



## Kriti's insight

Actor Kriti Sanon shares her thoughts on what truly shapes success in the entertainment industry

LEISURE | P2



## US-Iran talks in Pak

President Donald Trump is sending Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner to Pakistan for fresh US-Iran ceasefire talks

INTERNATIONAL | P10



## ₹7.17L-cr wiped off

Investors' wealth erodes by ₹7.17 lakh crore in three days of market fall, where the BSE Sensex tumbled over 3%

BUSINESS | P11



## Shuttlers start strong

India men begin campaign with 4-1 win over Canada in the Thomas Cup badminton championships

SPORTS | P12

# State to become global steel powerhouse: CM



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar/Rengali, April 24:** Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Friday graced the joint venture and initiation of partnership between JSW Steel Limited and JFE Steel Corporation, Japan, a pivotal step in Odisha's move from an iron-ore producer to a high-value steel manufacturing hub. This is Odisha's first single largest Japanese investment at ₹15,000 crore.

"I reaffirm Odisha's long-term industrial vision: We are committed to producing 100 MTPA of steel by 2030. It is a strategic commitment backed by resources, policy, infrastructure, and meticulous execution," said the Chief Minister.

The Chief Minister also announced that, "In the upcoming days, Rourkela, Jharsuguda, Bargarh, and Deogarh will form the Sambalpur growth corridor, similar to the state capital growth region. Investments worth ₹1 lakh crore shall

be brought in by industries, generating a potential of more than 2 lakh jobs through this initiative."

The JSW-JFE partnership will strengthen Odisha's capabilities in high-grade and specialty steel through advanced Japanese technology and operational expertise. The total JSW-JFE venture would involve an estimated investment of more than ₹30,000 crore. The state is steadily transforming into a global steel and manufacturing hub, the Chief Minister said, adding that this landmark collaboration not only strengthens India-Japan industrial ties but also reinforces Odisha's commitment to sustainable growth, technological advancement, and inclusive economic development for the future.

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, Minister of Revenue and Disaster Management Suresh Pujari, Minister of Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water Rabi Narayan Naik, MLA Jharsuguda Tankadhar Tripathy, MLA Sambalpur Jayanarayan Mishra, Keiichi Ono, Ambassador of Japan to India, and Yoshihisa Ishikawa, Consul General of Japan in Kolkata, Sajjan Jindal, Chairman, JSW Group, Parth Jindal, Managing Director - JSW Cement & JSW Paints, and Yoshihisa Kitano, President, CEO, JFE Holdings were also present.



**NATURE'S FURY:** Residents gather near damaged houses following a land subsidence at Tandabari village, in Dhanbad, Friday. The incident, reported late Thursday night, damaged several houses and prompted evacuation of affected families.

# Rupee's valuation sinks to over-a-decade low

REUTERS

**Mumbai, April 24:** The Indian rupee's valuation versus other major currencies calculated on a trade-weighted basis has fallen to its lowest in more than a decade, hit by the Iran war driven surge in crude oil prices and chunky foreign portfolio outflows.

The South Asian currency's 40-currency real effective exchange rate (REER), which accounts for inflation differentials between different economies, fell to 92.72, the Reserve Bank of India's latest bulletin released late Thursday showed.

The REER is now hovering well below its long run average of 98.25, pointing to a deeply undervalued rupee against historical norms.

Relatively subdued inflation in India has weighed on the REER in recent months, adding to the impact of the rupee's roughly 4.5% year to date decline, analysts said. The currency hit a record low of 95.21 per dollar in late March.

Despite the extent of the rupee's undervaluation, analysts see little near-term scope for a recovery.

While the rupee is highly undervalued on a REER basis relative to historical ranges, it

## Rupee falls 15 paise to 94.16 against dollar

**Mumbai:** The rupee extended its losing streak for the fifth day in a row, depreciating 15 paise to close at 94.16 against the US dollar Friday due to higher crude oil prices and strengthening American currency, with prospects of West Asia peace talks hanging in the balance. Despite a ceasefire being in place between the US and Iran, ship movement through the Strait of Hormuz remained uncertain, unsettling the global fuel prices, while the upheaval triggered a massive selling in domestic equity markets and outflow of foreign funds, forex analysts said. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 94.25 and stayed range-bound throughout the session, hitting the day's high of 94.18 and the low of 94.31 against the greenback. The currency settled for the day at 94.16, registering a loss of 15 paise from the previous closing level.



change rate helps make exports out of India more competitive, while increasing the cost of imports. It also offers foreign investors a cheaper entry point to the currency, even while hitting the value of their existing investments in Indian equities and fixed income in foreign currency terms.

A narrower six currency gauge suggests the rupee's undervaluation is starker. The rupee's 6-currency REER declined to 89.61 in March, the lowest on record for data going back to April 2015 and well-below the series average of nearly 100.

The US, China, United Arab Emirates, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Singapore were the country's 6-largest trading partners in the 2024-2025 fiscal year, trade ministry data show.

A weaker real-effective ex-

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A weaker real-effective ex-

## Summer vacation for schools from April 27

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 24:** Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Friday announced summer vacation in schools from April 27, in view of the prevailing heat wave conditions.

Majhi made the announcement on the recommendation of the School and Mass Education Department, said a statement issued by the Chief Minister's Office. Examinations, census works, and other official activities will continue as per schedule, it said.

School and Mass Education Minister Nityananda Gond said summer vacations usually start on May 6 and continue till June 17.

"However, considering the existing heat wave condition, summer vacation has been announced earlier," he said.

It is worth noting that Odisha is reeling under scorching heat, with day temperatures hovering above 40 degrees Celsius in several parts of the state, including the capital Bhubaneswar, as an intense heatwave sweeps across the region, severely affecting normal life. Heatstroke cases are also being reported from many places across the state.

Meanwhile, following concerns over heatstroke incidents, the state government has also halted census work between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. in view of the safety of enumerators.

# BJP gains in RS strength

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 24:** The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) suffered a jolt Friday as seven of its Rajya Sabha MPs, including Raghav Chadha, Ashok Mittal and Sandeep Pathak, quit the party, with Chadha saying all of them had merged with the BJP, asserting that the Arvind Kejriwal-led party had strayed from its principles, values and core morals.

Harbhajan Singh, Rajendra Gupta, Vikram Sahni and Swati Maliwal were the other four parliamentarians in the group of seven. Their move came as a surprise to many, as the exits were disclosed at a hurriedly called press conference at Constitution Club in central Delhi, after which AAP chief Kejriwal alleged that the BJP had betrayed the people of Punjab while state Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann termed the seven MPs "gaddar" (traitors).

The BJP extended a warm welcome to the MPs as party president Nitin Nabin offered them traditional sweets.

"Welcomed Raghav Chadha Ji, Sandeep Pathak Ji, and Ashok Mittal Ji to the BJP family at the Party HQ today. Also, best wishes to Harbhajan Singh Ji, Swati Maliwal Ji, Vikram Sahney Ji, and Rajinder Gupta Ji to work under the dynamic leadership of PM Narendra Modi towards the goal of Viksit



Bharat 2047," Nabin said in a post on X shortly thereafter.

AAP leaders accused the BJP of launching "Operation Lotus" to break away party MPs and of conspiring to stop the Mann government's good work in Punjab. Chadha said at the press conference that the seven MPs had merged with the BJP as the AAP was no longer honouring its founding principles.

"The AAP, that I nurtured with my blood and sweat and to which I gave 15 years of my youth, has completely strayed from its principles, values and core morals," he said.

Chadha was recently removed as the deputy leader of the AAP in the Rajya Sabha and was replaced by Mittal.

"As per the Constitution, two-thirds of the total MPs of a party can merge with another party," Chadha said, referring to the party's strength of 10 MPs.

"They have already signed,

and this morning we submitted all the required documentation, including signed letters and other formal paperwork, to the chairman of the Rajya Sabha," Chadha said.

Pathak, who held the post of national general secretary in the AAP, also said the party had diverted from the principles on which it was founded.

Of the seven MPs, six come from Punjab, including Chadha, Pathak, Mittal, Rajinder Gupta, Vikram Sahni, and Harbhajan Singh, while Swati Maliwal is from Delhi.

The three Rajya Sabha MPs who still remain with the party are Sanjay Singh, ND Gupta and Balbir Singh Seechewal.

AAP sources said the exits were aimed at destabilising the party before the Assembly elections in Punjab next year and admitted that the party was on guard to keep its flock together in the state.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



P felt suffocated here. It has moved to the BJP'

# 40 yrs after nuclear disaster, Chornobyl plant haunted by war

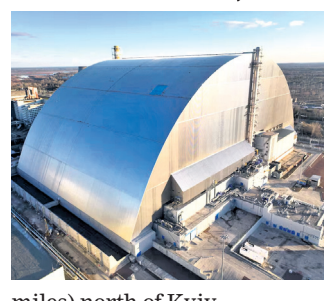
REUTERS

**Chornobyl Nuclear Plant, April 24:** Denys Khomenko betrays no emotion recalling the night last year when a Russian strike drone tore into the protective arc covering the part of the Chornobyl (also known as Chernobyl) nuclear plant that suffered the world's worst nuclear disaster - narrowly avoiding another tragedy. While Chornobyl (derived from Russian) was historically used, Ukraine now asks the world to use Chornobyl

to respect its language, culture, and sovereignty, moving away from Soviet-era forms.

Maintaining composure at all times was critical to the high-stakes job of keeping the stricken plant powered and protected as it is slowly decommissioned 40 years on, Khomenko said.

"Emotions get in the way of logic, so you need to work calmly," the deputy director for technical operations told Reuters during a recent visit to the plant in its eerily calm wooded exclusion zone some 100 km (60



miles) north of Kyiv. Workers have since patched up the hole with a large panel dwarfed by the hulking, 256 metre-wide steel structure that

covers the damaged reactor four. But further repairs are needed in an environment still too dangerous to linger in.

Large swathes of the exclusion zone have close to normal levels of radiation, but some areas, particularly around the destroyed reactor, remain highly contaminated. It is a reminder of the acute risks at the facility more than four years into a war involving regular Russian air strikes on infrastructure across Ukraine. Just outside, wild moose roam the approach road and nearby aban-

doned town of Prypiat, which has succumbed to nature.

The drone strike means Ukraine will mark the 40th anniversary of the disaster Sunday needing to reshield the old sarcophagus covering tons of radioactive debris inside reactor four, which exploded on April 26, 1986 spewing radioactive clouds across much of Europe.

Khomenko is among around 2,250 employees who still work at the facility, which was briefly occupied by Russian forces in the first few weeks of the

2022 invasion that has postponed plans to dismantle the doomed reactor.

The February 14, 2025 drone strike sparked a weeks-long fire, damaging the membrane sealing the original steel-and-concrete structure hurriedly built over the reactor by Soviet authorities in 1986.

Experts say the 2 billion-euro structure, which was meant to last 100 years when it was built in 2016, must be repaired within the next few years to avoid permanent damage.

# leisure



## Theron recalls terrifying camping experience

Charlize Theron recalled a terrifying camping experience, sharing how she once woke up at 4 a.m. to gunshots nearby. She described how a peaceful setting quickly turned frightening, highlighting how even the most beautiful places can suddenly feel unsafe and deeply unsettling.

## Elizabeth Banks slams misogyny in filmmaking

Elizabeth Banks recalled facing misogyny, revealing she was told women "can't direct men." Citing her work with Ray Liotta in *Cocaine Bear*, she dismissed the stereotype, asserting she proved critics wrong by successfully directing the late actor.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshSpeaks.com  
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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

**ARIES**  
You are in a position to affect other peoples' lives. Since you are very compassionate and caring, people will look up to you whether as a peer or a superior. Make good use of this excess energy to solve prickly issues. Ganesh encourages large-scale projects.

**TAURUS**  
It will be a thought-provoking day with tidbits of success and rewards scattered here and there, says Ganesh. If you feel you got the short end of the stick, do not let it affect your morale. Every sunrise comes with a different promise and today is not the end of the world.

**GEMINI**  
Your family members and your friends will have much higher expectations from you today, and trying to fulfill the same will make you irritable. However, you will figure out creative ways to juggle the many demands made upon you and come out on top at the end of it all, says Ganesh.

**CANCER**  
A wondrous beginning of the day! A unique vibrations in romantic life. Ties with life partner will be cordial. Blissful moments of married life are indicated. Peace and happiness prevail in the family. The whole day will be blooming and jovial, says Ganesh.

**LEO**  
People involved in Sales and Marketing related jobs will attend productive meetings and will make effective presentations. However, delays in journeying are a possibility. It is a good time to recognise your inherent capabilities. You will be able to prove your worth in the next 2-3 days, says Ganesh.

**VIRGO**  
Ganesh suggests that you take a much-needed break from the daily rigmarole. Introduce an element of the exotic in order to replace all the mundane work that fills up your day. You may attend private and social get-togethers, and Ganesh advises you to mingle with other people to keep your spirits high.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesh says you shall pay more attention to your family and family issues. You will want to renovate and change the interior of your house or go in for purchasing new gadgets and décor for the home.

**SCORPIO**  
Just another mundane day in store for you. At work, pressure may mount and lead to a hectic and tedious day. You may even feel irritated at times. Thus, feeling the need to unwind, you may invite your sweetheart for the cup of coffee and spend quality time together.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
For you, appreciation and recognition for the efforts you put in may be delayed, but it's not denied. There's no point losing heart and getting disappointed. This may only affect your work, instead, wait for a better tomorrow, Ganesh says giving you hope.

**CAPRICORN**  
You will feel little lost in the maze of problems and tricky situations. You will, however, find a way out, feels Ganesh. You like to be in a commanding position at work where you guide others and call the shots. But, it has a flip side, too.

**AQUARIUS**  
Flash warning signals to your arch rivals as you will be in a mood to prove you metal and give them a run for their money. Doubts and inhibitions - all will vanish in the air and you will be determined to make your mark, feels Ganesh. While on your path to success you will win the hearts of one and many.

**PISCES**  
You will be inspired to travel to a far off place or to a foreign land because of a very warm invitation. Some old friend or relative residing in a foreign land will get in touch and please you today. Ganesh says that today is a good day for those wishing to go abroad for some specialized study or work.

# KRITI'S success formula

**Mumbai:** Bollywood actress Kriti Sanon, who is currently riding the wave of success owing to the box-office performance of her recent films, has shared her thoughts on what truly shapes success in the entertainment industry and how she views the relationship between hard work, talent and destiny.

From her National Award-winning performance in *Mimi* to winning hearts with her emotional depth in *Tere Ishk Mein*, Kriti's journey reflects both evolution and intent. As she gears up for *Cocktail 2*, she looked back at how identifying the opportunities and working towards them shaped her journey.

Speaking about the role of timing and opportunity in success, Kriti shared, "I do believe in luck, I do believe a lot in destiny, I feel you know it's always a combination of hard work, talent and destiny and also recognising opportunities you know. They might just pass you by and you may not see them or you may not jump at them but that courage to take risk, to take the plunge, to take that leap and you know something that scares you but you still kind of just do it anyway. So I think that courage is also very important to recognise that opportunity. Absolutely".

Her words reflect a grounded perspective on success, where preparation meets timing, but it is courage that bridges the gap.



## Jacky's situationship remark

# Rakul clears air

**Mumbai:** Actor Rakul Preet Singh has addressed the recent controversy surrounding a comment made by her husband, Jackky Bhagnani, putting an end to speculation about their marriage.

Taking to Instagram Friday, Rakul reacted to how a single line from a longer interview was blown out of proportion. Sharing a screenshot of a headline based on Jacky's "situationship" remark, she revealed that the couple initially laughed at how the statement had been interpreted. However, she noted that the humour quickly faded as the narrative began to spiral.

In her response, Rakul highlighted the importance of context and nuance in conversations. She pointed out that reducing an hour-long discussion to one catchy line not only distorts the original intent but also misleads audiences. Calling out the culture of sensationalism, she stressed that meaningful conversations deserve better than being turned into clickbait.

Rakul also subtly urged media platforms to take greater responsibility for the narratives they shape, reminding them of the impact such portrayals can have. Her statement firmly shut down rumours, making it clear that the comment was taken out of context rather than reflecting any issue in their relationship. Rakul and Jacky had tied the knot February 24, 2024 in a destination wedding in Goa.



## Another feather in PeeCee's hat

Los Angeles: Global star Priyanka Chopra Jonas, also known as PeeCee to her fans, is set to receive another major international honour, as she will be awarded the Global Vanguard Honor at the upcoming Gold House Gold Gala 2026. The prestigious event will take place May 9 at The Music Centre in downtown Los Angeles, celebrating excellence and cultural impact across the Asian Pacific community.

Priyanka will be recognised alongside notable names such as Charles Melton, Jet Li, Simu Liu, Eileen Gu and other influential names. Now in its fifth year, the Gold Gala has evolved into a global platform highlighting leadership, representation and influence across industries including entertainment, business, sports and technology. This year's theme, A New Gold World, emphasises unity and shared progress.

Priyanka is being honoured for her remarkable 25-year career that bridges Asian Pacific and Western entertainment. From leading Hindi cinema to establishing herself in Hollywood, she has consistently championed South Asian representation worldwide. Beyond acting, her production house, Purple Pebble Pictures, has supported meaningful regional storytelling.

Her continued global recognition, including features in TIME 100 and Forbes' Most Powerful Women, further cements her influence as a leading international icon.

## Kajol shares her parenting struggles

**Mumbai:** Actor Kajol recently opened up about the challenges of parenting her Gen Z daughter, Nysa Devgan, during an appearance on a podcast. Kajol, who has been married to Ajay Devgn since 1999, admitted that there was a phase when her relationship with Nysa went through significant struggles.

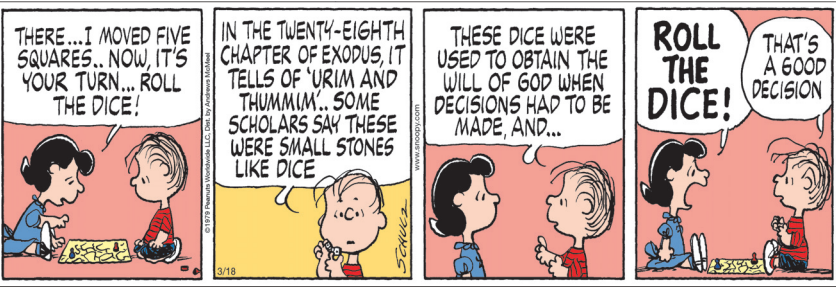
Speaking candidly, Kajol revealed that when Nysa turned 12, hormonal changes led to frequent disagreements with both mother and daughter often reacting irrationally. She shared that the phase lasted nearly three years, during which they found it difficult to communicate, often feeling unwilling to listen to each other. However, Kajol consciously decided to change her approach, choosing to be more patient and rational as the parent.

Over time, she realised that effective parenting about giving advice and more about listening. By allowing Nysa the space to express herself and feel heard, their relationship gradually improved. Kajol described this as her biggest learning from that period.

Now 23, Nysa shares a much stronger bond with her mother. Kajol recently expressed her love in a heartfelt birthday post. Professionally, Kajol last starred in the 2025 theatrical film *Maa* and the Prime Video film *Sarazmeen*. She also hosted the talk show, *Two Munch with Kajol and Twinkle*, with Twinkle Khanna for Prime Video and starred in Season 2 of the JioHotstar series, *The Trial*.



### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

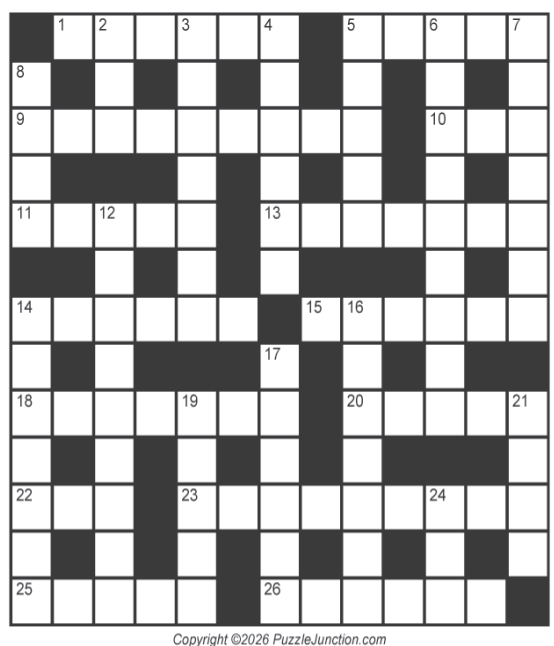


### BREVITY



### FUN post

### CROSSWORD



- Copyright ©2026 PuzzleJunction.com
- Across**  
1 Chinese philosophy  
5 Upright  
9 Become suspicious (5,1,3)  
10 Beer garden  
11 Intense hatred  
13 Give out, as an odour  
14 Resist strongly  
15 Recurring experience? (4,2)
- Down**  
2 Copycat  
3 Panama has one  
4 Sales outlet  
5 Bonus
- 18 Ship sinker  
20 Fresh from the shower  
22 Luau treat  
23 Old printer (3,6)  
25 Kind of panel  
26 Ogres
- 6 Seashore walkway  
7 Scene  
8 Norse capital  
12 Unbiased creature  
14 Tentaclated creature  
16 Enclosed territory  
17 In a way (4,2)  
19 Downy duck  
21 Barbershop call  
24 Reel's partner

### 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.

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

### SOLUTIONS

**CROSSWORD**

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

**SUDOKU**

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

## Textile park in Bolangir soon 3 shot dead in fresh violence in Manipur

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar/Bolangir, April 24:** Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Friday announced that a sugar mill and a textile park will soon be set up in Bolangir.

While attending the state-level National Panchayati Raj Day celebration in Bolangir, Majhi said that the state government is committed to realising the efforts to build a developed India under the strong leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"Our government is giving priority to water, land, forest protection, education, health, employment and women empowerment in rural areas," he said.

On the occasion, the CM launched 304 development projects worth ₹580 crore in the district. While 268 projects worth ₹329 crore were dedicated to the public, foundation stone of 36 projects, including a new nursing college at Bhima Bhoi Medical College and Hospital, worth ₹252 crore was laid.

"A sugar mill and a textile park will be established in Bolangir soon," the CM announced.

The CM launched the distribution of work orders and the first instalment of funds to more than 50,000 beneficiaries under the Antyodaya Gruha Yojana.

He also launched the 'Panchayati Raj Samikhya' portal and the 'e-Panchayat



Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, along with Deputy CM Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo and Panchayati Raj Minister Rabi Narayan Naik, being felicitated during the state-level celebration of National Panchayati Raj Day in Bolangir, Friday

Sabha' portal.

The CM further said that pucca houses are being provided to poor and deprived families through the Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana and Antyodaya Gruha Yojana. In the coming days, Odisha will get 10 lakh houses under the Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana, he added.

He further said, "To fulfil the vision of a developed India and a prosperous Odisha, we have started a comprehensive plan to empower the poor, women and youth."

Majhi called upon everyone to work together as a

team to build prosperous panchayats, prosperous cities, and prosperous Odisha.

Encouraging the panchayat representatives, the CM described his experiences and lessons learned during his time as sarpanch and said, "Today it is time for the panchayat representatives to work for the development of all - the poor, women, youth and farmers."

On the occasion, the CM awarded the districts, blocks and village panchayats that have achieved excellence in the field of MGNREGS and rural housing.

Deputy Chief Minister Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo said, "The main goal of our government is to achieve a developed Odisha and create strong villages. Therefore, Panchayati Raj institutions will have to be strengthened."

Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water Minister Rabi Narayan Naik said that rural empowerment and people-centric governance have been identified as the key pillars of a developed Odisha.

"An outlay of ₹44,309 crore has been made for ru-

ral development in the 2026-27 Budget. This reflects our government's commitment to the overall development of rural Odisha," Naik said.

Health and Family Welfare and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Mukesh Mahaling said, "Under the leadership of PM Narendra Modi at the Centre and CM Mohan Charan Majhi in the state, the benefits of Panchayati Raj system have reached every household today. Our government is providing all facilities to the people in rural Odisha through the Panchayati Raj department."

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Imphal, April 24:** Three persons were killed in two separate incidents of firing between armed groups of rival tribal communities in Manipur's Ukhrul district Friday morning, officials said.

In one incident near Mullam village, security forces recovered two bodies around 11:25am, they said.

The deceased, identified as L Siltou and P Haolai, were found in camouflage outfits with bullet injuries, officials added.

Earlier, a heavy exchange of fire broke out between armed militants at Mullam village in Tangkhul Naga-majority district around 5:30am.

Some outlying houses in the village were also set on fire by the militants.

Meanwhile, Kuki Organisation for Human Rights Trust condemned the killing of "two village volunteers" and the burning of houses at Mullam and Songphal villages.

The organisation demanded immediate registration of an FIR and a time-bound investigation into the incident.

In a separate incident, a 29-year-old man, identified as H Jamang from Chatric Khullen in Kamjong dis-



In one incident near Mullam village, security forces recovered bodies of L Siltou and P Haolai around 11:25am. Earlier, a heavy exchange of fire broke out between armed militants in the village in Tangkhul Naga-majority district around 5:30am

In another incident, a 29-year-old man, identified as H Jamang from Chatric Khullen in Kamjong district, was killed on the spot in an ambush by armed militants near Sinakeithei village in Ukhrul district early Friday morning

In a statement, the organisation said, "Following constant movement and disruption along Sirarakhong and Sinakeithei (in Ukhrul district) by armed Kuki cadres, Naga village guards were posted near Sirarakhong and had gone out for patrol when they were ambushed by Kukis."

Tension had been brewing in the district and neighbouring Kamjong district after suspected militants killed two Tangkhul Naga civilians, including a retired army personnel, in an ambush at a civilian convoy at TM Kasom in Ukhrul district April 18.

Tangkhul Naga bodies have claimed Kuki militants to be behind the killing, while Kuki organisations have denied any involvement in the ambush.

### Assembly special session April 30

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, April 24:** The Assembly will hold a special session April 30 to discuss issues related to women's participation in politics, an official notification said Friday evening.

According to the provisional calendar issued by the Assembly Secretariat, "a one-day Special Session will be held Thursday (April 30) to discuss women's participation in politics".

Notably, the Centre had convened a special sitting of Parliament beginning April 16 to pass the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026, which sought to redistribute Lok Sabha seats on the basis of the 2011 Census to expedite the implementation of women's reservation.

The Bill, however, was defeated by the Opposition.

## 10 Indians died fighting for Russia: Centre to SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 24:** Ten Indians have died while fighting alongside Russian forces in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, the Centre told the Supreme Court Friday.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi said the situation requires "tactful handling" as there may be immense difficulty in recovering mortal remains from the war zone.

The submissions about the unfortunate deaths of 10 Indians were made by Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, representing the Centre, before the bench that was hearing

a plea seeking directions to the government to take steps to facilitate the safe repatriation of 26 Indians who have allegedly been detained in Russia and forced to fight the ongoing war.

The petitioners have alleged that their kin were lured to Russia under the pretext of lucrative job opportunities, only to have their passports confiscated and be coerced into combat.

Of the 26 individuals specifically named in the petition, the ASG confirmed that 10 have died, one is imprisoned on criminal charges and one has chosen to remain in Russia voluntarily.

The Centre said while some individuals were misled by unscrupulous agents, many had entered

into "voluntary contracts" with Russian entities.

The petitioners' counsel refuted the government's claim of "voluntary" service and said this is a clear case of human trafficking.

The ASG further said the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has faced logistical hurdles and a lack of cooperation from some families regarding the repatriation of mortal remains.

"The government is committed to supporting every citizen in distress," she said.

"In one instance, we arranged for the return of mortal remains, but the family told us to keep them for three months as they were pursuing legal action. There are complex human angles involved," Bhati said.

## 'Cretaceous Kraken' prowled seas during age of dinosaurs

REUTERS

**Washington, April 24:** The Kraken is a huge tentacled sea monster from Norse folklore that drags ships and sailors down into the deep. During the age of dinosaurs, new research shows, there existed a creature as close to a real-life Kraken as you could possibly get - an enormous octopus that prowled the seas as an apex predator.

Scientists said fossils of beaks - the soft-bodied invertebrate's hard jaw structure - indicate that an octopus species named Nanaimoteuthis haggarti that lived about 86 to 72 million years ago during the Cretaceous Period ranged from 22 to 61 feet (6.6 to 18.6 metres) long.

"These animals were remarkable. With their large bodies, long arms, pow-

erful jaws and advanced behaviour, they represent what could be described as a real 'Cretaceous Kraken,'" said palaeontologist Yasuhiko Iba of Hokkaido University in Japan, lead author of the research published Thursday in the journal Science.

"For roughly the past 370 million years, marine ecosystems have been thought to be dominated by large vertebrate predators - first fishes and sharks, then marine reptiles and later whales. Our study shows that giant invertebrates, namely octopuses, also functioned as apex predators in the Cretaceous sea," Iba said.

Iba said Nanaimoteuthis haggarti is one of the largest invertebrates on record. "Until now, the largest-known invertebrate has been the modern giant



An artist's reconstruction of Nanaimoteuthis haggarti

squid, which can reach about 12 metres (39 feet) in total length," Iba said.

The intense wear observed on the beaks is consistent, the researchers said, with repeated crushing of hard structures such as bones and shells, indicative of a predator that hunted large fish, shelled tentacled creatures, clams


and other sizable prey.

"In the largest specimens, about 10% of the total jaw length appears to have been lost due to wear. This is more severe than what is typically seen in modern octopuses and cuttlefishes that feed on hard prey," Iba said.

The beaks were shaped like those of certain deep-sea octopuses alive today that swim with the help of fins, leading the researchers to conclude that these Cretaceous octopuses also bore fins.

The numerous beak fossils studied in the research came from Japan and Canada's Vancouver Island. The researchers re-examined previously known specimens and discovered new fossils as well.

The researchers also studied the beaks of a close relative called Nanaimoteuthis jeletzkyi that lived about 100 to 72 million years ago.



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CBC 19108/13/0056/2627

# Odisha Police nabs Delhi man in ₹2.06 cr investment scam

PNN/AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, April 24:** The Cyber Crime wing of Odisha police Friday busted an online investment fraud racket by arresting the mastermind of the gang from Dwarka area of New Delhi.

The accused identified as Vinay Kumar Sharma (56) had defrauded a man from Odisha to the tune of ₹2.06 crore by ensnaring the victim in the fraud on the pretext of exorbitantly high investment return, said police.

In this case, the complainant was contacted by unidentified cyber fraudsters through WhatsApp December 23, 2024 and was automatically added to a WhatsApp group. The fraudsters, posing as financial experts, falsely introduced an individual as a fund manager of a reputed company and lured the complainant with promises of high returns on investments.

The group regularly shared free stock market tips and daily technical analysis of NIF-



TY, thereby winning the complainant's trust. Believing the investment tips to be genuine, the complainant transferred a total amount of ₹2.06 crore from his three different bank accounts to five different beneficiary accounts through 54 transactions during the period from December 23, 2024 to March 24, 2025, as directed by the fraudsters.

When the complainant attempted to withdraw the so-called investment returns, the fraudsters, posing as the 'risk control team,' repeatedly refused to release the funds on various false pretexts. Realising that he had fallen victim to a well-orchestrated cyber fraud

conspiracy, the complainant lodged an FIR at Cyber Crime Police Station.

The investigators conducted an in-depth analysis of financial transactions and digital evidence. Based on credible leads, the team carried out a successful operation at Dwarka and identified one of the perpetrators as Sharma.

The accused was apprehended, and various incriminating materials including mobile phones, SIM cards, Aadhaar cards, PAN cards, and other evidence were seized from his possession.

Sharma was arrested and produced before the Judicial Magistrate First Class-II, Dwarka Court No. 05, under sections 318(4)/319(2)/336(2)/336(3)/338/340(2)/61(2)/3(5) of BNS of the Information Technology Act, 2000. He has been brought on transit remand and will be produced before the Court of Sub Divisional Judicial Magistrate, Bhubaneswar for further legal action, police said.



SCORCHING SUMMER: A potter fits water tap on an earthen pot near Khandagiri in Bhubaneswar Friday

PH: BIKASH NAYAK

## Revenue Board orders fast disposal of pending cases



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, April 24:** A high-level review meeting chaired by Revenue Board member Satyabrata Sahu was held here recently to assess and accelerate the functioning of 41 revisional courts under the Board of Revenue.

The board issued strict directions for speedy disposal of nearly 76,000 pending cases, with special priority to land dispute cases involving Lord Jagannath and Lord Lingaraj.

Presiding officers from courts in Cuttack and Bhubaneswar attended the meeting, along with senior officials who joined virtually. Emphasising faster justice delivery in land-related disputes, Sahu directed that all necessary reports and lower court records be submitted without delay.

All revisional courts have been instructed to function at least three days a week, and officers have been asked to prioritise the disposal of long-pending cases. The board also stressed immediate compliance with high court orders.

To enhance transparency,

**The board issued strict directions for speedy disposal of nearly 76,000 pending cases, with special priority to land dispute cases involving Lord Jagannath and Lord Lingaraj**

courts will actively use digital systems like CCMS 2.0 to update cause lists, interim orders, and final judgments. Cases may be dismissed if petitioners remain absent for more than three consecutive hearings.

The board further directed strict protection of government, forest, and endowment lands, including properties linked to religious institutions, as well as lands belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

The move aims to ensure timely justice, curb land-related corruption, and strengthen the protection of public land across the state.

## Prioritise land identification for GMAPV: Govt to Collectors

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 24:** State government has directed all District Collectors to identify suitable land on a priority basis for the construction of schools under Godabarish Mishra Adarsha Primary Vidyalaya (GMAPV) scheme.

In a letter to all collectors, Revenue and Disaster Management department Additional Chief Secretary Arabinda Kumar Padhee instructed them to identify five acres of suitable land and transfer it to School and Mass Education department for establishment of the schools.

The GMAPV scheme is a flagship initiative of the state government aimed at providing quality education at the Gram



Panchayat level.

Under the first phase of the programme, 118 schools were selected, and a state-level foundation stone laying ceremony was held January 7, 2026. In the second phase, another 212 schools have already been approved by the government.

The government has also decided to include more Gram Panchayats in upcoming

phases of the scheme.

In this regard, collectors have been asked to coordinate with field-level officials of S&ME department to identify land. Once the required acquisition forms are submitted by the competent authorities, immediate steps have been ordered for transfer of identified land to the department.

## NHRC seeks report on death of 2 schoolgirls

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, April 24:** Taking suo motu cognisance of a media report regarding the death of two girl students in Gajapati district after an iron gate of a government primary school collapsed on them, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued notices to the Chief Secretary and the Gajapati Superintendent of Police, calling for a detailed report within two weeks.

According to the report, the incident occurred April 15

when the girls were playing near the school entrance and were trapped under the debris after the gate collapsed. Locals rushed them to a nearby hospital, where doctors declared them dead. The deceased students were identified as Beckylesh Raita (10), and Idanti Raita (9).

The NHRC has observed that the contents of the report, if true, indicate serious lapses leading to the violation of the victims' human rights and has sought a comprehensive report from the authorities for further examination of the matter.

## Experts flag safety risks by corrosion

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 24:** On the occasion of World Corrosion Awareness Day, industry experts highlighted the growing economic and safety risks posed by corrosion, warning that India loses nearly 3 to 5 per cent of its GDP annually due to damage caused to steel assets, infrastructure and industrial systems.

Speaking about the state, experts said that Odisha is witnessing rapid industrialisation and major investments in roads, bridges, ports, railways and urban infrastructure. The state is particularly vulnerable because of its humid climate, long coastline and saline air, which accelerate the rusting and weakening of steel structures.

### WORLD CORROSION AWARENESS DAY

They noted that sectors such as transportation, construction, power and manufacturing in the state face increasing corrosion-related challenges, leading to frequent repairs, higher maintenance costs and premature replacement of assets.

International Zinc Association director Rahul Sharma said corrosion should not be viewed merely as a maintenance issue but as a serious economic concern affecting long-term infrastructure efficiency. He said many losses can be prevented if protection measures are built into the design stage rather than taken up after visible damage occurs.

Experts urged policymakers, builders and infrastructure agencies to prioritise durability, lifecycle performance and preventive corrosion management as India scales up public investment in modern infrastructure.

## DEOs, ADEOs trained on online safety for children

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 24:** A training programme on 'Online Safety for Children' was organised for District Education Officers (DEOs) and ADEOs (Academic) through a joint initiative of Odisha State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (OSCP) and ChildFund India. Around 80 participants attended the workshop, including officials from OSCPCR, OSEPA, School and Mass Education (S&ME) department and ChildFund India.

OSCP chairperson Babita Patra inaugurated the programme and underlined the growing need to ensure children's safety in the digital space. Education department has a vital role in protecting children from online threats and exploitation, Patra said.

S&ME Commissioner-cum-Secretary N Thirumala Naik appreciated the initiative taken by OSCPCR and ChildFund India. He urged participants to create awareness among children and parents to prevent cyber abuse and online exploitation.

OSEPA State Project Director

Ananya Das stressed the need to integrate online safety education in the school curriculum and suggested adopting interactive and game-based learning methods to make the subject more engaging and accessible for children.

OSEPA Additional Director Sangita Behera highlighted the role of institutions such as OSEPA and OSCPCR in preventing online abuse and developing effective child protection strategies in the digital environment.

ChildFund India Director (Programme) Shrabanti Sen presented findings from a pilot project on online safety conducted in Kendrapara. She emphasised the importance of coordination among departments such as Home, S&ME, and Women and Child Development to strengthen online safety measures across the state.

Among those present were OSCPCR members Manasmita Khuntia, Kasturi Mishra and Chandana Das and OSEPA joint directors Santosh Kumar Rout and Prachi Tanaya Giri. OSCPCR Secretary Smruti Prajna Priyadarshini coordinated the programme.



## BDA hosts free health camp for employees

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 24:** Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA), in collaboration with CARE Hospitals, organised a free health camp for its employees at BDA office here Friday.

The initiative, aimed at promoting health and well-being of employees by offering a range of basic medical check-ups. Services provided at the camp included blood pressure measurement, random blood sugar tests, ECG examinations and eye screenings. In addition to diagnostic services, a team of doctors also offered free medical consultations and guidance to employees.

Speaking on the occasion, BDA Vice Chairman Chanchal Rana said the health camp was part of an ongoing effort to prioritise employee welfare. He added that similar programmes would be organised in the future to encourage preventive healthcare and regular health monitoring among staff members.

The medical team from CARE Hospitals comprised Dr Bikram Keshari Mohapatra (Cardiology), Dr Dillip Mohanty (Gastroenterology), and Dr Adyasha Nanda (Medicine). Marketing head Lokanath Dash also supported the initiative.

## Treat citizens with dignity: HC to govt

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, April 24:** Expressing disappointment over the state government agencies suspending the appointment of 105 regular employees at the state Printing, Stationery & Publication department and downgrading them to the status of casual workers, the Orissa High Court has ruled that the authorities cannot act like the East India Company of the bygone era and that they must learn to treat citizens with dignity, not as slaves.

The unsavoury episode of bureaucratic high-handedness dates back to 1994. The Director of Printing, Stationery & Publication at Cuttack, being the appointing authority, had engaged 105 persons as casual labourers after conducting interviews and verifying their eligibility and qualifications during 1992-93.

They were later regularised in 1994 as per the then Director's order. However, their joy was short-lived. Before the ink on the orders had dried, another set of "strange" orders was issued, suspending the regularisation. Eventually, their status was reverted to that of casual labourers.

Aggrieved, the employees approached the State Administra-



tive Tribunal (SAT), which kept the impugned order in abeyance. However, the SAT did not dispose of the case conclusively. The litigation was later transferred to the High Court after the government abolished the SAT in 2019.

"The Director had not followed the principles of natural justice, which are considered a part of Article 14 of the Constitution of India. The Tribunal also failed in this regard, which constitutes a second error apparent on the face of the impugned judgement, warranting our interference to set aside the injustice caused to the petitioners," the division bench of Justice Krishna Shripad Dixit and Justice Chittaranjan Dash stated in its judgement.

"Neither the stand of the government nor the impugned

order of the Tribunal reflects this. Therefore, they need to be quashed with costs, so that officials wake up from the slumber of their colonial mindset and learn to treat citizens with dignity, not as slaves," the bench noted.

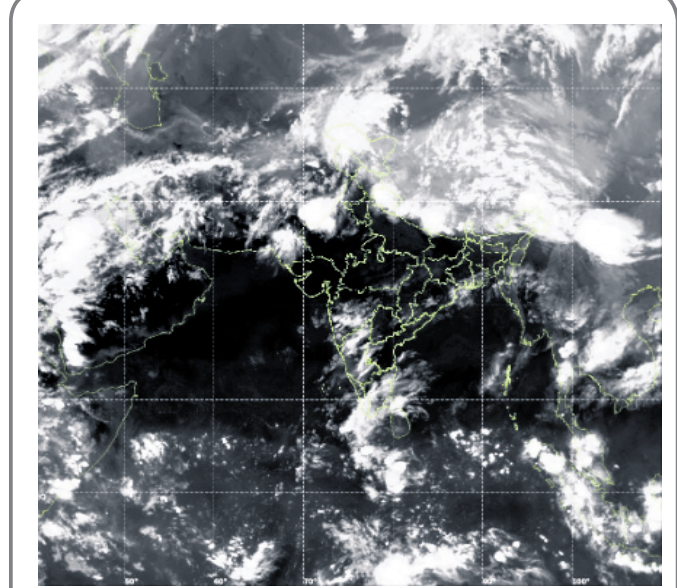
Of the 105 persons initially engaged as casual labourers, 57 have retired upon attaining the age of superannuation, 21 have passed away, and one has been removed from service.

At present, 26 persons remain in service. All of them are to be granted the benefits of the 1994 regularisation orders, along with consequential financial benefits. These benefits must also be extended to the retired employees or the legal heirs of the deceased.

With respect to those who have retired or passed away, the government and the Director have been directed to identify their legal heirs and transfer the financial benefits to their bank accounts within three months, and to report compliance to the Registrar General of the Court.

Any default or delay will attract interest at the rate of 1 per cent for the first month and 2 per cent for each subsequent month, recoverable from the erring government officials, the bench concluded.

MARKET WATCH					
CURRENCY		BOURSES		COMMODITIES	
INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION
DOLLAR	94.18 ▲ 0.10	SENSEX	76664.21 ▼ 999.79	GOLD	₹152,854 ▲ ₹1093
EURO	110.23 ▲ 0.18	NIFTY	23897.95 ▼ 275.10	SILVER	₹244,200 ▲ ₹2687



WEATHER				FORECAST
	BBSR	CTC		
Max Temp	43.0°	41.0°	Humid, Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning, gusty winds	
Min Temp	27.0°	25.0°		
Humidity	79%	66%		
Rainfall	Nil	Nil		

Deep Ear: Mayurbhanj innovator develops AI system to save forests



PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar/Baripada, April 24: A cutting-edge innovation in forest conservation has emerged from Odisha, as Deb Prasanna Mohanty of Mayurbhanj has developed "Deep Ear," an advanced sound-based Artificial Intelligence (AI) system designed to protect forests and curb poaching.

to operate effectively even in remote forest areas without mobile network connectivity. Affordability is another major highlight of the innovation. While similar technologies offered by international firms such as the US-based Rainforest Connection cost around ₹1.5 lakh per unit, Mohanty has developed "Deep Ear" at an estimated cost of just ₹12,000, making it a practical solution for widespread deployment by Indian forest departments.

Rabi paddy procurement in Bargarh from May 11

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bargarh, April 24: The procurement of Rabi paddy in Bargarh district will begin from May 11 at 183 mandis (procurement centres) across the western Odisha district. Collection will take place from 6:00am to 11:00am.



Singh Bariha, and Zilla Parishad Chairperson Manini Bhoi, who shared their suggestions for smooth execution of the procurement process. Also present were SP PS Meena, Chief Development Officer Lalat Kumar Luha, Additional District Magistrate Madhuchanda Sahu, Bargarh Sub-Collector Prasanna Kumar Pandey, Padampur Sub-Collector Hemsagar Bhoi, along with officials from the Supply, Cooperative, and Regulated Market Committee (RMC) departments. They provided updates on the preparatory arrangements for procurement.

It was informed that 1,05,494 farmers have registered so far for Rabi paddy procurement in the district. Registered farmers can sell their paddy at mandis under Attabira, Bargarh, and Padampur RMCs. The meeting decided that millers will supply jute bags to registered farmers. To ensure farmer convenience, all mandis will be equipped with digital moisture meters, tarpaulins, weighbridges, and quality testing kits. Additionally, facilities such as waiting areas, shade, drinking water, lighting, toilets, CCTV, and display boards

showing paddy prices will be arranged. The District Collector directed officials to ensure these facilities. To prevent distress sales, instructions were given to record complaints received via toll-free numbers at district, sub-division, and mandi-level control rooms and resolve those promptly. Continuous 24-hour monitoring of live CCTV footage at mandis was also discussed. Furthermore, each RMC will use public announcement systems to inform farmers about FAQ standards and input subsidies. Officials were instructed to maintain good communication with farmers by visiting villages, ensure proper token distribution, and prevent illegal transportation of paddy. Strict police deployment and checking at border areas of the district were also ordered. Millers and farmer representatives were also present at the meeting.

Kerala-bound bus overturns; 5 injured

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Balasure, April 24: Five persons were injured as a Kerala-bound bus overturned in Balasure district Friday, police said. The accident happened near Sheragada when the driver of the bus, in which 47 labourers from Assam were travelling to the southern state, lost control they said. Locals rescued the passengers and took them to nearby hospitals. Five seriously injured persons were taken to the Balasure District Headquarters Hospital. They were later shifted to hospitals in Cuttack and Bhubaneswar for better treatment, a police officer said. Meanwhile, the state Transport department arranged for train tickets for the remaining passengers, officials said.

Probe ordered into Bheden water row

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jharsuguda, April 24: The Sub-Collector of Jharsuguda has ordered an inquiry into alleged illegal water extraction from the Bheden River by SMC Power Generation Limited.



An emergency meeting, chaired by Sub-Collector Sabyasachi Panda, was held Friday following complaints that the company was drawing water illegally in Jharsuguda Sadar block. The superintending engineer of the Burla Dam division said under the River Regulation Act, 2025, no entity may obstruct a river's natural flow. Digging wells in the riverbed or extracting water through artificial means is illegal, he said, adding that water may be drawn only if the natural flow

remains unaffected and levels are normal. Local representatives, including sarpanches of Jamera, Hirma and Malda panchayats, and Zilla Parishad member Digambar Bhoi, raised concerns and sought strict action. Tehsildar Sadakar Kumbhar said the Sub-Collector has directed dam authorities and local representatives to conduct a joint inspection and submit a report. Action will follow if violations are confirmed. The meeting was attended by SMC AGM Jagadish Sahu, police officials and local residents.

Youth kills self fearing police after eloping with 13-year-old

POST NEWS NETWORK

Dhenkanal, April 24: A 23 year old youth who had eloped with a minor girl to Mumbai died by suicide Friday, allegedly fearing police action, after returning to his village in Dhenkanal district. The deceased, identified as Benu Pani Sahu, a resident of Nimidha village under Motanga police limits was found hanging inside his home. Police recovered the body and registered an unnatural death case. Sahu had fled to Mumbai with a 13 year old girl April 1. Her family lodged a com-

plaint at Angul Sadar PS, leading to a case (272/26), April 8. Earlier this week, police questioned Sahu's parents, prompting him to return with the girl. However, after sending her to a relative's house, he took his own life. Villagers alleged police pressure contributed to the tragedy and demanded suspension of officers involved. The body was eventually taken for post mortem around 2:30pm. Authorities said the minor has been handed back to her family. Angul Sadar police denied detaining Sahu's parents, stating they were only called for questioning.

FRAUDSTERS SIPHON OFF ₹3.34CR FROM UCO BANK

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, April 24: Fraudsters have siphoned off government funds worth ₹3.34 crore from multiple accounts of UCO Bank branches at Baripada and Betnoti in Mayurbhanj district, with cases registered at two police stations. According to sources, the fraud was carried out by changing registered mobile numbers and email IDs linked to the bank accounts. A case (178/26)

has been filed at Betnoti police station, while another (262/26) has been registered at Baripada Town police station. In Baripada, ₹1.08 crore was withdrawn from a municipal account. Following the incident, the branch manager lodged a complaint, prompting police to launch an investigation. The bank has since restored the withdrawn amount to the municipal account. In a separate incident at the



Betnoti branch, an unidentified non-Odia individual allegedly impersonated a representative of the Block Development Officer (BDO). The person submitted forged documents bearing the

BDO's signature and seal to update mobile numbers and email IDs linked to two government accounts of the Panchayat Samiti. The next day, the suspect reportedly returned and requested changes to the e-banking user ID and password. However, officials discovered April 21 that ₹2.26 crore had been withdrawn from the accounts. Betnoti branch manager Arpita Pal has filed a complaint. Police are investigating both cases.

Youth sentenced to 10-yr RI for sexually harassing minor girl

PNN & AGENCIES

Phulbani, April 24: A court in Kandhamal district Friday sentenced a youth to 10 years of rigorous imprisonment (RI) for sexual harassment of a 14-year-old girl in 2025. The court of Ad-hoc Additional District & Sessions Judge (Fast Track Special Court), Phulbani, convicted the 19-year-old youth and pronounced the verdict. The court also imposed a fine of ₹5,000 on the convict, and non-payment of the penalty will result in additional one year of rigorous imprisonment, Kandhamal SP Harisha BC said. The court also ordered payment of ₹2 lakh compensation to the victim. According to police, the crime was committed July 23 last year in Phulbani. The convict was arrested August 5, 2025, police said.

Woman jumps off hospital roof after hubby's death, dies

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir, April 24: A tragic incident unfolded at Bhima Bhoi Medical College and Hospital in Bolangir Friday as a woman died after jumping from the hospital's first-floor roof upon learning of her husband's death. Police said Padmini Bag, 30, of Dumerbahal village in Puntala police station limits, was unable to bear the shock after being informed that her husband, Sevak Ram Bag, 35, had succumbed to injuries sustained in a road accident late Thursday night. According to reports, Sevak Ram was travelling home in an auto-rickshaw when it collided head-on with a speeding truck near Randa village on National Highway 57. He was rushed to Bhima Bhoi Medical College and Hospital, where doctors declared him dead. Relatives brought Padmini to the hospital Friday morning. Upon hearing confirmation of her husband's death, she jumped off the first-floor roof. She was admitted with critical injuries but died during treatment, hospital officials said. The couple leaves behind three young children, two sons and a daughter. Their bodies were taken to their native village amid an atmosphere of grief and mourning.

Peaceful census enumeration underway in disputed Kotia

Andhra is reportedly planning a separate population enumeration in the region following Odisha's ongoing exercise

POST NEWS NETWORK

Koraput, April 24: The state government has begun preliminary house listing and population enumeration for Census 2027 across 21 disputed villages in Kotia panchayat, with officials reaching even the most remote hamlets along the Andhra border. Local social worker Ranjit Pangi said the exercise is being conducted systematically and without disruption, including in villages deep within hilly and forested terrain. "Officials are working sincerely in all the villages

along the Andhra border," Pangi said. "From early morning till evening, they are travelling through difficult terrain under intense heat to ensure no household is left out." He said the peaceful conduct of the census reflects local trust in the Odisha administration despite the long-standing interstate boundary dispute. Kotia, under Pottangi block in Koraput district, has remained a sensitive region due to overlapping territorial claims by Odisha and Andhra Pradesh. Administrative activities by both states often draw attention, particularly during welfare drives and official surveys. Pangi added that Andhra Pradesh is reportedly planning a separate population enumeration in the region following Odisha's ongoing exercise, a move that could again spotlight the unresolved boundary issue.

SHRI LAL BHADUR SHASTRI NATIONAL SANSKRIT UNIVERSITY (Central University) B-4, Qutab Institutional Area, New Delhi-110016. The University invites online applications for regular recruitment to various categories of non-teaching positions. For details, please visit the University website https://www.slbsrsv.ac.in. The last date for receipt of online application is 21.05.2026. cbc 21371/11/0001/2627 Sd./- REGISTRAR

OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL - SUNDARGARH Tender Call Notice No. 2370, Dt.23/04/2026 COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement NOTICE INVITING TENDER Bid Reference No. SNGM-02/2026-27 / Dt. 23.4.2026 1. Total No. of Works for which Tenders Invited: 25 Nos. 2. Place of Execution: Different locations of Sundargarh Municipality. 3. Estimated Cost of Individual Works excluding GST: Rs. 126916.00 to 1609512.00 4. Eligible Class of Contractors: Registered Contractors of Class - 'D' to Class - 'C' as indicated against each work mentioned in the tender call notice. 5. Intending bidders have to participate through "On-Line" bidding only. The website for online bidding is https://www.tendersodisha.gov.in. 6. The bid documents will be available in the above website from 11.00 A.M of Dt. 27.04.2026 to 5.00 P.M of Dt. 12.05.2026 for online bidding. 7. Bids received will be opened on e-Procurement System at 11.00 A.M onwards on Dt.13.05.2026 8. The bidder must possess valid and compatible Digital Signature Certificate (DSC). 9. The DTCN for bid shall be available in the e-procurement portal https://www.tendersodisha.gov.in for on-line bidding. Sd./- Executive Officer, Sundargarh Municipality OIPR-13001/13130/1/26-27/0002

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, BURLA IRRIGATION DIVISION, BURLA Phone No. : 0663-2430445, E-mail id : sambalpurirrigation@rediffmail.com 'e' Tender Call Notice No. BID-01/2026-27 (Online) 1. Nature of Works : Improvement to Canal Structure 2. Nos. of works : 18 (Eighteen) Nos. 3. Amount Put to Tender : Rs.8.11 Lakhs to 22.20 Lakhs Approximately 4. Period of Completion : As per D.T.C.N 5. Date and Time of availability of Bid Document in the Portal : Dt : 30.04.2026 at 11.00 A.M. to Dt : 11.05.2026 up to 05.00 P.M. 6. Last Date / Time for receipt of Bids in the Portal : Dt : 11.05.2026 up to 05.00 P.M. 7. Date of opening of Bid : Dt : 12.05.2026 at 11.00 A.M. 8. Last date & time of seeking tender clarification : Dt : 11.05.2026 up to 02.00 P.M. 9. Name and Address of the Officer Inviting Bid : Superintending Engineer, Burla Irrigation Division, Burla At/Po-Burla - 768017, Dist. - Sambalpur, Email Id : sambalpurirrigation@rediffmail.com Further detail can be seen from the e-procurement portal www.tendersodisha.gov.in. Sd./- Superintending Engineer, Burla Irrigation Division, Burla OIPR-32001/32436/1/26-27/0001

नेशनल फर्टिलाइजर्स लिमिटेड (भारत सरकार का उपक्रम) आंचलिक कार्यालय : ए/ए-2, ऑफिस काम्पलेक्स, गौतम नगर, भोपाल-23 फोन : 9337223497, वेबसाइट : www.nationalfertilizers.com किसान पर कार्यालय परिसर के लिए सूचना नेशनल फर्टिलाइजर्स लिमिटेड (एन.एफ.एल.), भारत सरकार का उपक्रम, भुवनेश्वर शहर में निम्नतम 700 वर्ग फीट कारपेट एरिया मार्केटिंग भुवनेश्वर कार्यालय प्रयोग हेतु लीज पर तीन वर्षों लेने के इच्छुक है। कोई भी इच्छुक व्यक्ति निम्नलिखित दस्तावेज एन.एफ.एल. वेबसाइट www.nationalfertilizers.com देख एवं डाउनलोड कर सकते है। निम्नलिखित जमा करने की आखिरी तारीख 04.05.2026 (दोपहर 12.00 बजे) भविष्य में इस निविदा से संबंधित किसी भी प्रकार की सूचना केवल एन.एफ.एल., की वेबसाइट पर ही दी जायेगी। दस्तावेज जमा करें। आंचलिक प्रबंधक, भोपाल

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No.25001/29/2627 OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS DIVISION-II, MALKANGIRI E-mail : ruralworksdivisioniimalkangiri@yahoo.in INVITATION FOR BIDS (SHORT NOTICE) "E" PROCUREMENT NOTICE NO. RWDSE\_MKG\_II\_ONLINE\_01/2026-27 1. Name of the work : Building works in the District of Malkangiri for the year 2026-27. 2. Total No. of work : 05 Number of Building Work 3. Estimated Cost : Rs.33.62 Lakhs to Rs.63.03 Lakhs 4. Period of Completion : As Specified in the Annexure 5. Class of Contractor : As Specified in the Annexure 6. Cost of Tender Paper : Cost of tender is to be remitted ONLINE as specified in column-6 of the Annexure 7. Details Projects : As Specified in the Annexure Other details as follows a) Procurement Officer : Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division-II, Malkangiri b) Availability of Tender : 28.04.2026 at 11.00 A.M. to 13.05.2026 up to 5.30 P.M. Online c) Last date & time of seeking : 12.05.2026 up to 5.00 P.M. of Tender clarification d) Technical Bid Opening : 14.05.2026 at 11.00 A.M. e) Financial Bid Opening : To be intimated Separately f) Decision to conduct Lottery : If required to decide the agency, transparent Lottery shall be conducted on date 22.05.2026 at 11.00 A.M. in Office Chamber of the undersigned. Further details can be seen from the Govt. website www.tendersorissa.gov.in Sd./- Superintending Engineer Rural Works Division-II, Malkangiri OIPR-25001/25079/1/26-27/0001

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER DEOGARH (R&B) DIVISION, DEOGARH INVITATIONS FOR BIDS (IFB) E-mail ID: eepwddeogarh@gmail.com Letter No. 1477, Dtd.20.04.2026 Invitation for Bids Bid Identification No. SE PWD DGR No.01 of 2026-27 1. The Superintending Engineer, Deogarh (R&B) Division, Deogarh, on behalf of Government of Odisha, invites percentage rate bids in Single cover system in ONLINE MODE only, for Electrical work as detailed below. 2. Nature of Work : Electrical Work 3. No. of Works : Electrical 01 No. 4. Bid Cost : Rs.6000/- 5. Class of Contractor : Specialized agency actively involved in fire fighting work having MoU with associate electrical contractor (MV/HT or Above) having valid license from ELBO 6. Availability of Bid documents in the website : From dt.27.04.2026 to 17.00 hours of dt.07.05.2026 7. Date of Opening of Technical Bid : Dt.08.05.2026 at 11.30 AM 8. The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website: http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in. Any addendum/corrigendum/ cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website only. Sd./- Superintending Engineer Deogarh (R&B) Division OIPR-34001/34061/1/26-27/0001

EAST COAST RAILWAY Tender Notice No. 05/ET/SP/ENGG/2026-27, Dtd.: 16.04.2026 (1) e-Tender No. 02-eT-SDEMS-SBP-26 Name of the Work: MAINTENANCE OF FISH PLATED JOINTS USING EXPANSION KIT AND SPLIT SLEEVES FOR COLD EXPANSION OF BOLT HOLES OVER SAMBALPUR DIVISION. Approx. cost of the work : ₹ 34,92,800/-, Bid Security: ₹ 69,900/- (2) e-Tender No. 03-eT-SDEMS-SBP-26 Name of the Work: UPGRADEMENT OF MANNED LEVEL CROSSING WITH RUBBERIZED ROAD SURFACE AT 23 NOS. OF LEVEL CROSSING NO. RV-163, JT-107, JT-109, JT-111, JT-115, JT-116, JT-117, JT-126, JT-128, JT-129, LJ-6, LJ-11, LJ-19, RV-166, RV-168, RV-169, RV-171, RV-177, RV-183, RV-188, RV-190, RV-191 & RV-193 UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF ASSISTANT DIVISIONAL ENGINEER/TITLAGARH & ASSISTANT DIVISIONAL ENGINEER/MUNIGUDA OF SAMBALPUR DIVISION. Approx. cost of the work : ₹ 5,03,11,994.70, Bid Security: ₹ 10,06,300/- Completion period of the work: 03 months (for Sl. No. 1) & 08 months (for Sl. No. 2) Tender closing date & time: at 1500 hrs. of 15.05.2026 (for both tenders). No manual offers sent by Post/Courier/Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration. Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website www.ireps.gov.in Note : The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website 15 (fifteen) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/corrigenda issued for this tender. Divisional Railway Manager (Engg.), Sambalpur PR-78/R/26-27

EAST COAST RAILWAY (1) Notice No. : e-Tender-Elect-G-06-26 Description of the work: PROVISION OF TEMPORARY LIGHTING, FAN, MOBILE CHARGING POINTS, AIR CONDITIONER, PUMPING, ALTERNATE POWER SUPPLY ARRANGEMENT & DECORATION AT IMPORTANT SERVICE BUILDINGS AND STATIONS DURING RATH YATRA-2026 AT PURI (PURI) FOR ONE MONTH. Approx. cost of work : ₹ 1,33,80,896.75, EMD: ₹ 2,67,600.00 (2) Notice No. : e-Tender-Elect-G-07-26 ST Description of the work: COMPREHENSIVE ANNUAL MAINTENANCE CONTRACT FOR JOHNSON MAKE PASSENGER LIFTS OF VARIOUS CAPACITIES PROVIDED AT RAILWAY STATIONS, SERVICE BUILDINGS AND RAILWAY COLONIES IN SINGLE TENDER BASIS FOR A PERIOD OF 3 YEARS. Approx. cost of work : ₹ 57,03,103.32, EMD: ₹ 1,14,100.00 (3) Notice No. : e-Tender-Elect-G-08-26 ST Description of the work: UPGRADE-TION AND ANNUAL MAINTENANCE CONTRACT FOR AROH MAKE LIFT PROVIDED AT RAILKUNJ (HQ) OVER KHURDA ROAD DIVISION IN THE PROCESS OF SINGLE TENDER BASIS FOR A PERIOD OF 3 YEARS. Approx. cost of work : ₹ 53,20,979.29, EMD: ₹ 1,06,400.00 (4) Notice No. : e-Tender-Elect-G-09-26 Description of the work: PROVISION OF EV CHARGER IN CONNECTION WITH BALANCE WORK FOR PROVISION OF RENEWABLE SOLAR ON GRID PLANT ON ROOF TOP AND SHED TOP IN VARIOUS LOCATION AT DIFFERENT STATIONS OVER KHURDA ROAD DIVISION. Approx. cost of work : ₹ 10,06,287.50, EMD: ₹ 20,100.00 Completion period : 01 month (for sl. no. 1), 36 months (for sl. no. 2 & 3) and 03 months (for sl. no. 4). Tender closing Date & Time: At 1500 hrs. of 05.05.2026 (for sl. no. 1 & 2) and At 1500 hrs. of 15.05.2026 (for sl. no. 3 & 4). No manual offers sent by post/courier/ Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders. Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website : www.ireps.gov.in Note : The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website 10 (Ten) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/corrigendum issued for this tender. Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (G), Khurda Road PR-82/R/26-27

FOCUS INDO-KOREAN TIES

# CHOKEPOINTS DRIVE PARTNERSHIP

When South Korean President Lee Jae-Myung landed in New Delhi on April 19, 2026, it wasn't just another photo-op at Rashtrapati Bhavan. It was the third time he and Prime Minister Narendra Modi met in 12 months, but the first time as the head of state on Indian soil. The timing is significant.

This is the first South Korean state visit to India in eight years, and the quickest by any Seoul President after taking office. That urgency tells us one thing: the India-Korea "Special Strategic Partnership," announced in 2015, is finally getting a deadline. The Middle East is burning, the Strait of Hormuz is effectively closed, and both democracies have decided they can't afford to keep their ties stuck in the CEPA (Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement)-2010 era.

In geopolitics both democracies face one chokepoint problem. President Lee was blunt on X before boarding the plane: "Amidst ongoing supply chain instability and a global economic crisis stemming from the aftermath of the Middle East conflict, the Republic of Korea and India are emerging as increasingly vital strategic partners."

The inference of the above statement is that Iran lost its Supreme Leader to US-Israeli strikes on Feb 28, Tehran is fractured, and Korean tankers can't get through Hormuz. Korea imports 70 per cent of its crude through that strait. India, meanwhile, needs to de-risk Chinese inputs and find trusted partners. Both need each other's geography.

So the summit wasn't about culture. It was about chokepoints. National Security Adviser WJ Sung-lac said it plainly: the leaders would "maintain close coordination on energy supply chains amid rapidly



**New Delhi-Seoul ties have always been elite-driven – Hyundai, LG, Samsung. But the next phase needs SMEs, students, and startups. Korea's population is aging; India's is young. Education visas, joint R&D in AI, and cultural familiarity will decide if this is transactional or transformational**

shifting global dynamics". One expects India to leverage its Iranian Chabahar port and East African routes, while Korea brings maritime insurance, LNG ship tech, and its Hyundai/Hanwha shipyards.

But the subtext here is, both countries are hedging. Trump's America is unpredictable, China is assertive, and the Middle East is volatile. A Seoul-Delhi defence industrial corridor — from Vizag to Busan — gives both the strategic autonomy. Various bilateral mechanisms already exist for "defence industrial cooperation". This visit funds them.

On the people track, CEOs, students, and the 'Kimchi-Curry' soft power are on top priority. Lee didn't just meet Modi. He laid a wreath at Gandhi's memorial, attended a business conclave, and met the Korean diaspora. First Lady Kim Hea Kyung was alongside. President Murrmu hosted the state dinner.

Why it matters! India-Korea ties have always been elite-driven — Hyundai, LG, Samsung. But the next phase needs SMEs, students, and

startups. Korea's population is aging; India's is young. Education visas, joint R&D in AI, and cultural familiarity will decide if this is transactional or transformational. Lee calling the summit a "turning point" only makes sense if 25-year-olds in Pune and Pohang start building together.

The Vietnam link shows Lee's 'Global South' play and India's role in it. Lee flew straight to Hanoi after Delhi. That's not accidental. We called this trip part of Lee's "global South strategy" to "diversify supply chains and markets". India is the anchor of that strategy. If Korea can plug in to India's manufacturing and Vietnam's critical minerals, it creates a non-China supply web for chips, batteries, and ships.

For Delhi, that's a win. It positions India not just as Korea's market, but as Korea's gateway to the Global South and ASEAN. The India-Korea-Vietnam triangle mirrors the Quad's economic logic, minus the military baggage.

What this visit actually changes? There could be three

takeaways for Indo-Korean ties.

Takeaway 1: From Trade to Trust. For 15 years, India-Korea was about Hyundai cars and CEPA tariffs. After Hormuz and the Middle East war, it's about energy security and war-proofing supply chains. That's a strategic shift. You don't share shipbuilding IP unless you trust the partner for 30 years.

Takeaway 2: From Bilateral to Networked. Lee's India visit was leg-1 of an India-Vietnam tour focused on "critical minerals" and "energy supply chains". India isn't the destination; it's the hub. We can expect Seoul to route more of its Indo-Pacific policy through Delhi.

Takeaway 3: From Intent to Investment. The test of this visit is the MOU signing ceremony and the business forum. If Hyundai Heavy, Samsung, and SK announce India capex by July, Lee's "turning point" claim holds. If not, we're back to 2018 communiqués.

In conclusion, the 'special' in strategic should be noted. "Special Strategic Partnership" has been diplomatic boilerplate since 2015. Lee Jae-Myung's three-day visit in April 2026 finally put machinery behind the metaphor. Hormuz forced the issue; economics will sustain it.

For India, Korea is the rare partner that brings capital, technology, and no border dispute. For Korea, India is the rare democracy with scale, youth, and a navy that can sail from Hormuz to Malacca. The two leaders have now met thrice. The next meeting should be at a shipyard opening, not a summit. That's when we'll know the Korean kimchi (a foundational staple in Korean cuisine) has really met the Indian curry.

The writer is Professor of Practice, NIIS Group of Institutions © INFA

## Silent Recalibration

The path is long, but self-surrender makes it short; the way is difficult, but perfect trust makes it easy.  
THE MOTHER



The Centre's latest appointment of 48 babus at the joint secretary level across ministries looks routine on the surface. It isn't. When postings cut across agriculture, commerce, defence, civil aviation and home, it's less about filling vacancies and more about recalibrating the government's operating system. Joint secretaries sit at that crucial junction where policy leaves the drawing board and meets the real world. Change the people there, and you often change how things actually get done.

The headline move is the appointment of Hardik Satishchandra Shah as Private Secretary to Narendra Modi at the joint secretary rank. That's not just a posting—it's a signal. It tells you who's in the room when decisions are shaped, who filters information, and who gets to nudge priorities.

Clearly, this isn't an isolated reshuffle; it's part of a longer game. The Modi government has been steadily tightening coordination across ministries, favouring officers who deliver, move files efficiently, and stay aligned with the larger political direction. With another round of changes expected later this year, this looks like scaffolding being put in place for the road to 2029.

There's a logic to it. Governments don't run on announcements; they run on execution. And execution, in India, is only as good as the babu handling the file. Put the right people in the right slots, and things move. Get it wrong, and even flagship schemes start gathering dust.

But let's not pretend this is purely technocratic. Babu reshuffles have always doubled as political messaging. There's also the issue of churn. Move people around too often, and institutional memory takes a hit. Projects that need steady hands don't always benefit from musical chairs.

Still, the intent is hard to miss. This is about tightening the system, placing trusted officers where they matter most, and getting the machinery ready for the next phase. Whether it delivers sharper governance or just smoother optics will depend on one simple thing: are these officers empowered to act, or just expected to comply?

### Can a new team in Bihar change old habits?

Bihar is about to do what Indian states do best when power changes hands: reshuffle the bureaucracy and call it a reset. The difference this time? There's a clearer sense of what that reset is meant to achieve.

Former Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has left a deep imprint, but if the early signals around Samrat Choudhary hold, this isn't just about moving babus around. The idea is to build a compact core team, bring in technocrats who understand industry, and push Bihar toward manufacturing-led growth, which it has long promised but rarely delivered.

The logic is sound. States like Gujarat and Tamil Nadu didn't attract investment by accident. They got the basics right—land, power, roads—and ensured the bureaucracy didn't become a bottleneck. Bihar, for all its ambition, has struggled precisely here.

The sectoral focus on food processing, textiles, and automobiles is sensible. These are scalable, job-heavy industries. But sectors don't grow because policy says so. They grow when businesses can actually set up shop without getting lost in paperwork.

That's where this "core team plus technocrats" approach will be tested. India has tried this before, bringing in experts, only to sideline them when their ideas hit bureaucratic inertia. Unless these technocrats have real authority, this risks becoming cosmetic.

The BJP's strategy of changing the top and leaving the lower bureaucracy intact is politically neat. It signals change without chaos. But it assumes new leadership alone can shift old habits, which is a bit of a leap. Administrative culture doesn't change with transfers; it changes with incentives and accountability.

Choudhary needs to strike a fine balance. A more "assertive" administration can speed things up. It can also drift into over-centralisation, which investors tend to read as unpredictability.

Still, Bihar has an opening: a young workforce, rising demand, and a chance to plug into eastern India's growth story. But the state's problem has never been a lack of plans, but execution.

### Smart officers, stuck system

Every few years, Delhi rediscovered the idea of "finding the right people". The latest buzz about the PMO and NITI Aayog scouting "next-gen" leadership from within babudom sounds both sensible and faintly familiar.

It's a smart brief. Needless to say, India today needs officials who are as comfortable reading balance sheets as they are reading files, who can push infrastructure, decode digital systems, and still keep the politics of governance in view. It calls for babus who can think fast, execute faster, and speak the language of both policy and markets. The focus on officers with real delivery experience and not just a note-writing pedigree is overdue.

But here's the uncomfortable bit. The system doesn't fail for lack of talent; it fails despite it. Good officers aren't rare. What's rare is giving them room to take risks, back decisions, and survive failure. Without that, even the most "future-ready" shortlist becomes another revolving door of promise and frustration.

There's also a subtle shift underway. When leadership is curated this tightly from the top, it inevitably reflects the priorities and preferences of the current establishment. That's not necessarily a flaw, but it does blur the line between building institutional depth and building a loyal inner circle.

None of this makes the exercise pointless. In fact, it's necessary. But talent-spotting, by itself, is the easy part. The harder question is whether the system is finally ready to trust the talent it keeps claiming to discover.

Share a babu experience! Follow [dilipthecherian@twitter.com](mailto:dilipthecherian@twitter.com). Let's multiply the effect



DK Giri

**FOR INDIA, SOUTH KOREA IS THE RARE PARTNER THAT BRINGS CAPITAL, TECHNOLOGY, AND NO BORDER DISPUTE. FOR KOREA, INDIA IS THE RARE DEMOCRACY WITH SCALE, YOUTH, AND A NAVY THAT CAN SAIL FROM HORMUZ TO MALACCA**



**BABUDOM BYTES**  
Dilip Cherian

### SPECTRUM WOMEN'S RESERVATION

# Patriarchy persists in India's electoral politics

India stands today at a defining crossroads in its democratic journey. While the promise of gender equality and women's empowerment is loudly proclaimed, its actual realization continues to be quietly deferred. The renewed debate on women's reservation, despite being presented as a progressive milestone, reveals a deeper and more uncomfortable truth—what appears as reform is often a carefully structured postponement. Once again, women are denied their rightful share in political representation.

At the heart of this delay lies an entrenched and persistent force: male chauvinism. This ideology, which assumes men to be inherently superior, more capable, and more deserving of leadership, continues to shape political decisions. It manifests not only through overt discrimination but also through subtle institutional mechanisms that delay or dilute reforms meant to empower women.

The demand for women's reservation in legislatures has a long history in India. Yet, despite repeated assurances from political parties across the spectrum, it has not been implemented. Both the ruling establishment and opposition parties claim commitment to the cause, but their actions of

ten suggest otherwise. Instead of building consensus, the issue is frequently used as a tool for political positioning.

Critics argue that before introducing the recent Bills—the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026; the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026; and the Delimitation Bill, 2026—the government should have held wider consultations with Opposition parties and implemented reservation within the existing Lok Sabha and Assembly seats.

These Bills sought to expedite women's reservation by linking it to delimitation based on the 2011 Census instead of waiting for the post-2026 census. They also aimed to increase the number of Lok Sabha seats from 543 to 850, with implementation targeted for the 2029 general elections. However, the Bills failed to pass on April 17, 2026, as it did not secure the required two-thirds majority. Following its defeat, the Delimitation Bill was withdrawn.

In practical terms, increasing the number of seats may not even be necessary. Advances in communication, transportation, and administrative efficiency have reduced the need for larger legislative bodies. Expanding seats would also impose a significant financial burden on the public exche-

quer. Earlier, even schemes like MPLADS did not exist.

A critical question, therefore, arises: why did political parties not implement women's reservation in the 2024 elections after passing the 2023 Act? The answer likely lies in the reluctance of sitting male MPs to vacate their constituencies—even for women from their own families. This resistance explains why repeated attempts since 1996 have failed to produce results.

If political parties were genuinely committed, they could have voluntarily allocated one-third of their tickets to women. However, the data tell a different story. According to the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) and National Election Watch (NEW), out of 51,708 candidates in the 2024 Lok Sabha and State/UT Assembly elections, only 5,095—about 10 percent—were women.

Globally, India's position remains weak. Among BRICS nations, India has the lowest share of women in Parliament at approximately 13.79 percent in 2025—well below the global average of 27.25 percent. Countries such as South Africa (46 percent), the United Kingdom (35 percent), and the United States (29 percent) perform significantly better. India ranks

149th out of 193 countries in women's parliamentary representation and 131st out of 148 in the Global Gender Gap Report.

Data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union show that in 2023, 52 countries held parliamentary elections, with women accounting for an average of 27.6 percent of elected representatives. Globally, women now constitute about 26.9 percent of all MPs. India, which was ranked 143rd earlier, is likely to slip further due to declining representation.

The conclusion is clear and urgent. It is time to implement 33 percent reservation for women not only in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies but also in the Rajya Sabha and Legislative Councils. Additionally, there should be restrictions on multiple MPs or MLAs from the same family to ensure broader and more equitable representation.

Until such reforms are enacted with sincerity and urgency, the promise of gender equality will remain unfulfilled. The continued delay only reinforces one reality—male chauvinism, rather than constitutional limitations, remains the biggest obstacle to women's political empowerment in India.

The author is an Odisha based economist and columnist



Santosh Kumar Mohapatra

**AMONG BRICS NATIONS, INDIA HAS THE LOWEST SHARE OF WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT AT APPROXIMATELY 13.79 PER CENT IN 2025**

### Faith vs facts

Sir, The Supreme Court's remark in the Sabarimala case urging respect for all views except those driven by 'WhatsApp University' is both timely and troubling. While misinformation must be firmly rejected, branding dissent risks oversimplifying deeply rooted faith-based concerns. The Sabarimala issue is not merely legal but entwined with tradition, gender rights, and constitutional morality. The Court must ensure its observations do not appear dismissive of genuine beliefs. A balanced approach demands curbing fake narratives without undermining pluralism. Judicial sobriety and sensitivity are essential to uphold both rational discourse and citizens' trust in constitutional institutions.

Sidhartha Kar Mohapatra, RAGHUNATHPUR, BARIPADA

### Regulate paneer fraud

Sir, Analogue paneer is essentially a lookalike food designed to save money at the expense of good health. While real paneer is made strictly from milk this fake version is a processed blend of cheap vegetable fats, palm oil, starches and stabilizers. Because it costs only Rs150 per kg less than half the price of the real thing it has flooded the restaurant & catering industry. The danger lies in the lack of regulation and nutritional value. Analogue increases the risk of heart disease and metabolic issues. Since these products are often sold loose in unorganized markets there is no way to verify the quality of the chemicals or oils used, so therefore regime should regulate.

Dr Vijaykumar HK, RAICHUR

### Double-engine model

Sir, Andhra Pradesh CM N Chandrababu Naidu, while campaigning for the NDA coalition in Tamil Nadu recently, advocated for a "double-engine government" as necessary for the development of TN. Naidu must know that the TN government's primary mandate would be to constantly defend regional rights against centralised control. As we all know, TN has recorded a historic 11.19% GSDP growth in 2024-25, the highest in the country and the first double-digit growth in 14 years, which is due to its industrial expansion, high human development indices and investment inflows. People of TN have never favoured a double-engine model, and will not do so in the future also.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

### WISDOM CORNER

Iron rusts from disuse; water loses its purity from stagnation... even so does inaction sap the vigor of the mind.

LEONARDO DA VINCI

I often think that the night is more alive and more richly colored than the day.

VINCENT VAN GOGH

Mostly people are ignorant, what is the language of painting. You know, they're ignorant. It is so difficult to make them aware, but time will teach them.

MF HUSAIN

## 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

## HIGH ULTRAVIOLET RADIATION RECORDED IN KERALA

**KSDMA advises public to use protective measures such as hats, umbrellas and sunglasses, and to wear full-body cotton clothing while stepping out during the day**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Thiruvananthapuram, April 24:** High levels of ultraviolet radiation have been recorded across Kerala over the past 24 hours, the KSDMA said Friday. As per data shared by the authority, UV levels above eight, warranting an orange alert, were reported at Konni in Pathanamthitta, Chengannur in Alappuzha, Changanassery in Kottayam and Munnar in

Idukki.

In addition, UV levels between six and seven, corresponding to a yellow alert, were recorded at 10 locations across the state.

Prolonged exposure to UV rays can cause sunburn, skin diseases, eye problems and other health issues, the authority said.

According to the advisory by Kerala State Disaster Management Authority, peak UV



levels are usually recorded between 10 am and 3 pm, and people are urged to avoid direct sunlight exposure during

these hours as much as possible.

Those engaged in outdoor work, fishermen involved in

marine and inland fishing, water transport workers, bike riders, tourists, and individuals with skin conditions, albinism, eye diseases, cancer and weakened immunity have been asked to exercise extra caution.

The authority advised the public to use protective measures such as hats, umbrellas and sunglasses, and to wear full-body cotton clothing while stepping out during the day.

It also recommended taking breaks in shaded areas during travel and outdoor activities.

It noted that UV levels are generally higher in high-altitude and tropical regions and can remain high even on clear,

cloudless days. Surfaces such as water bodies and sand can also reflect UV rays, increasing exposure.

Real-time UV index data from 14 monitoring stations set up by the authority is available online, it added.

Meanwhile, in view of rising temperatures in Thrissur and Palakkad districts, the India Meteorological Department has issued a heatwave warning for the two districts, the authority said.

Sirens were sounded after 12.30 pm Friday in Thrissur and Palakkad, and in other districts where temperatures are generally on the rise, as part of the warning system, it added.

## Heatwave conditions grip Rajasthan; Sri Ganganagar hottest

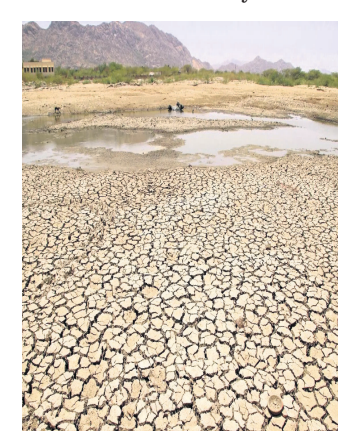
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jaipur, April 24:** Heatwave conditions persisted across Rajasthan, as the temperature crossed 40 degrees Celsius in most parts of the state, the meteorological centre here said Friday, adding that Sri Ganganagar city recorded the highest at 44.5 degrees Celsius.

According to the Jaipur meteorological centre, heatwave and warm night conditions were recorded at a few places across the state in the past 24 hours, while the weather remained largely dry.

Many places are currently witnessing maximum temperatures in the range of 40-42 degrees Celsius, which is around normal for this time of the year, it said.

The weather office has forecast a further rise of 1-2 degrees Celsius in maximum temperatures over the next few days, with heatwave conditions likely at isolated places in western and north-eastern parts of the state for the next two to three days.



In the north-western regions, maximum temperatures may reach 44-45 degrees Celsius during this period, it added.

The Met department also said that due to the impact of a weak western disturbance, dust storms accompanied by thunder are likely at isolated places in the border areas of western Rajasthan on April 25, and in the western and northern parts between April 26 and 28.

Light rain or drizzle is also expected at some places during this period, the meteorological centre said.

## Rajasthan saints protest industrial project over tree felling concerns



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jaipur, April 24:** Saints in Rajasthan's Bichoon have launched a protest against a proposed industrial project, alleging large-scale tree felling and a threat to a religious site.

Some protesters performed 'agni tap' amid soaring temperatures by sitting amid burning cow dung cakes as part of the ritual protest. According to local committee members, the protest is against a project proposed by the Rajasthan State Industrial Development and Investment Corporation (RIICO) on around 330 acres of land.

Members of the Dadu Palka Bhairana Sangharsh Samiti alleged that official records wrongly describe the land, considered a sacred site associated with saint Dadu Dayal, as scrubland, even though thousands of trees have already been cut.

"This is just a fight to protect a sacred site and the environment. We will not allow it to be turned into an investment zone," Mahant Govardhan Das, president of Dadu Palka Bhairana Sangharsh Samiti, told reporters.

The protesters said they

submitted a memorandum earlier this month, giving a 10-day ultimatum, and intensified the agitation after receiving no response. They said the protest would continue until the proposed industrial development is scrapped.

Meanwhile, former Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot expressed concern over the issue, calling it "unfortunate and worrying".

"The agni-tap by saints to save trees at Bhairana Dham near Bichoon is a matter of concern for all of us. The saints' voices are being ignored, which has led to anger among the religious community and the public," he said.

Gehlot also criticised the government over environmental concerns, saying, "On one hand, there are campaigns in the name of planting trees, and on the other, there is insistence on reducing green cover. This is not development, but destruction."

He urged chief minister Bhajanlal Sharma to intervene, suggesting that either he or a minister should visit the protesting saints.

Gehlot said the government must ensure that trees are not cut in the name of investment.

## As Kerala awaits May 4, spotlight on CM's legacy

*If Vijayan secures a rare third term, continuity is the obvious storyline. But if power shifts to the Indian National Congress-led UDF, the spotlight will swiftly turn to whether those very precedents, once criticised, suddenly become acceptable tools of governance*

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Thiruvananthapuram, April 24:** With Kerala waiting for the vote counting day May 4, the electoral suspense may be overwhelming, but is marked by an intriguing question - what happens to the precedents set over a decade by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan?

If Vijayan secures a rare third term, continuity is the obvious storyline. But if power shifts to the Indian National Congress-led UDF, the spotlight will swiftly turn to whether those very precedents, once criticised, suddenly become acceptable tools of governance.

Take the now-defunct



Wednesday post-cabinet media briefing. For decades, it was a ritual that symbolised accessibility. Vijayan scrapped it, replacing routine engagement with calibrated communication.

He also put an end to the culture of frequent "sound bites", choosing instead to speak on his own terms.

Critics cried opacity, but his supporters called it discipline.

The irony? Should a Congress chief minister adopt the same approach, the decibel levels of criticism may depend less on the practice and more on the practitioner.

Then there is the matter of travel.

Former Chief Minister Oommen Chandy famously avoided

frequent foreign trips, quipping he did not want to be "haunted and hunted".

Vijayan flipped that script, undertaking multiple overseas visits pitched as investment drives. The Opposition derided these as excessive, even coining political punch lines around imported ideas like the much-trodden "room for river" concept post-Netherlands visit.

Yet, if a future Congress regime embarks on similar outreach, will it be rebranded as global engagement?

Perhaps the most tangible precedent is logistical, the use of helicopters for intra-state travel. When Vijayan became the first chief minister, he used to regularly fly on a chopper.



Participants take part in the 'Nilathil Poru' ritual at Vellayani Devi Temple during the Kaliyootu festival, in Thiruvananthapuram

PTI PHOTO

## THRISSUR POORAM

## Kerala HC questions govt on temple elephant parades

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kochi, April 24:** The Kerala High Court Friday sought response of the state government and the Paramekavu and Thiruvambady Devaswoms on a PIL seeking issuance of directions with regard to parading of elephants during temple festivals, including the upcoming Thrissur Pooram April 26.

While admitting the PIL and issuing notice to the state government and the two devaswoms which organise the pooram, a bench of Justice Ziyad Rahman and KV Jayakumar pointed out that a similar issue was pending before the Supreme Court and therefore, the High Court cannot issue any directions for the time being.

The court was hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) by a Thrissur resident, VK Venkitachalam, who has claimed that there is a 2013 state government circular which mandates that elephants shall not

be subjected to conditions causing stress, fear or injury, adequate safety distance must be maintained from fireworks and they should not be paraded during peak heat hours.

"Notwithstanding the statutory and executive framework, there are widespread and recurring violations during temple festivals across the state, particularly in connection with Thrissur Pooram. Elephants are exposed to high-decibel fireworks in close proximity, made to stand amidst dense crowds without maintaining prescribed safety distances, paraded during restricted hours, and subjected to prolonged periods without adequate rest, food, or water," the plea has claimed.

It has sought strict enforcement of the Kerala Captive Elephants (Management and Maintenance) Rules, 2012, and the 2013 government circular in connection with the festivals. The court listed the matter for further hearing May 25.



## Groom climbs ladder to don 100-foot currency garland

**The incident was reported from Bamanwadi village under the Jurahara police station limits in the Mewat region, where a wedding ceremony was held April 19**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jaipur, April 24:** A 20-second video showing a groom climbing a ladder to wear a 100-foot-long garland reportedly made of Rs 500 and Rs 100 notes in Rajasthan's Deeg has surfaced online, with locals claiming it to be part of wedding rituals.

In the video, which has created a stir on social media, the groom is seen ascending a ladder to reach the height required to wear the unusually long garland, while several people on the ground support and balance its length.

Parked vehicles, including jeeps, are visible below, highlighting the scale of the



display. The garland is said to be made of Rs 500 and Rs 100 denomination notes.

Deeg Superintendent of Police Sharan Gopinath Kamble confirmed the incident

and said that the garland was hired and no illegality has been found so far in the matter.

The incident was reported from Bamanwadi village under the Jurahara police station limits in the Mewat region, where a wedding ceremony was held April 19.

Two grooms, Ruknuddin Meo and his nephew Ansar Meo, were seen wearing the garland during the ceremony.

Village sarpanch Abdul Mazed said the garland was part of a local tradition and was arranged for the occasion.

"The people who rent out such garlands brought them here for display during the ceremony. There was only one garland, which was used by both grooms," he said, adding that such practices are customary in the region.

**Two grooms, Ruknuddin Meo and his nephew Ansar Meo, were seen wearing the garland during the ceremony. Village sarpanch Abdul Mazed said the garland was part of a local tradition and was arranged for the occasion**

"Such garlands are available for rent in Nuh in Haryana. The garland comprised Rs 500 denomination notes. Preliminary inquiry suggests that the garland was hired," the SP said.



Since the beginning, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has had a vision of equal development for both the eastern and western parts of the country, and by forming a government in West Bengal, that vision will be realized

HC REJECTS KHERA'S ANTICIPATORY BAIL

The Gauhati High Court Friday rejected the anticipatory bail petition of Congress leader Pawan Khera in connection with his allegations that Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's wife possessed multiple passports and undisclosed properties abroad



of the day uote

Those who believe they can run Bengal from Delhi, dictate its politics, divide its people, and distort its culture are deeply mistaken. This land has a long memory and a stronger spine

I assured the injured workers (Palghar fire-cracker factory blast) and their families of all possible support. I will follow up at the government level to ensure adequate assistance is provided

The agni-tap by saints to save trees at Bhairana Dham near Bichoon is a matter of concern for all of us. The saints' voices are being ignored, which has led to anger among the religious community and the public

Oppn submits fresh notice for CEC removal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 24: Opposition parties on Friday submitted a fresh notice in the Rajya Sabha seeking to move a motion for the removal of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, sources said. The Opposition's fresh charges on Kumar's "proved misbehavior" include "continued partisan asymmetry in the enforcement of Model Code of Conduct", including the poll panel's failure to act on complaints against Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "address to the nation" April 18.

According to sources, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh and TMC leader Sagarika Ghose submitted the notice to the Rajya Sabha Secretary General. "In the Rajya Sabha, 73 Opposition MPs have just submitted a new notice of motion to their Secretary General to present an addressed resolution to the President of India, urging the removal from office of the Chief Election Commission-



MAJOR LEARNINGS

er Gyanesh Kumar," Ramesh said on X. "This demand is based on proven misconduct arising from his actions and errors committed March 15, 2026 and thereafter, which falls under Article 324(5) of the Constitution of India when read with Article 124(4), as well as Section 11(2) of the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023, and the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968," he said. The Congress leader said

visions of the Constitution, the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners Act, 2023, and the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968. The MPs have cited a series of alleged actions and omissions by the CEC, which they claim cumulatively amount to misconduct of a "grave character". These include alleged partisan enforcement of the model code of conduct, public remarks and social media communication targeting a political party, administrative lapses, and conduct deemed "unbecoming" of a constitutional authority.

Among the key allegations are claims of inaction over complaints related to a televised address by the prime minister on April 18, as the Model Code of Conduct was in force ahead of elections in some states. Referring to complaints by political parties and concerned citizens, it said, "As on the date of this notice, Gyanesh Kumar has issued no show-cause notice, no advisory, and no public response to any of the said complaints."

Students forced to remove janeu during CET in B'lore



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, April 24: A row has erupted after five Brahmin students were forced to remove their sacred thread (janeu/yajnopaveetha) at Krupanidhi College in the city during the CET held here. The BJP Friday came down heavily on the ruling Congress following the incident and called it "anti-Hindu".

As the controversy took a political turn, the college suspended the invigilator pending inquiry. The government has also ordered a probe. The Common Entrance Test (CET) is held to select students for admission into professional courses. Students Friday alleged that the invigilators present at the examination hall of the college at Madivala asked them to get the sacred thread removed if they wished to write the exam. This was despite the fact that last year, when a similar controversy took place, the government made it clear that the sacred thread would not be removed during the CET. However, once again this year, students faced similar discrimination. A student said, "When I went to the examination centre, the teachers got my ear ring removed. I can still understand

that because no metal is allowed, but they also forced me to get the sacred thread removed from the body." Left with no other option, the student obeyed the diktat of the invigilators. Sources said parents of the students reached the venue after the exam was over and questioned the motive when there were standing instructions not to remove the sacred thread. Some other students alleged that the red and yellow sacred thread (mauli/kalava) tied to the wrist was also removed by the invigilators. When a similar controversy erupted in Shivamogga, Bidar and some other places, the state's Higher Education Minister M C Sudhakar, assured parents that action would be taken against those responsible for it. Even the chief minister had directed authorities not to ask students to remove the thread last year. Yet, the incident was repeated Thursday, the parents alleged. Karnataka Higher Education Minister M C Sudhakar termed the incident unfortunate. "It is very unfortunate, because a similar thing happened last year as well -- one incident occurred in Bidar, and a few others happened in Shivamogga. We have taken this matter very seriously," he said.

AS THE CONTROVERSY TOOK A POLITICAL TURN, THE COLLEGE SUSPENDED THE INVIGILATOR PENDING INQUIRY. THE GOVERNMENT HAS ALSO ORDERED A PROBE

Complaint filed against woman who confronted Maha minister over rally

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 24: A complaint has been filed against a woman who berated Maharashtra minister Girish Mahajan for a traffic jam caused by a BJP rally in Mumbai, police said Friday, clarifying that no case has been registered against her. The incident occurred in the upscale Worli area, Tuesday, during a rally organised by the BJP to target Opposition parties over the defeat of the Constitution Amendment Bill to fast-track the implementation of 33 per cent reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies. An agitated woman confronted minister Mahajan, who was speaking to reporters, shouting at him for blocking roads and causing inconvenience to commuters. "Get out of here. You are causing a traffic jam," she said, asking why the rally could not be held at the nearby open ground. In the complaint to the Worli police, Zen Sadavarte said the woman created a ruckus, using abusive language, obstructing the rally and causing public disturbance. "Insult to hard-working police officials, public representatives, the Constitution and constitutional mechanism won't be allowed in this country," she told reporters. "It is being clarified that a Churu FIR has been registered against the woman who criticised traffic congestion and shouted at agitators during the morcha dated April 21 near Jambhori Maidan in Worli," said Deputy Commissioner of Police Krishnakant Upadhyay.



Workers pack green peas for sale at a vegetable market, in Kullu, Himachal Pradesh

Mandaviya inaugurates ESIC hospital in Kashmir

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Budgam (J&K), April 24: Union minister Mansukh Mandaviya Friday said a country that values the dignity of its workers is unstoppable on the path of progress, asserting that their welfare must therefore remain at the centre of governance. Mandaviya, the Union Minister for Labour & Employment and Youth Affairs & Sports, inaugurated a 30-bedded Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) Hospital at Ompora here in the central Kashmir district. The newly inaugurated hospital is the first ESIC hospital



in Kashmir, marking a historic milestone in the expansion of worker welfare services in the region. Addressing the function, Mandaviya said, a country that values the dignity of its workers is unstoppable on the path of progress.

"Our social security coverage has risen from 19 per cent in 2015 to 64.3 per cent in 2025, as per data published by the International Labour Organisation," he said, highlighting that the country's efforts in this direction were recognised by the International Social Security Association in 2025. Underscoring the impact of the four Labour Codes that were brought into effect last year, the Union minister said these reforms guarantee several long-awaited protections for workers, including annual health check-ups, mandatory appointment letters, and minimum wages.

The provision for annual health checks through ESIC hospitals will allow early detection of diseases, ensure preventive healthcare for workers, and secure their future, he emphasised. He also noted that the convergence of ESIC with Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana has further expanded access to cashless treatment for beneficiaries across empanelled hospitals. Built for Rs 165 crore, the hospital has been established with provision for expansion up to 100 beds and is expected to directly benefit more than 50,000 workers and their family members.

Study highlights role of Yoga, Ayurveda in diabetes management

AGENCIES

Haridwar, April 24: A recent study by the Patanjali Research Foundation suggests that integrative approaches such as yoga, naturopathy, and Ayurveda may help improve blood sugar control and overall well-being in individuals with Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus (T1DM). The study, titled "Impact of Integrative Therapies on Glycemic Control in Type 1 Diabetes: A Systematic Review and Global Research Landscape," was published in the journal Frontiers in Clinical Diabetes and Healthcare. It was led by Acharya Balkrishna in collaboration with researchers from the Patanjali Herbal Research Division and the University of Patanjali, Haridwar. According to the findings, yoga may offer several benefits for diabetic patients, including improved nerve function and enhanced cognitive performance, which can help manage complications associated with the condition. The study also suggests that yoga could increase insulin sensitivity, reduce insulin resistance, and improve the body's ability to utilise glucose. Additionally, it proposes that yoga might support the regeneration or improved functioning of pancreatic beta cells and enhance their responsiveness to glucose. The researchers reviewed 612 scientific records from databases such as PubMed, Scopus, Embase, and Google Scholar. Of these, 12 studies met the criteria for detailed qualitative and quantitative analysis. The review also highlighted certain Ayurvedic herbs and supplements—such as cinnamon, fenugreek, aloe vera, and bitter melon—that have been studied for their potential role in supporting blood sugar management in individuals with Type 1 diabetes.

SHORT TAKES

Five killed as speeding truck collides with car

Bhandara: Five people, including four women, were killed and four others sustained injuries after a speeding truck collided with a car carrying wedding guests in Maharashtra's Bhandara district, police said Friday. The accident occurred around 9 pm Thursday in Adyal village on a state highway in Pouni taluka, an official said. He said that the victims were returning from a wedding in Kondha when a speeding truck coming from the opposite direction crashed into their car.

Three burnt alive as SUV catches fire

Jaipur: Three people were charred to death and five seriously injured when an SUV burst into flames after colliding with a dumper truck in Churu district of Rajasthan late Thursday night, police said. The accident occurred on the Pilani-Sadulpur road in the Hamirwas police station area. Station House Officer (SHO) Rai Singh Suthar said some people were returning in a Churu-registered Bolero after attending a wedding in Pilani when the SUV collided with the dumper truck and caught fire. The injured were pulled out of the two vehicles with the help of locals and rushed to a nearby hospital, where they are undergoing treatment, he said.

Toll in Mundathikode fireworks blast rises

Thiruvananthapuram (Kerala): The death toll in the Mundathikode fireworks manufacturing unit explosion rose to 15 after its licensee succumbed to burn injuries Friday. Mundathikode Sathesh, who had suffered over 80 per cent burns in the April 21 incident, died in the burns ICU at Thiruvananthapuram Medical College in the afternoon, police said. Sathesh had been associated with Thiruvananthapuram Pooram fireworks for the past 14 years. Officials from the College Police Station said that Sathesh was the license holder for the fireworks manufacturing unit at Mundathikode, where multiple explosions occurred on the afternoon of April 21.

Maoist surrenders

Hyderabad: An 18-year-old woman member of the outlawed CPI (Maoist) from Chhattisgarh surrendered to the police in Mulugu district of Telangana, police said. She surrendered to Mulugu District Superintendent of Police Kekani Sudhir Ramanath Friday, according to a release.

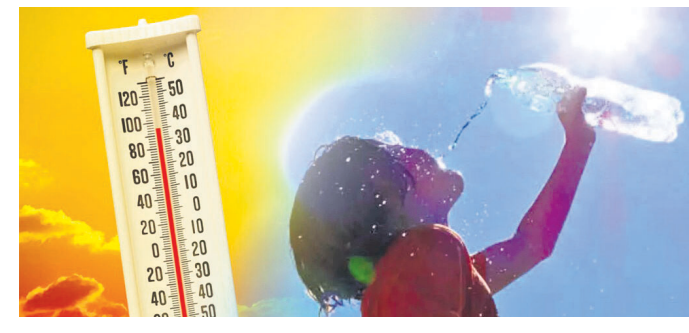
RISING TEMPERATURES

Experts call for vigilance against heatstroke, dehydration

ACCORDING TO MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS, THE IMMEDIATE EFFECTS OF HEAT TYPICALLY MANIFEST AS SKIN-RELATED ISSUES THAT FURTHER LEAD TO OTHER COMPLICATIONS SUCH AS SWELLING, MUSCLE CRAMPS, FATIGUE, AND DIZZINESS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

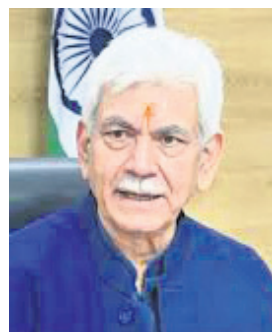
New Delhi, April 24: As scorching heat starts to grip various parts of the country, health experts have advised people to be cautious about heat-related problems such as dehydration and heat stroke. According to medical professionals, the immediate effects of heat typically manifest as skin-related issues that further lead to other complications such as swelling, muscle cramps, fatigue, and dizziness. Prolonged exposure to direct sunlight and hot environments significantly increases the risk of heatstroke, which can prove fatal, they said. Speaking to PTI, Dr Naval K Vikram, a professor in the Department of Medicine at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi, said the heat gives rise to a variety of physical ailments. Explaining that



excessive sweating results in dehydration, simultaneously depleting sodium and electrolyte levels within the body, he said this can trigger muscle cramps. This condition is particularly prevalent among individuals who engage in strenuous physical labour during the hot weather, such as daily wage labourers, farmers, and athletes. Vikram added that in severe cases, this can escalate into heatstroke, a critical condition that can impair vital organs such as the brain, heart, and kidneys, and may even prove life-threatening. There is often a misconception among the public that home remedies suffice for addressing mild heat-related symptoms. However, experts caution that certain warning signs should never be ignored, as doing so could have dangerous consequences. Naveen Srivastava, a 32-year-old employee of a private firm in the national capital, who

commutes daily to work via the Metro, remarked that this summer heat has made everyday life extremely difficult. According to medical professionals, staying adequately hydrated throughout the day is essential for protection against the heat. Natural beverages such as coconut water, buttermilk, and lemon water are particularly beneficial. Experts also advise against venturing out into direct sunlight between 12 pm and 3 pm. However, for street vendors and hawkers, a significant portion of their daily routine is spent on the roadside, exposed to the scorching sun. Lalit, a fruit vendor operating on the roadside in Delhi's Mayur Vihar Phase 1 locality, told PTI, "This heat has completely ruined everything. I try to shield myself from the sun by draping cloths around my cart. I have to earn a living, whether

it's sunny or raining, I have to keep working." Extreme heat affects everyone, but children tend to be particularly vulnerable. Reyansh Sinha, a sixth-grade student returning home from school, is plagued by a unique concern. He remarked, "I am afraid that in the coming years, conditions might deteriorate to such an extent that merely stepping outside the house could result in one's body getting scorched by the sun's heat." Explaining that children and the elderly possess a reduced capacity to regulate their body temperature. Consequently, they are more susceptible to falling victim to dehydration or heatstroke. He added that individuals with pre-existing conditions, such as heart disease, kidney ailments, or diabetes, also face a heightened risk. All such individuals should exercise extra caution.



I want to make it absolutely clear that those who engage in the grave crime of poisoning the future of our youth through drug trafficking will face the harshest consequences under the law

CENSUS: RGI LAUNCHES TOLL-FREE HELPLINE 1855

The Registrar General of India (RGI) has launched a national toll-free helpline, 1855, for Census 2027 to address queries or guidance related to the First Phase of the country's headcount: Housing Listing and Housing Enumeration (HLO)



Helpline

of the day quote

Our party has reports that Amit Shah has told Raghav Chadha that if he breaks seven MPs, then he will be made a Minister



BALTEJ PANNU | PUNJAB AAP CHIEF SPOKESPERSON

The anti-Hindu misdeeds of the Congress government, such as making people remove mangalsutra and janivara are continuing



R ASHOKA | OPPN LEADER IN K'TAKA ASSEMBLY

If Bengal had not been promoted this way - how beautiful the Ganga is, how developed the roads of Jhargram are - people of the country would not have known or understood. The biggest brand ambassador for tourism of Mamata Banerjee's Ma-Mati-Manush government is Narendra Modi



ABHISHEK BANERJEE | SENIOR TMC LEADER

POST OF THE DAY

If you look at how kids go to school in developed countries vs India, it reveals problems we don't talk about.

In many Western countries, kids walk or cycle. Bus usage is minimal. Walking is normal. You see this a lot in Japan too. In India, step out in the afternoon and half the traffic is school buses. If not buses, then private vans or autos. In those countries, kids cycle on clean roads with proper paths and safe crossings. In India, bad public infrastructure, road with potholes, messy traffic, dust, heat, and pollution make that risky. Kids don't get safe parks and playgrounds to play in many urban areas. And this comes with a cost. Less physical movement, less outdoor exposure. Active movement helps kids grow physically, mentally, and socially. Here, it's limited because the roads are unpredictable. That's why you're seeing more obesity, brain fog and low energy in kids at a young age.

@chanakyashah

SHORT TAKES

SIR process starts in Mumbai

Mumbai: A Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls has started in Mumbai city and suburban districts as per the directives of the Election Commission of India, the civic body said Friday. A release issued by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) appealed to political parties as well as elected representatives to cooperate to ensure effective execution of the SIR in Mumbai. Municipal commissioner Ashwini Bhide held a meeting with rerepresentatives of various political parties earlier in the day, the release said.

3 of family killed in road accident

Ranchi: Three members of a family died in a head-on collision between a truck and a scooter in Jharkhand's Lohardaga district Friday, police said. The accident occurred near Dhuluva Khunta within the Kuru police station limits when the scooty with the three family members collided with the truck in the afternoon, they said. The deceased have been identified as Kishore Bhagat (32), his mother Bishun Bhagat (53) and cousin Niranjana Oraon (26). All of them were residents of Kolsimri village.

Mann slams AAP MPs who quit party

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, April 24: Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann Friday dubbed AAP's Rajya Sabha members, who quit the party and announced joining the BJP, as "gaddars" (traitors).

Addressing a press conference here, Mann alleged that the BJP was trying to break the AAP and had "betrayed the people of Punjab."

When they did not find anything against Bhagwant Mann and did not level a single allegation, they tried to break AAP, said Mann, who returned Friday after nearly a week-long visit to the Netherlands and Finland to attract investments for his state.

They are perturbed why Mann is becoming the leader of people, the chief minister said, hitting out at the BJP.

Mann said that he does not have any group, but people are his group. "People of Punjab love me from the heart," he said.

"They cannot digest why Punjab is becoming 'rangla' (vibrant) and progressing, so they decide to break the party," he alleged.

Mann said he strongly condemns both those who have defected and the manner in which the BJP plays its politics.

He also said that the party is bigger than an individual, and 6-7 people who have left do not comprise Punjab. They are traitors, he alleged.

Chadha and Pathak Friday



announced that they are joining the BJP along with five other MPs of the party.

Earlier, addressing a joint press conference in Delhi, AAP Rajya Sabha MPs Raghav Chadha and Sandeep Pathak said they were joining the BJP.

Chadha claimed that nearly two-thirds of AAP's Rajya Sabha MPs had quit the party and would join the BJP as a separate faction.

Swati Maliwal and Harbhajan Singh were among the seven who quit, he revealed.

Addressing the media, Mann said, "I have been saying this earlier too that the BJP does not get along with Punjab and Punjabis".

Anything with which people of Punjab are happy about, it tries to spoil it, he charged.

He alleged that the "BJP started keeping a grudge against Punjab after Prime Minister Narendra Modi had to take a U-turn over the (now-repealed three) farm laws".

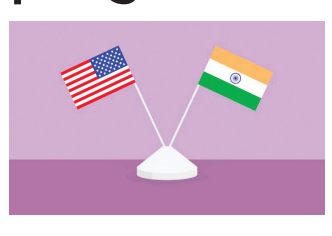
Citing other examples like

the Bhakra Beas Management Board, he said it shows that the BJP cannot win in Punjab, but it indulges in 'tikrambaazi' (trick games). Today, the BJP betrayed the people of Punjab by bringing some of our RS members to its side. Mann claimed that through the surveys, the BJP must have come to know the ground reality and thought of creating a flutter by engineering defections.

But Punjabis do not tolerate betrayal, he said. When Punjabis shower their love, they do so from the heart, but when anyone betrays them, they teach such a lesson that one remembers for generations, Mann said.

"Where is Capt Amarinder Singh, Manpreet Singh Badal? Does one hear about these leaders who joined the BJP (from Congress)?" Mann asked. Even Union Minister Ravneet Singh Bittu will be sidelined the day the BJP comes to know he holds no sway in the state, he said.

India, US make positive progress in trade talks



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 24: India and the US made positive progress during three-day trade talks in Washington this week, with both sides agreeing to remain engaged to sustain the momentum going forward, the government said Friday.

The talks deliberated on issues including market access, non-tariff measures, technical barriers to trade, customs and trade facilitation, investment promotion, economic security alignment and digital trade, the commerce ministry said in a statement.

US Trade Representative Jameson Greer has said India is a "tough nut to crack".

Following the decision of the US Supreme Court against the sweeping tariffs imposed by US

President Donald Trump on a number of countries, the Trump administration imposed a 10 per cent tariff on all countries from February 24 for 150 days.

According to that framework, the US had agreed to reduce tariffs on India to 18 per cent, from 50 per cent. It had removed the 25 per cent tariffs on Indian goods for buying Russian oil and was to cut the remaining 25 per cent to 18 per cent under the pact.

But the US Supreme Court ruled against Trump's reciprocal tariffs which were imposed under the 1977 International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA). After that, the President announced the imposition of 10 per cent tariffs on all countries for 150 days, starting February 24. Under the agreed framework, India proposed to eliminate or reduce tariffs on all US industrial goods and a wide range of US food and agricultural products, including dried distillers' grains (DDGs), red sorghum for animal feed, tree nuts, fresh and processed fruit, soybean oil, wine and spirits, and additional products.



A white tiger in a pond in its enclosure amid heat during the summer season, at Sarthana Nature Park and Zoo, in Surat, Gujarat

Court discharges ex-AAP MLA in 2014 'midnight raid' case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 24: A Delhi court Friday acquitted former Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLA Somnath Bharti in a 2014 case, in which he was accused of assaulting African women following an alleged midnight raid at Khirki Extension here.

Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate Neha Mittal acquitted Bharti of the charge levelled against him in a FIR lodged at the Malviya Nagar police station. "Any unlawful assembly could not be proved... The prosecution failed to prove its case," the magistrate said, quoting the substantive portion of the verdict. According to the chargesheet, on the intervening night of January 15, 2014, Bharti, the then law minister of Delhi, and 16 others reached Khirki Extension at Malviya Nagar.

They assaulted Ugandan women living in rented accommodation there, accusing them of being involved in illegal activities, including prostitution.

Gurjeet Singh Khalsa brought down from BSNL tower

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Samana (Punjab), April 24: Activist Gurjeet Singh Khalsa, who had been sitting atop a 400-foot BSNL tower for about 560 days demanding stricter laws against sacrilege incidents in Punjab, was finally brought down safely Friday morning, officials said.

The development brought to an end a dramatic protest that began when Khalsa (43) climbed atop the tower in Samana near Patiala October 12, 2024, demanding stringent punishment for the sacrilege of the Guru Granth Sahib.

He was brought down by a team comprising firemen, police and civil officials with the help of a specialised crane-lift (turntable ladder), a fire official in Patiala said.

As he was being brought down, the activist waved to

his supporters standing below, with one of them shouting Khalsa was in "Chardi Kala" (high spirits).

After he descended amid 'Sikh Jaikara' and 'Jo Bole So Nihal, Sat Sri Akal' chants, Khalsa was taken for a medical checkup in an ambulance, with his supporters showering flower petals on him.

Many locals were seen watching the entire operation from the rooftops of their houses. "We have won," said Khalsa, a dairy farmer from Kheri Nagaian village in Patiala district, as he stepped onto the ground.

"By the Guru's grace, I have come down safely after 18 months and 12 days. I thank the Punjab government," Khalsa said, expressing his gratitude to Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and Assembly Speaker Kultar Singh Sandhwan for

560-DAY PROTEST ENDS



Khalsa also thanked the local administration for bringing him down safely.

The activist decided to end his protest after the Punjab government recently notified an anti-sacrilege law the Jaagat Jot Sri Guru Granth Sahib Satkar (Amendment) Act, 2026 which proposes strict

imprisonment and a fine of up to Rs 25 lakh, for any act of sacrilege against the Guru Granth Sahib. The protest drew attention across Punjab due to its unique nature and the extreme conditions endured by Khalsa, who remained atop the tower through harsh winter and scorching summer months.

He was sent essential supplies using a rope by one of his supporters every day. He stayed in an 8-10 feet makeshift tarpaulin tent atop the tower, using a polythene bag to relieve himself.

The fire department carried out a meticulous operation to bring Khalsa down, which took around 30-40 minutes. However, the entire preparation, including a mock drill, took about two hours, officials said.

Six members of the fire department climbed the tower to bring Khalsa down.

Harinderpal Singh, an assistant fire officer in Patiala, said that Khalsa, who weighed around 110 kg, was first lowered 125 feet down to a specially made platform with the help of a ladder using a full-body harness, ropes and pulleys. Two men were positioned above and below Khalsa

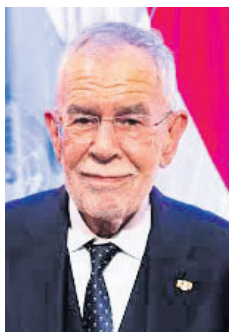
during his descent to ensure his safety. Later, he was shifted to the cabin of a hydraulic turntable ladder that got him down, keeping in mind the air velocity, the fire officer said.

The fire officials also brought down bedsheets, batteries, clothes and other belongings of Khalsa from atop the tower, he added.

After he was brought down, Khalsa said he had only one thought in mind either he would be a 'shaheed' (martyr) or the 'morcha' (protest) would be victorious. Asked about his lengthy stay atop the tower, Khalsa said it had been a good journey.

The activist, however, said that he is now suffering from elevated blood sugar levels because of a lack of physical activity. He also said his blood pressure would sometimes fluctuate.

# international



There can be no liberal democracy without truth. There can be no bright future without truth. Naturally, autocrats don't like the truth. It is their political strategy to ensure that people no longer know right from wrong

**VAN DER BELLEN**  
FEDERAL PRESIDENT OF AUSTRIA

## PAK REPAYS \$3.45BN LOAN TO UAE

Pakistan has returned the total USD 3.45 billion it owed in debt to the United Arab Emirates, the country's central bank said Friday. The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) in a social media post confirmed the repayment and said that the transaction was completed Thursday



## of the day quote

The position of the government of Spain is clear absolute collaboration with the allies, but always within the framework of international legality

**PEDRO SÁNCHEZ** | PRIME MINISTER OF SPAIN

America was built by people from all over the world who believed in its promise and worked tirelessly to make it better for the next generation. We are a nation of immigrants, and we are stronger because of it

**AMI BERA** | CONGRESSMAN, US

China has always been committed to promoting scientific and technological progress through cooperation and healthy competition. China attaches great importance to the protection of intellectual property rights

**LIU PENGYU** | SPOKESPERSON, CHINA EMBASSY

# Trump dispatches Witkoff, Kushner to Pak for new talks

The trip comes as much of the world is on edge over a war that has snarled crucial energy exports through the Strait of Hormuz, clouded the global economic picture and left thousands dead across the Middle East



to Pakistan "if necessary." Earlier Friday, Araghchi wrote on X that he was on his way to Pakistan, Oman and Russia on a trip focused on "bilateral matters and regional developments." Islamabad has sought to reinject momentum into the negotiations between Iran and the United States, which did not resume this week as had been expected.

### Trump extends the Jones Act waiver for 90 days

Separately Friday, the White House said President Donald Trump issued a 90-day extension to the Jones Act waiver, making it easier for non-American vessels to transport oil and natural gas. Trump first announced a 60-day waiver in March in a move intended to stabilise energy prices and ease oil and gas shipments to the US following the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz. "New data compiled since the initial waiver was issued revealed that significantly more supply was able to reach US ports faster," the White House post on social media said.

The price of Brent crude oil, the international standard, retreated on the news, vacillating between \$103 a barrel and more than \$107 - still nearly 50 per cent higher than where it was February 28, when the Iran war began.

Iran has kept its stranglehold on traffic through the strait, attacking three ships earlier this week, while the US is maintaining a blockade on Iranian ports and Trump has ordered the military to "shoot and kill" small boats that could be placing mines. "Iran has an important choice, a chance to make a deal, a good deal, a wise deal," US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth told reporters Friday. He said a second US aircraft carrier will join the blockade in a few days. Washington already has three aircraft carriers in the region; the USS George HW Bush in the Indian Ocean; the USS Abraham Lincoln in the Arabian Sea; and the USS Gerald R Ford in the Red Sea. It is the first time since 2003 that three American carriers have been operating in the region simultaneously. The force includes 200 aircraft and 15,000 sailors and Marines, US Central Command said.

## SNIPPETS

### Syrian forces arrest ex-officer linked to Tadamon massacre

**Damascus (Syria):** Syrian authorities said Friday they have arrested a former intelligence officer who appeared in a video leaked four years ago that purportedly showed him and his comrades fatally shooting dozens of people during the country's conflict. Amjad Yousef was arrested in the central province of Hama, where he had been hiding, the Interior Ministry said, and posted a photo of him in a striped prison uniform. Since insurgents ousted former President Bashar Assad in December 2024, dozens of members of his security agencies that were blamed for atrocities during the conflict have been arrested. Assad fled to Russia.

### Exchange of gunfire inside Mall of Louisiana leaves 1 dead, 5 wounded

**Baton Rouge:** An exchange of gunfire at a food court inside a Louisiana mall Thursday killed one person and wounded five others and sent workers and shoppers scrambling for safety, police and witnesses said. Authorities described the shooting inside the Mall of Louisiana in Baton Rouge as a confrontation between two groups of people and not a random attack. Louisiana Attorney General Liz Murrill said some innocent bystanders were struck by gunfire. Police Chief TJ Morse said five people were in custody, and there was no ongoing threat to the public. "This was a disagreement, a fight, between two different groups of people that we are still trying to unravel, and unfortunately innocent victims got caught in the crossfire," Morse said in a news conference.

### 250 Indian Jews from NE region reach Israel

**Jerusalem:** Some 250 Jews from north-east India have landed in Israel as part of an initiative announced by the government here last year to bring all remaining members of the community to the Jewish state. It is the first batch of Bnei Menashe to arrive in Israel, Thursday, since the announcement in November last year to fund the immigration of thousands more community members waiting to immigrate to Israel over the next five years. The Bnei Menashe community, which lives in parts of Manipur and Mizoram, claims descent from the biblical tribe of Manasseh, and has been slowly making its way to Israel since the 1990s. About 4,000 community members have reportedly immigrated to Israel over the past three decades with approximately 6,000 more waiting.

The squeeze on shipments through the strait has rippled through global maritime trade flows, including through the Panama Canal nearly halfway around the world.

### Pakistan forges ahead with diplomatic efforts

Pakistan has been trying to get US and Iranian officials back to the table after Trump this week announced an indefinite extension of the ceasefire with Iran, honouring Islamabad's request for more time for diplomatic outreach. "That hasn't lowered tensions in the strait, a strategic waterway through which a fifth of the world's oil and natural gas is shipped during peacetime."

Washington already has three aircraft carriers in the region; the USS George HW Bush in the Indian Ocean; the USS Abraham Lincoln in the Arabian Sea; and the USS Gerald R Ford in the Red Sea. It is the first time since 2003 that three American carriers have been operating in the region simultaneously. The force includes 200 aircraft and 15,000 sailors and Marines, US Central Command said.

### UK man jailed for religiously aggravated rape of Sikh woman

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**London, April 24:** A 32-year-old man who had pleaded guilty to the religiously aggravated rape of a Sikh woman in UK's Walsall was sentenced to life imprisonment at Birmingham Crown Court Friday.

John Ashby, a British man arrested last October days after the attack that sent shockwaves within the West Midlands community, had initially denied charges of sexual assault, strangulation, racially aggravated actual bodily harm and robbery before admitting the crimes.

He has now been jailed for life, with a minimum term of 14 years behind bars before he can be considered for parole. The judge described Ashby as a "deeply unpleasant racist and Islamophobe" after the court had previously heard that he had directed anti-Muslim rants at the woman during the attack.

"I have no doubt that you are a very dangerous man," Justice Pepperall told him during the sentencing hearing. "You pose an extreme danger to women and no reliable way to say how long you remain a danger," he said.



A girl holds a Ukraine flag while standing by some of the 20,000 teddy bears symbolising Russian abductions of Ukraine children during a demonstration on the National Mall in Washington, DC, US

# US Justice Dept drops probe into Fed Chair Powell



REUTERS

**Washington, April 24:** The Justice Department is closing its investigation into Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell, US Attorney Jeanine Pirro said Friday, removing an obstacle to the confirmation of Kevin Warsh, President Donald Trump's pick to lead the central bank.

The move by Pirro, a Trump ally and the top federal prosecutor in Washington, DC, for now ends an inquiry that had been rebuked by a federal judge and prompted a key Republican senator to block Trump's nominees to the central bank.

Pirro said she had instead asked the Fed's internal watchdog, the Office of Inspector General, to examine cost overruns in renovations of the central bank's Washington headquarters. The inspector general has already been examining the project after Powell requested a review last year.

"The IG has the authority to hold the Federal Reserve accountable to American taxpayers," Pirro said in a social media post. "I expect a comprehensive report in short order and am confident the outcome will assist in resolving, once

and for all, the questions that led this office to issue subpoenas."

The Powell probe, which had been examining the renovation and Powell's statements to Congress last year about the project, became the latest flashpoint in the Justice Department's pursuit of adversaries and critics of Trump.

A federal judge last month blocked subpoenas to the Fed's Board of Governors, finding they were issued for the improper purpose of pressuring Powell to cave to Trump's demands to rapidly lower interest rates or resign. Chief U.S. District Judge James Boasberg found prosecutors had shown "essentially zero evidence" Powell committed a crime.

As recently as this week, Pirro had vowed to appeal the ruling and continue the investigation.

Republican Senator Thom Tillis of North Carolina, a member of the Senate Banking Committee, has vowed not to support Warsh until the DOJ ends what he has called a baseless investigation into Powell. Tillis' blockade had effectively stalled Warsh's confirmation.

A spokesperson for Tillis had no immediate comment Friday.

# 'China now able to build 50 nuclear reactors at once'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Beijing, April 24:** China can build up to 50 nuclear reactors simultaneously, the country's atomic authority has said as Beijing gears up to rapidly expand the nuclear power sector to reduce dependence on fossil fuels amid the US-Iran war.

China has the ability to run dozens of nuclear projects concurrently spanning the full project life cycle - from design to construction - according to a latest report released this week by the country's Nuclear Energy Association.

"China's nuclear technology capabilities have moved from 'following' to 'keeping pace', and in some areas to 'leading,'" the report said.

China's total installed nuclear power capacity has reached 125 million kilowatts (KW), ranking first globally, state-run CCTV said, quoting the China Nuclear Energy Association (CNEA) report.

China currently operates 60 commercial nuclear reactors, with 36 under construction - representing over half of global nuclear construction, according to the report.

Another 16 units have been approved and await construction, according to the report.

By 2040, China is projected to have 200 GW of installed capacity, Yang Changli, rotating chairman of the CNEA, told domestic media outlet chinanews.com.cn.

Beijing has moved to rapidly build up its nuclear power sector in recent years as part of a wider effort to cut carbon emissions and reduce the nation's reliance on fossil fuels which gained urgency following the ongoing US-Israel war on Iran.

China aims to become a "strong country" in nuclear power by 2030, surpassing the United States in terms of total installed nuclear capacity and emerging as the world's largest nuclear power producer by scale, according to the CNEA.

# At SpaceX, AI is burning the cash that Starlink earns

REUTERS

**New York, April 24:** Elon Musk is touting SpaceX as humanity's ticket to Mars. But the company's pitch to investors for a potentially historic IPO reveals that its main business will be the same as Big Tech: building artificial intelligence.

The difference is in how the companies fund the spending. While Alphabet and Microsoft have deep operating cash flows, SpaceX is bankrolling its push with revenue from rockets and satellites, leaving it with a cash-burn profile closer to a late-stage startup than a trillion-dollar incumbent.

SpaceX's satellite broadband business, Starlink, doubled its operating income last year to \$4.42 billion, easily covering the loss incurred in its space divi-



sion, which is spending heavily on a new satellite-carrying rocket, showed excerpts of the company's IPO registration reviewed by Reuters.

That has emboldened Musk to remake SpaceX as an AI-first

company, dramatically shifting its spending profile. In 2025, the AI division - home to xAI - accounted for 61% of the consolidated company's \$20.74 billion total capital spending. At the same time, rising costs pushed the unit

- IPO may only fund few years of runway if AI revenue doesn't keep up with rising outlay
- Big Tech rivals outspend SpaceX on AI, with far greater revenue cushions
- Potential Cursor deal could raise need for more capital

to an operating loss of \$6.4 billion. Yet with plans to build an armada of space-based data centers, SpaceX spending is not likely to slow any time soon.

"What investors will be looking for is clear visibility on how the business model evolves with this financing and whether it can make the economics of compute work at scale," said Melissa Otto, head of research at S&P Global Visible Alpha.

### BIG TECH HAS HUGE REVENUE, PROFIT

While SpaceX's outlay is super-sized by most measures, it is dwarfed by Silicon Valley rivals. Google parent Alphabet, Microsoft, Instagram owner Meta, along with Amazon and Oracle, are set to collectively spend more than \$600 billion on AI this year.

Big tech also generates far more revenue from existing businesses spanning digital advertising, cloud computing and enterprise software, giving those companies both a longer runway to keep spending on the technology and a cushion if AI demand falls short of expectations.

That difference matters as SpaceX prepares what could be the largest initial public offering in history, touting a total addressable market of \$28.5

trillion - much of it tied to AI for businesses.

While the company is aiming to raise \$75 billion in its IPO at a valuation of \$1.75 trillion, it may have to return to the markets in a few years if capital spending growth continues to outpace that of revenue. Its capital spending more than doubled last year, exceeding revenue by roughly \$2 billion.

### WHAT HAPPENS IF SPACEX BUYS CURSOR?

A newly revealed deal with AI code-generation startup Cursor adds more uncertainty. SpaceX has the option of buying the company for about \$60 billion, or walking away and paying roughly \$10 billion for a collaboration. The structure allows SpaceX to delay a decision until after its IPO, but the financial implications are stark.



India today ranks, amongst the top three countries, as a seafarer provider, contributing roughly 12 per cent of the global maritime workforce. We aim to increase our global share to 20 per cent by 2030

**SARBANANDA SONOWAL** | UNION MINISTER

## PEAK POWER DEMAND SURGES

India's peak power demand surged to a seasonal high of 240 GW Thursday, driven by intense heat and increased air conditioner usage, according to the latest power ministry data. The country's peak power demand met (the highest supply in a day) was recorded a tad higher at 240.12 GW April 23, up from 239.70 GW April 22, the highest during this summer



## of the day note

While the federation has estimated wheat production of 110 million tonnes, the figure given by the agriculture ministry prior to the rainfall is 120 million tonnes. The reality will be somewhere between 110 and 120 million tonnes

**SANJEEV CHOPRA** | FOOD SECRETARY

Minor corrections will be there but not a structural hike as you generally see. Ongoing minor tariff corrections driven by current market conditions

**ABHIJIT KISHORE** | CEO, VODAFONE IDEA

We already have five super charging stations in India, which we have built around the lifestyle of our customers, where they go to work, shop, dine and travel

**SHARAD AGARWAL** | GENERAL MANAGER, TESLA INDIA

## THREE DAYS OF MARKET SLUMP

# INVESTORS' WEALTH DIPS BY ₹7.17L-CR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 24: Investors' wealth eroded by Rs 7.17 lakh crore in three days of market fall, where the BSE Sensex tumbled over 3 per cent, as escalating tensions in West Asia, particularly around the Strait of Hormuz, have heightened fears of supply disruption, driving crude prices higher.

In three days, the 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 2,609.12 points or 3.29 per cent.

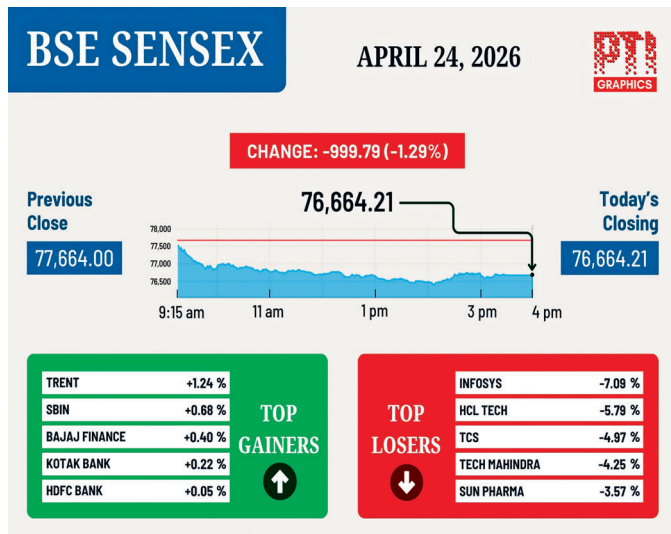
The primary drag on today's market came from the IT sector, where earnings disappointment and weak forward guidance triggered a broad-based sell-off

**HARIPRASAD K** | RESEARCH ANALYST AND FOUNDER, LIVELONG WEALTH

On Friday, the Sensex dropped 999.79 points or 1.29 per cent to settle at 76,664.21. During the day, it plunged 1,260.13 points or 1.62 per cent to 76,403.87. The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms eroded by Rs 7,17,476.54 crore to Rs 4,61,49,758.18 crore (\$4.89 trillion) in three days.

"Escalating tensions in West Asia, particularly around the Strait of Hormuz, have heightened fears of supply disruption, pushing Brent crude above \$106 per barrel. For an oil-import-dependent economy like India, this translates into elevated inflation risks, currency pressure, and margin compression across sectors," Hariprasad K, Research Analyst and Founder, Livelong Wealth, said.

Brent crude, the global oil



benchmark, climbed 2.17 per cent to \$107.3 per barrel.

From the Sensex constituents, Infosys dived 7.09 per cent after its revenue growth forecast for FY27 came in lower than market expectations.

HCL Tech, Tata Consultancy Services, Tech Mahindra, Sun Pharma, Asian Paints and ICICI Bank were also among the major laggards.

Trent, State Bank of India, Bajaj Finance, Kotak Mahindra Bank and HDFC Bank were the winners.

"While a lack of progress in peace talks between Iran and the US fuelled uncertainty in global markets, including India, mixed earnings among local IT companies triggered broad-based selling in domestic markets. The sharp depre-

ciation in the Indian rupee, along with a steep rise in FII fund outflows and renewed appreciation in crude oil prices, also dented investor sentiment," Ankur Punj, MD & Business Head at Equirus Wealth, said.

The BSE SmallCap Select index dropped 0.95 per cent, and the MidCap Select index dipped 0.91 per cent.

All sectoral indices ended lower. The BSE IT tanked 5.13 per cent, BSE Focused IT (4.65 per cent), Healthcare (1.35 per cent), Telecommunication (1.33 per cent), Realty (1.30 per cent), Services (1.17 per cent), and Consumer Discretionary (1.04 per cent).

A total of 2,905 stocks declined, while 1,326 advanced and 158 remained unchanged on the BSE.

## STRONG DOLLAR

# Gold, silver drop for 3rd straight day

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 24: Precious metal prices extended losses for the third straight session in the national capital Friday, with gold declining Rs 200 and silver plunging Rs 3,000 amid a firm US dollar and elevated global uncertainty.

According to the All India Sarafa Association, the yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity slipped Rs 200 to Rs 1,55,900 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) from Thursday's closing level of Rs 1,56,100 per 10 grams.

Silver also dropped Rs 3,000 to Rs 2,47,000 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes). The metal had settled at Rs 2,50,000 per kg in the previous market session.

In the international markets, spot gold rose marginally to \$4,708.17 per ounce, while silver gained nearly 1 per cent to \$75.96 per ounce.

# Style Bazaar partners with Odia movie Bindusagar



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 24: Style Bazaar, one of Eastern India's leading value fashion retail chains, has announced a special collaboration with the recently released Odia film *Bindusagar*.

The event was held Friday at the Style Bazaar store in Bhubaneswar and was attended by National award winning actress Prakruti Mishra and actor Dipanwit Dashmohapatra along with the movie crew team.

Commenting on the asso-

ciation, Shreyans Surana, co-founder and managing director of Style Bazaar, said, "At Style Bazaar, we believe in celebrating the spirit of the regions we serve. Our collaboration with *Bindusagar* reflects our commitment to staying rooted in local culture while creating contemporary experiences for our customers. This initiative allows us to bring together fashion, culture, and cinema in a meaningful and engaging way."

The collaboration is rooted in celebrating Odisha's cultural identity by seamlessly blending cinema and fashion, two powerful mediums that deeply resonate with local audiences. This initiative reflects Style Bazaar's continued commitment to connecting with regional roots while creating meaningful, contemporary retail experiences.

## Forex reserves jump to \$703.308 billion

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 24: India's forex reserves jumped by \$2.362 billion to \$703.308 billion during the week ended April 17, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said Friday.

In the previous reporting week, the forex kitty had increased by \$3.825 billion to \$700.946 billion.

The country's forex reserves had expanded to an all-time high of \$728.494 billion during the week ended February 27 this year, before the onset of the West Asia conflict. The reserves witnessed a decline in the subsequent weeks due to the escalation of the West Asia conflict, which began around February 28, 2026.

The rising geopolitical uncertainty weighed on the Indian Rupee, prompting the RBI to intervene in the forex market through dollar sales.

For the week ended April 17, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, increased by \$1.481 billion to \$557.463 billion, the central bank's data showed.

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

The value of gold reserves increased by \$790 million to \$122.133 billion during the reported week, the RBI said.

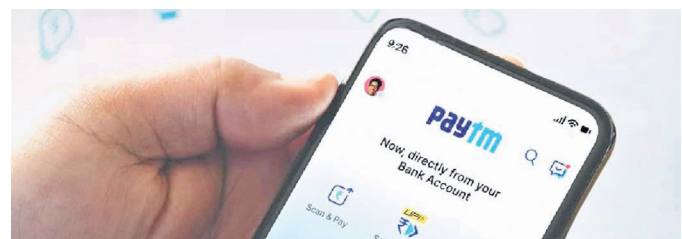
The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were up \$78 million to \$18.841 billion, the apex bank said.

India's reserve position with the IMF was up by \$14 million to \$4.87 billion at the end of the reporting week, according to the apex bank's data.

## COMPLIANCE LAPSES

# RBI revokes Paytm Payments Bank licence

Previously, the bank was directed to stop onboarding of new customers with effect from March 11, 2022



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, April 24: The Reserve Bank of India Friday cancelled the licence of Paytm Payments Bank Limited, citing failure to comply with the regulatory conditions laid down under its payments bank licence.

In a decisive move, the central bank said the entity would no longer be permitted to carry out banking operations and announced that it will approach the High Court to initiate the process of winding up the bank.

"RBI has cancelled the banking licence issued to Paytm Payments Bank Limited under Section 22(4) of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 ('BR Act') effective from close of business on April 24," the central bank said in its order.

"Consequently, Paytm Payments Bank Limited is prohibited from conducting the business of 'banking' as defined in Section 5(b) or any additional business specified under Section 6 of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 with immediate effect," RBI added.

RBI will make an application for winding up of the bank before the High Court, it mentioned.

The RBI noted that Paytm Payments Bank has adequate

liquidity to repay all its deposit liabilities, assuring that depositors' interests would be safeguarded during the closure process.

"Paytm Payments Bank Limited has enough liquidity to repay its entire deposit liability upon winding up of the bank," the central bank said.

It further stated that allowing the bank to continue operations would serve no useful purpose or public interest.

"No useful purpose or public interest would be served by allowing the bank to continue as envisaged in Section 22 (3) (e) of the BR Act," RBI said.

"The bank failed to comply with the conditions stipulated in the Payments Bank license issued to it, thereby violating the provisions of Section 22 (3) (g) of the BR Act," the central bank stated.

Previously, the bank was directed to stop onboarding of new customers with effect from March 11, 2022.

Thereafter, on January 31, 2024, and February 16, 2024, certain business restrictions were also imposed on the bank which, inter alia, disallowed any further deposits/credits/top-ups in existing customer accounts, prepaid instruments, wallets, etc, RBI said.

## BIZ BUZZ

### AM/NS India's project Daksh benefits 800 youth of Odisha



Entry Operator and IT Helpdesk Attendant. Under the initiative, till date, a total of 1,895 students have been trained across the four locations in Odisha. Of these, 1153 students have already secured placements in reputed organisations including Tatwa, Nija Manpower Services, Techbridge, VGM, Amazon and Randstad, demonstrating the program's strong impact on livelihoods. Through Project Daksh, AM/NS India is shaping a generation of future-ready youth, equipping them with digital skills that drive inclusive growth and unlock sustainable livelihood opportunities.

**BHUBANESWAR:** ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India (AM/NS India) marked an important milestone in digital livelihood empowerment with certification ceremonies for 800 trainees under its flagship CSR initiative, Project 'Daksh', across locations in Paradeep, Keonjhar, Kendrapara, and Barbil Friday. Implemented in partnership with Nasscom, the program culminated in the successful completion of intensive digital skill training in IT/ITES trades. The trainees received technical and soft skills training, industry mentorship, and workplace exposure during 225 hours of training. The participants earned certifications in specialized job roles such as Domestic Data

### Aditya Aluminium marks National Panchayati Raj Day

**SAMABALPUR:** On the auspicious occasion of National Panchayati Raj Day, Aditya Aluminium, Lapanga, as part of its community development initiatives, took significant steps towards improving the well-being of nearby villages. Safe Drinking Water Facilities were inaugurated in Jangala and Katarbaga Gram Panchayats of Rengali Block, Sambalpur district. Further strengthening basic village infrastructure, a Ground Breaking Ceremony was also conducted at Laripal village for the construction of a Cremation Centre and Community Toilets. Upon completion, the Durga SHG of Laripal has been entrusted with the responsibility of operating and maintaining the Community Toilet. The programme was inaugurated by Nilambar Rohidas, sarpanch of Katarbaga; Rita Biswal, sarpanch of Jangala; and Murari Prasad Biswal, ex-sarpanch of Jangala GP, along with PRI members. The event was held in the presence of Ravi Niwashi, CSR Head; Manoj Sharma, DH-Infra; Manoranjan Behera, CSR Team; and Nilamadhab Pati, Civil Team, along with PRI members, SHG members, and the CSR team. The initiative reflects the collaborative efforts between corporate and community stakeholders and reinforces the vision of sustainable rural development by improving health, hygiene, and overall quality of life in the villages.



# Iran war hits Asia's polyester suppliers to global fast fashion

REUTERS

**Surat, April 24:** A surge in fossil fuel prices since the Iran war is squeezing polyester suppliers and garment makers across India and Bangladesh, threatening to raise costs for fast-fashion retailers like Zara and H&M.

Filatex, one of India's biggest polyester yarn producers, is paying nearly 30% more for the petroleum-derived feedstocks - purified terephthalic acid (PTA) and monoethylene glycol (MEG) - that it needs to make yarn, as Chinese suppliers raise prices and Middle East supply is disrupted, managing director Madhu Sudhan Bhageria told Reuters.

The pain is being felt across the clothing supply chain, which is dominated by Asia. Avichal Arya, CEO of Bindal Silk Mills, which supplies dyed and printed polyester fabrics to retailers including H&M, Zara-owner Inditex,

Target, Walmart and IKEA, said the energy crisis had "drastically" pushed up the cost of chemicals and dyes.

Adding to his woes, Arya said a shortage of cooking gas due to the war has driven many migrant workers to leave Surat, a textile hub in India's western state of Gujarat. "We are not able to actually meet the demands of the global orders very fruitfully these days," he said.

Made from oil derivatives, polyester dominates the textile industry, accounting for 59% of global fibre production and used in everything from running shorts to dresses. It is directly exposed to the squeeze on refined petroleum products caused by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

## FAST FASHION COSTS COULD RISE

The pressure could eventually move downstream to retailers that rely on Asia's polyester-heavy supply chains, though retailers are shielded from immediate pain by forward buying.



British retailer Primark said its spring/summer stock and a big part of autumn/winter stock would not be affected. "If we were buying energy-related raw materials today we would be seeing significant inflation, it's just that we're not," George Weston, CEO of parent company Associated British Foods,

told Reuters. "It may be that when we do have to go back into the market the prices have reduced, but we don't know."

An industry source said H&M expects price increases from Bangladeshi suppliers in the coming weeks but plans to absorb them.

In a statement, H&M said it does not see major disruptions

**POLYESTER PRODUCTION COST SURGES AS PETROCHEMICAL PRICES JUMP**  
**INDIAN TEXTILE MILLS FORCED TO SLASH PRODUCTION**  
**COSTS FOR FAST FASHION INDUSTRY COULD RISE**

to production in Bangladesh and has not observed "any noticeable number of requests from suppliers to adjust orders in connection with energy costs."

Retailers like Zara and H&M have shifted to using mostly recycled polyester - made from plastic bottle waste - which could cushion some of the oil-driven cost pressure for them. But globally, recycled polyester still accounts for just 12% of polyester production.

## DEMAND DESTRUCTION

In Bangladesh, even though factories mostly make cotton-based clothing, they face higher prices for the polyester sewing thread that feeds their

sewing machines, and higher logistics costs from raised retail fuel prices.

In an April 5 letter reviewed by Reuters, thread producer Coats Bangladesh — a unit of UK-listed Coats — announced a 15.5% price increase effective April 15, citing the "rapid escalation in oil-derived feedstock costs" and higher transportation expenses.

"Buyers are becoming more cautious and carefully calculating risks before placing orders, which could affect order volumes," said Mohammad Hatem, president of the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

"If this goes on for one more month, forget it — we will have lower clothing production and what we call demand destruction, because retailers will have to raise their prices and consumers will cut their purchases," said Bruna Angel, principal analyst for fibres at Wood Mackenzie.

# Kohli, Devdutt explode

RCB BEAT GT BY FIVE WICKETS TO RETURN TO WINNING WAYS



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangalore, April 24:** Devdutt Padikkal and Virat Kohli played quintessential T20 knocks of 55 and 81 respectively, trouncing Sai Sudharsan's century to power Royal Challengers Bengaluru to a five-wicket win over Gujarat Titans in an IPL match here Friday.

Once Devdutt and Kohli added 115 runs for the second wicket in no time, RCB's chase of 206

**TODAY'S MATCHES**

**DC VS PBKS**  
TIME: 3:30 PM

**RR VS SRH**  
TIME: 7:30 PM

Star Sports channels & JioHotstar

was right on track, which they eventually completed in 18.5 overs and moved to the second spot in the points table.

The champion batter and his understudy tore apart GT bowlers after the early dismissal of Jacob Bethell in a mesmerising display of aggressive batting, in total contrast to the measured way their rivals' went about gathering runs in the first innings.

Kohli, who was dropped on zero by Washington Sundar off Mohammad Siraj, measured the bounce of the pitch to a nicety, tackling Prasidh Krishna and Kagiso Rabada with ease.

Prasidh was carted for two fours, Rabada was flicked away for a six and Rashid Khan, his eternal nemesis, was pulled over mid-wicket for a six as Kohli reigned Chinnaswamy, reaching his fifty in 30 balls.

At the other end, Devdutt was equally imperial, biffing Kar-

### FRESH RECORDS

- Kohli becomes the first player to reach 800 IPL fours and 300 sixes for a single franchise
- Sudharsan breaks Gayle's record to become the fastest player to score 2,000 runs in IPL

nataka state-mate Prasidh for a couple of sixes and Rashid too was dispatched for a maximum, fetching his fifty in 10 balls fewer than his senior.

It took a peach from Rashid to castle Devdutt, and Kohli, who till then read the bounce to perfection, ironically dragged a Jason Holder lifter on to his stumps.

It pushed RCB to a wobbly period as they lost skipper Rajat Patidar and Jitesh Sharma as well, slipping to 173 for five.

But Krunal Pandya (23, 12b) and Tim David (10) carried them past the target from that

IPL STANDINGS					
TEAMS	P	W	L	NRR	PTS
PBKS	6	5	0	1.420	11
RCB	7	5	2	1.101	10
RR	7	5	2	0.790	10
SRH	7	4	3	0.820	8
CSK	7	3	4	0.118	6
DC	6	3	3	-0.130	6
GT	7	3	4	-0.790	6
MI	7	2	5	-0.736	4
LSG	7	2	5	-1.277	4
KKR	7	1	5	-0.879	3

point, as RCB signed off from their home venue with a victory. This was their fourth win at Chinnaswamy from five engagements this season.

Earlier, Sudharsan produced a magnificent 100 that was an anti-thesis of T20 batting, but still strong enough to carry Gujarat to a competitive 205 for three.

In fact, the first 12.4 overs of the Titans' innings was an anti-thesis of T20 batting, where the former champions proved that runs can be made in this format without hitting the ball in anger.

Sudharsan's 58-ball knock, his third hundred in the IPL, was the cornerstone in GT's trend-defying effort with the bat.

The left-hander totally dominated the 128-run alliance with his opening partner and captain Shubman Gill (32, 24b). Sudharsan consumed 29 balls in the Power Play segment against the latter's seven.

The 24-year-old Tamil Nadu batter, who also became the fastest to score 2000 IPL runs along his innings, made 46 runs in Power Play, and then reached fifty off 33 balls in style, clobbering Romario Shepherd for a six.

### BRIEF SCORES

**Gujarat Titans** 205/3 in 20 overs (Sai Sudharsan 100, Shubman Gill 32, Jos Buttler 25) lost to **Royal Challengers Bengaluru** 206/5 in 18.5 overs (Virat Kohli 81, Devdutt Padikkal 55) by five wickets

## THOMAS & UBER CUP FINAL

INDIAN MEN BEAT CANADA 4-1, WOMEN 1-1 AGAINST DENMARK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Horsens (Denmark), April 24:** Lakshya Sen endured a tough loss but Ayush Shetty and the doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty registered wins as 2022 champions India notched up a commanding 4-1 win over Canada in their opening Group A tie of the Thomas Cup Finals, here Friday.

After Lakshya's spirited effort ended in a 18-21, 21-19, 21-10 loss to world No 13 Victor Lai, world No 4 Satwik and Chirag levelled the tie with a dominant 21-10 21-11 win over Jonathan Bing Tsan Lai and Kevin Lee.

The 20-year-old Ayush, runner-up at the recent Asia Championships, then outwitted world No 33 Brian Yang 21-13, 21-17 in 39 minutes to hand India a 2-1 lead.

# Odisha to host Junior & Senior Artistic Gymnastics National Championships



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 24:** The Odisha Gymnastics Association (OGA) Friday hosted an official press conference here announcing the Junior & Senior Artistic Gymnastics National Championships 2026-27, scheduled to be held at Kalinga Stadium from April 25 to May 3, 2026.

The championships are being organized by Odisha Gymnastics Association in collaboration with the Gymnastics Federation of India (GFI) and with the support of the Sports and Youth Services Department Odisha, Government of Odisha.

The press conference was graced by Bijay Kumar Swain, Additional Secretary, Sports and Youth Services Department, Government of Odisha; Kallol Mukherjee, Chief Operating Officer, Gymnastics Federation of India; Ashok Sahoo, Secretary, Odisha Gymnastics Association; Dhiran Panda, Executive Member, Odisha Gymnastics Association; Dhuroj Kumar Pattnaik, Officer on Special Duty, Sports and Youth Services Department, Government of Odisha; Rakesh Patra, National Coach, Indian Gymnastics Team; and Ashok Mishra, Competition Manager, Artistic Gymnastics Championships.

Addressing the media, Kallol Mukherjee, Chief Operating Officer, Gymnastics Federation of India, emphasized the championship's significance in the national and international pathway, "The

National Championships remain a critical benchmark in India's gymnastics calendar. Performances here will directly influence selections for major upcoming international competitions, including the Asian Championships, Asian Games, and the Commonwealth Games. The depth of talent we are witnessing today reflects the steady progress of gymnastics in India and platforms like these Nationals are essential to building that competitive edge."

Ashok Sahoo, General Secretary, Odisha Gymnastics Association, said the significance of the championship, stating that it serves as a crucial selection trial for the 2026 Commonwealth Games and the 2026 Asian Championships. He noted that the Nationals provide an important platform for Indian gymnasts, who have been training rigorously for months, to showcase their talent on a national stage. He also highlighted that such events create valuable opportunities for promising athletes to learn from one another and elevate their performance.

He expressed his gratitude to the Federation, the Gymnastics Association, and the Government of Odisha for their continued support in promoting the sport and for providing platforms like these Nationals that contribute to the growth and development of gymnastics in the country.

The championship will see participation from over 600 gymnasts representing 25 States, three Union Ter-

ritories, and service boards, competing across Men's Artistic Gymnastics (MAG) and Women's Artistic Gymnastics (WAG). The competition will include Team Championships, Individual All-Around events, and Apparatus Finals across junior and senior categories.

Prominent Indian gymnasts, including Pranati Nayak, Tapan Mohanty, Yogeshwar Singh, Asish Kumar, Protishta Samanta, and Tapeswaranath Das are expected to participate alongside emerging talents from across the country.

The event will be conducted on a technical panel of over 300 officials, including judges, coaches, and support staff, ensuring adherence to national and international standards. Athletes will also benefit from access to dedicated warm-up and training facilities adjacent to the high-performance gymnastics centre.

The opening ceremony is scheduled for April 25, 2026. Competitions will be conducted in multiple sessions, culminating in the finals and closing ceremonies April 28 (Men's) and May 3 (Women's).

The return of the National Championships to Odisha marks another milestone in the state's sporting journey and reflects the strong collaborative efforts between OGA, GFI, and the Government of Odisha in advancing gymnastics across all levels—from grassroots development to elite performance pathways.

## Abhay enters maiden PSA Gold-level QFs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 24:** India's Abhay Singh registered a notable win over Egyptian world No 13 Aly Abou Eleinen to enter his maiden PSA Gold-level event quarterfinals at the Grasshopper Cup squash in Zurich. World No 24 Abhay trailed 5-8 in the opening game before recovering to beat the seventh seed 12-10, 11-9 in the second round. Singh had beaten Eleinen earlier this month at the El Gouna Open in Egypt.

"I stuck to my game plan. Still a few things I can work on. We will go back to the drawing board tonight," said Singh. He will play Egyptian world No 4 Karim Gawad next. In the opening round, Singh beat Swiss David Bernet 11-9, 9-11, 11-8, while compatriot Ramit Tandon lost to Egypt's Fares Dessouky 6-11, 9-11.

## Indian U18 ice hockey team set to compete in Asia Cup

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 24:** The Gurtej Singh Bhatti-led Indian ice hockey team will compete in the U18 Asia Cup in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan from April 27 to May 3, the national federation announced Friday.

Apart from India, hosts Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Uzbekistan, Indonesia and Macau, China will compete in the tournament.

Devansh Sharma and Iftiqar Hussain will be India's alternate captains.

In 2025, the Indian women's team had won a bronze medal at the IIHF Women's Asia Cup in Al Ain, UAE, securing the country's first international medal in the sport.

The men's team had earlier claimed silver at the 2017 IIHF Challenge Cup of Asia Division I, and more recently represent-



ed India at the 2025 Asian Winter Games in Harbin, China.

"The last year was a big one for Indian ice hockey. It created real momentum around the sport. Now the U18 boys have their opportunity, and that makes this a very exciting moment for us."

"The fact that this team has players from different states shows the game is growing, and the IIHF U18 Asia Cup gives them the kind of exposure that can shape the future," said Harjinder Singh, General Secretary, Ice Hockey Association of India.

## Blues face Islanders' challenge

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Bangalore, April 24:** As the Indian Super League enters Gameweek 10, Bengaluru FC play host to Mumbai City FC for their final home game of the 2025-26 season in the Indian Super League (ISL) at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium in Bangalore Saturday.

The Blues head into the fixture on the back of a gruelling away game at the VYBK against East Bengal FC last week, where they were held to a 3-3 draw, thanks to a last-minute equaliser by Anton Sojberg.

The Islanders' eight-game unbeaten streak came to an end as they went down 0-2 to FC Goa at the Fatorda, with goals from Sahil Tavora and Mohammed Nemil ensuring the Gaurs won back-to-back home games for the first time this season.

Life in the ISL for Blues'



Head Coach Pep Munoz hasn't started as he would have wanted. With a draw and a loss in two games in charge, he will look to get maximum points on this weekend as his side welcomes Petr Kratky's team Saturday.

With ten points in five

games, two more than the hosts in the same period, Kratky will look to make the most of this visit to the Garden City to keep his side's title hopes alive. On the other hand, the Blues will look to end their home season on a positive note to keep pace in the title race.

## Shambhavi, Divyanshu clinch world record

India now has 12 medals from the Cairo Junior World Cup and leads the medal tally with four gold, five silver, and three bronze, with two days of the competition left and six gold medals still to be decided

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, April 24:** India's 10m Air Rifle Mixed Team pairing of Shambhavi Kshirsagar and Divyanshu Dewangan won the competition with a junior world record score of 499.9, as India claimed a fourth gold in the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) Junior World Cup Rifle/Pistol/Shotgun, in Cairo, Egypt, Friday.

The pair had earlier topped



the qualification round with a combined 632.0. Chinese Taipei's Tsai Chieh-Ying and Chen You-An won silver with 498.3, while the French pairing of Tiffene Pomes and Gaspard Lesieur won bronze with 434.4.

In the junior men's 25m Rapid-Fire Pistol event, Sameer made the cut to the final with an effort of 573 in qualifying, which gave him the second spot. France's Arnaud Gamaleri posted a table-topping 589, which equalled the junior world record. Sameer finished seventh eventually, scoring seven hits in the first three five-shot series of the

eight-series final. Gamaleri took gold with 29 hits. India now has 12 medals from the Cairo Junior World Cup and leads the medal tally with four gold, five silver, and three bronze, with two days of the competition left and six gold medals still to be decided.

Earlier Thursday, Prachi Gaikwad struck gold, winning the junior women's 50m Rifle 3 Positions (3P) event.

Another AIN shooter, Elena Kretina, won bronze with a score of 343.3, exiting the 35-shot final after the 34th shot. Naraen Pranav also won bronze in the junior men's 10m air rifle with a score of 229.5 in the final.

This was India's second gold of the competition after Shiva Narwal had won the men's 10m Air Pistol event on the opening day of competitions on Tuesday (April 21), and with four silver and three bronze medals also in their kitty, takes them back to the top of the medal tally.