the greatest privilege of my life to be the CEO of Apple and to have been trusted to lead such an extraordinary company," Cook said in a statement. "I love Apple with all of my being, and I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to work with a team of such ingenious, innovative, creative, and deeply caring people."

Ternus, 50, has been with Apple for the past quarter century, including the past five years overseeing the engineering underlying the iPhone, iPad and Mac — a role that made him a prime candidate to succeed Cook.

# 18 projects worth ₹3,877cr get nod

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 21:** The State Level Single Window Clearance Authority (SLSWCA), headed by Chief Secretary Anu Garg, Tuesday approved 18 industrial projects across various sectors involving a total investment of ₹3,877.14 crore.

These projects are expected to generate around 7,565 employment opportunities, officials said. The SLSWCA approved the proposal of Runaya Eckart Aluminium Powders Private Limited to set up a facility for manufacturing gas-atomised spherical aluminium powder in Jharsuguda. With an investment of ₹300 crore, the unit is expected to provide jobs to 500 individuals.

Similarly, Jay Jagannath Steel & Power Limited received approval for the expansion of its existing sponge iron plant into an integrated steel plant in Sambalpur. With an investment of ₹955 crore, the project is expected to create 1,600 direct and indirect jobs. Scan Steels Limited will expand its integrated steel plant in Sundargarh with an investment of ₹503.68 crore, while SS Alufoils Private Limited will set up a chrome ore beneficiation plant in Jajpur with an investment of ₹56.80 crore. Together, these initiatives are expected to generate around 2,150 employment opportunities.

The SLSWCA also gave its



go-ahead to Tamil Nadu Ispat Private Limited to set up a multimodal logistics park in Jharsuguda. With an investment of ₹113.40 crore, the project is expected to create 250 jobs. Similarly, Alps Mining Services Private Limited will set up a coal washery project in the district with an investment of ₹52 crore, generating at least 120 jobs.

Harman Finochem Limited is set to establish a facility for manufacturing active pharmaceutical ingredients (API) and formulations in Gopalpur. With an investment of ₹530 crore, the unit is expected to provide employment to more than 900 individuals. Ambitech Healthcare Private Limited has received approval to set up a medical device manufacturing unit in Khurda with an investment of ₹51 crore, creating 369 jobs.

During its 146th meeting, the SLSWCA also approved the proposal of Envair Electrodyne Limited to establish a copper-clad laminate manufacturing facility in Khurda. With an initial investment of ₹136.87 crore, the unit is expected to provide employment to over

300 individuals.

In the tourism sector, the SLSWCA approved proposals to set up three five-star hotels—one each in Sambalpur, Khurda, and Puri—two four-star hotels—one each in Keonjhar and Puri—and a luxury mountain resort in Koraput. With a combined investment of over ₹700 crore, these initiatives are expected to generate more than 1,200 direct and indirect jobs.

Solar Industries India Limited's proposal for a defence-grade explosives unit in Deogarh was also approved. With an investment of ₹210.10 crore, the project is expected to provide jobs to over 900 individuals.

Moreover, Baleshwar Shipyard and Infra Private Limited will set up a shipbuilding and repair facility in Balasore with an investment of ₹150 crore, creating 600 jobs. South Block Marketing Private Limited has also received approval to establish an integrated facility for recycling plastic and metal products in Khurda with an investment of ₹111.64 crore, generating at least 120 employment opportunities.

## Inclusive growth key to nation's progress: Prez

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Rourkela, April 21:** Launching projects worth ₹158 crore at Rourkela in Sundargarh, President Droupadi Murmu Tuesday said overall development of the country is possible only through the progress of every section of society, including women and tribals.

Murmu, who was in the Steel City on a day-long visit, inaugurated the Planetarium and Science Centre, Nirmal Munda Parivesh Path, the Tribal Museum and the Integrated Command and Control Centre.

Addressing a function here on the occasion of 'Adi Paraba-2026' in the tribal hinterland of Odisha, the President said that women comprise half of the country's population and they need to be empowered in order to achieve the goal of 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047 and



'Samrudha Odisha' by 2036.

She also stressed the development of tribals, who constitute around one fourth of Odisha's population.

"With this in mind, the Union and state governments are actively working on various schemes for tribal welfare and women empowerment. This is accelerating the development process in tribal-dominated districts like Sundargarh, while

prioritising the economic upliftment of the members of tribal communities," Murmu said.

"Become good human beings and strive to uplift those who have been left behind," she told the gathering.

A 'Viksit Bharat' will be possible only through the collective efforts and dedication of the nation's farmers, labourers, tribal communities, marginalised sections, intellectuals,

## Pak extends airspace closure till May 24

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 21:** Pakistan Tuesday extended the closure of its airspace for Indian planes till May 24 as the curbs will now remain in place for more than a year. In the wake of the terror attack in Pahalgam, Kashmir, that killed 26 people April 22 last year, India and Pakistan have closed their respective airspaces for each other's planes. While Pakistan airspace has been closed for Indian aircraft since April 24, 2025, Pakistan planes are not permitted to use the Indian airspace since April 30 last year.

According to a NOTAM (Notice to Airmen), Pakistan air-



space is not available for Indian registered aircraft and aircraft operated/owned or leased by Indian airlines/operators, including military flights.

The ban will be applicable from April 21 till 2359 hours (UTC) May 23, which translates to 0530 hrs (IST) May 24, as per the NOTAM issued by the Pakistan Airport Authority (PAA). It is now nearly a year since

the Pakistan airspace ban came into force that has also resulted in Indian carriers taking longer routes for various international destinations.

Meanwhile, India has barred Pakistan aircraft from using its airspace till 0530 hrs April 24, and the restriction is expected to be extended. The ban, part of various measures taken by the Indian government against Pakistan in the wake of the Pahalgam terror attack, was initially till May 24, 2025 and has been subsequently extended every month.

Generally, a NOTAM is a notice containing information that is essential for personnel involved in flight operations.

# NASA rover detects more organic compounds on Mars

REUTERS

**Washington, April 21:** Performing a type of experiment never before tried beyond Earth, NASA's Curiosity rover has identified more organic compounds on Mars as scientists strive to learn whether the Red Planet ever harboured life.

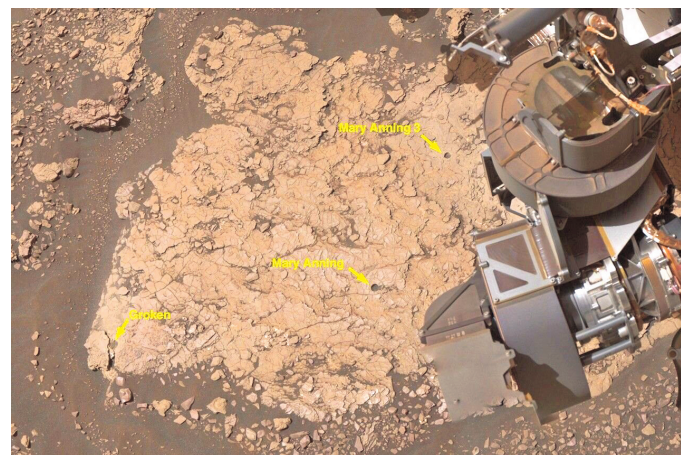
Five of the seven diverse organic compounds confirmed by the six-wheeled rover in rock that formed in a dried lakebed near the planet's equator had never previously been identified on Mars, the researchers said. The experiment also hinted at the presence of another organic compound that bears a structure similar to precursors to DNA, the molecule that carries genetic information in living organisms on our planet.

Organic compounds, molecules primarily composed of carbon

atoms bonded to other elements, form the structural basis of all life on Earth. The total identified on Mars is now in the dozens. The scientists noted, however, that all these compounds could have formed through non-biological processes.

Like Earth and the solar system's other planets, Mars formed roughly 4.5 billion years ago. Early in its history, Mars was warmer and wetter than the cold and arid place it is today. The researchers estimated that the rock sampled by the rover - sediment laid down by flowing water - dated to at least 3.5 billion years ago.

"We cannot yet say that Mars ever harboured life, but our findings further support the evidence that Mars was a habitable world around the time that life on Earth originated," said astrobiologist and planetary scientist



Amy Williams of the University of Florida, a member of the Curiosity scientific team and lead author of the study published Tuesday in the journal Nature Communications.

Definitively identifying evidence of past life currently would

require bringing rock samples back to Earth for testing.

"To be clear, we have not found evidence for life with this study, but we're further refining the building-block molecules that were present on Mars," Williams said.

Curiosity landed in the Gale crater, which was formed by an ancient impact on the Martian surface, in 2012. It conducted the experiment now being described in 2020 in a region of the crater called Glen Torridon, where an abundance of clay minerals shows water was once present. If microbial life ever arose on Mars, bodies of water would have been a likely habitat.

Clay minerals can preserve organic molecules better than other minerals, making them a good target for finding such compounds, Williams said.

The experiment was conducted by the rover's Sample Analysis at Mars, or SAM, instrument. The rover drilled into bedrock at a location called "Mary Anning". The powdered rock sample was then dropped into a small cup that contained

a chemical that breaks down complex organic matter into smaller pieces that can be detected by the SAM instrument.

"This study confirms that larger and more complex organic matter, called macromolecular carbon, is present and preserved in the near surface of Mars bedrock despite the planet's harsh radiation conditions. The experiment also yielded smaller organic molecules from that breakdown process that have not been seen on Mars before," Williams said.

"The Curiosity rover was built to search for habitable environments, places where life would want to live if it ever arose on Mars. This study contributes to that story, that Mars environments were habitable in the ancient past and had the ingredients for life as we know it," Williams said.

youth and students, as well as the urban and rural populace, the President said.

India is rapidly marching towards becoming a developed nation by 2047, she asserted.

"To build a 'Viksit Odisha' and 'Viksit Bharat', the all-round development and the participation of people from every section of society are essential, Murmu said.

She also hailed Sundargarh for its natural beauty, folk culture, heritage, brave individuals and sports enthusiasts.

"The allure of its dense forests, mountains, waterfalls and rivers is boundless. The art and culture of Sundargarh have further enriched the cultural abundance of Odisha," she said.

Rourkela has also played a pioneering role in promoting Odisha's art, literature, culture, tribal traditions, and sports, Murmu said.

## Bangalore: Woman burns lover to death

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangalore, April 21:** A 27-year-old man was allegedly charred to death by his live-in partner at her residence in Byadarahalli area Tuesday police said.

The deceased, identified as Kiran, a native of Tumakuru, worked at an outlet of a mobile service provider, they said.

Preliminary investigation indicates that the woman allegedly tied him up under the pretext of a "western-style proposal".

Police suspect the murder was premeditated, as the woman believed he had been avoiding her of late.

DCP (Northwest) DL Nagesh said Kiran and the accused, Prema, were working at a store in Rajajinagar. Kiran had gone to her house to pick her up as a new outlet of their company had been opened in Nelamangala.

The officer said she allegedly set him on fire by pouring kerosene on him. "It is a case of murder. They were in a relationship, and she felt he had been ignoring her of late," he said.

The incident led to heavy smoke, and the victim's body was found in a charred condition, police said.

On receiving information, police and fire officials rushed to the spot and extinguished the fire. At the time of the incident, only Prema was present at home, as her family members were away.

The woman claimed that she was inside the washroom when the incident occurred and on noticing smoke, she came out and found Kiran's charred body, police said.

A case was registered and probe began.

OVER DERAILMENT OF WOMEN'S QUOTA BILL

# Oppn will get befitting reply from people: CM



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Rourkela, April 21:** Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Tuesday lambasted the Congress, days after the Centre's bid to implement 33 per cent women's reservation in legislatures in 2029 derailed in the Lok Sabha, saying people will give a befitting reply to the party at the right time.

Addressing an event here in the presence of President Droupadi Murmu, the chief minister held the Congress and its allies responsible for "denying women reservation in the legislatures".

"The people of India are simple, but they are 'swabimani' (proud). They will certainly give a befitting reply to those who obstructed making provision for women's reservation," Majhi said.

While noting that the "Adi Paraba-2026" event graced by President Murmu was "not a political platform", the chief minister said he remembers

how the President was "treated in our neighbouring state".

"The incident caused great pain, not only to the people of Odisha, but also of the entire country," Majhi said.

He was referring to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in early March, accusing President Murmu of speaking "on the BJP's advice", questioning her "silence on atrocities" against tribals in states such as Manipur and Chhattisgarh.

Banerjee's unusually sharp remarks had come hours after Murmu, during a visit to north Bengal, questioned the pace of development among tribals in parts of the state, and wondered whether the CM was "upset" as neither she nor any state minister was present to receive her.

Majhi had then written a letter to his West Bengal counterpart, expressing deep concern and condemning the incident.

The chief minister projected President Murmu as the symbol of tribal and women's empowerment.

"Today, we have before us the greatest example of women and tribal empowerment. She is the first President of India from the tribal community and also a woman," Majhi said.

Highlighting Prime Minister Narendra Modi's efforts to promote tribals, he said, "India's Tribal Affairs Minister Jual Oram is a tribal from Odisha. PM Modi and the BJP's central leadership have given another tribal community representative the responsibility to serve Odisha as chief minister."

The chief minister said the progress of the country is not just about infrastructure, but also about the empowerment of every section of society.

He said that PM had brought a Bill to amend the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam that provides for 33 per cent reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies.

"It would have started a new chapter in the empowerment of the poor, the deprived and common women of the country. But it was not passed due to political expediency. The women of the country will not forgive those who opposed the bill," Majhi said.

The chief minister said the BJP government was committed to all-around development of western Odisha. "In Sundargarh district and the entire region, we are focusing on roads, drinking water, healthcare, education, sports, industrial growth and employment generation."

CM Majhi said that Rourkela represents state's industrial strength, cultural diversity, and sporting excellence.



**SYMPHONY OF SERVICE:** Karatia sebaks busy cutting wood logs for the construction of chariots ahead of Rath Yatra in Puri, Tuesday

## BMC'S AFFORDABLE HOUSING INITIATIVE

# 138 beneficiaries get permanent address

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 21:** Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) allotted houses to 138 families through a lottery system under its affordable housing initiative. The allotment was carried out Tuesday for residents from Ekamra Vिला, Maa Bhagabati Basti, Salia Sahi, Bhoi Nagar, and Saraswati Basti. The selected families will receive homes in 'Buddha Vihar Affordable Housing Project' located in Patia.

The event was attended by several dignitaries, including BMC Mayor Sulochana Das, Deputy Mayor Manjula Kahnar, and BMC Commis-



sioner-cum-BDA Vice-Chairman Chanchal Rana. Senior officials, corporators, and members of the Slum Settlement Standing Committee were also present along with the beneficiaries.

Speaking at the event, Rana said the housing project ensures that relocated families will have access to essential amenities such as drinking water, electricity, waste disposal systems, and nearby shops. He added that these homes would become a long-term identity and asset for the beneficiaries and their future generations.

Das emphasised that BMC is providing complete facilities along with housing, but warned beneficiaries against renting out allotted houses. She stated that strict action will be taken if any violation is found.

After receiving their allotments, many beneficiaries became emotional, with sev-

eral seen in tears of joy. They expressed that after years of struggle, they finally have a permanent house in the Capital city, giving them a sense of identity and stability.

"This is the first time we feel we truly belong to the City," one beneficiary said.

The entire programme was coordinated by Additional Commissioner Ratnakar Sahu and conducted by Deputy Commissioner Ajay Kumar Mohanty.

The housing allocation is part of BMC's ongoing efforts to improve living conditions for economically weaker sections and provide secure urban rehabilitation.

# Puri panel reviews anti-defection disqualification law framework

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Puri, April 21:** A committee of presiding officers set up by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla Tuesday reviewed the constitutional and procedural framework for disqualification of legislators under the anti-defection law, officials said.

The deliberations took place during the second meeting of the Committee of Presiding Officers in Puri, they added.

The four-member panel, headed by Maharashtra Assembly Speaker Rahul Narwekar, was constituted in January 2020 to examine issues relating to the powers of presiding officers under the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution and rules framed under it.

On the basis of the deliberations, a guideline would be prepared by the committee for

presiding officers of all state legislatures, officials said.

Karnataka Assembly Speaker UT Khader, Nagaland's Shering Longkumer and Odisha's Surama Padhi are the other members of the committee.

Senior Lok Sabha secretaries of various state assemblies, constitutional experts and Odisha's Advocate General Pitambar Acharya were present at the meeting.

In the welcome address, Padhi highlighted the significance of the deliberations in strengthening the institutional framework governing the Tenth Schedule.

After deliberations, the committee decided to convene its next meeting in Karnataka after two months to further continue its review and finalise its recommendations, officials said.

## BELPAHAR PROJECTS REVIEW

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 21:** Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Suresh Pujari Tuesday held a high-level review at Lok Seva Bhavan on Belpahar Municipality projects.

During the review, he directed that works slated for 2024-25 and 2025-26 but yet to begin must have their work orders cancelled, with fresh tenders floated immediately and funds arranged in the 2026-27 budget to expedite execution.

Minister Pujari also warned contractors against delays, directing officials to issue show-cause notices and terminate contracts where timelines are not met.

A high-level Housing and Urban Development department team will soon visit Belpahar to review stalled projects and assess ground issues, with the

# Min Pujari pushes fresh tenders



Minister stressing prompt action to ensure timely completion of ongoing works.

Key projects reviewed included a market complex, an urban homeless shelter under the Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi's Urban Development Scheme, a guest house, a weekly (Saturday) market, and pathway development, with the Minister setting a six-month

completion target.

He also directed officials to prepare detailed plans from the tender stage and ensure strict monitoring of contractors by the executive officer and assistant engineer to meet deadlines.

Considering the ongoing severe heatwave, the Minister also reviewed drinking water supply arrangements and directed that tanker supply be

ensured wherever required.

In a separate directive, he asked the Superintendent of Police and the local Inspector-in-Charge to take strict action against trucks illegally dumping fly ash in the Jharsuguda region.

The review also covered utilisation of funds from state allocations, Finance Commission grants, Western Odisha Development Council, District Mineral Foundation (DMF), and CSR sources. The Minister stressed 100 per cent utilisation of funds and faster execution of projects planned for 2026-27.

The meeting was attended by Joint Secretary Pradeep Kumar Sahoo, the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of Belpahar Municipality, the executive officer, assistant engineer, and other public representatives and officials.

## OHPC celebrates 31st Foundation Day

**BHUBANESWAR:** Odisha Hydro Power Corporation Limited (OHPC) celebrated its 31st Foundation Day at IMMT Auditorium here Tuesday. Deputy Chief Minister and Energy Minister Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo joined the occasion as chief guest. He appreciated OHPC's contributions to power sector and state's development. OHPC CMD and Additional Chief Secretary Vishal Kumar Dev presided over the function.

Senior officials including Director (Finance) Pranab Kumar Mohanty, Director (HR) Sandeep Patnaik, Director (Operation) Amiya Kumar Mohanty and Director (Projects) Rajeeb Lochan Panda were also present in the occasion. At the event, several key initiatives were unveiled, including the launch of OHPC theme song, revamped OHPC website, online E-Varun and integration of OSWAS 2.0, signifying a major step towards digital governance and improved administrative efficiency. OHPC also honoured its units for outstanding achievements during the year 2025-26. The 'Best Performing Unit' award was conferred on Rengali Hydro Electric Project. The 'Second Best Performing Unit' award was presented to Upper Indravati Hydro Electric Project, Mukhiguda, while the 'Best Housekeeping Unit' award was awarded to Hirakud Hydro Electric Project, Burla.

# Minor boy rescued at Bhubaneswar station

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 21:** A minor boy was rescued by the Railway Protection Force (RPF) from Bhubaneswar railway station after he was found wandering alone in a distressed condition Tuesday, officials said.

The boy, around 7-8 years old and a resident of Jobra in Cuttack, is yet to provide full details as an inquiry is underway.

According to RPF officials, duty officer Sachala Pradhan and lady constable R Basat spotted the boy wandering between platforms 2 and 3.

The boy said his father had died a few days ago. After his death, his mother told him they would travel to a new place by train. However, he claimed she boarded him on a train at Cuttack railway station and fled, leaving him alone.

After rescuing the minor, RPF officials said Childline has been informed and will contact the boy's mother or relatives to ensure his safe return.

"Our officers spotted the boy this afternoon and rescued him immediately. He has been handed over to Childline, which has begun efforts to trace his parents," said Bhubaneswar RPF Station Inspector-in-Charge Amaresh Behera.

## EARTH DAY TODAY

# Capital's paradox: Progress vs plastic pollution

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, April 21:** As the world prepares to observe Earth Day April 22 (Wednesday) with renewed focus on climate action and community-led sustainability, Bhubaneswar presents a dual narrative—visible progress in urban waste management on one hand and the persistent challenge of plastic pollution on the other. The City's experience reflects a broader national and global struggle to translate environmental awareness into lasting behavioural change.

India remains a major contributor to plastic waste, generating an estimated 9.3 million tonnes annually—nearly one-fifth of global pollution. In Bhubaneswar, the problem is evident across streets, markets and drainage systems despite bans on single-use plastics.

A 2026 study by Toxics Link found nearly 89% of surveyed locations in the City still use or sell banned plastic items. Bhubaneswar generates an estimated 45,000-50,000 tonnes of plastic waste each year, forming a significant share of over 900 tonnes of daily municipal



solid waste. Thin carry bags, disposable cutlery and multi-layer packaging remain widespread, often clogging drains or piling up at dumping sites like Daruthenga.

Despite repeated measures by the BMC, including regular raids and enforcement drives, residents and experts point to persistent gaps.

Environmental expert JK Panigrahi said waste management in Bhubaneswar reflects a broader global challenge—partly effective but inconsistent. The City has improved systems through door-to-door collection, segregation drives, micro-composting centres and plastic bans, boosting recycling efficiency.

However, he added that weak enforcement allows continued use of plastic and thermocol,

which still form a major share of waste.

Naturalist Biswajeet Panda said waste management in Bhubaneswar has improved in awareness and systems, but implementation remains inconsistent. Door-to-door collection and segregation are positive steps, yet improper disposal and low public participation persist in several areas.

He added that while bans on plastic and thermocol have raised awareness, their impact is limited due to weak enforcement and continued use. In many places, environmentally harmful materials are still used for plates, glasses, spoons and bowls.

Urban planner and city resident Piyush Ranjan Rout said Bhubaneswar has made notable progress, rising from 245th in Swachh Survekshan 2018 to ninth in 2024. However, despite improved systems like source segregation and door-to-door collection, ground realities differ, with midday garbage, illegal dumping and burning persisting, clogging drains and posing health risks.

Environmental advocate Satyabrata Samal stressed the

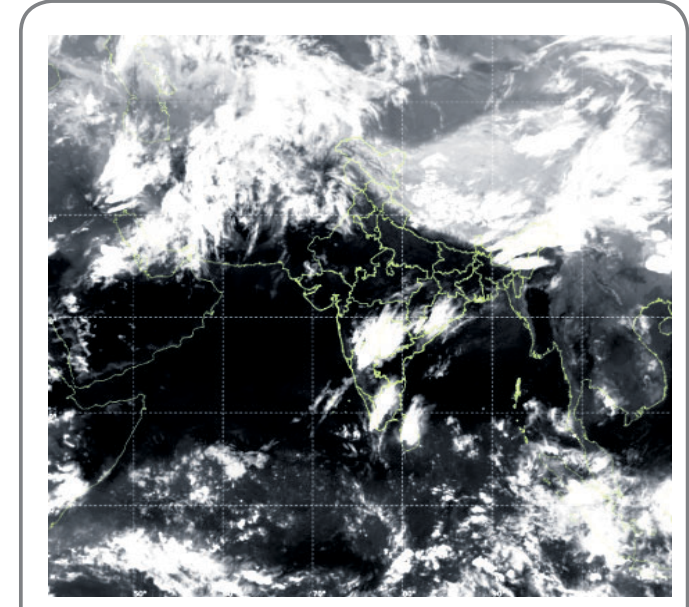
need for practical solutions—affordable alternatives to plastic, stricter enforcement, and better support for small vendors transitioning away from single-use packaging.

Swikruti Mishra, a Bhubaneswar resident, said the government's doorstep waste collection is a welcome step, ensuring waste is managed directly from homes. Residents only need to keep waste ready outside, though she added the service should be extended to all households across the City.

City-based environment expert Ranjan Panda said Bhubaneswar is doing relatively well in curbing plastic waste compared to other cities. He noted that while BMC is making sustained efforts, citizens must also remain cautious and ensure responsible disposal of plastic waste.

Additional Commissioner Kailash Das said steps are underway to make all marketplaces plastic-free, with alternative options being provided to traders and vendors. He added that initiatives are being launched to encourage startups and companies supplying eco-friendly alternatives to plastic bags.

MARKET WATCH					
CURRENCY		BOURSES		COMMODITIES	
INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION
DOLLAR	93.39 ▲ 0.24	SENSEX	79273.33 ▲ 753.03	GOLD	₹152,614 ▼ ₹1329
EURO	110.09 ▲ 0.37	NIFTY	24576.60 ▲ 211.75	SILVER	₹245,442 ▼ ₹7,103



WEATHER			
	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	37.9°	38.8°	Light to moderate rain or thunderstorm very likely to occur
Min Temp	26.4°	24.6°	
Humidity	79%	84%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	

**'UNAUTHORISED' WATER EXTRACTION BY PRIVATE POWER PLANT**

# Jharsuguda protesters allege police pressure to disperse

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jharsuguda, April 21:** Tension escalated at the ongoing protest in Jharsuguda district after villagers alleged that police are mounting pressure on them to withdraw from the demonstration against alleged unauthorised water extraction by SMC Power Generation Ltd.



Hundreds of residents, mostly women from Hirma, Badmal, Jamra and Marakuta panchayats, have been staging a sit-in outside the company's pump house since Monday night, braving extreme heat with temperatures hovering around 45°C. The protest continued into Tuesday.

The agitators claim that water is being drawn from the Ib and Bheden rivers during the non-monsoon period in violation of government norms, worsening an already prevalent drinking water crisis in the region. With river levels falling sharply, villagers say access to potable water has become increasingly difficult, affecting both households and livestock.

Protesters alleged that police personnel at the site have been pressuring them to vacate the area, citing administrative and law-and-order concerns. However, the demonstrators have refused to disperse, demanding that authorities halt the water extraction immediately and make the official permission received by the company to extract water, public, if any at all.

Police officials, on the other hand, have maintained that the company possesses the required approval to draw water. Villagers have challenged this claim, insisting that documentary proof be produced.

The Jharsuguda sub-collector said an inquiry by the irrigation department has been completed and appropriate action will be taken once the report is received.

The issue has drawn further attention as the state government had earlier imposed restrictions on drawing river water during the non-monsoon period. The chief minister had also warned of penalties and legal action against violations.

Despite repeated demands from locals, no formal meeting between the SMC Power Generation Ltd and affected villagers has been convened so far, prompting allegations of administrative inaction.

Residents have warned of intensifying their agitation if immediate steps are not taken to resolve the crisis and stop the alleged illegal extraction of river water.

## Bhadrak: BJP leader's son rescued with multiple stab injuries; two arrested

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhadrak, April 21:** A 17-year-old student, son of a local BJP leader, was rescued with multiple stab injuries from the Nalag canal under Rural police limits in Bhadrak Tuesday morning, police said.

The victim, Rajiv Lochan Pani, son of BJP leader Sumitra Pani of Motel Square, was found unconscious in the canal by locals, who alerted his family. He had left home around 7pm Monday but did not return, and his mobile phone was switched off, triggering a search.

At around 6am Tuesday, a passerby spotted him and informed his mother. He was rushed to the district headquarters hospital and later shifted to Cuttack due to his critical condition. Doctors said Rajiv sustained over 10 deep stab wounds on the neck, face, abdomen and back, causing heavy blood loss.

His mother alleged that he named a friend as the attacker and claimed the accused later contacted others to check if he was alive. The family also reported his mobile phone, gold chain and bracelet missing. Police have detained two persons, including a friend of the victim, and launched an investigation.

Locals alleged rising anti-social activities along the canal road and nearby casuarina groves, demanding intensified night patrolling.

# Sijimali protest reaches Delhi as MPs seek probe

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhawanipatna, April 21:** Protests in Sijimali hills have escalated to the national stage, with multiple MPs from Odisha alleging tribal rights violations and prompting a probe by the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes into mining-related actions by Vedanta Limited in the region.

Kalahandi MP Malvika Devi met Union Coal and Mines Minister G. Kishan Reddy Monday, submitting a memorandum on the unrest urging that no project proceeds without the free and informed consent of indigenous communities. She also called for a re-evaluation of environmental clearances and an inquiry into the validity of Gram Sabha resolutions, stressing that constitutional safeguards for Scheduled Tribes must take precedence over industrial interests.

Koraput MP Saptagiri Sankar Ulaka, following a fact-finding visit, alleged that eight Gram Sabhas held in December 2023 were "fabricated and manipulated" and did not reflect the will of the people. He also condemned an alleged



late-night police operation April 6, claiming electricity was cut around 3am before security forces launched a crackdown on villagers. Ulaka termed the use of force disproportionate and called for the withdrawal of what he described as false cases against tribal leaders.

Separately, Rajya Sabha MP Sasmit Patra approached the commission, which has registered a case to examine alleged violations of the Forest Rights Act and the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act. A senior team is expected to visit the area soon.

The Sijimali hills, located on the border of Kalahandi and Rayagada districts, have witnessed sustained protests by tribal communities opposing mining operations linked

to Vedanta Limited. Residents say the hills are central to their cultural identity and livelihoods, and have vowed not to cede ancestral land.

According to local accounts, more than 40 protesters have been seriously injured in recent police action. Despite arrests and heightened security, thousands of men and women continue overnight vigils in the hills, echoing the resistance seen during the Niyam-giri movement.

With leaders across party lines calling for transparent oversight of Gram Sabhas and interim protection for affected families, attention is now focused on the Ministry of Mines and the commission's forthcoming action, as tensions remain high in the region.

## QR code launched for donations to Baladevjew



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kendrapara, April 21:** A QR code has been launched to collect donations for the proposed Suna Besha (golden attire) of Lord Baladevjew at Kendrapara, an initiative estimated to require at least ₹200 crore.

Though the particular ritual is closely linked to the Jagannath culture of Puri, the Suna Besha has not been observed here due to the absence of gold ornaments.

The code was unveiled in the temple premises Monday by district Collector Raghuram R Iyer, additional district magistrate and Trust Board chairman Nabakrushna Jena, Punjab National Bank officials and members of the Suna Besha Management Committee. Describing the plan as a "noble initiative", Iyer said the district administration, with due approvals, will extend support in coordination with the bank. He urged devotees to contribute through the QR code to help realise the proposal.

# Drainage lag triggers monsoon worry in Kendrapara town

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kendrapara, April 21:** Restoration of the dilapidated drainage system in Kendrapara municipality has emerged as a persistent problem. While the civic body is prioritising drain cleaning, a long-term solution remains elusive as two proposed drainage water treatment plants by the state's urban development department are yet to be implemented and remain pending under red tape.

If the projects are not completed before the upcoming monsoon season, there are fears that more than half of the town could face severe waterlogging. Residents have urged authorities to expedite the execution of both projects without further delay.

In 2017, the state sewerage board, along with TTI Consulting Engineers, prepared a master plan for the city's drainage system, including the establishment of a water treatment plant in the Indupur area. Additionally, the urban development department prepared a detailed project report (DPR) for a second project worth ₹19.47 crore with support from the drainage division. However, both projects have faced significant delays in implementation.

Manoj Kumar Singh, a local resident, said the then municipi-



pal council had initiated efforts for the first drainage water treatment plant. As per the plan, instead of discharging drain and rainwater directly into the Gobari river and canals, the water would be diverted through a dedicated drainage channel to a treatment plant outside the town. The treated water would then be released into the river and canals, helping keep them free from pollution.

Meer Abu Obeda of Fakirabad said even light rainfall causes drains to overflow, with garbage spilling onto the streets and creating serious inconvenience. Despite the problem persisting for years, no concrete steps have been taken to resolve it. He added that timely action before the monsoon would benefit residents.

Umesh Chandra Padhi, a

social worker from Ward No. 21, said rainfall worsens the situation for residents. Waterlogging is common in Wards 21, 12 and 13. He alleged that many natural water channels and drains in the town have been encroached upon, obstructing the smooth flow of rainwater and disrupting daily life. He stressed the need to stop granting permission for construction on water channels and called for immediate eviction of encroachers.

Municipal chairperson Sarita Sahu said a recent review meeting was held to address drainage issues. She added that steps have been initiated to improve the drainage system and ensure a healthier environment for residents. Efforts are also underway to implement the proposed water treatment plant projects.

# Minor climbs 100-ft tree to meet lover, rescued

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Angul, April 21:** A minor boy sparked panic after climbing nearly 100 feet up a tree and threatening suicide unless he was allowed to meet his minor girlfriend in Angul town Tuesday.

Eyewitnesses said the boy repeatedly warned that he would hang himself with a cloth tied around his neck if he was not permitted to see the girl. The incident prompted a swift response from the fire brigade, police and the local municipality team, who rushed to the spot and began negotiations.

After nearly an hour and a half of counselling and persuasion — including an assurance that he would be allowed to meet the girl — the boy finally relented and climbed down safely. The incident occurred inside the Utkal Balashram premises in Amalapada area of Angul and has since drawn widespread attention.

According to sources, the boy and the girl, both minors from Rairakhol area in Sambalpur district, were in a relationship and had eloped a few days ago. They were later rescued by the Railway Police in Angul and produced before



the Child Welfare Committee. Subsequently, the boy was lodged at Utkal Balashram in Amalapada, while the girl was placed at a Sakhi counselling centre. The boy climbed to the top of a tall tree within the Balashram premises Tuesday morning and demanded that the girl be brought to meet him. He threatened to end his life if his demand was not met.

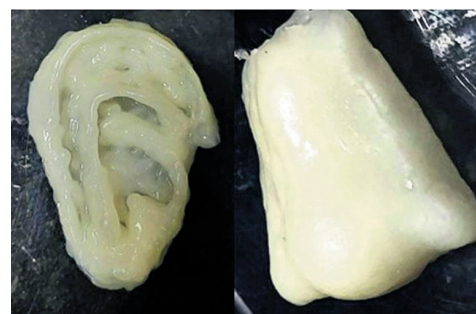
Fire services personnel, Angul Town Police and municipal officials engaged him in prolonged dialogue before convincing him to come down safely after promising a meeting with the girl.

While no injuries were reported, the episode has triggered debate in the locality and raised serious concerns over security arrangements at the Balashram.

## 13 minors rescued from Jan Shatabdi Express

**Bhadrak:** Acting on a tip-off, the Bhadrak Child Protection Unit, with assistance from the Railway Protection Force (RPF), rescued 13 minors from the Jan Shatabdi Express near here late Monday night. According to officials, the minors were being transported by train from Bihar toward Jajpur Road railway station. Acting on a tip-off from the State Child Protection Unit, the Bhadrak unit coordinated with railway police and launched a search operation at Bhadrak station. As the train had already departed, the team boarded it and searched coach by coach, eventually locating the children near Baudpur station. The minors were later boarded to Jajpur Road and brought back to Bhadrak on a passenger train, Child Protection Officer Abinash Mohanty said. The children have been kept at a shelter home, while the individual accompanying them has been detained by railway police for questioning. The man told authorities that he was taking the children to a madrasa in Jajpur for education. He added that the minors would be released after their families produce Aadhaar cards for verification.

# NIT Rourkela patents bio-ink for 3D-printed tissue repair



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rourkela, April 21:** National Institute of Technology Rourkela has developed and patented an advanced bio-ink for 3D bioprinting of tissue-like structures, marking a significant step in regenerative medicine.

The research, led by Deventra Verma, along with research scholar Shreya Chrungoo and Tanmay Bharadwaj, addresses a key limitation in existing bio-inks — the lack of a single material combin-

ing mechanical strength, biological compatibility and printability.

Their findings, published in the International Journal of Biological Macromolecules, describe a high shape-fidelity protein-polysaccharide bio-ink suitable for bone and cartilage repair. The team has also secured a patent (No. 583759) for the technology.

The bio-ink was developed by blending bovine serum albumin, sodium alginate and polyelectrolyte complexes of gelatin and chitosan. This

composition creates a bioactive system that supports cell growth while maintaining structural stability during and after printing.

Laboratory studies showed the material mimics the extracellular matrix of bone tissue, promoting cell adhesion and proliferation. Scaffolds containing 2% PEC-GC achieved more than 90% cell viability and demonstrated potential for bone tissue formation and collagen synthesis.

Verma said the innovation bridges the gap between print precision and biological performance, bringing clinically viable bioprinted constructs closer to reality. Chrungoo added that the bio-ink could enable patient-specific scaffolds with precise geometry and functionality.

The team plans to conduct animal studies followed by clinical validation to establish safety and efficacy.

## HM suspended for punishing students with stinging nettle

**Jajpur:** A headmaster of a government school in Jajpur district has been suspended after allegations of subjecting students to a painful and abusive form of punishment using stinging nettle, officials said Tuesday. Basudev Dehury, headmaster of Saruabilli Upper Primary School under Sukinda block, was suspended following a preliminary inquiry into the incident. According to education department officials, the alleged incident took place Friday when Dehury reportedly placed stinging nettle inside the trousers of at least ten male students for creating disturbance in class. The act caused severe irritation and pain, leaving the students in visible distress. The matter surfaced after the students informed their parents upon returning home. Angered by the incident, parents confronted the headmaster and staged a protest outside the school Saturday, demanding strict action. Sukinda Block Education Officer Narayan Das intervened and ordered an inquiry. Based on initial findings, Dehury was suspended pending further investigation. Officials said a detailed probe is underway and action will follow as per rules.

**OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL, BHAWANIPATNA**  
DIST.: KALAHANDI, PIN - 766001

**'e' Procurement NOTICE**

**Bid Identification No. BPM/02/2026-27**  
**Bid Identification No. BPM/1492, Dt. 17.04.2026**

No. 13001/254/2627: The Executive Officer on behalf of Bhawanipatna Municipality invites tenders in Single Cover System. Bid documents consisting of specification, the Schedule of Quantities and the set of terms and conditions of contract and other necessary documents can be seen the Govt. website i.e. <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>.

1. Number of Civil works : 14 (Fourteen) Numbers
2. Estimated Costs : 5.88 lakhs to 16.94 lakhs
3. Period of Completion : As per NIT
4. Date and time of availability of the bid documents in the portal : From 11.00 A.M. of 18.04.2026 to 05.00 P.M. of 28.04.2026
5. Last date/time for receipt of bids in the portal : 05.00 P.M. of 28.04.2026
6. Bids will be opened on : 5.30 P.M. of Dt.28.04.2026
7. Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid : Executive Officer, Bhawanipatna Municipality

**Sd./- Executive Officer**  
**Bhawanipatna Municipality**

OIPR-13001/13100/1/26-27/0004

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER**  
**TEL IRRIGATION DIVISION, SONEPUR**

E-mail: [eeteldivn2022@gmail.com](mailto:eeteldivn2022@gmail.com)

**E-Procurement Notice No. EE, TID, SNP - 01/2026-27**  
No. 32001/92/2627: The Executive Engineer, Tel Irrigation Division, Sonepur on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites online Percentage rate tenders in Double Cover System to be received in Online Mode only for the works as detailed below.

1. Name/Nature of the work : Flood Protection Embankment Works
2. No. of Works : 08 Nos.
3. Class of Contractor : As mentioned in Col. No. 4 of NIT
4. Bid Identification No. : EE, TID, SNP-01/2026-27
5. Approximate Estimated Cost : From Rs.58.60 lakhs to Rs.83.84 lakhs (Excluding GST)
6. Period of Completion : As per mentioned in Col. No. 7 of NIT
7. Date & time of availability of bid documents in the portal : From 24.04.2026 (10.00 A.M.) to 11.05.2026 (05.30 P.M.)
8. Last date/time for receipt of bids in the portal : In portal 11.05.2026 from 10.00 A.M. upto 05.30 P.M.
9. Date of Opening of Bid : On date 12.05.2026 (11.00 A.M. onwards in the Office of the undersigned)
10. Name of the Officer Inviting Bid : Executive Engineer, Tel Irrigation Division, Sonepur (Dist.: Subarnapur)

Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement portal <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>

**Sd./- Executive Engineer**  
**Tel Irrigation Division, Sonepur**

OIPR-32001/132362/1/26-27/0001

**RBL BANK**  
agn ka bank

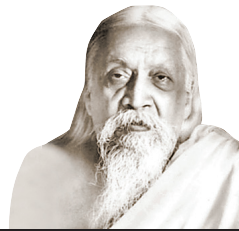
**COMMERCIAL PREMISES REQUIRED FOR LEASE / RENT**

RBL Bank is expanding its Branch presence nationwide. Bank is seeking premises for lease/rent on ground floor (800 to 1,100sq ft). Interested parties having clear ownership & marketable titles with ready to occupy status (all permissions in LL scope) are requested to visit our website and apply <https://www.rbl.bank.in/premise-details> on or before April 25, 2026, 5:00 pm. Owners having premises ready to occupy or will be ready within One (1) month can only apply. No brokerage shall be paid. RBL Bank reserves the right to cancel/reject offer(s) without assigning any reason or notice thereof.

**S. E. RAILWAY – TENDER**

DRM/ENGG, South Eastern Railway, Chakradharpur acting for & on behalf of the President of India invites E-Tenders against Open Tender. Manual Offers are not allowed against these tenders, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. **SI.No.-1. Tender Notice No.: CKP-CENTRAL-26-27-03, Date: 20.04.2026. Name of work:** Manufacturing, supply and stacking of 65000 CUM machine crushed Track Ballast conforming to RDSO Specification (IRS-GE-1) with latest correction slips issued up to date of inviting of tender at all yards/Bridge approaches/nominated places as per direction of Engineer in Charge from Rourkela to Jharsuguda in Chakradharpur Division. **Tender Value:** ₹ 11,28,02,300. **EMD:** ₹ 22,56,100. **Date of Opening:** 12.05.2026. **SI.No.-2. Tender Notice No.: CKP-WEST-26-27-01, Date: 20.04.2026. Name of work:** Through Sleeper Renewal (P) of 67.034 Tkm between station Rourkela-Jharsuguda Jn. (UP) by Track Relaying Train (TRT). Deep screening by BCM and T-28 and other miscellaneous works under the jurisdiction of Sr. DEN (West)/Chakradharpur in Chakradharpur Division. **Tender Value:** ₹ 8,30,39,763.15. **EMD:** ₹ 16,60,800. **Date of Opening:** 11.05.2026. **Cost of Tender form:** ₹ 0 (for SI.No. 1 & 2). **The tender can be viewed at website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>.** The tender/bidders must have class-III Digital Signature Certificate & must be registered under IREPS Portal. Only registered tenderer/bidder can participate on e-tendering. All relevant paper must be uploaded at the time of participating in e-tendering. **Note:** e-Tender Forms shall be issued free of cost to all tenderers. (Authority— Railway Board's letter no. 2020/CE-I/CT/3E/GCC/Policy dtd. 16.07.2020). (PR-69)

**The fly that touches honey cannot use its wings; so too the soul that clings to spiritual sweetness ruins its freedom and hinders contemplation.**  
**SRI AUROBINDO**



## War-torn Economy

The disruption in the supply of cooking gas (LPG) and petrol is one aspect of the economic crisis caused by the one-sided war launched by the US-Israel combine against Iran. The bigger picture of the global economic dislocation has been drawn by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) which says the world will be plagued by an oil shortfall this year no matter how soon the war is resolved. It has cautioned governments against overspending to cushion consumers from high energy prices as public finances were already strained before the war started. Even if an immediate resolution of the conflict does take place, it still would not help matters and governments will be forced to grapple with high energy prices and shortages. IMF chief economist Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas painted a grim picture by asserting that if everything stops now and the Strait of Hormuz opens up, the oil shortfall will still continue for the rest of the year.

According to one estimate, global oil supply plummeted by 10.1 million barrels a day in March, regarded as the largest disruption in history. These are simply not figures, but they highlight the dramatic change in the outlook for global energy markets and the wider impact on nations' economy caused by the war. Before the conflict started, the global economy was, in fact, performing better than expected with growth on track to be revised upward this year, the IMF said in its latest report. The optimism stemmed, explained Gourinchas, from the fact that the uncertainty over US tariffs had been reduced and there was the artificial intelligence investment boom.

However, with the outbreak of the war in the Middle East, the global outlook suddenly darkened and the energy crisis has deepened on an unprecedented scale, warned the World Economic Outlook report. The IMF now expects global growth of 3.1 per cent in 2026, a 0.2 percentage point downgrade from its January forecast. Even then the projection is based on the assumption that the war will be over very soon. Global inflation is also rising to 4.4 per cent this year. If the war continues oil and natural gas prices will spike causing global economic growth to shrink further. The scenario projected by the IMF is alarming, indeed, as it fears there could be a close call for a global recession which is defined as economic growth below 2 per cent. The phenomenon was experienced only four times since 1980.

The IMF prediction has been ratified by economists and organisations, including the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the United Nations, cautioning against an alarming economic toll in case the war in Iran turns out to be lengthy. This is the reason why US President Donald Trump keeps harping that the war would be over very soon despite his war-mongering rhetoric which he has to resort to in order to prevent the Republicans from a disaster in the November mid-term poll.

The warnings are not mere academic exercise but they portray the stark reality of the situation caused by the war. The closure of the Strait of Hormuz has severely disrupted one-fifth of the world's crude oil supply and a considerable amount of commodities such as natural gas, helium and fertilizer. The short supply of fertilizers is going to hit Indian agriculture production in the kharif season as it heavily depends on import. The situation is so bleak that Australian finance minister Jim Chalmers has warned that the global economy is faced with a really dangerous time because of the war in the Middle East even though his country is better placed and better prepared to tackle the situation than many others. But, he sounded the alarm bell nonetheless saying that his country would not be spared the fallout from the economic shock.

The sooner Trump and all those who embraced Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu realize how he misled them by starting the war with Iran, the better it is for the world economy. Trump is already paying a heavy political cost in the form of a split in his MAGA support base for reneging on his electoral pledge given to his main constituency that he would abandon war and work only for the economic wellbeing for his country encapsulated in the slogan of "America First." The economic dislocation he has caused by the unilateral declaration of this war should prompt him to tone down his war rhetoric and arrogance of America's military might. That same arrogance, observed in those few other leaders who also willingly joined hands with Netanyahu, has brought immense grief to their countries. It may increase further.

### WISDOM CORNER

**There are basically two types of people. People who accomplish things, and people who claim to have accomplished things. The first group is less crowded.**

MARK TWAIN

**The only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve.**

ALBERT SCHWEITZER

**Most people do not really want freedom, because freedom involves responsibility, and most people are frightened of responsibility.**

SIGMUND FREUD

### THIS DAY IN HISTORY

■ **1370:** Construction began on the Bastille, the medieval fortress turned state prison that, centuries later, came to symbolize French despotism. It was attacked in 1789 during the early days of the French Revolution and later torn down.

■ **1500:** Portuguese explorer Pedro Álvares Cabral, while on a voyage tracing Vasco da Gama's 1497-99 water route to India, sighted the mainland of South America near the present-day city of Pôrto Seguro, Brazil.

■ **1724:** Immanuel Kant, whose work in epistemology (the theory of knowledge), ethics, and aesthetics greatly influenced all subsequent philosophy, was born in Königsberg, Prussia (now Kaliningrad, Russia).

■ **1870:** Vladimir Lenin—who inspired and led the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 and was the architect, builder, and first ruler of the Soviet state—was born in Simbirsk, Russia.

■ **1904:** Theoretical physicist and science administrator J. Robert Oppenheimer, who served as director of the Los Alamos laboratory in New Mexico during development of the atomic bomb, was born in New York.

■ **1915:** During World War I, German forces introduced the systematized use of chemical warfare when they released chlorine gas along a 4-mile (6-km) front at the Second Battle of Ypres.

■ **1970:** Earth Day was first celebrated in the United States. An estimated 20 million people participated, making it the largest single-day protest in American history, and it quickly became an international event.

### FOCUS INNOVATION

# GEOPOLITICS OF INFRASTRUCTURE

For most of the postwar era, global power was defined by alliances, aircraft carriers, and reserve currencies. But we are now entering an era defined by critical infrastructure and those who finance, build, and operate it. Ports, power grids, rail corridors, data centres, and critical-mineral supply chains are no longer just "projects." They are the operating system of sovereignty. Infrastructure—networks that move energy, goods, and data—is the industry of industries. Whoever shapes it through contracts, standards, currency denomination, and long-term maintenance (much of which is increasingly guided by data and AI-driven systems) will achieve enduring global influence.

Debates about "de-dollarization" often focus on reserve currencies. In the IMF's Currency Composition of Official Foreign Exchange Reserves data, the US dollar accounted for roughly 57% of global reserves in 2025, with the euro a distant second. But official reserves are a lagging indicator. The more relevant shift concerns infrastructure.

China recognised this early. Between 2000 and 2023, it extended approximately \$2.2 trillion in official loans and grants as part of its Belt and Road Initiative, much of which was invested in transportation and energy infrastructure. This model was never just about capital. By bundling finance, contractors, equipment, and digital systems, China was exporting state capacity and embedding long-term dependence. Projects like the Chancay mega-port in Peru—which is majority-owned by a Chinese operator and backed by billions in investment—illustrate how infrastructure can reconfigure trade routes and other dependencies. Likewise, the Addis Ababa-Djibouti Railway, financed largely by Chinese lending, dramatically reduced freight times between Ethiopia and the Red Sea.

The geopolitical implications of infrastructure investment are increasingly top of mind for policymakers. The prospect of Chinese involvement in airport construction in Greenland raised security concerns in both



**Infrastructure, increasingly guided by algorithmic systems, risks making certain potential futures appear inevitable, and others unthinkable**

Denmark and the US. The new contest is not simply between currencies but between competing infrastructure blocs.

For decades, US influence rested on military power, the dollar, and multilateral institutions. But while this architecture still matters, it is rapidly being supplemented—and in some cases challenged—by infrastructure strategies. Political tensions reflect this shift. In 2024, US President-elect Donald Trump threatened severe tariffs against countries pursuing alternatives to dollar-based invoicing and payments. At the same time, Western economies have scaled up their own infrastructure initiatives. The G7's Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment, for example, aims to mobilize \$600 billion by 2027; the European Union's Global Gateway pledges up to 300 billion (\$353 billion); and the Blue Dot Network (launched by Australia, Japan, and the US) seeks to certify high-quality infrastructure standards.

Yet many countries perceive these efforts as slow and overly conditional. In a world facing climate shocks, demographic pressures, and urgent development needs, the ability to deliver infrastructure quickly often outweighs governance concerns. Various middle powers are redefining their own strategies accordingly. India, for example, is pursuing "corridor diplomacy" by supporting projects like the Chabahar Port and the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor. Rather than aligning

exclusively with one bloc, it is leveraging infrastructure to hedge, diversify, and expand its own strategic autonomy.

There is also another critical shift underway. Far from being confined to steel and concrete, infrastructure geopolitics increasingly extends into compute, data, and AI. Corporate filings reveal the scale of this transition. Technology firms such as Microsoft, Alphabet, Meta, and Amazon are investing tens of billions of dollars annually in AI infrastructure, including data centers and specialized hardware. Their capital expenditures and associated depreciation now resemble those of traditional infrastructure sectors.

Semiconductor manufacturing has become a strategic chokepoint in this system. Facilities costing tens of billions of dollars anchor global supply chains and define access to advanced compute capabilities. But AI is not just another layer of infrastructure. It is meta-infrastructure that will shape how all other systems are planned, operated, and optimized. If infrastructure defines geopolitical power, AI is increasingly defining infrastructure. It can improve grid efficiency, extend the life of transport networks, and enable more precise climate-adaptation strategies.

But AI also introduces new forms of vulnerability. Remote control over optimization systems can function as a "kill switch" for critical infrastructure, and opaque or biased algorithms can systematically determine which regions or communities receive

investment. In this context, infrastructure is no longer only about physical assets, but also about who controls the intelligence layer that governs them.

Nowhere are the stakes more visible than in Gaza. According to UN and World Bank assessments, by late 2025, roughly 90% of homes and infrastructure had been damaged or destroyed, and nearly the entire population of 2.1 million people had been displaced. Reconstruction will require tens of billions of dollars, but without a durable political settlement, the enclave's new infrastructure could become an instrument of control rather than recovery. Infrastructure geopolitics is not inherently emancipatory. Transit corridors, energy systems, and housing can be designed to enable mobility and growth; but they can also be used to constrain people. The world is moving toward overlapping infrastructure ecosystems: a US-centered system built on open capital markets and legal enforcement; a China-centered system combining state finance, contractors, and embedded standards; and a diverse set of regional and middle-power strategies.

The decisive question is not which system is largest, but which will ultimately be accepted as the default.

George Orwell famously warned about the control of language. Today, we are witnessing an even more subtle form of power. Infrastructure, increasingly guided by algorithmic systems, risks making certain potential futures appear inevitable, and others unthinkable.

The greatest danger is not that one power dominates, but that societies gradually lose the ability to choose among competing paths. The new world order is being built in concrete and encoded in silicon. The last sovereign act may not be to build or to resist, but to recognise that these choices remain open, before the systems we construct begin to optimise us in return.

**Bertrand Badré is Chair of the Project Syndicate Advisory Board. Saurabh Mishra is Founder and CEO of Taiy AI.**

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Bertrand Badré & Saurabh Mishra

**THE GEOPOLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT ARE INCREASINGLY TOP OF MIND FOR POLICYMAKERS**

### IN JEST THIS

## Chinese patent may solve a road trip problem



Melvin Durai

**THE CHINESE CARMAKER SERES HAS PATENTED AN 'IN-VEHICLE TOILET' THAT SLIDES UNDER A PASSENGER'S SEAT**

A Hyderabad man who likes to take his family on long drives in his Tata Safari recently complained on Reddit about the "lack of proper washrooms/toilets" on all his road trips, especially for women.

He noted that he regularly stops at a few select restaurants on the highway between Hyderabad and Vijayawada largely because their toilets are "super clean" and "most hygienic." But he wanted to know if there was a resource that mapped all the clean toilets around India. (Ideally, this would be a real-time online map, showing whether the toilet was currently vacant or occupied, and how fast he needed to drive to get there before another interested party.)

Among the Reddit users who responded, one person suggested downloading the government's "Swachh Bharat Toilet Locator" app and filtering the results by "clean rating." Of course, ratings are subject to manipulation. Business owners have learned that negative rat-

ings from dissatisfied customers can be offset by positive ratings from "highly satisfied" friends and relatives. So what's the best way to deal with this problem? Take a toilet with you! The Hyderabad man may be happy to learn that the Chinese carmaker Seres has patented an "in-vehicle toilet" that slides under a passenger's seat.

According to a BBC report, Seres' recent patent filing states that the invention would "satisfy users' toilet needs on long journeys, while camping or while staying in the car."

In case you're wondering, it's not just a portable toilet that, once used, requires passengers to roll down their windows and hold their noses. Seres' engineers have designed the toilet with a fan and exhaust pipe, allowing any unpleasant smells to be pushed out of the car (hopefully not into a neighbouring car).

While waste matter will need to be emptied manually from a tank under the toilet, it won't be long before an engineer de-

signs a system that processes this waste matter into biofuel that propels the car forward.

Father: "We're running low on fuel. Does anyone need to use the toilet?"

Mother: "I think it's your turn."

Father: "But I'm driving."

Mother: "Don't you know how to multi-task?"

Emptying the waste tank won't be a pleasant task, but you'll be glad to know that the Seres toilet is equipped with a rotating heating element that causes urine to evaporate and waste matter to dry.

Seres' engineers have obviously put a lot of thought into their invention, but I wonder if they've given much thought to an important aspect of using a toilet: privacy. It would be somewhat embarrassing to use a toilet with other passengers around, not to mention all the other travellers on the highway getting a peek. Perhaps the car will come with privacy curtains that automatically drop around you.

More likely, the toilet would only be used when the car is parked in a secluded spot, with the other passengers serving as lookouts.

Father: "Be quick! Someone is coming!"

Mother: "Please shoe them away."

Father: "Shoo! Shoo! ... It's not working. They're still coming."

Mother: "I said SHOE them away. Throw your shoe at them!"

While Seres has not yet announced any specific plans to install toilets in any of its cars, the company and its subsidiary brand Aito make electric SUVs, which are large enough to easily accommodate a toilet. Small cars will probably not have enough space. So what would you do if you're driving a small car and need to use a toilet badly? Don't panic. Just approach the driver of an SUV.

You: "Excuse me, may I use your car please? I wouldn't trouble you if it wasn't urgent."

SUV driver (smiling): "Of course. No problem at all. I'm running low on fuel anyway."

## 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

### India-Korea ties

Sir, The visit of South Korean President Lee Jae Myung to India after eight years signals a decisive push to elevate ties between the two countries. The ambitious target of doubling bilateral trade to \$50 billion by 2030 opens vast opportunities for traders and businesses on both sides. From semiconductors and shipbuilding to green energy and advanced technology, cooperation is expanding across critical sectors. New initiatives like the India-Korea Financial Forum, Industrial Cooperation Committee, and an Economic Security Dialogue aim to strengthen resilient supply chains. India's plan to develop a dedicated industrial township for Korean MSMEs could generate employment and attract investment. The "India-Korea Digital Bridge" further boosts collaboration in AI, IT, and sustainability. With shared democratic values and a common Indo-Pacific vision, this partnership promises growth, jobs, and a brighter future for young aspirants.

RS Narula, PATIALA

### Deficient monsoon

Sir, The India Meteorological Department's recent acknowledgment of the looming El Niño risk marks a refreshing departure from its historical tendency to downplay early-season climate disruptions. By forecasting rainfall at 92 per cent of the Long-Period Average and assigning a significant 66 per cent probability to a deficient monsoon, the IMD has aligned itself with global weather agencies that see a strong likelihood of El Niño emerging as early as June 2026. While the arrival of this phenomenon occurring every few years is a known variable in Indian agriculture, its impact is rarely a foregone conclusion. The critical factor remains the complex interplay between El Niño and the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD). While a positive IOD can theoretically neutralise the drying effects of El Niño, the timing is everything; if the IOD only turns positive toward the end of the season, it may offer little relief during the crucial sowing months of July and August. Historically, while El Niño years have often throttled agricultural growth, the Indian economy has developed certain shock absorbers that mitigate the worst-case scenarios. However, the 2026 outlook is complicated by a volatile geopolitical landscape. With the conflict in Iran already straining global fertilizer supplies, the risk of "imported inflation" is high.

Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH

**EXTREMELY RARE MOMENT**

## Tiger, cheetah, leopard spotted together in Ranthambore

The three apex predators were spotted within an estimated range of one-two kilometres at the same time, thrilling tourists and drawing attention from conservationists

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jaipur, April 21:** A tiger, a leopard and a cheetah, three of the world's most-elusive apex predators, were sighted simultaneously in a tourist zone of the Ranthambore Tiger Reserve, a moment experts describe as "extremely rare" and "scientifically intriguing".

The unusual convergence was witnessed Sunday in Zone 9 of the reserve, located along the banks of the Chakal river, about 45 minutes from the main gate.

The three apex predators were spotted within an estimated range of one-two kilometres

at the same time, thrilling tourists and drawing attention from conservationists, said Ranthambore's Deputy Conservator of Forest and Deputy Field Director Manas Singh.

"Forest chose to surprise. In Zone 9, a tiger, a leopard, and a cheetah, three of the wild's most elusive beings, sighted in the same landscape, in a single window of time," the forest department said on Instagram.

"Moments like these are rare, unscripted, and impossible to plan. They remind us what our forests are truly capable of," it added. Singh said the cheetah, named KP-2, is a known wanderer from Madhya



Pradesh's Kuno National Park.

The cheetah entered Rajasthan last week. After the sighting Sunday, it moved towards Zone 8 of the park, he added.

A specialised joint team from the Ranthambore and Kuno national parks has established a camp at the site. Officials are utilising advanced track-

ing equipment to monitor the cheetah's movements around the clock.

Wildlife expert Rajkumar Chauhan said the phenomenon is intriguing because each of the three species occupies a different ecological niche despite being apex predators.

"Such proximity among three

large carnivores with distinct territorial and hunting strategies is extremely rare," he said.

Tigers are dominant, solitary carnivores that control large territories and often suppress the presence of other predators in core areas. Leopards, though adaptable, usually avoid direct encounters with tigers. They tend to shift to denser or more rugged terrain and alter their activity patterns, often becoming more nocturnal.

Cheetahs, in contrast, are diurnal hunters that prefer open grasslands and rely on speed rather than strength, making forested habitats and tiger-dominated landscapes less typical for their movement.

Chauhan said the likelihood of an overlap between these animals at the same time and

space is inherently low because they minimise competition through what is known as "niche partitioning", a process in which competing species use different habitats, resources and active times to reduce competition and coexist, enhancing biodiversity.

He added that such a sighting suggests a temporary convergence driven by ecological factors, such as prey movement, dispersal behaviour and landscape connectivity, rather than sustained coexistence in the same microhabitat.

The Ranthambore Tiger Reserve, spread across about 1,800 square kilometres, currently has around 70 tigers. The vast reserve covers Sawaimadhopur, Dholpur and Karauli districts in Rajasthan, including buffer areas.

**8-YEAR-OLD'S DEATH**

## Rajasthan rights panel orders safety review in schools

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jaipur, April 21:** The Rajasthan State Human Rights Commission Tuesday took suo motu cognisance of the death of an eight-year-old boy at a school in Udaipur, and ordered a state-wide safety review of sports in infrastructure in schools.

The incident occurred April 19 at a private school in the Goverdhan Villas area. Marharth Raj Singh, a class 3 student, was hanging from the pole in the school playground when it suddenly collapsed and struck his head, causing fatal injuries.

SHRC Chairperson Justice G R Moolchandani termed the incident "deeply painful" and issued detailed directions to prevent such accidents in the future.

Observing that sports are an essential part of a healthy life and school development, the commission, in its order, said that sports infrastructure is created to promote physical well-being and negligence in maintenance can turn it into a safety hazard.

The order said that student safety must be ensured in all schools and directed the Sports and Youth Affairs department of the Rajasthan government to issue a circular to all educational institutions across the state, asking them to prevent such accidents.

"To ensure the safety of students, they must inspect all sports equipment, nets, poles, pillars, etc., installed in school premises, thereby ensuring that innocent students do not lose their lives while engaged in play," the chairperson said in the order.

The chairperson also directed district collectors across the state to ensure compliance at the district level, saying that they are responsible for monitoring safety standards in schools under their jurisdiction. The commission observed that children, who represent the future of society, must be protected from avoidable risks during school activities.

The commission directed Udaipur's divisional commissioner, district collector, superintendent of police, and education department officials to conduct a comprehensive inquiry into the incident and submit a factual report at the earliest.

## Rajasthan emerges as third-largest state in rooftop solar installation



Rajasthan has so far installed 2,45,317 rooftop solar units across domestic, non-domestic and industrial categories, taking the total capacity to about 2,090 MW

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jaipur, April 21:** Rajasthan has emerged as the third-largest state in the country in rooftop solar installations, witnessing a rapid adoption with nearly 700 new consumers switching to renewable energy consumption on a daily basis.

According to the state energy department, Rajasthan has so far installed 2,45,317 rooftop solar units across domestic, non-domestic and industrial categories, taking the total capacity to about 2,090 MW.

The growing shift to solar energy has resulted in 1,43,965 consumers bringing their electricity bills down to zero, an official said, adding that Gujarat leads the country in rooftop solar capacity with 6,882 MW, followed by Maharashtra at 5,442 MW, while Rajasthan ranks third.

Under the PM Surya Ghar scheme launched in 2024, 1,77,468 rooftop solar plants with a combined capacity of 686 MW have been installed in the state in the past two years.

"The response has been en-

couraging. Around 675 to 700 consumers are adopting solar energy daily," the official said.

In March alone, 20,343 rooftop solar units were installed, making it the second-highest monthly figure recorded in the state.

With 910 units, March 23 recorded the maximum number of installations in a single day.

"The pace of installations has been rising steadily, and the number of consumers opting for rooftop solar has been increasing two to two-and-a-half times every six months since the launch of the scheme in February 2024," he said.

While only 7,694 consumers installed rooftop solar systems in the first six months, the numbers rose sharply in subsequent phases, with 58,153 installations recorded in the first three months of this year alone.

The state government expects the number of installations to cross one lakh in the first half of the current year.

Financial incentives have also played a key role. Subsidy amounts of up to Rs 78,000 are being transferred to beneficiaries within one to one-and-a-half months of installation under the central scheme.

So far, Rs 1,185 crore has been transferred to the bank accounts of 1,52,350 consumers, covering about 85 per cent of beneficiaries under the scheme.

In addition, over 13,000 consumers have received an extra subsidy of Rs 17,000 under the state's 150-unit free electricity scheme.

## Nomad migration begins

Hundreds of families have been traversing through the plains of Kathua, Samba and Jammu districts towards the high-altitude meadows of the Chenab Valley, a journey that would take at least a month to reach the summer pastures

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhaderwah (J&K), April 21:** Amid unseasonal snowfall, hundreds of Gujjar and Bakerwal tribes have begun their centuries-old biannual migration to the highland pastures of Jammu and Kashmir's Chenab Valley, braving harsh conditions.

The nomads and their livestock embarked on their traditional routes last week, signalling the start of the seasonal transhumance. The movement comes notwithstanding fresh, or rather unusual, snowfall in several higher-altitude areas, which has made the passage particularly risky.

Hundreds of families have been traversing through the plains of Kathua, Samba and Jammu districts towards the high-altitude meadows of the Chenab Valley, a journey that would take at least a month to reach the summer pastures.



According to official figures, in the past 10 days, 250 nomadic families have crossed the 10,500-foot-high snow-bound Chattergalla check post, connecting Bhaderwah in Doda district with Basohli in Kathua district.

Accompanied by herds of sheep, goats, and horses, the families have been navigating steep mountain trails, swollen streams, and slippery tracks, exposing themselves to significant challenges.

Officials said the migration is crucial for the sustenance of these communities, as they depend on highland grazing grounds during the summer months. Each year, as winter recedes and spring sets in across the Jammu region, the Gujjar and Bakerwal tribes embark on their centuries-old migration, revitalising the highland pastures of Doda, Kishtwar and Ramban districts in the Chenab Valley.

"Though we face numerous life-threatening challenges during migration, we have been in this profession since time immemorial. We have no option but to continue this extremely difficult way of life, which has been passed down by our forefathers," Abdul Majeed (85), a resident of Basholi in Kathua who is leading his group to Paddar in Kishtwar, told PTI.

Majeed said that every year, the community loses livestock, including goats and horses, during the arduous journey due to harsh weather conditions, adding that even children and the elderly have, at times, lost their lives. He also said that there have been little to no government assistance.

"Due to snowstorms along the 15-km route between Sarthal and Guldanda, several of our goats died. Food was also scarce for three consecutive days (last week). We now hope to reach our destination in

Machail safely," Nishata Begum (63) said.

She said what was once a time of joy during migration has now turned into a period marked by the loss of hard-earned livestock, compounded by instances of hostility and discrimination from locals.

Begum said despite her two sons being graduates and belonging to the Scheduled Tribe category, they were unable to secure government jobs and were ultimately compelled to continue the centuries-old occupation of their forefathers.

Saddam Chohan (14) said the journey to the high-altitude meadows brought him face-to-face with harsh realities at Chattergalla, where several goats perished in a snowstorm before his eyes, leaving him helpless. He said the family has little choice but to continue the profession practised by his father and grandfather.

Bhaderwah Divisional Forest Officer Devinder Kumar has formed a team of officials, led by Range Officer Sameer Rishu, to ensure that the nomads do not face any hostility from anyone while passing through forest areas.

"Several hundred families have entered the Bhaderwah forest range over the past fortnight, and our team is there to receive them round the clock, as many continue their journey even during night hours," Rishu said.



People dressed in traditional attire perform during the Spring Art Festival, at Botanical Garden on the banks of Dal Lake in Srinagar, Tuesday

## Kabir Chhillar secures AIR 1 in JEE Main 2026

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kota, April 21:** Studying 15 hours a day for a competitive exam is more of a stereotype attached to toppers, but one actually needs to prioritise quality learning over quantity, says Kabir Chhillar, who scored a perfect 300, securing AIR 1 in JEE-Main 2026.

Kabir Chhillar, a native of Gurugram and a son of an IITian father, says his goal is crystal clear. After completing B.Tech in Computer Science from IIT Bombay, he wishes to pursue higher education at the US's Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Speaking about his approach to his studies, he said, "During self-study, I prioritise quality of learning over quantity."

The results of JEE-Mains 2026 Session-2 were declared by the NTA Monday late evening. According to Chhillar, after every test, he conducted a self-analysis and focused intensely on the specific areas where he identified shortcomings.

He said that, alongside taking regular mock tests, a deep analysis of every paper led to continuous improvement in both his accuracy and time management.

"Having clear conceptual clarity is paramount. Rather than rote learning, my greatest strength has been my ability to truly understand every topic and apply that knowledge," Chhillar said.

Speaking further, Chhillar said, he broke down his studies into small, manageable



targets, created concise notes, and made regular revision a habit.

To keep himself mentally refreshed, Chhillar spared time to spend with his friends.

Joint Entrance Examination (Main) conducted by the National Testing Agency is a test for admission to various technical undergraduate programs in engineering, architecture, and planning across colleges in India.

Kabir Chhillar is among four students of Kota's Allen Career Institute who succeeded in securing ranks 5, 6 and 8 in the top 10. A total of 39 students of the institute were in the top 100, claimed Allen Career Institute CEO Nitin Kukreja. Kota's local boy, Arnab Gautam, also a classroom student at the coaching institute, has secured All India Rank 5, while Shubham Kumar, a resident of Gaya, Bihar, of the same institute obtained AIR 6 by scoring 295 out of 300 marks. Rishi Premnath, also a classroom student at the Hyderabad centre of the coaching institute, secured an AIR 8.

## Mock air raid-blackout drill in Kishtwar April 23

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jammu, April 21:** Authorities will conduct an air raid blackout mock drill in Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar district April 23 to assess preparedness and response mechanisms for emergency scenarios, officials said.

The decision was taken at a meeting chaired by Deputy Commissioner Pankaj Kumar Sharma to review arrangements for the civil defence exercise.

"It was decided that the mock exercise will be conducted April 23," officials informed, adding that the drill aims to strengthen operational readiness and coordination among various agencies during situations such as air raids and blackout conditions.

Detailed deliberations were held to ensure effective coordination among all stakeholder departments, they said.

The deputy commissioner directed the officials to prepare a comprehensive action plan in consultation with all concerned departments. The plan will include communication protocols, inter-departmental coordination, emergency response mechanisms and public awareness strategies.

"All heads of departments were asked to ensure close coordination among civil administration, police, paramilitary forces, health services, fire and emergency services, transport authorities and telecommunication agencies", they added.

Officials noted that the drill



will evaluate the district's capability to handle emergencies, with emphasis on the timely deployment of resources and adherence to Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

To prevent panic among the public, prior information about

the drill will be disseminated through print and electronic media and local announcements, authorities stated.

Preparations include pre-positioning of response teams, readiness of ambulances, hospitals and fire services, and round-

the-clock activation of control rooms during the exercise, they said, adding that, "Departments have also been asked to identify shelters, safe zones and vulnerable areas, and ensure readiness of communication systems and emergency equipment."

The exercise will also help identify gaps and formulate recommendations to further strengthen emergency preparedness, officials mentioned.

The deputy commissioner reiterated that adequate precautions must be taken to avoid public panic. High-risk activities should be avoided, medical teams must remain on standby, and all activities should be conducted in a controlled and supervised manner, with the utmost priority given to public safety.



I consider Narendra Modi the biggest brand ambassador of Mamata Banerjee's government. In the past 15 years, I have never seen him eat 'jhalhuri' in Gujarat or Madhya Pradesh. But he did that in Jhargram. This is the success for the people of Maa-Mati-Manush

ABHISHEK BANERJEE | TRINAMOL CONGRESS LEADER

INDIA RAMPS UP PNG ADOPTION

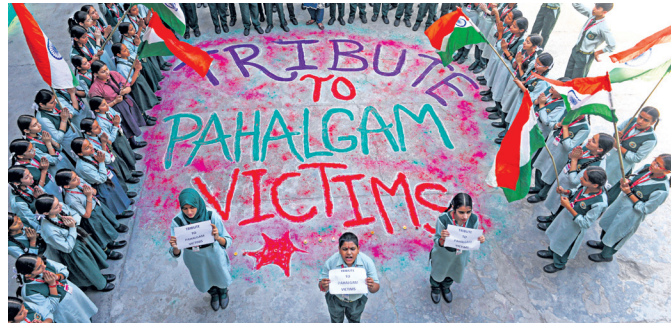
India has accelerated its shift to piped natural gas, with more than 5.01 lakh new PNG connections gasified since March and over 5.68 lakh consumers registering for fresh connections, even as authorities manage LPG supplies amid geopolitical disruptions



Pahalgam attack anniv: Families grieve, Army warns terrorists

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 21: The Indian Army Tuesday issued a stern warning to the perpetrators of terrorism on the eve of the first anniversary of the Pahalgam attack, asserting the response is decisive when "boundaries of humanity are crossed" as families of the victims said they are still coming to grips with the loss.



Students make a rangoli paying tribute to victims of the Pahalgam terror attack ahead of its first anniversary in Jammu

the family is yet to recover from his untimely death.

Ramachandran, 65, on holiday in Kashmir with his wife, daughter, and grandchildren, was gunned down by terrorists in the attack April 22 that sent shockwaves across the country, prompting India to launch Operation Sindoor, a military response targeting terror launchpads in Pakistan.

Arathi R Menon, before whose eyes her father was killed, said there was nothing more for her to say about the tragedy.

The post, heavily symbolic, also carried a digital poster bearing a silhouetted image of the map of India with the caption "SOME BOUNDARIES SHOULD NEVER BE CROSSED."

The 'O' in the word 'CROSSED' was depicted by a bowl carrying a dash of 'sindoor' (vermillion), and a tagline at the bottom printed in crimson hue, read, "INDIA DOES NOT FORGET" with a red line drawn at the bottom.

After launching the decisive military operation, the Indian Army in a post on X May 7 last year had said, "#PahalgamTerrorAttack Justice is Served. Jai Hind!" along with a digital poster that carried the name 'OPERATION SINDOOR'. One of the Os in 'SINDOOR' was portrayed as a bowl carrying a dash of 'sindoor'.

For the family of Lt Vinay Narwal, the Indian Navy officer who was among those killed, too, life hasn't been the same. Lt Vinay, 26, and his wife Himanshi were on a honeymoon in Pahalgam when terrorists shot him at point-blank range. Speaking to reporters at his

Karnal residence, Rajesh Narwal, a government employee, said for the past one year, the family has been grappling with the loss.

Forty-one-year-old IT professional Bharath Bushan from Bangalore also fell victim to bullets while his wife and their then three-year-old son survived the attack.

Meanwhile, the Jammu and Kashmir administration has deployed additional police and paramilitary personnel in and around Pahalgam, with intensified checking at multiple points and heightened surveillance to ensure a peaceful commemoration Wednesday.

Senior officials said all necessary arrangements have been put in place for the event, which is expected to be attended by several politicians, civil society members, families of the victims, and local representatives.

Writer Madhu Kishwar booked for 'misleading' post on social media

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, April 21: Academician Madhu Kishwar has been booked on charges of criminal defamation, promoting enmity and other offences by Chandigarh police following a complaint by a resident alleging circulation of forged and misleading content on social media.

A Chandigarh police team Tuesday served notice to Kishwar in Delhi, asking her to join the investigation in the case.

Sarita Roy, the Station House Officer of Sector-19 police station in Chandigarh, where the FIR was filed, told reporters in the national capital that the notice was issued under Section 35(3) of the BNSS and that Kishwar has been asked to appear and present her side.

Kishwar and some other social media users have been booked under various sections of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, including 196 (criminalises acts that promote enmity, hatred, or ill-will between groups based on religion, race, language), 336 (1) (forgery) and 356 (criminal defamation), and the IT Act, according to the FIR.

They have also been charged under Section 353 (penalises making, publishing, or circulating false information that cause public mischief...) and those related to cheating and forgery under the BNS.

According to a statement by the Chandigarh police, a city-based complainant April 19 alleged that some forged and misleading social media posts and video clips with obscene text and content were being circulated by various social media users, misidentifying the person in the video.

The complainant alleged that it is a deliberate act of creating a false electronic record using obscene words and phrases, having knowledge and sufficient reason to believe that the posts are misleading and false, with the intent to cause damage or injury.

The video, which circulated with the intent to cause harm to the reputation of a constitutional authority and to disturb public peace and tranquillity, should be investigated, and appropriate action should be taken, the complainant said.

The complainant said the person seen in the video is a travel vlogger whose wife regularly posts updates about their activities on social media. The original video was shared from her social media account.

EC to examine complaint over PM's address violating poll code

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 21: Election Commission sources Tuesday said the Opposition's complaint that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address to the nation was violative of the poll code "would be examined" by it.

Left parties wrote to Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, alleging that Prime Minister Modi's address to the nation Saturday violated the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) for elections and sought action against him.

While polling has taken place in Assam, Kerala and Pondicherry, voting will be held in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal April 23.

The last phase of polling in West Bengal will be April 29.

The sources said the complaint against the prime minister "would be examined" by the Model Code of Conduct division of EC.

The poll code came into force March 15 with the announcement of the poll schedule and will remain in place till May 4, the day votes will be counted for the five assemblies. CPI(M) General Secretary MA Baby and CPI Rajya Sabha MP P Sandosh Kumar



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wrote separately to the poll panel chief, alleging misuse of the public broadcaster to influence public opinion in states where polling is scheduled in coming days.

Separately, nearly 700 activists and private citizens have approached the poll authority on the alleged vi-

olation.

Baby, in his letter to the poll panel chief, called it a "serious violation" of the MCC by the prime minister, arising from the "misuse" of the public broadcaster, Doordarshan, to deliver a political speech.

He said this constitutes a "flagrant breach" of the MCC provision laid down in Section 4 under the heading "Party in Power".

In his address Saturday, the prime minister lashed out at the Congress and its allies for defeating the amendment bill on women's reservation in legislatures, saying they committed the "sin of foeticide" and will face severe punishment from the women.

Modi apologised to the women and said the government may have lost the vote in the Lok Sabha, but it will never give up its efforts to empower women.

The address was delivered a day after the Lower House of Parliament rejected a Constitution Amendment Bill to increase the number of Lok Sabha and Assembly seats and implement 33 per cent reservation for women in legislatures under the Nari Shakti Vandhan Adhiniyam.

SABARIMALA

SC: Court can review state curbs on religious practice

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 21: The Supreme Court orally observed Tuesday that despite limitations on the power of judicial review, it can examine if the state prohibits a religious practice or custom in the name of social welfare or reform.

Dealing with the vehement submissions asking the court to refrain from venturing into the essential-religious-practice arena, a nine-judge Constitution bench headed by CJI Surya Kant said there are certain limitations on the court's power of judicial review in such matters but to say there is no authority at all would be a "difficult proposition to accept".

The observations were made by the bench on the submissions of senior advocate J Sai Deepak, who appeared in the court for the Pandalam royal family and the historic Shriur Mutt, that if a religious practice is inherently beyond the court's jurisdiction due to its sacred nature, the mere act of the state recognising or "codifying" that practice through a law does not suddenly grant the judiciary the power to review it.

The CJI told Deepak, "If the state, in the name of social



welfare, prohibits a religious practice, who will examine it? We understand that there are certain limitations, but to say that there is no power at all, it may also be a very difficult proposition to accept."

Deepak, who also represented various other Hindu organisations in the court like Chetana Conscience of Women, All India Organisations of Lord Ayyappa Temples, besides the head priests of the Sree Padmanabhaswamy and Chilkur Balaji temples, submitted that what cannot be done directly, cannot be done indirectly.

The lawyer told the bench, also comprising Justices BV Nagarathna, MM Sundresh, Ah-sanuddin Amanullah, Aravind Kumar, Augustine George Masih, Prasanna B Varale, R Mahadevan and Joyimala Bagchi, that a legislation should not be used as a back door for courts to test the "rationality" of centuries-old religious traditions.

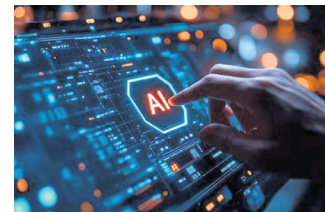
AI content labelling: MeitY proposes tighter norms

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 21: The government Tuesday mooted stricter disclosure norms for AI-generated content, proposing tweaks to IT rules that would require clear and continuous labels identifying synthetically generated information to be visible throughout the entire duration of the visual display.

This would replace the earlier requirement of ensuring "prominent visibility" of AI labels under the IT Rules.

Adding this to the draft IT Rules amendment that, among



other changes, also proposes to bring independent news creators on the Centre's radar and mandate compliance with advisories - the Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) has extended the deadline for stakeholder feedback to May 7 from the once-already-extended timeline of April 29, 2026. "In ad-

dition to the draft amendments already placed in the public domain, further changes have been proposed in Rule 3(3)(a)(ii), which requires continuous and clearly visible display of label for synthetically generated information throughout the duration of the content in visual display," the IT Ministry said in a notice. In another notice, it said the wording "ensures prominent visibility in the visual display" will be substituted with the language: "ensures continuous and clearly visible display of such label throughout the duration of the content, in a visual display".



A boy dives into a pond to beat the heat on a hot summer day, in Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh

PTI PHOTO

'Quitting tobacco may boost incomes of 20.5mn households'

The researchers said the findings show the direct economic benefits of tobacco cessation and that tobacco control needs to be integrated with poverty reduction strategies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 21: An analysis has estimated that quitting tobacco could help 11.5 per cent or 20.5 million households in India move up one economic class, with rural areas and the poorest households possibly seeing the greatest impact.

Seven million middle-income families may also stand to benefit from quitting tobacco, the estimates published in the British Medical Journal (BMJ) Global Health suggest.

Researchers, including those from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, and Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)-National Institute of Cancer Prevention and Research (NICPR) in Noida, said the findings show the direct economic benefits of tobacco cessation and that tobacco control needs to be integrated with poverty reduction strategies through increased taxation, cessation support programmes and awareness campaigns.

The team added that treat-



ment of tobacco-related disease and productivity subsequently lost due to illness and premature death add up to global economic losses of more than USD one trillion every year - money

spent on tobacco means less for essentials, including food and education.

Around 80 per cent of tobacco users live in low and middle income countries, where a signif-

icant proportion of household income is spent on tobacco products, they said.

The analysis looked at over 261,000 households from the Indian National Sample Survey (NSS) 2022-23 Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES), to quantify the long-term economic benefits of quitting tobacco for households in the countries and estimate how many families could therefore be lifted out of poverty.

Consumption of tobacco products, including bidis, cigarettes and gutka, was recorded for seven-day periods and monthly household expenditure was estimated.

The poorest households were

noted to allocate the highest monthly expenditure per head to tobacco (6.4 per cent), as were households in rural areas (6.6 per cent).

Further, the proportion of a household's spend on tobacco was found to fall with increasing income - 4.4 per cent in poorer households, 3.6 per cent in middle income households, 2.8 per cent in richer households and two per cent in the richest.

"Tobacco cessation could uplift 20.49 million households (10.6 per cent) to higher economic classes, with (a) greater impact in rural areas (11.64 per cent; 17 million) against urban regions (7.26 per cent; 3.5 million)," the authors wrote.

of the day quote

Modi ji built the Ram Temple in Ayodhya. It came up at a place where Babri Masjid stood. Now, Mamata Didi, through her associate Humayun Kabir, wants to build a Babri Masjid in Bengal

AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

The BJP will not win the elections in West Bengal this time. The Trinamool Congress will again form the government. We will also throw out the BJP from Delhi in 2026 itself

MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CM

Congress and its allies may create as many hurdles as they want, but we will ensure that women's reservation is implemented in both Parliament and state assemblies

RADHA MOHAN DAS AGRAWAL | BJP LEADER

SHORT TAKES

Triple talaq over phone: Man booked

Ballia (UP): A man was booked for allegedly pronouncing triple talaq to his wife over a mobile phone here, police said Tuesday. Based on the complaint from 19-year-old Shabina Khatoon, a resident of ward number 18 in Rasra town, the police booked her husband, Parvez Alam alias Rinku, a resident of Chak Kalandar Chakia village in the Sikandarpur police station area. The FIR was lodged under relevant sections of the BNS, sections 3 and 4 of the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019, which criminalise the practice of instant triple 'talaq'.

Signal glitch sends train on wrong track

Mumbai: A wrong signal given by railway staff caused a local train to deviate to a different platform at CSMT station in Mumbai before it halted some distance away from another train Tuesday afternoon, officials said. The incident, which occurred at 3:15 PM, affected services on the main line of Central Railway, causing delays. The station master has been suspended following the incident, said a senior official.

Campaign for TN Assembly poll ends

Chennai: The high-intensity poll campaign for the April 23 Assembly election to Tamil Nadu ended at 6 pm Tuesday, and the mandatory "silent period" came into effect 48 hours ahead of the poll date. Political parties and candidates are barred from holding meetings, processions or issuing campaign-related advertisements during the silent period, an official said. The model code of conduct is already in place since the announcement of the assembly election and will continue till the election process is completed.

MP: Five dead in car-truck collision

Barwani: Five persons were killed and two others suffered serious injuries after their car collided with a truck near Julwania town in Madhya Pradesh's Barwani district Tuesday, police said. The accident occurred between 4.30 pm and 5 pm, they said. "The victims came to Julwania to fill fuel in their vehicle as it was about to run dry. They were part of a marriage party from Jalgaon village," Julwania police station in-charge Ramkumar Patil said.

of the day uote

The government attempted to mislead the public by convening a special session of Parliament during ongoing elections in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu

A BJP minister says Vijay is an actor. Yes, I am an actor. But I haven't come to politics to act. You guys, however, are performing drama after drama while being in politics. Can we call you all stage actors?

Even today, a large number of children in the state continue to suffer from malnutrition. It is extremely important to eliminate malnutrition from the state

POST OF THE DAY

India: - 88% population has less than 10L in net-worth. - 94% has less than 50L net-worth. - 98.5% has less than 1Cr net-worth. Getting to 1Cr is extremely rare. So don't let the internet fool you. If you have built 1Cr wealth, you have achieved something exceptional. Maybe you can/cannot retire on this wealth. But, since you CAN achieve exceptional things, you are likely to do well in life.

SHORT TAKES

Court orders framing charges against Bishnoi

New Delhi: Setting the stage for trial, a Delhi court Tuesday ordered framing of charges under the stringent MCOCA provisions against gangster Lawrence Bishnoi and 19 others, saying there was a prima facie case against them.

Manipur: Two tribal communities clash

Imphal: Protesters from two tribal communities clashed at the border of Senapati and Kangpokpi districts in Manipur Tuesday over a shutdown called by a civil society organisation, prompting authorities to impose prohibitory orders, officials said.

Trader killed in East Delhi parking dispute

New Delhi: The killing of a 34-year-old trader in East Delhi over an alleged parking dispute has left his family in Noida's Sector 121 devastated and in shock.

MoD inks ₹975cr TRAWL tank Assembly contract

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 21: The defence ministry Tuesday signed contracts worth nearly ₹975 crore for the procurement of critical equipment for T-72 and T-90 tanks of the Army which will enhance the minefield breaching capability of the force.

The contracts were inked in the presence of Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh in Delhi. The ministry, in a statement, said it has signed contracts with Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEML) and Electro Pneumatics and Hydraulics (India) Private Limited for the "procurement of TRAWL Assembly for T-72/T-90 tanks, at an approximate cost of ₹975 crore".

The 'TRAWL Assembly' for T-72/T-90 tanks is a critical equipment developed by the DRDO that will enhance the minefield breaching capability of the Indian Army. "It would generate additional capability of creating vehicle safe lanes through minefields with anti-tank mines with proximity magnetic fuses, thus enhancing the operational effectiveness of the Indian Army," the statement said.

Being a 'Buy (Indian-Indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured)' case, the procurement marks a pivotal step towards modernising India's defence infrastructure and empowering indigenous industries, which will be a proud flag-bearer of Aatmanirbhar Bharat, it said. This project has immense potential of direct and indirect employment generation by encouraging the MSME sector through components manufacturing, the ministry said.

Fireworks unit blast in Thrissur kills 13

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Around 40 people were suspected to have been present in the sheds at the time of the explosion, which occurred at a fireworks unit preparing crackers on behalf of a temple devaswom ahead of the upcoming Thrissur Pooram April 26

Thrissur (Kerala), April 21: At least 13 people were killed and several others injured in a blast at a fireworks manufacturing unit at Mundathicode in central Kerala's Thrissur district Tuesday, officials said.

Thirteen injured persons, three of them women, are undergoing treatment. Five of them are in critical condition with over 70 per cent burn injuries, authorities at Government Medical College, Thrissur, said.

Around 40 people were suspected to have been present in the sheds at the time of the explosion, which occurred at a fireworks unit preparing crackers on behalf of a temple devaswom ahead of the upcoming Thrissur Pooram April 26. Hospital authorities said 13 bodies were received, including dismembered remains, which are being counted as individual fatalities.

A control room was also opened at the state-run medical college. Television visuals showed residents assisting in rescue efforts, shifting the injured and recovering remains from

For the first time in history, one social bloc is going to defeat them (BJP)... This bloc is PDA (Pichhda, Dalit, Alpsankhyak)- the PDA family. People united by shared pain and issues will come together as one and defeat the BJP

AKHILESH YADAV | SP PRESIDENT

CAMPAIGN FOR 1ST PHASE OF WB ELECTIONS ENDS

The high-pitched campaign for the first phase of the West Bengal assembly elections came to an end Tuesday as issues ranging from food habits, cross-border infiltration and a uniform civil code to the contentiously revised electoral rolls dominated the discourse



Pappu Yadav's comments on women spark outrage

Pappu Yadav's comments on women spark outrage

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Patna, April 21: Bihar MP Rajesh Ranjan alias Pappu Yadav, Tuesday drew flak for making controversial remarks while commenting on the issue of women's reservation in Parliament.

A video footage of the Purnea MP's disparaging comments on women in politics has gone viral on social media. While talking to reporters, he purportedly said, "90 per cent of women cannot do politics without going into a leader's room".

The comment of the Congress-supported Independent MP drew criticism from BJP leaders, including Shehzad Poonawala and Tuhi Sinha, and prompted the Bihar Women's Commission to slap a notice on him. "Shocker statement! When the nation was pushing for Nari Shakti, see what Cong-supported MP is saying!" Poonawala said in a post at X. "Pappu Yadav is abusing self-made women politicians. Will Priyanka Gandhi sack this obnoxious misogynist, or does she endorse his views? Disgusting people," he said.

"Whose vulture-like gaze is on women? It is that of politicians. Without being through a politician's room, 90 per cent of women cannot do politics at all. This can be seen in daily CCTV footage of politicians. It has become a culture," he said. Meanwhile, the Bihar Women's Commission has slapped a notice on Yadav, asking him to respond within three days as to why the Lok Sabha Speaker should not be approached with a recommendation for his disqualification.



One dead in explosion at Maha firecracker factory

Palghar: A worker was killed and five others were seriously injured after an explosion ripped through a firecracker factory in Maharashtra's Palghar district Tuesday, police said. Two persons were arrested in connection with the incident, said an official. Earlier, the administration had put the death toll at two, but a corrected statement in the evening said a male worker died while a woman with 80 per cent burns was undergoing treatment. The tragedy follows the blast at a firecracker factory in Tamil Nadu which claimed 23 lives and left many injured Sunday.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan directed that all necessary medical assistance be provided and asked officials to ensure coordinated rescue and relief operations. He also instructed that, if required, expert doctors from outside the state be brought in to treat those with severe burn injuries, according to a statement from the Chief Minister's Office.

All departments, including police, fire and rescue services, health, revenue, and disaster management, have been mobilised, and a special mechanism has been set up to monitor the situation, it said. State Health Minister Vee-na George directed officials to

the accident occurred. Some workers escaped with minor injuries. Fire and rescue personnel, along with police, led the rescue operations, though continuing explosions posed serious challenges.

Wadakanchery Municipal Chairman P N Surendran, who visited the site, said blasts were still occurring, preventing people from approaching the area. "ZThere is still no clarity on how many workers were present or how many were injured. Extreme heat is suspected to be one of the reasons for the mishap," he told reporters.

He added that the sound of the explosion was heard several kilometres away and that houses in nearby areas suffered damage. Eyewitnesses said multiple sheds spread across several acres were present at the site, of which at least five were destroyed in the fire.

Most of those affected were reported to be residents of Mundathikkode and the nearby Kundannur areas. Wilson, one of the surviving workers, recalled the terrifying moment. "There was a sudden flash beside me and then fire. After that, I don't remember anything," he said. He maintained that all workers at the unit were Malayalees and that no migrant labourers were employed. The Thrissur district collector has ordered a magisterial-level inquiry into the incident, assigning the sub-collector to conduct a detailed probe into the cause of the blast and its aftermath, according to a statement.



People throng at the premises of Kedarnath Dham as the Panchmukhi Utsav Doli (ceremonial palanquin of Lord Kedarnath) reaches the temple on the eve of its door-opening ceremony, in Rudraprayag district, Uttarakhand

UTTARAKHAND

Ops resume at Haldwani factory after protests

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Haldwani, April 21: A day after workers' protests broke out at a private company's manufacturing unit here, its officials Tuesday said most employees have returned to work after consensus was reached on 12 of their 14 demands.

The 500-strong workforce of the Motherson Sumi Systems Ltd factory in Motahaldu industrial area near Padalipur went on strike Monday, holding a sit-in at the factory gate over various demands, which led to a face-off between some protesters and police.

Most workers have returned to their stations following assurance from authorities, officials said. Around 10 workers however continued their protest at the factory gate, insisting that the stir will continue till their primary demands - ₹20,000 minimum wage and eight-hour shift - are met. "Assurances alone will not work; we need a concrete decision," they asserted.

Motherson HR Head Subhash Tiwari stated the company currently pays wages as per government orders. He added that any revision in the pay scale would only be possible

upon fresh directives from the government. Tiwari urged employees to maintain restraint and ensure production remains unaffected.

Meanwhile, police arrested Congress leader Harish Paneru as preventive action on Tuesday morning when he reached the site to express solidarity with the protesting workers.

There was a heated argument between Paneru and police personnel before he was detained and taken to Kathgodam police station. "Raising one's voice in a democracy has become a crime. The police and administration are working at the behest of the ruling party," Paneru alleged.

Authorities also sent RTI activist Piyush Joshi to preventive custody.

Superintendent of Police (City) Manoj Katyal and Tehsildar Rekha Kohli, who were monitoring the situation since Monday, reiterated that maintaining law and order remains the priority. The officials said necessary action would be initiated if tensions escalate again.

Tension gripped Motahaldu area in Uttarakhand's Nainital Monday as workers of the Motherson Sumi Systems Ltd factory went on strike alleging excessive work hours and inadequate pay.

Delhi Police arrest two ISI operatives

New Delhi: The Special Cell of Delhi Police has arrested two operatives allegedly working at the behest of Pakistan-based gangster and ISI proxy Shahzad Bhatti, with the police unearthing a criminal conspiracy to carry out firing, grenade attacks and target killings in the Delhi-NCR region, an official said Tuesday. The accused, identified as Rajveer (21) and Vivek Banjara (19), both natives of Madhya Pradesh's Gwalior, were apprehended by the Special Cell. "Their arrest foiled planned attacks in the national capital and adjoining areas. The arrests exposed a larger conspiracy orchestrated by Bhatti, who, along with other ISI-linked handlers, was recruiting young people through social media platforms and deploying them for targeted acts of violence in Delhi-NCR," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) Praveen Kumar Tripathi said in a statement. The officer said that a case in this regard was registered March 31 following inputs about a plan to execute grenade attacks and targeted killings in the region.

Yogi leads march against defeat of women quota Bill

Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath Tuesday claimed that by opposing the Constitution amendment bill to implement women's quota, the Congress and the SP "misused" the option given to them by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to shed their "anti-women image". He made the remarks after participating in the 'Jan Aakrosh Mahila Padyatra' here to protest against the Opposition's obstruction of the Bill. Thousands of women marched from the Chief Minister's 5 Kalidas Marg residence to the Vidhan Bhavan via Civil Hospital. Adityanath led the march along with Union minister and Uttar Pradesh BJP chief Pankaj Chaudhary, deputy chief ministers Keshav Prasad Maurya and Brajesh Pathak, leaders of allied parties, members of the cabinet and office bearers of various BJP units.

Disabled prisoners' rights need humane recognition: SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 21: The Supreme Court Tuesday said the rights of prisoners with disabilities must be recognised and effectuated in a manner that accords with a humane and rights-based approach.

The apex court observed that it must also be ensured that incarceration does not, in any manner, dilute the fundamental protections enshrined under Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution. While Article 14 deals with equality before law, Article 21 pertains to the protection of life and personal liberty. A bench of Justices Vikram

Nath and Sandeep Mehta passed its order on a plea which raised the issue concerning the rights, conditions of detention and institutional safeguards available to prisoners with disabilities within prison systems across the country. The bench said the issues raised in the petition could be more appropriately and effectively addressed by the high-powered committee for reform and governance of open correctional institutions constituted by it in February 2026 in a separate petition.

Former Supreme Court judge Justice S Ravindra Bhat is the executive chairperson of the high-powered committee.



Semi-open or open prisons allow convicts to work outside the premises during the day to earn a livelihood and return in the evening. The concept was introduced to assimilate convicts with society and reduce psychological pressure as they faced difficulties in leading normal lives outside. In its order passed Tuesday, the bench directed that the committee shall formulate a comprehensive and implementable action plan for the provision of appropriate assistive devices, mobility aids and other necessary support equipment to

The apex court observed that it must also be ensured that incarceration does not, in any manner, dilute the fundamental protections enshrined under Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution. While Article 14 deals with equality before law, Article 21 pertains to the protection of life and personal liberty

prisoners with disabilities, ensuring that such measures are tailored to their specific needs and functional requirements. It emphasised that the directions issued by it were firmly grounded in the constitutional guarantees of dignity, equality and substantive justice.

It said the committee, having already been entrusted with the mandate of overseeing systemic concerns relating to harmonisation of rules framed by states and Union Territories (UTs) in respect of open correctional institutions, is suitably equipped to examine the issues raised in this plea in a holistic manner.

Passing a slew of directions, the bench directed the secretary of the department of empowerment of persons with disabilities, or his nominee not below the rank of additional secretary, to forthwith start active participation in the proceedings before the high-powered committee.

# international



Our government was prepared to make changes to a contested plan offering financial rewards to lawyers who help with migrants' repatriations  
**GIORGIA MELONI** | PRIME MINISTER, ITALY

## JAPAN OPENS DOOR TO GLOBAL ARMS MARKET

Japan unveiled its biggest overhaul of defence export rules in decades, scrapping restrictions on overseas arms sales and opening the way for exports of warships, missiles and other weapons



### of the day quote

We need to act. We need to make sure that our fundamental values are protected. And we need to make sure that any agreement that we have with any other country that country is fulfilling and upholding their obligations

**HELEN MCENTEE** | FOREIGN MINISTER, IRELAND

The PNL decision is to no longer make a coalition with the PSD. This is about breaking away from a certain way of doing politics, one that is unfavourable for Romania

**ILIE BOLOJAN** | PRIME MINISTER, ROMANIA

I mean I'm surprised because they are really rich. You know, they're very good for this country. So, yeah, if I could help them, I would

**DONALD TRUMP** | PRESIDENT, US

# US forces board sanctioned oil tanker in Indian Ocean

US forces 'conducted a right-of-visit maritime interdiction' and boarded the M/T Tifani 'without incident,' the Pentagon said on social media

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, April 21: US forces have boarded an oil tanker previously sanctioned for smuggling Iranian crude oil in Asia, the Pentagon said Tuesday, as it puts into place a global warning to track down vessels tied to Tehran.

US forces "conducted a right-of-visit maritime interdiction" and boarded the M/T Tifani "without incident," the Pentagon said on social media.

The Tifani was captured in the Bay of Bengal - between India and Southeast Asia - and was carrying Iranian oil, according to a US defence official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss an ongoing military operation.

The US military will decide in the next four days what to do with the vessel, such as tow it back to the US or turn it over to another country, the official said.

It's the latest move in the US war on Iran to stop any ship tied to Tehran or those suspected of carrying supplies that could help its government, from weapons and oil to metals and electronics.

The announcement comes ahead of the expiration of an already tenuous ceasefire between the US and Iran, and as Pakistan attempts to broker



talks between Washington and Tehran.

It is the second vessel linked to Iran that has been interdicted by the US military.

The US Navy attacked and seized an Iranian-flagged cargo ship Sunday that it said had tried to evade its blockade of Iranian ports, with President Donald Trump saying an American destroyer blew a hole in the ship's engine room.

### TARGETING IRAN-LINKED SHIPS IN INTERNATIONAL WATERS

The Pentagon on social media described the Tifani as "stateless" despite it being a Botswana-flagged vessel.

"As we have made clear, we will pursue global maritime enforcement efforts to disrupt illicit networks and interdict sanctioned vessels providing material support to Iran - anywhere they operate," the Pentagon announcement said, echoing previous statements from Trump administration officials.

## Trump calls on Iran to release 8 women

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, April 21: US President Donald Trump Tuesday called on Iran to release eight women facing prosecution ahead of potential Islamabad talks.

The president reposted a photo of six women and two teen girls on social media Tuesday morning that a conservative activist noted are facing prosecution by the Iranian government.

"I am sure that they will respect the fact that you did so. Please do them no harm!" Trump posted. "Would be a great start to our negotiations!!!" Five of those in the photo flagged by Trump were arrested during widespread anti-government protests earlier this year, according to human rights groups.

One of the women, from Iran's minority Bahai faith, is accused of being part of a network described as "satanic and under the influence of Israel."

Bitia Hemmati was sentenced to death in Tehran after taking part in the protests, according to the Washington-based Abdorrahman Boroumand Center for Human Rights in Iran. Mahboubeh Shabani was arrested in the city of Mashhad during the protests. She's charged with "enmity of God," which carries the death sentence, according to human rights monitor Hengaw.

Diana Taher Abadi and Ghazal Ghalandari are both 16, and were arrested separately in Karaj, west of Tehran, and Yasuj in southwestern Iran during the protests, according to the US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency.

Venus Hossein Nejad, from the Bahai faith, was arrested in January from her workplace in southeast Iran. She was forced to confess on state TV and was accused with others of organizing protests.

# NATO criticises Russian, Chinese nuclear stances, urges cooperation with US

REUTERS

Brussels, April 21: NATO criticised Russian and Chinese nuclear arms policies Tuesday and urged both countries to work with the United States to establish greater stability and transparency at an upcoming international conference.

In a statement, NATO's 32 members underlined their "strong commitment to the full implementation" of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), a cornerstone of global arms control since it entered into force in 1970.

The statement came ahead of a conference beginning next week at the United Nations in New York to review the operation of the treaty, against a backdrop of geopolitical instability including Russia's war against Ukraine and the US-Israeli war against Iran.

"Russia has violated crucial arms control commitments and employed irresponsibly threatening nuclear rhetoric. China continues to rapidly expand and diversify its nuclear arsenal without transparency," said the statement from NATO's North Atlantic Council.

NATO members "strongly encourage the United States' pursuit of multilateral strategic stability," it said.

### NATO OFFICIAL CRITICISES MOSCOW'S USE OF ORESHNIK MISSILE

In an interview with Reuters, NATO Assistant Secretary General Boris Ruge cited Russia's use of its nuclear-capable Oreshnik intermediate-range ballistic missile - twice so far in Ukraine - as another exam-



NATO urges Russia and China to boost nuclear transparency, work with US

Appeal comes ahead of conference on nuclear non-proliferation at UN

NATO raps Russia's missile use, nuclear rhetoric; Moscow defends its policy

China rejects Western criticism, says its nuclear arsenal is minimal

ple of irresponsible "nuclear signaling" from Moscow.

"Today, we face a Russia that has dropped out of all the important arms control agreements, that has been... developing all sorts of... nuclear delivery systems, and that is engaged in the largest war in Europe since 1945," he said.

For its part, Russia said in February it would remain a responsible nuclear power after the expiry of the New START treaty, which set limits on US and Russian missiles, launchers and strategic warheads.

Russian President Vladimir Putin's government has also criticised NATO member France's plans to expand its nuclear arsenal as a "highly destabilizing" move that posed a potential threat to Moscow.

Ruge defended France's move as a "measured, reasonable, and transparent response to the threats that we face".

### SHORT TAKES

#### Pak receives second tranche of \$1bn loan

Karachi: Pakistan has received the second and final tranche of \$1 billion from Saudi Arabia, as part of a \$3 billion aid package aimed at boosting its foreign reserves, the state bank said Tuesday. Last week, Saudi Arabia pledged \$3 billion in deposits for Pakistan and extended its existing \$5 billion facility for a further three years. The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) confirmed through a social media post that it has received the second tranche from Saudi Arabia, completing the \$3 billion transaction after it received \$2 billion last week.

#### India-Singapore green maritime pact

Singapore: India and Singapore are working on a roadmap to set up infrastructure for digital corridor collaboration and green shipping, a senior official said Tuesday. The roadmap is part of a larger collaboration between the two countries in line with global decarbonisation initiatives as the world's maritime industries seek to become environment friendly, said Vijay Kumar, Secretary of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways. "A roadmap for a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is being worked out with infrastructure details," Kumar told PTI at the Singapore Maritime Week being held from April 20-24.

#### Taiwan president cancels Africa trip

Taipei: Taiwan President Lai Ching-te said Tuesday he had cancelled his trip to Eswatini this week, after his government accused China of pressing three other African countries to revoke permission for his aircraft to fly over their territories. The small southern African nation of Eswatini is one of only 12 countries to retain formal ties with Chinese-claimed Taiwan. Lai was due to leave Wednesday for the 40th anniversary of King Mswati III's accession.

#### 2 Palestinians killed in West Bank village

Cairo/Ramallah: Two Palestinians, including a 14-year-old boy, were killed in the Israeli-occupied West Bank Tuesday after Israeli settlers and soldiers opened fire, witnesses said, while in Gaza health officials said two Palestinians were killed in Israeli strikes. The Palestinian Red Crescent Society said two Palestinians were killed and four others were wounded by Israeli settler gunfire in al-Mughayyir village near Ramallah.

## Gunman shoots several tourists in Mexico, killing 1 Canadian



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Mexico City, April 21: An armed man standing atop one of the historic Teotihuacan pyramids opened fire on tourists, killing one Canadian and leaving at least 13 people injured at the archaeological site north of Mexico's capital, authorities said.

The shooter later died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound, authorities said, and security officials found a gun, a knife and ammunition.

The local government said seven people were wounded by gunshots Monday. How the other people were injured was not disclosed, but those taken to

hospitals for treatment were six Americans, three Colombians, one Russian, two Brazilians and one Canadian, the local government said.

Video and photos published by local media showed a man standing with a gun on top of a pyramid while people ducked for cover. A number of gunshots rang out in the videos.

The shooting took place shortly after 11:30 am when dozens of tourists were at the top of the Pyramid of the Moon. A man standing on the structure's platform began firing upward, according to a tour guide who was at the scene and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity for safety reasons.

"Some people, because they were scared ... threw themselves face down on the ground, and the rest of us started to go down," the guide said, recounting how the shooter, upon seeing the tourists descending the pyramid's steps, began firing.



Children play atop a tank, on Israel's Memorial Day, which commemorates fallen soldiers of Israel's wars and Israeli victims of hostile attacks, in Latrun REUTERS

# Starving Rohingya gamble on deadly sea voyages

REUTERS

Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, April 21: Rohingya refugee Rahila Begum spent two days adrift in the Andaman Sea this month, clinging to a wooden shard after her overcrowded boat capsized, one of the few survivors of a disaster that left 250 missing and feared dead.

She was among the thousands of Rohingya Muslims who brave hunger and accidents on rickety boats each year to flee desperate conditions in camps in southeastern Bangladesh for countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia.

Hundreds die en route from hunger or accidents at sea, but the numbers keep growing as shrinking food rations caused by dwindling international aid push yet more to make the dangerous crossing.

"I never thought I would survive," said Begum, her voice

thready from fever and aches as she sat, wrapped in a blanket, on a thin mat in her parents' shack thrown together from tarpaulin sheets. "It felt like the end of my life."

The 26-year-old was rescued by a passing Bangladeshi oil tanker after her boat, with nearly 300 aboard, sank this month on its way to Malaysia, and later handed to the country's Coast Guard.

Bangladesh's coastal district of Cox's Bazar is home to nearly 1.2 million Rohingya, many of whom fled persecution and fighting in Buddhist-majority Myanmar, where they are accused of being outsiders.

Trapped for years, denied the right to work, receiving only limited education and shrinking food aid, few see a future in Bangladesh and cannot risk returning to Myanmar.

UN refugee agency UNHCR says nearly 900 Rohingya were



reported missing or dead in the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal in 2025, making it the deadliest year on record for regional sea crossings, with more than 6,500 attempted.

Between January and mid-April this year, more than 2,800 Rohingya attempted such journeys, the agency says.

"The Rohingya population is very young and aspires to a better life, but that hope is increasingly turning into desperation," said Astrid Castelein, a UNHCR official.

"That is why youths and families are deciding to take these dangerous boat journeys."

Authorities have stepped up

Rohingya refugees flee camps because of hunger, poor prospects

More sea journeys to Malaysia, Indonesia as conditions worsen

Traffickers, often Rohingya, exploit desperation despite risks

coastal patrols and surveillance of the camps to curb trafficking networks, a Bangladesh official said, speaking on condition of anonymity, but acknowledged that the scale of desperation made enforcement difficult.

### 'RATION CUTS MEAN NO MEAT OR FISH'

Begum's arms and body are scarred with burns caused by spills of hot engine oil mixed with seawater.

She left Myanmar in 2017 during a military crackdown that sent more than 730,000

Rohingya to Bangladesh amid accusations of killings, mass rape and arson - acts a United Nations mission later described as "genocidal", a charge Myanmar denies.

Things worsened after her marriage four years ago, she said.

"I was beaten because I could not have children. I knew I had to flee. There was no life left for me here," she said, adding that her husband had refused to take her back.

This month the UN World Food Programme began distributing food rations in Cox's Bazar on the basis of households' earning capacity.

The monthly sums handed out range from \$12 per person for the most vulnerable to \$7 for those deemed food insecure, with families headed by children, women and the elderly getting the most support.



**Coming to the present crisis, it particularly impacts us as West Asia contributes about one-sixth of our exports, one-fifth of our imports, half of our crude oil imports, two-fifths of our fertilisers imports and almost two-fifths of our inward remittances**  
SANJAY MALHOTRA | RBI GOVERNOR

**SILVER, GOLD RISE**

Silver prices rose Rs 700 to Rs 2.58 lakh per kilogram in the national capital on Tuesday while gold also edged higher amid geopolitical uncertainty and mixed global cues. According to the All India Sarafa Association, gold of 99.9 per cent purity gained Rs 300 to Rs 1,57,300 per gram (inclusive of all taxes).



**business**

**of the day quote**

**Momentum across our advanced AI offerings and overall AI portfolio remains strong, reflecting the strength of our early bets and our continued focus on AI that scales from experimentation to measurable business impact**



**With a strong base of young, skilled technology talent and improving digital infrastructure, we see India evolving from a consumption-driven market to a creator economy for gaming**



**Our telecom rollout has been very successful in lithium. We've traditionally been market leaders in telecom, even with our lead acid product for several decades now. We continue to lead the market, even as the chemistry has changed to lithium**



**Vikram Gourineli, Executive Director | Amara Raja Energy & Mobility Ltd**

**Stock markets climb nearly 1% amid Iran-US peace talk hope**



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, April 21:** Stock markets advanced for the third consecutive day Tuesday, with Sensex jumping by 753 points and broader Nifty closing above 24,550 following a drop in crude oil prices and hopes for progress on peace talks between Iran and the US.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 753.03 points or 0.96 per cent to settle at 79,273.33. During the day, it surged 846.78 points or 1.07 per cent to 79,367.08.

The 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 211.75 points or 0.87 per cent to end at 24,576.60.

Among the 30-Sensex firms, Trent rose the most by 3.55 per cent. Hindustan Unilever, ICI-CI Bank, Bajaj Finance, HDFC Bank and Axis Bank were the major winners.

Bharat Electronics, Titan, Reliance Industries and NTPC were among the laggards.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, traded 0.75 per cent lower at USD 94.76 per barrel.

"Indian equity markets traded on a positive note, as invest-

mentors positioned for a potential near-term de-escalation in the Middle East. Energy markets remained in a consolidation phase, as traders balanced hopes of a near-term resolution and a potential reopening of the Strait of Hormuz against ongoing uncertainty around cease-fire negotiations," Ponnudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

Broader markets also advanced with the BSE MidCap Select index jumping 0.73 per cent and SmallCap Select index by 0.29 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, FMCG rallied the most by 2.23 per cent, followed by Realty (2.17 per cent), MidSmall Private Banks Quality Tilt (1.71 per cent), Private Banks Index (1.67 per cent), Top 10 Banks (1.66 per cent) and Bankex (1.46 per cent). Capital Goods emerged as the only laggard.

"With the ceasefire deadline arriving tomorrow, all eyes turn to the second round of US-Iran talks - while markets remain hopeful of progress, elevated tensions and uncer-

tain participation make any negative surprise a key downside risk," Siddhartha Khemka - Head of Research, Wealth Management, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said. A total of 2,531 stocks advanced, while 1,760 declined and 162 remained unchanged on the BSE.

In Asian markets, South Korea's benchmark Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225 index, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index ended higher.

"The bullish momentum was largely driven by a combination of macro and market-specific triggers. Easing geopolitical concerns, particularly around the US-Iran situation, played a central role in improving risk appetite. This was further supported by a cooling in crude oil prices, which helped ease inflation concerns for an oil-import-dependent economy like India and improved margin visibility across sectors," Hari Prasad K, Research Analyst and Founder, Livelong Wealth, said.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 1,059.93 crore Monday, according to BSE data.

"Amid hopes for progress in Iran-US peace talks and supportive global cues, India's equity markets rebounded strongly," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

On Monday, the Sensex closed marginally up 26.76 points or 0.03 per cent at 78,520.30. The Nifty edged up 11.30 points or 0.05 per cent to settle at 24,364.85.

**BANKS' CREDIT GROWS 16.1%**

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, April 21:** Bank credit in India stood at Rs 213.6 lakh crore for the fortnight ending March 31, registering an annual growth of 16.1 per cent for the reported period - up from 11 per cent in the same period prior year, a report said Tuesday.

The report from CareEdge ratings said credit growth in Indian banks continued to outpace deposit accretion, widening the differential to about 260 basis points.

Credit-Deposit (CD) ratio remained elevated at 81.4 per cent for the fortnight ended March 31, 2026, though it moderated sequentially from its record high of 83 per cent.

The report added that credit expanded by Rs 6 lakh crore, or 2.8 per cent, sequentially, reflecting typical year end acceleration in disbursements.

Credit growth was also supported by sustained traction in retail lending, particularly gold and vehicle loans, alongside robust MSME financing, increased bank exposure to non-banking financial companies and opportunistic corporate borrowing. Aggregate bank deposits rose to Rs 262.3 lakh crore, up 13.5 per cent year on year. However, on a sequential basis, deposits increased by 4.9 per cent in the previous fortnight, supported by typical year-end seasonality and liquidity flows.

**Prolonged energy disruption to widen India's trade deficit: Moody's**



REUTERS

**New Delhi, April 21:** A prolonged disruption in energy supply can widen India's trade deficit and strain the fiscal account of the world's fastest-growing major economy, according to rating agency Moody's.

Brent Crude prices have shot up 31% since the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran began on February 28 and have been see-sawing with each development, while prospects of peace fuelled a recovery in stock markets globally.

"Given lingering risks and because some production operations in the Middle East and logistical assets will take time to restart and reposition, risk premia and key commodity prices will likely remain structurally higher for some time," Moody's Ratings said in a report on Monday.

The rating agency currently has "Baa3" rating on India

with a "stable" outlook. It had trimmed its growth forecast for India's real gross domestic product to 6% for fiscal 2027 from 6.8% earlier, factoring in the impact of the Iran war.

"A prolonged disruption would pose more material challenges, potentially entrenching inflation, straining fiscal and monetary policy flexibility, testing external investor confidence," Moody's said.

The impact of higher crude oil on companies will be uneven, the report noted, with oil marketing companies (OMCs) and fuel-dependent sectors such as cement and chemicals likely bearing the brunt of the price shock.

"Cost hikes associated with inland transportation have been contained for now through fuel subsidies borne by state-owned OMCs, but this has shifted cost pressures onto their balance sheets in a manner we view as unsustainable," Moody's added.

**Apollo leads healthcare by setting international standards: Dr Srivastava**

**Dr Alok Srivastava is heading Apollo Hospital, Bhubaneswar as Chief Operating Officer. He completed Post Graduation Masters in Business Administration from Faculty of Management Studies, Delhi University. He had been a faculty of Advanced Trauma Life Support at School of Medicine, University of Utah, USA. Dr Srivastava carries expertise in the field of operations, medical strategy, merger and acquisition, quality assurance, and clinical excellence. Excerpts...**



**DR ALOK SRIVASTAVA**  
Chief Operating Officer, Apollo Hospital, Bhubaneswar

- **How did Apollo Hospitals successfully scale from a single hospital in 1983 to a network of 73 hospitals across Asia?**
- Apollo Hospitals has always focused on key pillars to consistently build patient trust through clinical and service excellence. The organisation has prioritised bringing the latest technology to the country, both in terms of advanced equipment and in setting standards across clinical specialties. It has also focused on driving excellence through a strong base of clinical talent, which forms the core of the entire business.
- **What business strategies enabled Apollo to dominate the private healthcare sector?**
- Growth has been a key factor, and this focus has enabled us to expand from one hospital to the current

network of 73. We have led healthcare by setting international standards and replicating them across all our hospitals. It is important to note that all our hospitals adhere to the same set of quality standards, which drive clinical and service excellence. We benchmark clinical outcomes against international standards through the Apollo Clinical Excellence Program, one of the most unique initiatives in the country. Secondly, Apollo Hospitals invests significantly in technologies that reduce the length of hospital stays. This ultimately improves patient outcomes while also reducing treatment costs. Finally, Apollo Hospitals leads the country through a unique combination of talent, best-in-class equipment, and the effective use of these resources to deliver superior clinical outcomes.

- **How has the Apollo 24/7 platform contributed to Apollo's digital transformation and patient engagement?**
- Apollo 24/7 is the largest multi-channel digital healthcare platform in India, created with a vision of eliminating access and flexibility barriers in healthcare. The platform was launched to remove mobility constraints, allowing users to access healthcare services online. This aligns with the Apollo

Group's overarching goal of making quality healthcare accessible to all.

- **What challenges does Apollo face in balancing affordability and premium healthcare services in emerging markets?**
- Quality healthcare often comes at a premium, especially when patients have to pay out of pocket. Affordability remains a growing challenge in emerging markets. We are working to reduce treatment costs by using consumables manufactured in India; however, in certain specialties, this is not always feasible. Many treatments depend on high-cost drugs and advanced equipment, which significantly increase overall costs. This creates a challenge, as reducing costs is not always easy or possible, particularly in complex procedures.
- **As an entrepreneur, why did you choose to enter this line of business? What advice will you give to the new entrants?**
- I would advice that aspiring entrepreneurs should choose a specific healthcare product line to focus on and commit to building it over time. This journey may take anywhere from three to 10 years, but consistent investment and dedication will help them excel. Over time, they will establish themselves in the market and gain recognition for the services they offer.

**Vedanta Aluminium powers rural security with solar street lights**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 21:** Vedanta Aluminium has strengthened rural infrastructure in Jharsuguda and Sundargarh districts through the installation of 325 solar-powered street lights. This initiative generates approximately 28,470 kWh of clean energy annually and reduces carbon emissions by nearly 24 tonnes.



These street lights were installed a year ago and covered various rural areas and municipalities, including Jamkhani, Girisima, Jharpalam, Hemgir, RNR Colony, Bileimunda, Munderkhet, Ghogharpalli, Podajalanga, Rengalpali, Ku-

dalo, Banjari, Bartap, Grindola, Pipilimal, Likhai, Lakhampur, and Belpahar.

Illuminated roads have reduced the risks associated with nighttime movement and improved access to essential services. There has been a significant increase in nighttime safety and accessibility, especially for women, senior citizens, and daily commuters.

This initiative aligns with the company's broader goal of community development and reinforces its commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, specifically SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and SDG 13 (Climate Action).

**India, South Korea sign pact to boost MSME ties**

**NEW DELHI:** India and South Korea have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to bolster cooperation in the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises sector as part of efforts to strengthen bilateral economic ties during President Lee Jae Myung's visit to India. The Memorandum of Understanding was signed between India's Ministry of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises and South Korea's Ministry of SMEs and Startups, according to an official statement issued Tuesday. The Memorandum of Understanding establishes a structured framework for collaboration between the two Ministries, enabling sustained dialogue on key issues related to Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises and facilitating the exploration of mutually beneficial opportunities. It seeks to promote a deeper understanding of each other's Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises ecosystems and enhance engagement between stakeholders, the statement issued by the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Ministry said.

**US waiver to keep Russian oil exports to India near record high**

REUTERS

**Moscow/London, April 21:** Russian oil sales to India are set to remain near record highs in April and May following a new US sanctions waiver, and refiners have already secured much of their supply needs via non-sanctioned entities and vessels, traders said and data showed Tuesday.

The robust exports to India - the second-largest buyer of Russian crude after China and largest importer of its flagship Urals grade - will likely help Moscow replenish state coffers under pressure due to

military spending for the war in Ukraine.

India shipped in a record 2.25 million barrels per day of oil from Russia in March, nearly double February's volumes, making Russian oil 50% of its imports.

Russian crude arrivals at Indian ports are set to reach 2.1 million bpd for the week of April 20 to 27, up from 1.67 million bpd the previous week, data from shipping analytics firm Kpler showed.

The mid-April dip in Russian oil supplies was likely caused by export disruptions resulting from Ukrainian drone attacks



on Russian ports at the end of March, two sources said. However, Russian supplies are expected to average more

than 2 million bpd for the full month and will likely remain around that level, or possibly increase, in May, three sources

involved in the trade said.

Washington issued a 30-day waiver in mid-March for countries to buy sanctioned Russian oil and petroleum products to help stabilise global energy markets roiled by its war with Iran. It renewed the waiver last week.

Despite the sanctions, which are intended to pressure Moscow to negotiate a peace deal with Kyiv, Russian oil deliveries to India have continued via non-sanctioned enterprises in the supply chain, traders and analysts said.

Indian refiners had already been actively purchasing

Russian oil in April before the waiver extension was announced and secured most of the volumes for May delivery as early as last week, according to the traders.

Refineries in India were paying premiums of \$7 to \$9 per barrel of Russian oil to the dated Brent for cargoes delivered in May, similar to what they paid for April imports.

India has recently expanded the pool of Russian insurers eligible to provide marine cover to ships docking at its ports, increasing the number to 11 from eight, according to its Directorate General of Shipping.

INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE

# SRH crush DC by 47 runs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hyderabad, April 21: Abhishek Sharma butchered a listless Delhi Capitals into submission with a brilliant 68-ball 135 not out as Sunrisers Hyderabad cantered to an easy 47-run victory in an IPL match here Tuesday.

On a placid Uppal track, Abhishek scythed through Delhi bowling attack with 10 sixes and as many boundaries in Sunrisers' mammoth score of 242 for 2.

The chase was out of question but Sri Lankan Eshan Malinga (4/32 in 4 overs) and Sakib Hussain (1/29 in 4 overs) scripted a middle-order collapse with DC reduced to 107 for 4 from a comfortable 107 for 1. DC never recovered from thereon.

In the end, Axar Patel's men managed only 195 for 9 to lose the game comprehensively as SRH consolidated their position in the points table moving up to third place.

The match will be remembered for some serious tactical mistakes made by the DC 'Brains Bank' comprising Direc-



line spinners Axar (1/23 in 2 overs) and Kuldeep Yadav (0/30 in 2 overs) only bowled half their quota of overs trying to escape the onslaught from Abhishek.

Three pacers Mukesh Kumar (0/53), Lungi Ngidi (0/44) and T Natarajan (0/40) were also rendered ineffective.

On the other hand, SRH pacers led by Malinga and Hussain used clever variations of pace-on and pace-off deliveries to get wickets at regular intervals save Rana's half-century

which was pale in comparison to Abhishek's innings.

Even with a relatively off-colour Travis Head (37 off 26 balls), Abhishek added 97 for the opening stand. Then, skipper Ishan Kishan (25 off 13 balls) joined the party, adding another 79 runs for the second wicket in just 5.5 overs to create a beautiful launchpad for the final assault.

Towards the end as Abhishek seemed a bit tired as strike-rate dropped a touch below 200, Heinrich Klaasen chanced his

arms to hit a quickfire 37 not out off 13 balls.

Delhi Capitals' ploy of starting with an off-spinner, that too a mediocre part-timer like Rana backfired badly as he was given four overs in which he was hit for half a dozen sixes -- all off left-handed batters.

Rana bowled a tidy first over but then the second went for 20 and after strategic time-out, he was again given two more overs out of which one went for 23.

Even skipper Axar will have some answering to do as to why he as a frontline spinner didn't complete his quota and why Kuldeep was not trusted after one bad over (22 runs) but someone like Rana was persisted with.

**Brief Score:**

**Sunrisers Hyderabad:** 242 for 2 in 20 overs (Abhishek Sharma 135 not out, Heinrich Klaasen 37 not out, Travis Head 37; Axar Patel 1/23) beat **Delhi Capitals:** 195 for 9 in 20 overs (Nitish Rana 57, Sameer Rizvi 41; Eshan Malinga 4/32 ) by 47 runs.

IPL STANDINGS					
TEAMS	P	W	L	NRR	PTS
PBKS	6	5	0	1.420	11
RCB	6	4	2	1.171	8
SRH	7	4	3	0.820	8
RR	6	4	2	0.599	8
DC	6	3	3	0.130	6
GT	6	3	3	-0.821	6
MI	6	2	4	0.067	4
CSK	6	2	4	-0.780	4
LSG	6	2	4	-1.173	4
KKR	7	1	5	-0.879	3

**TODAY'S MATCH**

LSG vs RR

TIME: 7:30 PM

Star Sports channels & JioHotstar

tor of Cricket Venugopal Rao, head coach Hemang Badani and skipper Axar.

Using a part-time off-spinner Nitish Rana's (0/55 in 4 overs) full quota simply because the top three of SRH consists of southpaws beggared belief.

Equally baffling was front-

## Eves chase 0-2 deficit vs SA

Johannesburg: Vice-captain Smriti Mandhana and senior all-rounder Deepti Sharma would like to bring out their respective 'A' games with the Indian women's team trying to pull all its stops to get back to winning ways against South Africa in the third T20 International here Wednesday. The Proteas women lead the five-match series 2-0 and would like to complete the series win in the third match at the Bull Ring. Mandhana, easily team's most impactful batter, scored 13 and 12 in the first two games in which India put up an underwhelming show with totals of 157 and 147 which the home team surpassed without breaking much sweat. As far as Deepti is concerned, her form has been more worrisome. She was demoted to No. 9 in the first game where she remained not out on 1 and was dismissed for identical score in the second game where she was sent up the order at No. 6. In both games, she went wicketless.

## Subrat continues winning streak

POST NEWS NETWORK

Carlow, April 21: Odisha's experienced cueist Subrat Das delivered a commanding performance at the Irish Open Challenge Cup 2026 here Tuesday advancing from the Top 16 stage with a dominant 200-139 win over Northern Ireland's Dom Halligan. Carrying that momentum into the World Matchplay Billiards 2026, Das continued his strong run in his second league match, securing a convincing 4-1 victory.

Known for his vast experience and calm presence on the table, the seasoned player displayed sharp cue control, precise shot selection, and strong tactical awareness across both contests. His composed approach under pressure helped him maintain control throughout crucial frames, outplaying his opponents with consistency. Das's impressive showing



not only highlights his enduring class at the international level but also brings significant pride to Odisha's billiards fraternity, reinforcing his status as one of the region's most reliable performers.

## DOPING CRISIS

# Red-faced AFI vows clean-up

Athletics Federation of India promises to come out of highest-risk of doping category soon

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 21: Left red-faced after the Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) designated India as a country with an "extremely high" risk of doping, the national federation Tuesday said it will work with the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) and the Sports Ministry to quickly come out of the category of worst doping offenders.

India was Monday placed in the highest-risk category for doping by the Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU), an independent watchdog set up by World Athletics (WA), after recording the highest number of positive cases over the past two years.

In a decision taken recently by the AIU Board, the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) has been re-categorised from Category B to Category A under Rule 15 of the World Athletics' Anti-Doping Rules.

The development will put the Indian athletes under more stringent anti-doping stipulations. The AFI acknowledged the AIU's decision and said it will work towards moving out of Category A.

"With continued collaboration with the AIU, NADA and the ministry of youth affairs and sports, AFI is confident that India will overcome the challenge and soon be removed from Category A," said AFI.

Under the World Athletics Anti-Doping Rules, the AIU Board categorises all Member Federations according to their doping risk to the sport. Category 'A' Member Federations, representing the highest risk, are subject to more stringent requirements, including minimum testing of their national team athletes.



## In a decision taken recently by the AIU Board, the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) has been re-categorised from Category B to Category A under Rule 15 of the World Athletics' Anti-Doping Rules

Category 'B' Member Federations represent a medium doping risk while Category 'C' Member Federations represent a low doping risk.

India has ranked in the top two for the most Anti-Doping Rule Violations (ADRVs) in athletics between 2022 and 2025.

According to the AIU, India recorded 48 ADRV's (ranked 2nd) in 2022, 63 (ranked 2nd) in 2023, 71 (ranked 1st) in 2024 and 30 ADRV's (ranked 1st) in 2025 (data received so far).

Recently, India have surpassed Kenya to top the Athletics Integrity Unit's (AIU) list of ineligible persons due to doping

violations with 148 suspended athletes.

Under Rule 15.3.3 of the World Athletics Anti-Doping Rules in force since January 2026, every three years the AIU Board shall determine in its absolute discretion the category of each Member Federation by taking into account factors such as doping history of athletes, athlete support personnel etc, confidential intelligence or other information, the extent of success, or the potential for success, of the Member Federation in international events, the effectiveness of the national anti-doping programme in the country to deter, detect and pursue doping at all levels.

The AIU, however, may change a Member Federation's assigned category at any time within the three years.

The AFI said it has consistently maintained that doping undermines the growth of athletics in India.

It said the AIU has also recognised AFI's push for meaningful anti-doping reforms in India and said it remains committed to working closely with the AIU and NADA to combat doping at every level.

## ISSF JUNIOR WORLD CUP

# Narwal clinches gold, Sharma bronze

Panaah Bhugra wins silver in women's 10m air rifle, taking India's medal tally to three on opening day

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Cairo, April 21: Leading Indian shooter Shiva Narwal marked his return to the global stage after a long hiatus by clinching gold in the men's 10m air pistol event at the ISSF Junior World Cup (Rifle/Pistol/Shotgun) while Chirag Sharma added to the tally by securing bronze in the same event, here Tuesday.

In addition to the double podium on the opening day, Panaah Bhugra fetched the sil-



ver in the women's 10m air rifle, taking India's tally to three medals across all colours.

Narwal continued his form from the qualification to claim gold with a score of 241.8, finishing 1.8 ahead of Uzbekistan's Sodikjon Abdullaev, who secured silver. Chirag completed the podium with 218.9, while Abhinav Deshwal, the third Indian in the final, finished seventh with

136.7. In qualification, Narwal qualified in top spot with a score of 576, followed by Abhinav in third place with a score of 576 and Chirag who qualified in fourth place, shooting 575.

In the junior women's 10m air rifle event, Panaah Bhugra, who qualified for the finals with a score of 629.4, maintained her place in the medal positions from the first series and show-

cased consistency to eventually clinch the silver medal with a final score of 250.6.

The French duo of Anceline Brackman and Helena Ecale secured gold and bronze with scores of 252.0 and 228.6 respectively.

Shambhavi Kshirsagar, who finished qualification in top spot with a score of 634.0, finished fourth with a score of 206.5. The third Indian in the final, Anvii Rathod finished sixth with a score of 164.6. Anvii qualified for the finals in sixth place with a score of 628.6, while the other Indians in the competition, Manyata Singh scored 628.3 to finish in eighth place.

With the rule of a maximum of three athletes per country, the three top ranked after qualification round proceeded to the final with Manyata missing out.

## LAUREUS AWARDS

# Tennis royalty: Alcaraz, Sabalenka bag top honors

Alcaraz and Sabalenka win Laureus sportsman and sportswoman of the year; PSG Named 'Team Of The Year'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Madrid, April 21: Tennis players Carlos Alcaraz and Aryna Sabalenka were named sportsman and sportswoman of the year at the Laureus awards while Paris Saint-Germain was the team of the year.

Alcaraz won the French and US Opens last year plus the Australian Open in January. Sabalenka, the top-ranked woman, won her second consecutive US Open last year.

PSG broke through with its first Champions League title in 2025.

Rory McIlroy, who successfully defended the Masters title this month, received the comeback of the year award.

Barcelona and Spain star Lamine Yamal, aged 18, won



the young sportsperson of the year prize.

Formula One champion Lando Norris received the world breakthrough of the year award.

German soccer great Toni



Kroos won the world sporting inspiration award, and retired gymnast Nadia Comaneci got the lifetime achievement prize.

The world action sportsperson award went to American snowboarder Chloe Kim.

Brazilian Gabriel Araujo was the world sportsperson of the year with a disability.

The awards ceremony in the Spanish capital was hosted by tennis great Novak Djokovic and freestyle skier Eileen Gu.

## ELITE CROWNED

- Laureus World Sportsman of the Year Award: Carlos Alcaraz
- Laureus World Sportswoman of the Year Award: Aryna Sabalenka
- Laureus World Team of the Year Award: Paris Saint-Germain
- Laureus World Breakthrough of the Year Award: Lando Norris
- Laureus World Comeback of the Year Award: Rory McIlroy
- Laureus World Sportsperson of the Year with a Disability Award: Gabriel Araujo
- Laureus World Action Sportsperson of the Year Award: Chloe Kim
- Laureus World Young Sportsperson of the Year Award: Lamine Yamal
- Laureus Sporting Inspiration Award: Toni Kroos
- Laureus Lifetime Achievement Award: Nadia Comneci
- Laureus Sport for Good Award: Fútbol Más



## Sony secures Asian Games broadcast rights



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 21: Sony Pictures Networks India has secured the exclusive broadcast rights for the 20th Asian Games Aichi-Nagoya 2026, scheduled to be held in Japan from September 19-October 4.

As per the deal, the continental showcase will be telecast on Sony Sports Network channels and streamed on Sony LIV across India and the subcontinent.

India will head into the Games on the back of a historic campaign in the previous edition, where it secured a record 107 medals.

"We are proud to bring this continental multi-sport event back to Sony Pictures Networks for the third time," Rajesh Kaul, Chief Revenue Officer and Business Head Sports and International, SPNI said in a release.

The Asian Games, one of the biggest multi-sport events globally, will feature 41 disciplines, including 32 Olympic sports, with new additions such as mixed martial arts and surfing.

Traditional events like cricket, tennis, esports, kabaddi, sepak takraw and kurash will also be part of the programme.

Cricket is expected to be a major attraction for Indian audiences, with both men's and women's teams in contention for top honours.

"India's historic performance at the last edition, where the nation crossed the 100-medal milestone for the first time, has ignited unprecedented interest in multi-sport events," he said.

"The stage is set for another unforgettable chapter with the inclusion of cricket along with a formidable Indian contingent ready to chase new milestones.