



## Hansika's mechanism

Actor Hansika Motwani says she doesn't take negativity or trolling to heart to stay focused on work

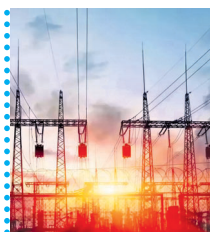
LEISURE | P2



## Deportation shield

Trump argues courts lack jurisdiction to review his ending humanitarian immigration protections

INTERNATIONAL | P10



## Power demand peaks

India's peak power demand hits a record high of 252.07 GW Friday following an intensifying heat wave

BUSINESS | P11



## Punjab's record chase

Punjab Kings pull off the highest-ever successful chase in the format's history by overhauling a daunting 265-run target

SPORTS | P12

## Central govt reconstitutes Niti Aayog

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 25: The government has reconstituted the Niti Aayog, appointing Ashok Kumar Lahiri as Vice Chairman and five full-time members, including economist KV Raju, Director of AIIMS M Srinivas and Abhay Karandikar, Secretary, Department of Science and Technology.

Making the announcement, Prime Minister Narendra Modi wished a productive and impactful tenure to Lahiri and the new full-time members, including scientist Gobardhan Das and former cabinet secretary Rajiv Gauba.

"The Government has reconstituted the NITI Aayog. My best wishes to Shri Ashok Kumar Lahiri Ji on becoming the Vice Chairman. My best wishes also to Shri Rajiv Gauba Ji, Prof. K. V. Raju Ji, Prof. Gobardhan Das Ji, Prof. Abhay Karandikar Ji and Dr. M. Srinivas Ji on becoming Full Time Members of NITI Aayog. Wishing all of them a productive and impactful tenure ahead," Modi said in a post on 'X'.

The Prime Minister said that the NITI Aayog has emerged as a vital pillar in India's policy-making architecture, fostering cooperative federalism, furthering reforms and boosting 'Ease of Living'.

It serves as a dynamic platform for innovation and long-term strategic thinking across sectors, he said.

The Prime Minister is the chairman of the Niti Aayog.

Lahiri called on Prime Minister Modi Saturday following his appointment. He is amongst India's most experienced and senior economists with a career spanning over four decades. Currently a BJP MLA in West Bengal, he is a former chief economic advisor to the Government of India and a member of the 15th Finance Commission. He is not contesting the ongoing Assembly election in the state.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



You have two ways to join our party... give a missed call on this number, or wait for a missed call from the ED



HEATWAVE BLUES: A man drinks water from a public tap on a hot summer day as a boy looks on, in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, Saturday

PTI PHOTO

## US: Bill for 3-yr pause on H-1B visas introduced

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, April 25: A group of Republican lawmakers has introduced a bill in the US Congress for a three-year pause to the H-1B visa programme, contending that it has been hijacked to replace American workers with cheap foreign labour.

Congressman Eli Crane from Arizona introduced the End H-1B Visa Abuse Act of 2026, which was co-sponsored by seven other Republican lawmakers.

The bill proposes reforms to the H-1B programme that include reducing the annual cap from 65,000 to 25,000 with a minimum wage of USD 2,00,000 per year and disallowing H-1B visa holders from bringing dependents to the US.

Congressmen Brian Babin, Brandon Gill, Wesley Hunt, Keith Self (all from Texas), Andy Ogles (Tennessee), Paul Gosar (Arizona) and Tom McClintock (California) have signed on as original cosponsors of the bill.

The H-1B visa programme is used extensively by American technology companies to employ foreign workers. Indian professionals, including technology workers and physicians, form one of the largest groups of H-1B visa holders.

## Peace talk hopes fizzle out

TRUMP CANCELS ENVOYS' TRIP AS IRANIAN FM LEAVES PAKISTAN

REUTERS

Islamabad/Washington, April 25: President Donald Trump cancelled a trip by two US envoys to Iran war mediator Pakistan Saturday, dealing a new setback to peace prospects after Iran's foreign minister flew out of Islamabad following talks in the capital.

Trump said in a social media post that he had called off the planned visit by his special envoy Steve Witkoff and son-in-law Jared Kushner, citing what he said was tremendous confusion within the Iranian leadership.

"Too much time wasted on traveling, too much work! Besides which, there is tremendous infighting and confusion within their leadership. Nobody knows who is in charge, including them. Also, we have all the cards, they have none! If they want to talk, all they have to do is call!" he wrote.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi earlier left the Pakistani capital without any sign of a breakthrough in talks with



In this photo released by the Pakistan PMO, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi, fifth left, meets with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, centre, in Islamabad, Pakistan, Saturday

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and other senior officials.

Araqchi later described his visit to Pakistan as "very fruitful", adding in a social media post that he had "shared Iran's position concerning (a) workable framework to permanently end the war on Iran. Have yet to see if the US is truly serious about diplomacy."

Iranian media reported that Araqchi had flown to Oman's capital Muscat, saying he will meet with senior officials to "discuss and exchange views on bilateral relations and regional developments".

Tehran has ruled out a new round of direct talks with the United States and an Iranian diplomatic source said Tehran would not accept Washington's "maximalist demands".

### Iran and US at an impasse

Washington and Tehran are at an impasse as Iran has largely closed the Strait of Hormuz, which normally carries one-fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas shipments, while the US blocks Iran's oil exports.

The conflict, in which a ceasefire is in force, began with US-Israeli airstrikes on Iran

February 28. Iran has since carried out strikes against Israel, US bases and Gulf states, and the war has pushed up energy prices to multi-year highs, stoking inflation and darkening global growth prospects.

Araqchi "explained our country's principled positions regarding the latest developments related to the ceasefire and the complete end of the imposed war against Iran", said a statement on the minister's official Telegram account.

Asked about Tehran's reservations over US positions in the talks, an Iranian diplomatic source in Islamabad told Reuters: "Principally, Iranian side will not accept maximalist demands."

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt had said the US had seen some progress from the Iranian side in recent days and hoped more would come over the weekend, while Vice President JD Vance was ready to travel to Pakistan as well.

Vance led a first round of unsuccessful talks with Iran in Islamabad earlier this month.

## Minor girl kills self hours after boyfriend's suicide

POST NEWS NETWORK

Angul, April 25: In a tragic fall-out of teenage love, a minor girl committed suicide at the Sakhi Centre on the premises of the district headquarters hospital in Angul Saturday, hours after her boyfriend took the extreme step.

Sources said the 13-year-old girl was found hanging inside a toilet of the facility. She was a resident of Samakoi village under Sadar police limits in Angul.

Police said the minor girl had eloped to Mumbai a few days ago with one Benupani Sahu, 21, of Nimidha village in Dhenkanal district. Following a complaint lodged by the girl's family, police registered a case (272/26) and reportedly detained the youth's parents prompting him to return with the girl. Distressed over the situation, Benupani sent the girl to a relative's house and reportedly committed suicide Friday.

Villagers alleged police pressure contributed to the tragedy and demanded suspension of officers involved. Tension rose as locals initially refused to release his body. Officials,



including Motanga IIC Deepak Kumar Lenka and Hindol SD-PO Satya Kumar Nanda, tried to pacify the crowd. The body was eventually taken for post mortem around 2:30pm.

After being rescued, the girl was kept at the Sakhi Centre. However, she went to the toilet Saturday morning and did not return. Authorities later found her hanging from a shower pipe using her scarf.

Police reached the spot, recovered the body and launched an investigation. The body was sent for post-mortem and later handed over to the family, said Angul police station IIC Prakash Majhi. Further investigation will continue after the post-mortem report is received, he said.

The incident has raised serious questions about security at the Sakhi Centre, which is meant to be a safe shelter.

## SHORT TAKES

### AAP seeks defected MPs' disqualification

New Delhi/Chandigarh: Stung by the multiple defections of its Rajya Sabha members, the Aam Aadmi Party Saturday announced that it will seek their disqualification from the Upper House while the rebel group hit back, alleging corruption and ideological decline in their former party. The seven MPs also asserted that they have quit the party not out of fear but due to a growing sense of "disappointment, disengagement and disgust" with the existing leadership. According to AAP sources, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann has sought time from President Droupadi Murmu for a meeting, along with party MLAs, to present his party's stand about the "recall" of the Rajya Sabha members who quit Friday. Six of the seven Rajya Sabha members who quit the AAP come from Punjab. P8

### Bengal records 93.19% turnout in Phase 1: EC

Kolkata: The first phase of the West Bengal Assembly elections recorded a voter turnout of 93.19 per cent, the highest ever in the state, the Election Commission said Saturday. Polling for the first phase was held April 23 across 152 Assembly segments in 16 districts, and 3.36 crore of the total 3.61 crore voters exercised their franchise, it said. Of those who voted, 1.65 crore were women and 1.71 crore were men, it added. The highest turnout was recorded in Cooch Behar district at 96.2 per cent, followed by Dakshin Dinajpur at 95.44 per cent and Malda at 94.79 per cent. According to data shared by the EC, the previous highest turnout was 84.72 per cent, recorded in the 2011 Assembly elections, in which the TMC stormed to power, ending the CPI(M)-led Left Front's uninterrupted 34-year rule.

## Historic Mughal astrolabe set to be auctioned in UK

These astrolabes are works of artistry as much as instruments of science and many now describe them as olden day smartphones. Sotheby's reflected

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, April 25: A rare 17th century brass astrolabe, a hand-held astronomical supercomputer, from Maharani Gayatri Devi of Jaipur's collection is set to fetch millions at a Sotheby's auction in London next week.

The astrolabe, which forms the centrepiece of the auction house's 'Arts of the Islamic World and India' sale Wednes-

day, went on display this weekend and is estimated to fetch between 1.5 and 2.5 million pounds. Dating back to 1612, it is believed to be the largest of its kind and was created by two brothers for a powerful Mughal nobleman in Lahore.

The intricate device was part of the royal collection of Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II and by descent his wife Gayatri Devi, Rajmata of Jaipur, before passing on into private collection.

It was commissioned by Aqa Afzal, a really powerful Mughal nobleman who at the time was overseeing the administration of Lahore under Emperor Jahangir, and the object was clearly conceived as something befitting a man of his considerable standing, the auction notes



revealed.

The craftsmanship is quite staggering 94 cities catalogued inside with their longitudes and latitudes, 38 star pointers

connected by floral tracery, five precision-calibrated plates, and degree divisions so fine they are subdivided down to a third of a degree.

The inscription describes it as an 'asturlab-e tam', a complete astrolabe referring to the fact that its plates carry a full 90 altitude circles, it added.

The astrolabe is inscribed with the Persian names of the stars and the Sanskrit names in Devanagari script with plates including the locations for Mecca, Bijapur, Ajmer, Kashmir and Lahore.

From a single brass disc, the ancient device could be used to tell the time, map the stars, calculate the position of the sun, find the direction of Mecca, and navigate. This rare historic nod

to astronomy lands on the auction circuit soon after the recent Artemis II space mission.

These astrolabes are works of artistry as much as instruments of science and many now describe them as olden day smartphones, Sotheby's reflected.

According to the official literature referenced, Lahore in the early 17th century was the epicentre of astrolabe-making in the Mughal world. Known as the Lahore School, the craft was kept within a single family and passed down from father to son across four generations.

The two brothers who made this particular instrument, Qa'im Muhammad and Muhammad Muqim, were among the most celebrated makers the school ever produced.

# leisure



## HBO TO RECAST HELENA'S ROLE IN WHITE LOTUS SEASON 4

Actress Helena Bonham Carter has exited Season 4 of *The White Lotus*, with her role set to be recast. HBO stated that the character, created by Mike White, did not align during filming and is now being rewritten.

## RIHANNA CHARMS MUMBAI FANS DURING BRAND VISIT

Global pop icon Rihanna charmed fans during her Mumbai visit to promote her beauty brand, Fenty Beauty. At a recent event, she warmly interacted with paparazzi, even posing for a photo on request.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshaSpeaks.com  
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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

**ARIES**  
If you have children, it's likely you'll spoil them today. After all, it's for days like these that you work hard, says Ganesha. You will also complete pending assignments and it's a productive day for those in medical professions and public services.

**TAURUS**  
You may feel frustrated and stranded in family matters today, says Ganesha. Shower your warmth and care to make up for past mistakes. Your spouse will be supportive and lend you a helping hand to regain your mental composure. Reciprocate with intimacy and go with the flow, suggests Ganesha.

**GEMINI**  
A favourable day to put an end to all the doubts surrounding your ability to do well, especially in the field of communication. People around you will find you incredibly charming and enchanting. You will win hearts with your verve and panache. You may want to spruce up your surroundings at work and at home. It will fetch you crucial brownie points from those you want to impress.

**CANCER**  
It is quite possible that your personal life will take precedence over your professional life. You will not be able to repress or ignore your feelings, and you should not either, says Ganesha. But you should be careful about how you express yourself in public.

**LEO**  
No matter how far you go, there is always a horizon that you desire to reach. And what holds true for all outer projections of life most certainly holds true for one's inner self as well, reminds Ganesha. Bear this in mind as you strive to improve yourself in as many ways as possible. You might consider part-time courses and crash courses to help increase your skills and double your efficiency. Self-improvement is a never-ending process, says Ganesha.

**VIRGO**  
Financial doldrums are headed your way today. In order to seek what you desire, expect shelling out a hefty price. You might just net those short-term goals in the evening. Ganesha foretells large and important business deals will end the day on a high note.

**LIBRA**  
Today will be fabulous for you, especially if you are in the world of business. Long-term deals seem to be on the cards for you. If you happen to be a government officer, luck favours you today. Keep your ears and eyes open, there may be news of a possible promotion. All Ganesha has to say to you today is, keep your options open and hopes alive. And smile with good luck on your side.

**SCORPIO**  
Ganesha feels that your intuitive feelings will rule your actions today. You will need to break past your stress threshold and tackle work with zeal and zest. Follow your instincts and relax to some good music when the burden of work is overwhelming.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Ganesha sees a spectacular day in store for you, especially if you are an artist. Radio jockeys will be heard and cheered for. Television anchors will receive thundering applause and golden opportunities. Go ahead – seize the day!

**CAPRICORN**  
Your extraordinary skills, passion for perfection, and an overpowering personality will inspire and motivate those around you, says Ganesha. Many will, in fact, emulate your actions, so much so that you could most likely have a fan following. But while the inspired lot may achieve success and move on to target higher goals, you are likely to miss out on the best of opportunities to make money.

**AQUARIUS**  
Spirituality is your new passion and Calvin Klein matters less today! Mysticism attracts you, says Ganesha. This may lead you to seek solace in holy books and religious places. It's going to take some time for you to understand that spiritual attainment can be had in the flesh-and-blood world as well.

**PISCES**  
You are ceaselessly driven to find room for improvement. A part-time course to enhance your skills or to increase your efficiency is what you will likely be pursuing today, says Ganesha.

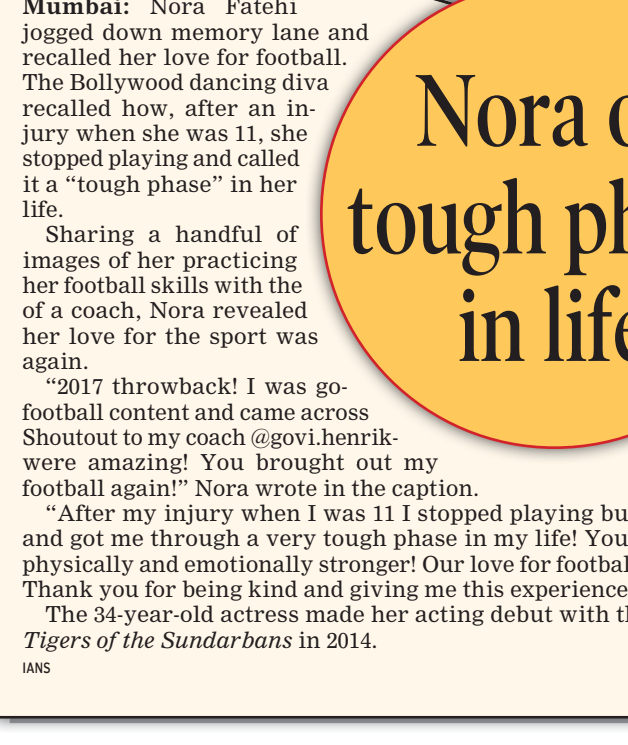


## Hansika stays calm in chaos

**Hyderabad:** Actress Hansika Motwani has spent more than half her life in the public gaze, evolving from a child artiste at 8 to a leading lady by the time she was sixteen. But recently, that gaze has turned into a glare. Over the last six months, the actor has navigated a whirlwind of controversies — from a high-profile divorce to a messy legal battle and a subsequent defamation suit. Yet, in the face of the firestorm, Hansika appears largely unfazed, choosing to focus on work and what she calls her "sacred space."

Talking to an entertainment portal recently, Hansika speaks about navigating scrutiny and negativity. "I don't really take negativity or trolling to heart. Over the years, I've become quite thick-skinned, so these things don't affect me as much as people might assume. What truly matters to me is that my mom, my family, and I know who I am. That's the only reality I hold on to. I've always believed that my personal life should remain personal, and I've maintained that boundary very strongly," shared the actress.

She went on to add, "I don't allow just anyone into my space, and I'm quite clear about that. If conversations are happening around me, I usually choose not to engage unless I personally feel it's something I want to address. Otherwise, I let my work speak for itself and focus on what keeps me at peace."



## Nora on tough phase in life

**Mumbai:** Nora Fatehi jogged down memory lane and recalled her love for football. The Bollywood dancing diva recalled how, after an injury when she was 11, she stopped playing and called it a "tough phase" in her life.

Sharing a handful of images of her practicing her football skills with the of a coach, Nora revealed her love for the sport was again.

"2017 throwback! I was go-football content and came across Shoutout to my coach @govi.henrik-were amazing! You thought out my football again!" Nora wrote in the caption.

"After my injury when I was 11 I stopped playing but you motivated me and got me through a very tough phase in my life! You helped me become physically and emotionally stronger! Our love for football brought us closer! Thank you for being kind and giving me this experience," she concluded.

The 34-year-old actress made her acting debut with the Hindi film *Roar: Tigers of the Sundarbans* in 2014.

help that brought out ing through my this moment sen our sessions childhood love for

**Mumbai:** Actress Neetu Chandra, who has been in the acting business for almost 23 years, has shared that her perspective for taking on roles has evolved over the years and that she now chases "stories that stay with you."

"Over the years, my perspective has evolved. I don't chase roles anymore, I chase stories that stay with you. *Aakhri Sawal* is one such film," Neetu said in a statement.

She said: "It's not just cinema, it's a question that lingers long after the lights go out. Being part of something so intense and thought-provoking feels far more meaningful than simply being in the spotlight."

The actress added: "Collaborating with National Award-winning director Abhijeet Mohan Warang, whose vision brings rare depth to storytelling, and sharing the screen with a legend like Sanjay Dutt has been nothing short of transformative. It has been a journey of learning, growth, and rediscovery."

Talking about the upcoming film *Aakhri Sawal*, it stars Sanjay Dutt and will release on May 8.

The film also stars Amit Sadh, Namashi Chakraborty, Sameera Reddy and Tridha Choudhury.

Neetu's perspective for taking on roles



## Sanju to return as Ballu in Khal Nayak sequel

**Mumbai:** Ballu, the iconic anti-hero played by Sanjay Dutt in the 1993 cult classic, *Khal Nayak*, is set to return to the big screens. On Friday, the actor announced his new film, *Khal Nayak Returns*, touted to be a 'fresh interpretation' of the 1993 original.

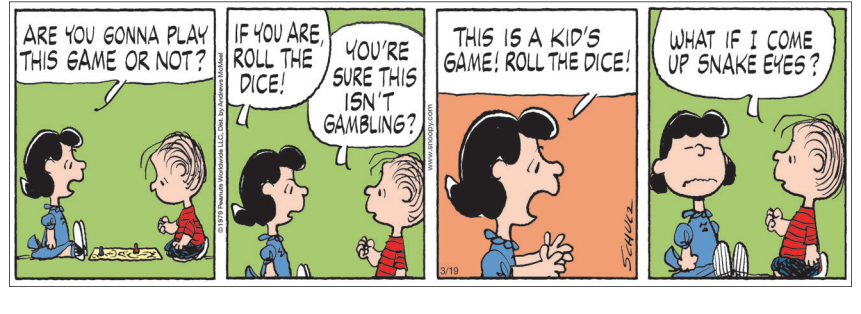
On Friday, at an event in Mumbai, Sanjay revealed that his Three Dimension Motion Pictures and Producer Aksha Kamboj's Aspect Entertainment have jointly secured the rights from filmmaker Subhash Ghai and his company Mukta Arts for the second part of the iconic action-crime movie. The original *Khal Nayak* also starred Jackie Shroff and Madhuri Dixit.

At the event, a brief teaser of *Khal Nayak Returns* was unveiled, news agency PTI reported. It showed the actor reprising his iconic role of Ballu in a rugged new avatar.

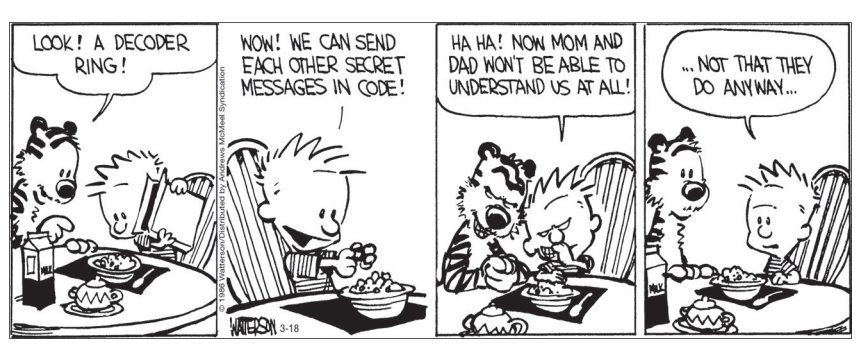
Speaking at the event, Sanjay thanked Subhash Ghai, the director and producer of *Khal Nayak*, for making the film. "The journey of *Khal Nayak* has been long, and without Subhash ji, it wouldn't have been possible. He is a legend and the man of entertainment. He will be part of this *Khal Nayak*," he told reporters.



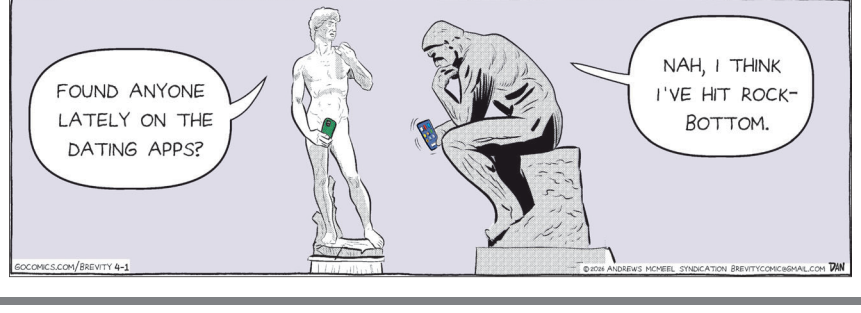
### PEANUTS



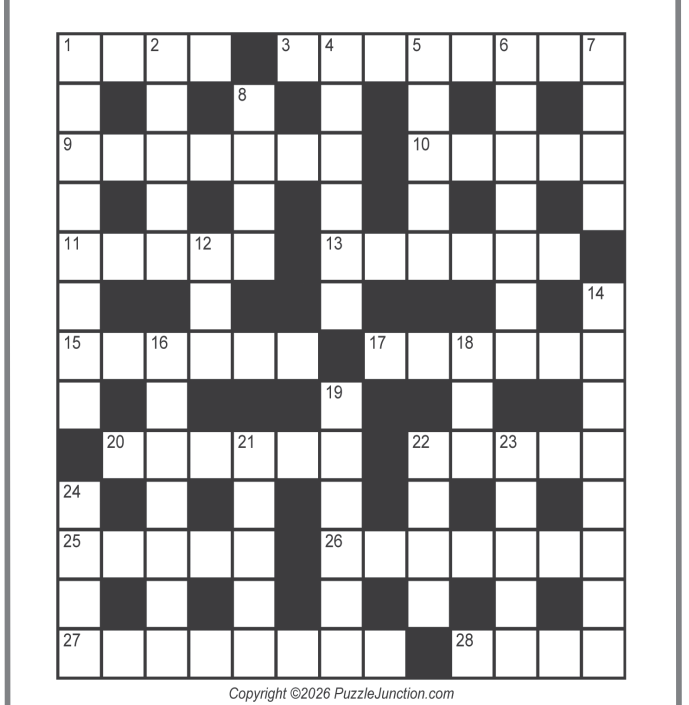
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



### CROSSWORD



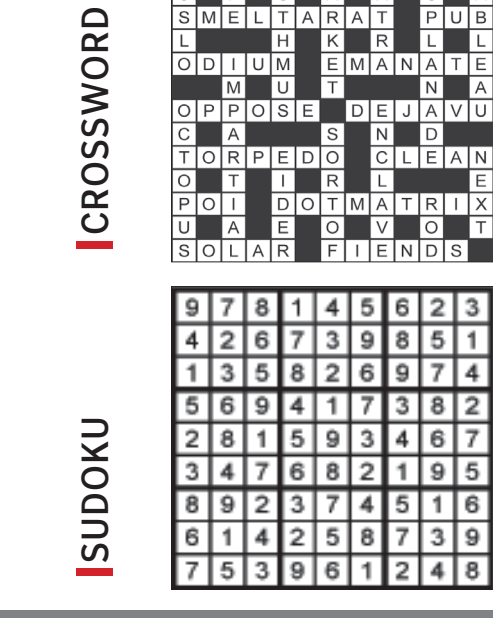
- Across**
- 1 Vats
  - 3 Acme
  - 9 Fishermen
  - 10 Hawaiian feasts
  - 11 Come to pass
  - 13 Snub, in a way
  - 15 Tight
  - 17 Right away (2,4)
  - 20 Acid neutralizer
  - 22 Fastener
  - 25 Happen
  - 26 Pokes fun at
  - 27 Type of pig or stove
  - 28 Night fliers
- Down**
- 1 Span
  - 2 Counterfeit
  - 4 Confined to a cell (2,4)
  - 5 Man-made fibre
  - 6 Mortification
  - 7 Leisure
  - 8 Yield
  - 12 Samovar
  - 14 Storms
  - 16 Unlawful
  - 18 Engine need
  - 19 Traffic stopper
  - 21 Correspond
  - 22 Cordon bleu
  - 23 Permit
  - 24 It's sold in bars

### SUDOKU

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, fill in the boxes in such a manner that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.



### SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

## SC: Prepare action plan to implement ICU guidelines

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 25:** The Supreme Court has asked all the states and Union Territories (UTs) to prepare a "realistic and practical" action plan to implement the guidelines necessary as a minimum standard for intensive care units (ICUs).

The SC was informed that "Guidelines for Organisation and Delivery of Intensive Care Services", on which there is consensus and which is practical, implementable and necessary as a minimum standard for an ICU, has been prepared.

A bench of Justices Ahsanuddin Amanullah and R Mahadevan said copies of the guidelines should be shared with all the states and UTs.

"Moving further, as an immediate measure, let all the additional chief secretaries/secretaries... heading the department of health and medical education in the states and the UTs, convene a meeting of all experts involved in this exercise to prepare an action plan for implementation of the guidelines. Such a plan shall be realistic and practical," the bench said in its April 20 order.

The SC was hearing a matter relating to healthcare services, including guidelines for the treatment of patients in the ICU or critical care unit.

The bench said five basic issues shall be identified and prioritised in the first instance. "The challenge ... lies in determining what ought to be treated as absolutely essential and mandatory; accordingly, an initial list of five basic requirements, in terms of priority, relating to both manpower and equipment/logistics, shall be prepared," it said.

It said a methodology should also be formulated for implementation on the ground, and more importantly, a mechanism to ensure compliance and monitoring of the implementation.

"We expect the exercise to commence immediately and the first meeting to be held within one week. We direct that the meeting shall be attended personally by the additional chief secretary/secretary ... heading the department of health and medical education in the states and the UTs," the bench said.

It said, "The report prepared pursuant to the deliberations should be forwarded by the respective states and UTs to the Secretary of the Department of Health, Government of India, who in turn would circulate it to all the states and UTs."

The bench said thereafter, a meeting of all concerned should be convened where a final common agreed draft shall be prepared and circulated.



FOR A CAUSE: Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) personnel, with a sniffer dog, perform a mock drill on Patna High Court premises, Bihar, Saturday

PTI PHOTO

# 219 new veterinary hosps in state soon

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 25:** If all goes as planned, Odisha will soon have 219 new veterinary hospitals and diagnostic laboratories, as pacts in this regard were inked with six public sector undertakings (PSUs) Saturday.

Attending the state-level celebration of World Veterinary Day here, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi announced a series of major initiatives for the development of the animal resources, veterinary healthcare, and fisheries sectors.

As part of efforts to strengthen animal healthcare services, the CM inaugurated 76 newly constructed veterinary hospitals built at an investment of nearly ₹100 crore across the state. He also oversaw the signing of Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) worth ₹177 crore with six PSUs for the construction of 219 new veterinary hospitals and diagnostic laboratories. As part of the pact, a state-level molecular laboratory will be set up at Phulnakhara in Cuttack at a cost of around ₹10 crore.



Majhi also announced that the state-level food laboratory will be strengthened at a cost of ₹6 crore to ensure quality animal feed.

In the fisheries sector, projects worth ₹50 crore were launched, including a fish landing centre at Kasia in Bhadrak and modernisation works at Dhamra fishing harbour.

Marking the golden jubilee of OPOLFED, the CM also inaugurated marketing centres for brown eggs and indigenous 'Aseel' chicken. He said the initiative would help poultry farmers receive fair prices for

their produce.

Addressing the gathering, Majhi praised veterinarians for serving speechless animals and described them as protectors of livestock and public health. He stressed that traditional farming alone is not enough to raise farmers' incomes and called for greater focus on allied activities such as dairy farming, poultry, goat rearing and fisheries.

He highlighted the state government's flagship Mukhyamantri Kamadhenu Yojana, 'Aseel' chicken. He said the initiative would help poultry farmers receive fair prices for

profit over 15 lakh cattle farmers over the next five years, with subsidies of up to 70 per cent for rearing high milk-yielding cows.

In a bid to expand veterinary services in rural areas, the state government has also decided to engage 2,000 trained A-HELP personnel to assist farmers with vaccination and grassroots animal healthcare, he said.

The CM felicitated successful veterinarians, animal husbandry workers, and farmers, interacted with them, and urged them to contribute collectively towards making Odisha a developed state.

Attending the event as the guest of honour, Fisheries and Animal Resources Development Minister Gokulananda Mallik said, "Veterinarians play a vital role in ensuring safe food systems and preventing diseases transmitted from animals to humans."

Among others, Fisheries and Animal Resources Development Commissioner-cum-Secretary Prem Chandra Chaudhary and Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Services' Director Vijay Amruta Kulange were present.

## HM suspended for sexual harassment

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar/Nabarangpur, April 25:** The headmaster (HM) of a state-run Sevashram school in Nabarangpur district has been placed under suspension by the District Collector Saturday after a 14-year-old tribal girl lodged a police complaint, alleging sexual harassment, officials said.

The accused has been identified as Sukanta Kumar Sadangi, Head Sevak, Sevashram, Patraput on deputation to Government (SSD) High School, Singdari.

The Class VII student filed the complaint at Patraput police outpost, alleging that the headmaster had sexually harassed girl students.

In her complaint, she alleged that Sadangi called five girls to his room April 15. While four others were asked to drink ORS water, he allegedly touched her inappropriately. She said she managed to escape and left the hostel the following day.

Asked why the complaint was filed 10 days after the alleged incident, the girl's father said they had first approached the District Welfare Officer (DWO), but no action was taken.

He said they later went to the police outpost with the help of local BJD leader Pradeep Majhi and submitted a written complaint. District Welfare Officer Rabindra Palaka said the headmaster had initially been transferred from the school to ensure a fair inquiry.

"The internal complaints committee of the school was looking into the matter. Based on the recommendation of the school committee, the headmaster was suspended Saturday," he said. The school is run by the state's SC & ST Development, Minorities and Backwards Classes department.

Sub-Divisional Police Officer Krishna Chandra Bhattara said, "Appropriate action will be taken as per the law. Whoever the accused may be, if sufficient evidence is found, necessary legal steps will follow."

Majhi alleged that several girls were subjected to similar harassment, but one student has now gathered the courage to speak out. School and Mass Education Minister Nityananda Gond said a detailed investigation would be conducted and the accused would be punished if found guilty.



## KCR's daughter launches new political outfit TRS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Hyderabad, April 25:** Telangana Jagruthi president and former CM K Chandrasekhara Rao's daughter, K Kavitha, Saturday launched a political outfit, named 'Telangana Rashtra Sena' (TRS). Kavitha, who announced her party's name and agenda at an event on the city outskirts, sharply attacked the ruling Congress, BJP and BRS, describing her father as a "changed man" who has become "soulless".

The Bharat Rashtra Samiti (BRS), headed by her father, was originally named Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS). However, it was renamed as BRS in 2022 following KCR's ambitious plan to expand the party nationwide.

Alleging that the BRS, Congress and BJP are now riddled with corruption, "family rule" and favouritism, she announced 'Panchajanya', a set of five promises, including free education and health.

Attacking her father Chandrasekhara Rao and brother K T Rama Rao, she said KCR is, of late, speaking without showing "political maturity".

## Jharsuguda state's hottest at 44.1°C

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, April 25:** Odisha continued to reel under heatwave conditions Saturday as at least 17 places in the state recorded a maximum temperature of 40 degrees Celsius and above, officials said.

The industrial town of Jharsuguda was the hottest place in the state at 44.1 degrees Celsius, nearly 2.9 degrees Celsius above normal, followed by Titlagarh at 44 degrees Celsius, according to the evening bulletin of the Bhubaneswar Meteorological Centre. The places which recorded temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius or above included Bolangir (43.5), Nua-pada (43), Sundargarh (42.8), Rourkela, Sambalpur and Hirakud (42.6), and Bhawanipatna and Boudh (42). State capital Bhubaneswar recorded 36.8 degrees Celsius, while Cuttack 36.6 degrees Celsius. The relative humidity in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack was 77 and 79, respectively.

# Japan awakens to Radio Taiso exercise tradition

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Tokyo, April 25:** Every morning at 6:30, a particular music plays on a radio station in Japan, and it sets the tone for the day, in fact for a healthy day. That is Radio Taiso - Exercise Radio in English - a simple yet dynamic way to start the day. The music accompanies basic instructions for calisthenics, and millions perform in the choreography: in parks, workplaces, schools - and at home.

Radio Taiso has an almost 100-year history, formally introduced in 1928 and coinciding with the enthronement of Emperor Hirohito. The tradition endures because the exercises are suitable for all ages and capabilities, and easily accessible. It is all about basic exercise movements; reach to the

sky to limber up, twist at the torso, bend at the hips, swing the arms and get the shoulders loose, or jump or run in place.

Exercisers can make it as strenuous as they wish, and it's over in just 10 minutes, all done to the rhythm of a soft piano melody. Japan has one of the longest lived populations on earth, and this ritual is credited for promoting physical and social wellbeing.

There are about a dozen basic moves that can be done standing or seated. The idea is to keep moving and, though the program runs early in the morning, many devotees repeat it on their own later in the day.

The routine features a trio of three-minute segments that get slightly more difficult - but not much. Most Radio Taiso followers know the sequences



by heart, but beginners can join in and quickly pick up the routines. No equipment is needed.

The programme begins with arms exercises - lifting the arms, circling the arms and stretching the arms side-to-side. It's followed by bending

from the waist and twisting at the waist.

Shoulder raises are incorporated with a few mini-jumping exercises and marching-in place moves. Along the way you add in neck exercises, moves to stretch the chest and small

squats for leg power.

Mieko Kobayashi is 88 and goes to Kiba Park - an expansive layout in the east Tokyo area - almost every day, where a large group gathers without fail.

"If it's cold or raining, I don't go," she said. "By moving my body, I feel better." She and her 77-year-old friend, Yoshi-ko Nagao, said that some, who go to the park daily, live alone, and this is an important social anchor - particularly for the elderly.

"Laughing and chatting while taking a walk after (the exercise) is also good," Nagao added. "We come even on New Year's Day."

Kenji Iguchi is 83 - he'd pass for 60 - and he's been a regular for about 20 years. "It's for my joints, mainly the knees and back, because of my age," Igu-

chi said. "I get up at 5 am anyway," he added. "I come to the park about 6 and do a round of walking ahead of the Radio Taiso session. Most of the faces are familiar, and coming here and getting together with them is also one of the things I look forward to."

Japan has one of the world's longest-lived populations, attributed to its diet, healthcare system and a lifestyle that encourages the elderly to be active. The average life expectancy is about 85, and only Hong Kong is reported to be slightly higher. By comparison, the United States is about 79.

The Japanese government announced late last year that 99,763 people were alive in Japan at 100 or more, a new national record for the 55th straight year.

# Odisha projects urban roadmap at UCF meet

POST NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi, April 25:** Odisha projected its ambitious urban development roadmap at a high-level national consultation on the Urban Challenge Fund (UCF), held at the India Habitat Centre in New Delhi Saturday after the release of the fund's operational guidelines.

Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs Manohar Lal Khattar chaired the meeting which was attended by ministers and senior officials from various states and Union Territories to discuss implementation strategies for the flagship initiative aimed at accelerating India's urban transformation.

Representing Odisha, Housing and Urban Development Minister Krushna Chandra Mahapatra described the Urban Challenge Fund as a catalyst for a "new take-off" in India's urban growth story, aligned with the vision of Narendra Modi for Viksit Bharat @ 2047. He said the fund would promote market-driven growth models and attract private investment to build self-reliant and future-ready cities.

Highlighting Odisha's priorities under Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, Mahapatra identified the Bhubaneswar-Cuttack-Puri-Paradip Economic Region (BCPPER) as a major growth engine for the state. He said a strong pipeline of investment-ready projects is being prepared to create world-class infrastructure, improve climate resilience, and generate employment opportunities.

Additional Chief Secretary Usha Padhee presented Odisha's roadmap for Viksit Odisha @ 2036, aligned with the broader national vision of Viksit Bharat @ 2047. She stressed the importance of



## HUDCO observes Foundation Day

**New Delhi:** The Housing and Urban Development Corporation Ltd (HUDCO) observed its Foundation Day at the India Habitat Centre here Saturday, bringing together representatives from central ministries, financial institutions, multilateral agencies, lenders and urban local bodies (ULBs) to discuss infrastructure financing and development of bankable projects. The event underscored the need to scale up public-private partnerships (PPP) in infrastructure. Discussions underscored the opportunity for PPPs to mobilise private capital, improve efficiency and innovation, enable lifecycle asset management, and ensure faster, high-quality project execution with better service delivery. HUDCO also showcased its flagship Urban Investment Window (UIWIN) as a major initiative to help cities develop investment-ready projects. It stressed capacity building for ULBs in financial structuring, PPP design, procurement and securing financial closure through engagement with lenders and investors. Panel discussions highlighted the need for robust, bankable infrastructure projects, focusing on ULB revenue and expenditure analysis, borrowing capacity, asset management and viability gap funding.

convergence-based planning, data-driven governance, and institutional capacity building for timely execution of large urban projects.

Padhee also highlighted Odisha's focus on developing scalable and investment-ready urban ecosystems rooted in sustainability and innovation.

With a central outlay of ₹1 lakh crore for urban infrastructure, the consultation focused on project prioritisation, faster approvals, and effective fund utilisation. Major thrust areas included Integrated Command and Control Centres, municipal digitisation, drone-based land management, Transit-Oriented Development, dumpsite remediation, and strengthening of core

urban infrastructure.

Senior Odisha officials who attended the consultation included Director of Municipal Administration Arindam Dakua, Additional Secretary Satrughna Kar, Financial Advisor-cum-Additional Secretary Shikha Biswal, Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation Commissioner Chanchal Rana and Puri Municipal Corporation Commissioner Sneha Arugula.

The consultation is being seen as a significant step toward unlocking high-impact investments and building sustainable, inclusive and future-ready urban centres across the country, with Odisha positioning itself at the forefront of the transformation.

# Speeding truck kills helper; driver held

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 25:** A driver was arrested after a helper was killed when a speeding truck rammed into a stationary goods vehicle while the victim was fixing a tyre near the Tamando overbridge on NH-16 under Tamando police limits, officials said Saturday.

The deceased was identified as Manoj Bira, helper of a pick-up truck bearing registration number OD-02-BQ-7545.

According to police, the incident took place around 3:10am April 20 when the brick-laden vehicle was travelling from Bhubaneswar to Khurda. Its rear tyre burst near Tamando, following which it was parked by the roadside. While Manoj was changing the tyre, an Eicher truck bearing registration number RJ-14-GP-5614 allegedly came from behind at high speed and rammed into the pick-up vehicle.

Manoj sustained grievous injuries and died on the spot. Police said the impact was severe, leaving the body badly mutilated. The body was later



shifted to AIIMS-Bhubaneswar for necessary formalities.

Based on a written complaint, Tamando police registered a case and launched an investigation.

The accused driver, identified as Dharmendra Kumar (40)

of Bahalpur under Rura police station in Kanpur Dehat district of Uttar Pradesh, was arrested during the probe. During interrogation, he reportedly confessed to his involvement in the incident.

Police have seized both damaged vehicles involved in the accident. Further investigation is underway.

The incident occurred April 20 when the brick-laden pick-up truck was travelling from Bhubaneswar to Khurda and stopped near Tamando after its rear tyre burst

While helper Manoj was changing the tyre, an Eicher truck allegedly came from behind at high speed and rammed into the stationary vehicle

## MAYURBHANJ STALE FOOD DEATH

# Submit report within 2 weeks, NHRC to govt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, April 25:** The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued notices to Odisha Chief Secretary and the Mayurbhanj SP, seeking a detailed report within two weeks over the death of a girl student and 100 other pupils falling ill after eating stale food at a state-run school.

The NHRC took suo motu cognisance of reports about the death of one student and 100 other students falling ill after consuming stale food at the residential hostel of Kakabandh Ashram School of Mayurbhanj April 14, 2026.

The victim was a Class V student of the school run by the ST and SC Welfare department of the state government.

The NHRC has observed that the contents of the news report, if true, raise serious issues of human rights violations of



the victims. Therefore, it has issued notices to the Chief Secretary and Mayurbhanj SP, calling for a detailed report on the matter within two weeks, an official release issued Saturday said.

The rights panel said that it is expected that the officials will include the status of the investigation as well as the health of the victim students.

According to the report, the condition of about 67 students was serious, and they were shifted to the Baripada Medical College and Hospital, while 41 others were admitted to a Community Health Centre.

A Class V student identified

as Rupali Besra (12) died, and over 100 fell ill in a suspected case of food poisoning after they consumed stale pakhala (fermented rice), saga bhaja (fried green leaves) and aloo bharta at the hostel of a state government-run residential school in Mayurbhanj district.

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi has announced an administrative inquiry by the Revenue Divisional Commissioner (RDC), central division and an ex gratia of ₹3 lakh for the girl's family and the headmaster of the school, Jayanta Kumar Panigrahi, was suspended by the local administration.

# OPCC to launch padyatra May 3

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, April 25:** Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) has announced an eight-day padyatra beginning from Dhinkia in Jagatsinghpur district to protest against alleged atrocities by industrial establishments on local residents.

The padyatra will conclude in Bhubaneswar May 3 with a major public gathering at Lower PMG, where leaders from across districts and senior Congress functionaries are expected to participate.

OPCC President Bhakta Cha-



ran Das said a party delegation will also meet the Governor and submit a memorandum highlighting their concerns.

Das strongly criticised what he described as injustices committed by industries against innocent people in Jagatsinghpur and several other parts of the state.

He alleged that the state government's industrial policy has enabled companies to exploit Odisha's mineral resources without safeguarding the rights of local communities.

The Congress leader further claimed that instead of granting land rights to people who have lived in these regions for generations, the government is facilitating their displacement in favour of industrial projects.

Das noted that the party has previously organised protests and padyatras to support those affected by industrial expansion.

He pointed out that similar concerns have emerged in areas such as Kalinganagar, Chhendipada, Talcher, Mayurbhanj and Rairangpur.

He added that although mining operations have been approved in 34 coal blocks, with work already underway in some, issues of displacement have begun to surface. The government, Das said has failed to provide adequate support and rehabilitation to affected communities.

# STF seizes 154 kg ganja; 1 arrested

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar/ Dhenkanal, April 25:** In a crackdown on the drug trade, the Special Task Force (STF), Bhubaneswar, seized 154 kg 380 grams of ganja and arrested one person from Dhenkanal district, officials said Saturday. The accused, Lipu Naik (28), son of Sanatan Naik of Cheptigadia village under Hindol police limits, was taken into custody during the operation.

Acting on intelligence inputs, STF officials conducted a raid near Maa Banadurga Temple at Kansara on the outskirts of Ambhiti village under Hindol police

station limits on the evening of April 24. During the operation, the team apprehended the accused while he was allegedly smuggling the contraband in a SUV. During the search, officials recovered 154 kg 380 grams of ganja, a mobile phone, and seized the SUV along with other incriminating materials.

The accused was arrested and produced before the court of the District & Sessions Judge-cum-Special Judge, Dhenkanal.

A case was registered at the STF police station under Sections 20(b)(ii)(C), 25 and 29 of the NDPS Act, 1985 (STF Police station case number 09 dated April 25, 2026), officials said.

## BMC's anti-rabies drive on World Veterinary Day



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 25:** Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) marked World Veterinary Day by organising a special mass anti-rabies vaccination drive across nine institutions in City, reinforcing its commitment to public health and animal welfare.

The initiative was conducted under the ongoing Mass Dog Vaccination (MDV) programme and focused on sterilising stray and community dogs to curb the spread of rabies, a deadly yet preventable disease.

BMC's Veterinary doctors, interns from, along with trained dog catchers and para-veterinary staff, participated in the campaign. The vaccination camp was carried out at Sainik School Institute of Physics, Kalinga Stadium, Capital Hospital, College of Veterinary Science and Animal Husbandry, Raj Bhavan, Secretariat, AIIMS-Bhubaneswar and a residential welfare society at Kalinga Nagar (K-8). Dogs within these institutional and residential premises were vaccinated to ensure smooth coverage.

A total of 374 dogs were vaccinated during the special drive.

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, April 25:** The state government has directed all departments and associated agencies to complete preparations well in advance for the Rath Yatra, scheduled to be held in July.

Chief Secretary Anu Garg Saturday reviewed the status of ongoing works and preparedness at a high-level meeting. The review covered progress on decisions taken in earlier meetings, alongside an assessment of current arrangements and upcoming tasks.

A key focus of the meeting was ensuring the smooth and disciplined pulling of the chariots. Officials noted that excessive entry of pass holders into the cordoned area creates obstacles during the procession. To address this, it was proposed to significantly reduce the number of cordon passes this year.

SJTA Chief Arabinda Padhee informed that construction of the chariots commenced April 20 on the auspicious occasion of Akshaya Tritiya. A technical committee has been formed

# RPF recovers ₹1.95L jewellery in train theft case

MANOJ KUMAR JENA, OP

**Bhubaneswar, April 25:** The Railway Protection Force (RPF), in coordination with GRP Bhubaneswar and the Crime Intelligence Branch (CIB), Saturday recovered stolen gold and silver ornaments worth ₹1.95 lakh under Operation Yatri Suraksha in connection with a train theft case registered in February this year.

The recovery relates to GRPS Bhubaneswar Case No. 34 dated February 24, registered under Section 305(C) of the BNS on the basis of a complaint lodged by Sreya Das (30) of Chandini Chowk, Cuttack.

According to police, the complainant was travelling in Train No. 18447 Hirakhand Express February 24 when the theft took place between 7:19 pm and 7:30 pm in coach S2 at Bhubaneswar railway station. She had kept a black bag on the upper berth, which was stolen within minutes. The bag contained four gold rings (5.5



to monitor the progress, with regular inspections planned. Of the required 865 pieces of timber, 576 have already been procured, while the remaining supply is being arranged. Emphasis has also been laid on ensuring the strength and quality of the chariot ropes. Major infrastructure projects being executed by the Odisha Bridge and Construction Corporation (OBCC)—including the Jagannath Ballav Pilgrim Centre, redevelopment of Acharya Harihar Square, multi-level parking at Digabareni, and Parking-1—are nearing completion. Restoration and renovation work at the Gundicha Temple is also progressing and is expected

to be completed before the festival, as informed by the Puri Collector. To enhance illumination, 50 high-mast lights will be installed along the Grand Road. Sanitation measures include the installation of six bio-toilet blocks comprising 18 units along the Puri sea beach, along with 1,600 temporary toilets at police camps, parking zones, and other public areas.

In view of possible heavy rainfall, a drainage management plan has been prepared, identifying 23 locations for installation of high-capacity pump sets. Encroachment removal along the Grand Road is underway and is scheduled for completion by



grams), a gold chain (12 grams), a gold pendant (2.3 grams) and a silver bracelet, valued at nearly ₹1.95 lakh.

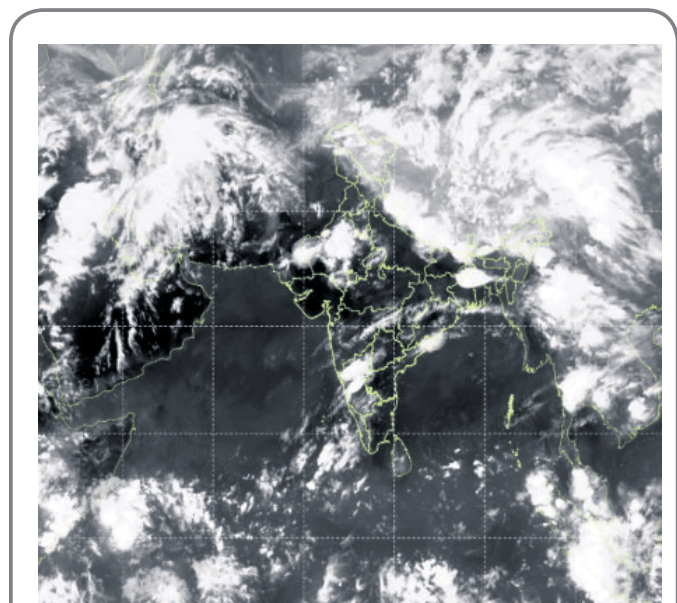
During the investigation, a joint team of the RPF and CIB

examined CCTV footage and arrested accused Anatha Behera (40) of Tangi, Khurda, on February 27. A portion of the stolen items, including a silver bracelet, was recovered from him.

However, Anatha could not account for all the stolen items and told police that he had lost the stolen bag. RPF officials said he was allegedly intoxicated while carrying it, lost consciousness and dropped the bag.

"After reviewing CCTV footage, we found that a passerby picked up the abandoned bag," said Amaresh Behera, IIC, RPF.

Continuing the probe through CCTV footage analysis, the team traced the case to Dhenkanal and recovered the stolen bag from Tapas Dehury (30). During questioning, Tapas confessed to hiding the remaining gold ornaments at his residence. Acting on this, the team recovered the remaining stolen items, and the process to return them to the complainant is underway.



WEATHER			FORECAST
Max Temp	BBSR 36.8°	CTC 36.6°	Light to moderate rain or thunderstorm likely to occur
Min Temp	27.4°	25.2°	
Humidity	77%	79%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	

# Mass exit from BJD in Bhadrak



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhadrak, April 25:** In a major setback to BJD in Bhadrak Lok Sabha constituency, several senior leaders, including former Bhadrak MP Manjulata Mandal and ex-MLA of Dhamangar Mukhtikanta Mandal, Saturday resigned from the party's primary membership following recent suspensions and internal discord.

## Former Bhadrak MP Manjulata Mandal and ex-MLA of Dhamangar Mukhtikanta Mandal resigned from BJD's primary membership

ber Sonali Das, Rabindra Sethi, Arun Rout and Sukanti Barik and several party leaders from Bhadrak Lok Sabha constituency resigned from the party. The resignations were submitted to BJD president Naveen Patnaik. Speaking at a meeting held at a convention centre in Bhadrak, Mukhtikanta alleged that he had devoted years to strengthening the party but was "unconstitutionally suspended" due to the conspiracy

of some vested interests. He claimed the move has created deep dissatisfaction in the constituency and could push the party toward a collapse in the district.

"BJD will be wiped out in Bhadrak district in the coming days," he asserted.

Echoing similar sentiments, Jagannath Swain said he had been associated with the party since his student days, inspired by the ideals of Biju Patnaik. He alleged that the party has strayed from its core principles and is now being controlled by vested interests, leading to neglect of founding members. He said his resignation is in protest against such developments.

The mass exit of senior leaders has created a buzz in political circles, with many viewing it as a significant blow to the BJD in the Bhadrak Lok Sabha segment.

However, former minister and BJD vice president Prafula Samal downplayed its likely impact, stating that leaders leaving the party do not necessarily take public support with them. He added that people do not stand with those who frequently switch parties and suggested that any misunderstandings could be reconsidered and resolved.

## Two engineers get RI for MGNREGA fraud

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sambalpur, April 25:** The Special Vigilance Court in Sambalpur has sentenced two former engineers to two years of rigorous imprisonment in connection with corruption in a road construction project under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).

The court found retired assistant engineer Sadananda Pradhan, formerly of Maneswar block, and Biranchi Narayan Das, currently serving as assistant engineer at the Britang irrigation project in Daspalla, Nayagarh district, guilty of misappropriating government funds. Both were also fined.

The case dates back to 2008-09, when the engineers allegedly presented false measurements in a road construction project under MGNREGA in Maneswar block, thereby siphoning off government money. Odisha Vigilance filed a chargesheet against them following its investigation.

The Special Vigilance Judge Saturday convicted both men and handed down the sentences. Following the verdict, Vigilance officials indicated that they would recommend to higher authorities that Pradhan's pension be stopped and Das be dismissed from service. The investigation was conducted by former Vigilance DSP Dilip Kumar Kar. The case was prosecuted by Special Public Prosecutor Shobhan Anand Guru and Additional Public Prosecutor Debashis Prasad Das on behalf of the state.



FLOUTING NORMS: Casual workers clearing sand on a service road in violation of the state government's guidelines on heatwave at Banarpal in Angul district Saturday

## Couple ends life over debt burden

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Dharakote, April 25:** In a tragic incident, a couple died by suicide at Kalasuta village under Jharbandh panchayat in Dharakote block of Ganjam district allegedly over debt burden, days after daughter's wedding, police said Saturday.

The deceased were identified as Seemanchal Bisoi, 66, and his wife Namita Bisoi, 61. The couple had married off their youngest daughter just four days earlier.

On being informed, Gangpur police led by IIC Banabihari Pradhan reached the village Saturday. The bodies were seized in the presence of Dharakote additional tehsildar Ganesh Dalai, who was acting as magistrate. With assistance from local sarpanch Jyodendra Swain, police sent the bodies for postmortem and began an investigation.

Preliminary investigation suggests the couple was under heavy debt burden, which may have driven them to take the extreme step, the IIC said. The villagers also corroborated



ed the claim, the IIC added.

Sources said Seemanchal's first wife had died earlier, and he had married Namita later. He had four daughters from his first marriage, all of whom are married. His son from the second marriage died of a heart attack about four months ago at the age of 23.

The couple, daily wagers, had reportedly borrowed money from several people to meet the expenses of their daughter's wedding. They were at home Friday night. Neighbours grew suspicious when the door remained closed for a long time Saturday. Upon opening the door, they found the couple hanging inside the house.

## 2 get life term for acid attack

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sonepur, April 25:** Two men have been sentenced to life imprisonment for an acid attack in Subarnapur district, Odisha. Additional District Judge Dillip Kumar Biswal convicted Raja alias Rajaram Malik and Papulu alias Bikram Hari for assaulting Brundaban Chhatra in December 2021.

The incident occurred when the victim was on his way to buy eggs. The accused, driven by prior enmity, stopped him, abused him, and threw acid on his face and body. He collapsed at the spot and was rushed to Binika hospital before being transferred to Burla hospital. A case was registered at Binika police station, leading to their arrest and trial. The court found them guilty under Sections 326A, 307 and 341 of the Indian Penal Code. Both were sentenced to life imprisonment with rigorous imprisonment and fined ₹48,500, with an additional three years if unpaid. They also received seven years and seven months under Section 307 and 15 days under Section 341, with sentences to run concurrently.

The prosecution, led by Deputy Director of Prosecution Venul Pradhan, Public Prosecutor Madhumita Amatya and Additional PP Panchanan Danta, presented testimony from 16 witnesses and documentary evidence to secure the conviction.

## Dy CM Parida reviews key Ganjam projects

**Chhatrapur:** Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida reviewed some key development projects and government schemes during her two day visit to Ganjam district Friday and Saturday. At a review meeting, she launched the logo and standard operating procedures (SOPs) of the Sampurnashri Mission, aimed at strengthening women empowerment. Parida said initiatives such as Subhadra Yojana and Lakhyapati Didi would help create an independent identity for women, with a target of enabling more than 300,000 to become self reliant by 2027. She also inspected progress on anganwadi centres, expressing concern over delays in constructing 617 new facilities. On Saturday, Parida visited Potagada fort, Tampara lake, Gopalpur beach and Sunapur blue flag beach, urging faster development to boost tourism and revenue.

## CAG flags chinks in SC/ST land sale

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sonepur, April 25:** A recent audit report prepared by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has revealed significant irregularities in the granting of permission for the sale of land belonging to Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) in Subarnapur and Kendrapara districts.

Under the Odisha Land Reforms Act, restrictions are in place to prevent the transfer of SC and ST land to non-SC/ST individuals, with sub-divisional officers authorised to approve such transactions only under specific conditions. However, the audit found these safeguards being repeatedly bypassed.

According to the findings, between 2018 and 2023, a total of 1,287 cases were cleared in

which 661.073 acres of SC/ST land were permitted for sale to people from the general category. Of this, 557.256 acres belonged to SC families and 104.808 acres to ST families. A detailed scrutiny of 528 sampled cases revealed serious procedural lapses in 335 instances, affecting 378 acres of land.

The audit further highlights that permissions were often granted without proper verification of supporting documents. Applications citing reasons such as medical treatment, marriage expenses, higher education, debt repayment, housing and business needs were approved even when adequate proof was missing. In several cases, medical claims were supported only by minimal paperwork such as outpatient slips, while in others

no documentary evidence was provided at all.

The report also notes violations of existing government directives, including earlier instructions discouraging land sales for marriage purposes. Despite concerns raised by subordinate revenue and welfare officials in some cases, approvals were still granted by sub-divisional authorities.

The CAG has recommended that the findings be included in its draft report, citing serious administrative failures and lack of due diligence. Residents of the affected districts are now awaiting action from the state government against officials found responsible for the irregularities.

The Odisha government is yet to issue an official response to the audit findings.

## Gahirmatha sees no arribada; experts sound alarm

PNN & AGENCIES

**Kendrapara, April 25:** Nature lovers and wildlife experts are worried that endangered Olive Ridley turtles skipped their annual visit for mass nesting to Gahirmatha coast in Kendrapara district this year.

Gahirmatha beach, close to Bhitarkania National Park in this district, has the distinction of being World's largest-known rookery where millions of Olive Ridley turtles converge annually for laying eggs.

According to Rajnagar Mangrove Forest Division (Wildlife) DFO Varadaraj Gaonkar, each year these turtles in millions of numbers used to turn up for laying eggs during January-March along Gahirmatha coast. However, there are instances in the past when turtles made their appearance towards the fag end of March.

But it was never delayed beyond that, the DFO said.

Meanwhile, turtles have already emerged at Rushikulya river mouth, another rookery in



the state's Ganjam district, for mass nesting. But they are yet to appear at the nesting ground at Gahirmatha, the officer said.

Though there is a possibility of turtles skipping mass nesting this year as they had done in 2014, we are not entirely ruling out the emergence of turtles for mass nesting as weather conditions and beach profile at the Agarnasi are ideal and perfect for marine animals to turn up en masse for laying eggs, the DFO said.

It's a unique natural phenomenon called 'arribada', a Spanish term that describes

the millions of these marine species converging on the nesting ground in Gahirmatha in Kendrapara district for laying eggs.

It is though to predict what has prompted them not to appear at the nesting beach so far, he added. Wildlife experts, however, tend to believe that unchecked trawl fishing and human interference might have affected their privacy, prompting them to play truant. They are yet to arrive at a definite conclusion that has led to the disappearance of turtles. Though studies are in progress regarding the behaviour of the turtles, another

official said that a mystery hovers around their habitation pattern of these marine species. Research is yet to throw much light on these.

Non-emergence of turtles along Gahirmatha might be due to the multiplicity of factors. But these conclusions are in the realm of speculation, they added.

In 2025, as many as 6.06 lakh turtles emerged from the sea-water to crawl and dig pits on the beaches to lay eggs, a phenomenon otherwise described as 'arribada' (a Spanish term) in a five-day span starting from March 5.

While turtles did not turn up at Gahirmatha for 'arribada' last time in 2014, they also did so in 2008, 2002, 1998, 1997, 1988 and 1982, according to official records.

It's only the female turtles that virtually invade the nesting beaches, usually at the dead of night for laying eggs. After indulging in instinctive egg-laying, the turtles leave the nesting ground to stride into the deep seawater.

## Man held for alleged abduction of minor

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Lanjigarh, April 25:** A man has been arrested and produced in court in connection with the alleged abduction of a minor girl in Kalahandi district, police said Saturday.

The accused, identified as 25-year-old Kumar Naik from Gopiguda village under Bijepur police limits in Lanjigarh block, was apprehended after evading arrest for nearly 15 months.

According to police, the girl, then a Class IX student, had been in a relationship with Naik. The two had travelled to Bhubaneswar October 21, 2024, but were brought back by family members after their whereabouts came to the fore. Shortly afterwards, Naik reportedly fled to Bangalore, where he worked as a security guard while remaining in contact with the girl over the phone.

Police said Naik returned to the village January 1, 2025, and allegedly persuaded the minor to elope with him the same night on the promise of marriage. The girl's father filed a complaint at Bijepur police station January 9, leading to the registration of a kidnapping case (2/25).

The duo was traced to their native village Friday following a tip-off. During investigation, police alleged that Naik had established physical relation with the minor, who is now reportedly pregnant.

Naik was medically examined and produced before a court Saturday. The minor was also examined and later presented before a special POCSO court in Bhawanipatna, after which she was sent to a shelter home. Police said the accused has been booked under relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and POCSO Act.

**REGIONAL OFFICE: BHUBANESWAR**  
Bank of Baroda, Regional Office, Bhubaneswar,  
1st Floor, Bivab Gulmohar, Behera Sahi, Nayapalli, Bhubaneswar-751012, Odisha,  
E-mail : rm.orissa@bankofbaroda.co.in

**DEMAND NOTICE**  
(Under Sub Section (2) of Section 13 of the SARFAESI Act 2002)

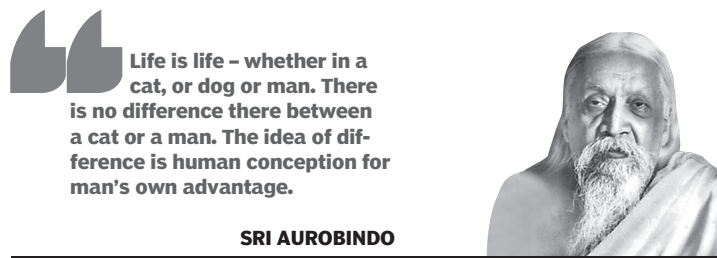
Demand Notice u/s. 13(2) of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 is issued by **Bank of Baroda** as secured creditor against the following Borrower(s)/Co-Borrower(s) of the **Champatipur Branch**.

CHAMPATIPUR BRANCH Ph.: 7077727128	NPA Date / 13(2) Date / Notice Reason	Limit (Rs.) / Rate of Interest	Total Dues	Description of Mortgaged Property
<b>Name &amp; Address of Borrower(s)/Co-Borrower(s)</b> Borrower: Mr Haribandhu Pattanaik, C/o: Jaykrishna Pattanaik, Co-Borrower/Mortgagor: Mrs Sanjukta Pattanaik, W/o: Mr Haribandhu Pattanaik, both are address At: Singarpalli, PO: Bahadajhola, Tahasil: Odagaon, Dist: Nayagarh, Pin - 752082, Odisha.	25.04.2022 / 24.03.2026 / Acknowledgement not received	Term Loan (Home Loan) Rs.9,50,000/- / 8.15 %	Rs.9,71,499.23 as on 23.03.2026 plus further interest and expenses	All Parts & Parcels situated at Dist: Nayagarh, Tahasil: Nayagarh No.429, PS.: Nayagarh, PS No. 96, under the jurisdiction of SRO Nayagarh, Mouza: Nayagarh bearing Khata No.1219/1948, Plot No.2010/3818 with admeasuring area of Ac.02 Decl. . Kissanam: Gharabari, standing in the name of Mrs Sanjukta Pattanaik, bounded by: North- Duryodhan Lenka, South- Bijaya Kumar Sahu, East- Road, West - Basanta Kumar Sahu .

You have committed default in repayment of loan mentioned above with further interest at the agreed rate availed from our Branch as mentioned above. The Bank has issued notice under the said Act to you to repay the outstanding amount in the above mentioned table. The Demand Notice sent to you by registered post but it has been returned with the reason mentioned above. Again you have committed default in payment. You are called upon to pay the dues together with interest within **60 days** from the date of this notice failing which Bank will be constrained to exercise Right of Enforcement of Security Interest as against the secured asset given in the schedule of Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002. We hereby give you a notice that in terms of sub-section (13) of section 13 of the said Act, you are barred from transferring the secured asset mentioned above by way of sale, lease or otherwise other than in the ordinary course of business without prior written consent of the Bank. We further invite your attention to sub section (8) of section 13 of the said Act in terms of which you may redeem the secured assets, if the amount of dues together with all costs, charges and expenses incurred by the Bank is tendered by you, at any time before the date of publication of notice for public auction / inviting quotations / tender / private treaty. Please note that after publication of the notice as above, your right to redeem the secured assets will not be available. This Notice is without prejudice to any other right or remedy available to the Bank including initiation of legal action.

**Place: Bhubaneswar, Date: 26.04.2026**

**Authorized Officer, Bank of Baroda**



SRI AUROBINDO

## Exclusion Doctrine

Story under this headline was reported this month: 'No Muslim name finds place in BJP's Bengal list'. The story went on to provide readers with the numbers—that is to say, how many tickets were distributed and so on—but beyond that headline, there is not much to add. This does not surprise most of us, because the data since 2014 have taught us what the BJP wants.

In the last three Lok Sabhas, the Bharatiya Janata Party has won 282, 303, and 260 seats, with no Muslims among them. It has over 100 MPs in the Rajya Sabha with no Muslim representation. A decade or so ago, it was reported that it had over a thousand MLAs across India, of whom only one was Muslim. There is no Muslim minister in the Union Cabinet—something we are seeing for the first time since 1947. Again, this does not surprise us because, if there is one thing to be appreciated about the BJP, it is its honesty. The party, especially in its current form under the prime minister, is clear about the fact that it seeks the total exclusion of India's largest minority, against whom it holds historical resentment.

We need not go into the merits of this sentiment other than to acknowledge that this is how the party and many of its supporters feel. The issue to consider is something else: why, given how clear the BJP—and the prime minister in particular—are about pushing this exclusion, do we then hear slogans like 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vishwas' and references to '140 crore Indians'? The party and its leader could just as well be honest and craft slogans that are as exclusionary as their behaviour, but they do not. Why?

There are two ways to answer this, and the first is the less complicated one. The slogans are coined and regurgitated to assuage those who are anxious about such issues. They do not mean much because the reality of exclusion is evident in practice.

This answer is not particularly satisfying, because it does not address why the BJP needs to do this at all, given the transparency of its practices. It also does not account for the fact that, in being full-throated and unapologetic about the exclusion and persecution of Muslims, the prime minister has won over many people who want this kind of behaviour and this kind of society.

The real reason the party and the prime minister are compelled into this contradiction is that their desire for total exclusion does not sit well with Indian society and culture. Who invokes phrases like 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' in their manifesto? It is not the Opposition or the intelligentsia—it is the BJP. The party draws on Indian wisdom when presenting its message, even while promoting something else.

The constituency for the BJP's more explicit agenda exists, of course, but it is smaller than its total voter base. It is for this reason that 'development' is, or at least was, such a large part of the party plank. The harsher elements must be concealed in formal declarations, especially when engaging with the wider world. Our poor diplomats have to juggle with this dilemma of acting brutally at home while pretending to be liberal abroad.

On one of his visits to the US, Foreign Minister Jaishankar had an interview with Donald Trump's former National Security Advisor, Gen. H.R. McMaster. The general, who is familiar with India and has visited it, asked: 'I wanted to ask you about how you see political developments in your own country. You are not a partisan person. You have served with great distinction across many administrations. There is concern, in the midst of the pandemic, about some of these Hindutva policies that could be undermining the secular nature of Indian democracy... Are India's friends right to be concerned about some of these recent trends?' Jaishankar avoided answering the question directly and instead spoke about ration distribution and cash transfers. He did not address the specific concerns regarding Hindutva policies that McMaster raised.

What are these concerns? They include the introduction of religion into citizenship; new laws criminalising aspects of Muslim marriage and divorce; laws criminalising the possession of beef; the forced ghettoisation of Muslims in Gujarat; the use of shotguns on crowds only in one part of India—Kashmir—and the demonisation by the government of Muslims, including for spreading Covid.

These are the issues that India's friends were concerned about. Jaishankar responded without using the word 'Hindutva' once and without referring to the laws for which India has faced international criticism. The reason he avoided the debate, of course, is that there is little defence. Obfuscation and evasion were the only ways to respond to the accusation—one that critics argue is valid—that India is harming itself and its people through such policies.

This should offer some hope, even if it is just a sliver, to those who worry about our society—where it has arrived and where it is headed. If even those who promote division along religious lines find it uncomfortable to openly defend their positions when challenged, it suggests that this is not ultimately who we want to be, nor who we truly are.

## WISDOM CORNER

Humans have both the urge to create and destroy.

HAYAO MIYAZAKI

In feature films the director is God; in documentary films God is the director.

ALFRED HITCHCOCK

In theory I know that if you have a universal theme and a good story told well, it will work everywhere.

SS RAJAMOULI

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

**1768:** The prestigious English Royal Academy of Arts, led by its first president, Joshua Reynolds, hosted its first art opening.

**1865:** Twelve days after assassinating U.S. President Abraham Lincoln, John Wilkes Booth died at a Virginia farm, shot either by a Federal soldier or by his own hand.

**1964:** With the merger of Tanganyika and Zanzibar, the United Republic of Tanzania was founded. Julius Nyerere served as its first president.

# INDIA'S VOLTE-FACE

FOCUS COP 33



**Riding high on the success of leading the G20 Summit in Delhi in 2023, on the very second day of COP 28 at Dubai, UAE, PM Modi, in his speech at the high-level segment, offered to host COP 33 in India**

Secretariat of the UNFCCC is about to activate its appraisal process, India has expressed its unwillingness to serve as a host. Is it the structure, process, and outcomes of hosting a UN climate COP that begets the reluctance?

Hosting a COP carries a definite political nuance. When hosting a COP, the country must enter into a legal agreement with the UNFCCC Secretariat, which must be publicly released before the COP commences. The devil is in the details of the agreement.

Would the government tolerate the most severe criticisms or protests of its climate or environmental policies from observers of the UNFCCC during the COP and at the mandated COP premises? Meanwhile, India's new Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC), approved by the Cabinet last month, drew criticism from international climate experts. Several international environmental NGOs, who earlier termed India obstructionist during previous COPs, are highly visible in their strategy and style during the COP, focusing on climate mitigation and adaptation. Widespread worldwide media coverage would be a tightrope for the government in its image-build-

ing. From issuing visas to such critics to providing complete immunity in respect of words spoken or written and any act performed by participants during COP would be a herculean task for the present dispensation. These aspects fall under 'privileges and immunities' of the legal agreement between the host country and the UNFCCC. Neither the G20, a Commonwealth Summit, nor a BRICS Summit provides such immunity. After all, the UN promotes meaningful participation by civil society and non-governmental organisations in global efforts to combat climate change.

During 12 years of the Prime Minister's leadership, no major UN conferences have been held in India, such as a high-profile climate summit, except for one on combating desertification. However, under NDA-1, India had the opportunity to hold the first climate summit (COP8) in New Delhi, when PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee was at the helm. Prior to that, in 1981, India hosted COP 3 to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) under the environmental stewardship of PM Indira Gandhi. Similarly, the COP 11 to the Convention

on Biological Diversity (CBD) was held in Hyderabad in early October 2012. Lastly, New Delhi hosted the COP14 to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in early September 2019. Arguably, India's leadership in environmental governance is not limited to hosting a summit. Hosting a UN-sponsored climate summit is undoubtedly a prestigious issue for any member country. However, it may not define the leadership role in climate actions, but it does provide an opportunity to accelerate them.

It is being contested that the UNFCCC has significantly weakened after the US repeatedly leaving under a President who termed climate change a 'hoax'. The major concern remains that President Trump would remain in power till the end of 2028. As we have already witnessed the dilly-dallying of the US President on India, if India had continued to host the summit, the direct and indirect wrath of a whimsical US President would have been detrimental to the Indian government.

The other challenge is the timing and selection of the venue in India. The notoriously infamous Delhi gas chamber during November and December, the usual dates for the COP, must have been considered. Even the 'summit capital' of India for the last decade, Ahmedabad, would not be able to rescue India from severe criticism in the global media over air pollution and emissions during the COP.

Whether the second global stocktaking of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change during COP 33 may exert pressure on India's presidency, or whether India lost an opportunity to showcase its climate leadership, we are witnessing a gradual erosion of climate responsibility from the leading countries.

*The writer is international advisor on climate change risk and transboundary rivers. Views are personal.*



Avilash Rouf

**UNDER NDA-1, INDIA HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO HOLD THE FIRST CLIMATE SUMMIT (COP8) IN NEW DELHI, WHEN PM ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE WAS AT THE HELM**



Aakar Patel

**In the last three Lok Sabhas, the Bharatiya Janata Party has won 282, 303, and 260 seats, with no Muslims among them. It has over 100 MPs in the Rajya Sabha with no Muslim representation. There is no Muslim minister in the Union Cabinet—something we are seeing for the first time since 1947**

## SPECTRUM MIDDLE EAST CRISIS

# Iran conflict signals regional transformation

An update on the American-Israeli attack on Iran, launched on 28 February and carried out outside the framework of regional law, marks a new phase in the broader Middle East, with implications for global events. For the affected region, the war signals the beginning of the formation of a vaguely defined order, aligned with the American National Security Strategy and Israeli aspirations. It also lays the groundwork for a principle in which the US imposes the rules of the game in international relations—focused on implementation rather than political engagement—aimed at defending its weakening position as a global hegemon.

For Israel, this war has long been considered necessary until the process of neutralising its hostile neighbours is completed, leaving behind either friendly or destabilised states, ideally under the approval of a regional power willing to assume partial responsibility for regional security from the US.

For the Islamic Republic, the ongoing war is existential in nature and marks the culmination of a conflict with the

US and Israel that has persisted since the establishment of the regime in 1979.

Iran's relations with its Arab neighbours have historically been strained, marked by deep mutual distrust. The outbreak of war has undermined the Saudi-Iranian normalisation process that began in 2023 through Chinese mediation.

The Gulf monarchies, while not fully expressing their usual positions, understand that the consequences of the attack on Iran cannot be openly articulated. This situation signals the weakening of regionalisation. Formal condemnations of violations of their territories and sovereign rights have also led to increased scrutiny and restrictions on missile and drone programmes.

Iran has long been viewed as a destabilising force, posing a threat to Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, and other GCC states. At times, like Iraq, it has been used as a strategic lever by the US in regional politics. It remains unclear, however, whether these countries are the true targets of the war.

The US has once again been drawn into an armed conflict in the Middle East alongside

Israel, without a clear plan, despite the likelihood of significant financial and domestic consequences, as well as a deterioration in its legal standing. The regional balance of power and the emerging security architecture are also at stake. Meanwhile, multiple crises—from Libya and Sudan to Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, Iran, and Afghanistan—remain unresolved, with several states on the verge of collapse.

The Arab Gulf countries have traditionally relied on an American security umbrella, though these partnerships have weakened. There appear to be no viable alternatives that do not involve a security framework including Pakistan or Turkey. The US is likely to push for a regional security pact involving Israel and an expansion of the Abraham Accords process. As a result, attention may return to Saudi-Israeli normalisation and a broader package of Saudi-US agreements covering security, arms control, technology regulation, investment, and cooperation. However, GCC countries may also face increased oversight, particularly

regarding their spending.

Preliminary data from the first 30 days of the economic fallout suggest that Saudi Arabia's revenues could decline by 5-6% in 2026, while the UAE may see a drop of 8-10%. A comprehensive solution remains distant, and challenges are intensifying. A prolonged war with Iran—the most severe scenario—could trigger governance breakdowns, recession, and wider instability, spreading destabilising effects far beyond the region and affecting countries across Asia and Africa.

The situation in the Middle East is also likely to worsen, including increased migration pressures and heightened instability in Lebanon and the Palestinian territories. Once de-escalation is achieved, practical steps will be necessary, including diversifying energy supply sources in case the crisis deepens. The ongoing situation requires careful monitoring, and government agencies should prepare detailed analyses of the conflict.

*The writer is an expert, Centre for International Relations, Poland. ©INFA*



Krzysztof Plomski

**THE US IS LIKELY TO PUSH FOR A REGIONAL SECURITY PACT INVOLVING ISRAEL AND AN EXPANSION OF THE ABRAHAM ACCORDS PROCESS**

## Script stage scrutiny

Sir, The controversy over the proposed web series 'Lawrence of Punjab' highlights the importance of timely regulatory oversight. Judicial concern that its content could disturb public order and incite cognizable offences led to withholding its release—an action taken after considerable investment had already been made. Such post-production intervention results in avoidable financial loss, wasted effort, and creative setbacks. A more effective approach would be to enforce scrutiny at the script stage itself. Mandatory clearance by a competent censoring authority before filming begins can identify sensitive elements early, allowing corrections without major losses. Preventive regulation not only safeguards societal harmony but also ensures economic prudence, reinforcing that early caution is far better than costly corrective action later. This will surely foster responsible storytelling, industry stability, and a balanced relationship between creative freedom and regulatory accountability.

RS Narula, PATIALA

## Structural issues in AAP

Sir, The Aam Aadmi party is facing a serious setback after seven of its Rajya Sabha MPs reportedly joined the Bharatiya Janata Party, strengthening the National Democratic Alliance. This development has raised doubts about the party's stability and leadership. Led by Arvind Kejriwal, AAP was once known for its strong anti-corruption stand and promise of clean governance. However, critics argue that Kejriwal's style of functioning has become increasingly centralised, leaving little room for internal debate. Many feel that the party has drifted away from its original values, with key policies being diluted over time. There are also concerns about inconsistency in decisions and a lack of transparency in leadership choices, which have created unease among party members. These issues have led to growing dissatisfaction within AAP, pushing some leaders to exit. The loss of MPs is not just about numbers but reflects deeper structural problems. If these concerns are not addressed, the party could face further decline and struggle to retain its credibility in national politics.

N Sathisiva Reddy, BANGALORE

## 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

## Wheat procurement going on smoothly in Haryana: Saini

Saini announced that starting next week, farmers across Haryana will receive QR code-based J-Forms through WhatsApp



leaders are visiting mandis these days and asked them to remember the time when their parties ruled the state and the kind of problems the farmers faced then.

"The kind of falsehood they are trying to spread...they should remember their time. People have understood that they speak only lies," Saini said.

He said that during the Rabi marketing season 2026-27, bumper arrivals of crop have been recorded which has broken the record of past four years. "For this, I congratulate the farmers. This is the result of sweat of our hardworking farmers."

The chief minister said the state has recorded a bumper wheat arrival, with 81.48 lakh tonne reaching the mandis so far.

Wheat worth ₹21,044 crore has arrived, and around 5.8 lakh farmers have brought their produce to the mandis. Out of this, 79.14 lakh tonne has undergone biometric verification, accounting for nearly 97 per cent, while 70.23 lakh tonne has already been procured and 34.56 lakh tonne lifted.

A record 7.71 lakh tonne of wheat arrived in a single day April 11, he said.

The lifting process has

gained momentum since April 18 with an average daily lifting of about 3.5 lakh tonne.

"Our farmers are adopting modern techniques and they are expressing confidence in transparent system of crop procurement," he said.

Saini said before 2024 Haryana Assembly polls Congress used to say that if they come to power they will shut down the portals which the government started to facilitate farmers and other sections.

"There was no system in place during their time, the problems farmers faced during their time everyone knows. Farmers have not forgotten that time.

We created a system and change has come. There was no digital system during their time and things were not transparent. Farmers had to wait for payments of their crops for months. Now, the opposition leaders are touring mandis, but they should tell farmers what was the condition when they ruled. When farmers were actually facing problems, then these opposition leaders did not visit mandis and neither found solution to their problems. Long queues were seen in mandis when farmers came to sell their crops," he said.

## Online booking for Kedarnath heli shuttles concludes

The helicopter shuttle service provides an aerial link for pilgrims from base camps to the Himalayan shrine

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dehradun, April 25: All 31,450 available seats for the Kedarnath helicopter shuttle service between April 22 and June 15 were booked within 90 minutes of the portal opening, officials said Saturday.

According to the officials, the booking process commenced at 6 pm April 15 and saw the final ticket issued by 7.28 pm. A total of 10,855 tickets were successfully generated through the official IRCTC portal during this window, they said.

The helicopter shuttle service provides an aerial link for pilgrims from base camps to the Himalayan shrine. These ser-



31,450 SEATS BOOKED WITHIN 90 MINUTES

VICES operate from Guptkashi, Phata, and Sirsi to reduce the arduous 16-km trek.

The Uttarakhand Tourism Department's helpline call centre conducted 565 random verification calls to monitor the process. Officials found that

4,400 mobile numbers matched actual passengers out of 10,859 numbers used.

Analysis showed that 51 per cent of bookings were made directly by pilgrims. The remaining 49 per cent were processed through oth-

er authorised channels, the department officials said.

Peak activity occurred between 6.10 pm and 6.32 pm. At 6.10 pm, the system recorded 849 bookings, followed by a sharp increase in volume over the next 20 minutes.

Maharashtra led the statewide booking charts with 1,708 successful transactions. Other major bookings came from Uttar Pradesh (1,243), Delhi (867), Telangana (864), Karnataka (801), and Gujarat (700).

To maintain transparency, the state government limited each user to two bookings and 12 seats. A single IP address was restricted to five user IDs, with each booking capped at six passengers.

Official records show that 913 seats across 510 booking IDs have been cancelled to date. The department officials stated the streamlined process ensures a safe and reliable journey for all pilgrims.

## Over 62,000 citizens complete self-enumeration in Uttarakhand

CENSUS 2027

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dehradun, April 25: More than 62,000 citizens in Uttarakhand completed digital self-enumeration between April 10 and April 23 for the first phase of Census 2027, an official said Friday.

Eva Ashish Srivastava, Director at the Directorate of Census Operations, Ministry of Home Affairs, told reporters at a press conference that the Dehradun district led the state with 10,884 residents participating in the digital process. The house listing and housing census phase serves as the foundation for the upcoming national census.

The official announced that the "Har Dwar, Dastak" campaign will commence across the state April 25 and conclude



May 24. Enumerators will visit every household to collect data on 33 specific parameters regarding amenities and assets.

According to an official release issued here, the ministry has appointed 20,859 enumerators and 3,670 supervisors to execute the operations in Uttarakhand. These personnel have undergone training in 555 batches, including practical sessions with the HLO mobile app.

The directorate has divided the state into 29,567 house list-

ing blocks (HLBs) via the HLCBC portal. Digital maps have been prepared for each block to assist enumerators during fieldwork.

"The allocation of each HLB has been completed digitally through the CMMS portal. Enumerators will receive area details and maps immediately upon logging into the mobile app," Srivastava added.

This exercise marks the first time in the history of the country that the census is being conducted through a completely mobile app-based digital system.

Joint Director S S Negi and deputy directors Tanya Seth, RK Banwari, and Praveen Kumar attended the press conference organised in collaboration with PIB Dehradun, the release added.

## Haryana to set up 23 additional air quality monitoring stations

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chandigarh, April 25: The Haryana government will set up 23 additional air quality monitoring stations in the National Capital Region (NCR), increasing the total to 52 by July.

The state will also soon introduce an aggregator policy to regulate transport services, while legacy solid waste is targeted for complete elimination within 11 months. This information came to light at a comprehensive review meeting on air quality management in the NCR, chaired by Chief Secretary Anurag Rastogi here.

The Chief Secretary directed all departments to strictly adhere to timelines, stressing that sustained coordination across sectors is essential for long-term improvement in air quality.

Rastogi directed Commissioners of Municipal Corporations in the NCR areas, as well as the Gurugram, Faridabad and Sonapat Metropolitan Development Authorities, to identify key roads -- at least five in each jurisdiction -- for development or redevelopment as model dust-free stretches.

He asked them to prepare comprehensive plans with clear timelines for all milestones, from detailed project report (DPR) preparation to final completion for this year. He emphasised that emissions from transport, construction and demolition activities, and industries must be tackled through precise planning and time-bound action on the ground.

Additional Chief Secretary (Environment) Sudhir Raj Pal stressed the need for checking vehicular pollution across the region. He said enforcement of pollution norms must be strengthened and checking drives intensified, particularly on heavily trafficked corridors, to identify and penalise grossly polluting vehicles.

Pal also highlighted the need to adopt cutting-edge technology to monitor emissions from moving vehicles and issue challans accordingly.

Chief Secretary Rastogi directed the Transport Department to collate data from Pollution Under Control (PUC) centres, including the number of cases where certificates were refused and instances where vehicles exceeded prescribed emission norms.

Principal Secretary (Transport) Raja Shekhar Vundru said the department would soon introduce an aggregator policy to regulate cab and ride-sharing services in the state.

The policy aims to bring a large fleet of privately operated vehicles under a structured regulatory framework, ensuring compliance with emission standards and contributing to the reduction of transport-related pollution.

He said that in compliance with directions of the Commission for Air Quality Management, diesel auto-rickshaws have nearly been phased out from major NCR districts as per timelines. In the remaining NCR areas, they will be phased out by December 31.

## Haryana intensifies fight against malaria

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, April 25: On World Malaria Day, Haryana's Health Department has launched a series of initiatives to accelerate malaria elimination, focusing on village and mohalla-level micro-surveillance, source tracing, and high-risk population monitoring.

The department has prepared a plan to cover all villages and urban localities that reported malaria cases in the previous year, in addition to activities routinely performed by health workers.

Health teams are conducting monthly door-to-door surveys in such areas, with over 950 visits already completed, ensuring that no potential case goes unnoticed, additional chief secretary, Health and Family Welfare Department, Sumita Misra said Saturday.

Another major step is the mandatory investigation of every reported case. Each case is now examined by a specialised team, including an epidemiologist, to identify the exact origin of infection and contain its spread at the source.

Misra said that these measures are designed to ensure early detection and prompt radical treatment to break the transmission across the state.

The department has also introduced monthly inspections of labour sites, to be carried out on the first Monday of every month. This targeted outreach aims to detect infections early among vulnerable groups and reduce the risk of transmission.

These initiatives align with this year's global theme, Driven to End Malaria: Now We Can. Now We Must, according to the health department.



People throng at the premises of Kedarnath Temple, in Rudraprayag district, Uttarakhand

PTI PHOTO

## Girls outshine boys in Uttarakhand board exams

Education minister Dhan Singh Rawat, releasing the results at the board's headquarters in Nainital's Ramnagar, noted that the Class 12 pass rate rose to 85.11 per cent, marking a 1.88 per cent improvement over last year

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dehradun/Pithoragarh, April 25: Girls outpaced boys in the Uttarakhand board examinations, the results of which were announced Saturday, as the state recorded an uptick in pass percentages of Class 10 as well as Class 12, officials said.

Education minister Dhan Singh Rawat, releasing the results at the board's headquarters in Nainital's Ramnagar, noted that the Class 12 pass rate rose to 85.11 per cent, marking a 1.88 per cent improvement over last year.

"The dedication of our teachers and students is reflected in these improved figures," he said. Rawat also congratulated the successful candidates and interacted with the toppers over the phone.

Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhama congratulated the successful students, describing the results as a testament to their continuous hard work and discipline. He urged those who did not achieve expected results to remain courageous.

"You will surely achieve success with patience and positive thinking," Dhama stated in an



official statement.

Out of 1,00,452 students who appeared for Class 12 Board exams, 85,499 passed. Girls achieved a pass percentage of 88.09 per cent against 81.93 per cent for boys, according to Uttarakhand Board of School Education.

Geetika Pant from Bageshwar and Sushila Mehndiratta from Udham Singh Nagar jointly topped the intermediate exams with 98 per cent marks.

Geetika, whose father is a taxi driver, aspires to become an engineer to serve the public. Despite financial constraints,

she had previously topped the district in Class 10 with 97.6 per cent marks.

"If family support and guidance of good teachers are with you, scarcity of means does not matter," Geetika said. Her mother, Ritika Pant, said she never let resource shortages hinder her daughter's big dreams.

Aryan from Rishikesh secured the second rank with 97.80 per cent, and Vanshika from Haridwar stood third with 97 per cent marks.

In high school, the pass percentage rose by 1.33 per cent from the previous year. A total of 1,08,983 students appeared, and 1,00,373 cleared the examination. Girls recorded 96.07 per cent, significantly higher than the 88.03 per cent for boys.

Akshat Gopal from Ramnagar topped the high school board with 98.20 per cent marks. Ishant Kothari from

Uttarkashi and Bhumika from Nainital shared the second position with 98 per cent. Yogesh Joshi from Bageshwar stood third with 97.80 marks.

Bageshwar emerged as the best-performing district in the state, the statement said. It secured the top rank with a pass percentage of 94.84 per cent in intermediate and 96.98 per cent in high school.

The board also announced results for the secondary improvement examinations of 2025. High school improvement recorded a 68.67 per cent pass rate, while the intermediate improvement result stood at 66.27 per cent. Education minister Rawat later visited the residence of high school topper Akshat Gopal in Ramnagar to personally felicitate him. Local MLA Diwan Singh Bisht and senior education department officials attended the result declaration event.



In a country and state where parents have to beg even to get an FIR filed for their daughter, that country's government has no moral right to remain in power

RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

ED RAIDS AGAINST RAHEJA DEVELOPERS

The Enforcement Directorate Saturday conducted fresh searches against real estate company Raheja Developers as part of a money laundering investigation linked to alleged fraud with home buyers



of the day quote

In the last 15 years of TMC rule, it is women who have suffered the most. Be it RG Kar, Sandesh-khali, or South Calcutta Law College, every incident has exposed the complete failure of Didi's government in ensuring women's safety

The people of Maharashtra would not tolerate any disrespect to Shivaji Maharaj. Dhirendra Shastri, (Chief Minister) Devendra Fadnavis, (Union minister) Nitin Gadkari and RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat should issue a public apology to Maharashtra

A person who gets elected after being given a ticket by a party but does not remain loyal to it is betraying the party. Bala-saheb Thackeray used to say that such betrayal should not be tolerated and strict action should follow

AAP seeks action against its MPs who switched sides to BJP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Chandigarh, April 25: Stung by the multiple defections of its Rajya Sabha members, the Aam Aadmi Party Saturday announced that it will seek their disqualification from the Upper House while the rebel group hit back, alleging corruption and ideological decline in their former party.

The seven MPs also asserted that they have quit the party not out of fear but due to a growing sense of "disappointment, disengagement and disgust" with the existing leadership.

According to AAP sources, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann has sought time from President Droupadi Murmu for a meeting, along with party MLAs, to present his party's stand about the "recall" of the Rajya Sabha members who quit Friday.

Six of the seven Rajya Sabha members who quit the AAP come from Punjab.

Addressing a press conference in Delhi, AAP Rajya Sabha member and senior leader Sanjay Singh said the party will write to the Rajya Sabha Chairman to seek the disqualification of the MPs from the Upper House.

"Anti-defection law clearly states that any type of split or faction cannot happen in Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha. It does not carry any legal recognition, even if it's a two-thirds majority," Singh said.

Raghav Chadha, who led the AAP rebellion, said those quitting the party have not done so out of fear but due to a growing sense of "disappointment, disengagement and disgust" with the existing leadership.

Every "true patriot", who nurtured the party with their blood and sweat and joined it with great hope, has either al-



According to AAP sources, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann has sought time from President Droupadi Murmu for a meeting, along with party MLAs, to present his party's stand about the "recall" of the Rajya Sabha members who quit Friday

ready left it or is in the process of leaving it, he claimed.

Chadha said that every honest and hardworking person now feels that there is "no space left to work in the AAP" and that the party is moving on a wrong path with which no one wants to remain associated.

Chadha said MPs are abandoning and leaving the AAP together because they believe the party has gone into "corrupt and compromised hands", he claimed.

Mann used a culinary analogy to attack those who quit the party. In a sarcastic post on X, he wrote in Punjabi, "Ginger, garlic, cumin, fenugreek powder, red chilli, black pepper, and coriander -- these seven

things together make a dish taste great, but on their own cannot become a dish."

On Friday, the AAP suffered a jolt when Chadha, Ashok Mittal, Sandeep Pathak, Harbhajan Singh, Rajendra Gupta, Vikram Sahni and Swati Maliwal quit and merged the parliamentary party with the BJP. They alleged that the Arvind Kejriwal-led party had strayed from its principles, values and core morals.

Though Chadha and Maliwal had fallen out of favour of the AAP, the move by the other five MPs to switch sides came as a surprise to many.

Mann has claimed that the BJP, which has repeatedly faced rejection in Punjab, has responded with hostility towards both the state and the AAP, attempting to weaken a corruption-free government through intimidation, inducements and engineering defections.

Maliwal, who had a fallout with Kejriwal after she was allegedly assaulted by his close aide in 2024, said she quit the party as it had "strayed far" from its original principles.

She alleged the party had completely changed and is now known for "lies, corruption and hooliganism".

She claimed that more leaders would quit the party in the coming days.

IMD issues heatwave alert as temps soar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 25: With temperatures rising across several regions, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) released detailed heatwave guidelines and advisories, officials said Saturday.

These include avoiding prolonged exposure to direct sunlight, especially during peak afternoon hours, staying adequately hydrated, wearing light and breathable clothing, and avoiding strenuous outdoor activities during high-temperature periods.

The IMD advised special care for vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly, and individuals with pre-existing health conditions. "The department emphasised that early awareness and preventive action are critical in reducing heat-related illnesses such as heat exhaustion and heat stroke," an official said.

In its latest assessment, the IMD said that maximum temperatures in many parts of northwest, central, and peninsular India currently range between 40 degrees Celsius and 44 degrees Celsius, with the highest temperature of 44.5 degrees Celsius recorded at Sri Ganganagar in Rajasthan.

In several regions, temperatures have been markedly above normal by five degrees Celsius or more, indicating a developing heat stress scenario across parts of the country.

"The IMD indicated that heatwave conditions are very likely to develop in isolated pockets of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and central India over the coming days," the official said.

"The department further projected no significant change in maximum temperatures over northwest India till April 27, followed by a gradual fall, while central and other regions may witness a gradual rise and subsequent decline in temperatures during the forecast period," the official said.

YouTuber 'Ex-Muslim' held in 31-year-old case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 25: YouTuber Salim Wastik, who identifies himself as 'Ex-Muslim' on social media, was arrested by the Delhi Police in connection with a 31 years old case of kidnapping and murder of a businessman's teenage son in the national capital, officials said Saturday.

The development has added a strange twist in the YouTuber's saga as Wastik was provided security by the Uttar Pradesh Police in February after he was allegedly stabbed by two men at his office in Loni.

The two alleged attackers were later killed in an encounter by the Uttar Pradesh Police.

Salim Wastik, whose original name is Salim Khan alias Salim Ahmed, had managed to evade arrest by assuming a new identity and moving to different locations over the years. He was apprehended from Loni in Uttar Pradesh by a team of crime branch.

According to police, Khan was convicted in 1997 along with his associate Anil for the kidnapping and murder of the 13-year-old son of a cement businessman in northeast Delhi and sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for life by a sessions court in Delhi.

At the time of the incident, Salim was working as a martial arts instructor at the victim's school.

The convict had been evading arrest for over two decades after jumping interim bail granted in 2000 during pendency of his appeal, police said.

"The boy was abducted in January 1995 while on his way to school, and a ransom of Rs 30,000 was demanded for his release," a senior police officer said.

The officer further said the victim's father had received a phone call from the kidnappers, who instructed him to deliver the ransom amount at a bus



stand near the Loni flyover. The caller also warned him against informing the police.

However, during the investigation, suspicion fell on Salim Khan. A police team questioned him and based on his disclosure, recovered the boy's body from a drain near Mustafabad in Delhi, according to the officer.

The co-accused Anil was later identified and eventually surrendered before a court in February 1995.

Following trial proceedings, both accused were convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment by a sessions court in Delhi. They later challenged the verdict in the Delhi High Court. During the pendency of the appeal, Salim Khan was granted interim bail in November 2000 but failed to surrender thereafter. His conviction was upheld by the high court in 2011.

"After jumping bail, Salim Khan managed to evade law enforcement by frequently changing locations across Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. He reportedly worked as an almirah maker in places such as Karnal and Ambala before settling permanently in Loni around 2010," the officer said.

To avoid arrest, he allegedly declared himself dead in official records and assumed a new identity as Salim Wastik or Salim Ahmed.

SHORT TAKES

Five dead as SUV collides with truck

Mau (UP): Five people returning from a wedding in Jharkhand were killed when their SUV collided head-on with a trailer truck here, police said Saturday. Among the dead were three members of a family. The accident took place in the Doharighat police station area on the highway late Friday night when the SUV, bearing a Jharkhand registration number, went out of control, crossed its lane and crashed into an oncoming trailer, circle officer of the area Jitendra Kumar Singh said.

Two killed in road accidents

Medininagar (Jharkhand): Two persons were killed in separate road accidents in Jharkhand's Palamu district Saturday, police said. In the first incident, a 28-year-old man was killed in a head-on collision between an SUV and a motorcycle. The accident took place on National Highway 139 near Gari village under the jurisdiction of Padwa police station when the driver of the speeding SUV lost control of the vehicle and hit the oncoming motorcycle. The motorcycle rider, identified as Akash Pandey, died on the spot.

Three of family drown in Ganga

Bhagalpur: Three members of a family, including two siblings, drowned in the Ganga in Bihar's Bhagalpur district, police said Saturday. The incident happened at a ghat in Jhaludas Tola in the Naugachia police station area Friday, they said. The family, from Bhatgama in Madhepura district, had come to the ghat in Bhagalpur for a tonsure ceremony.

Bomb threat call at Rohini metro station

New Delhi: A bomb threat call at the Rohini Sector 18 metro station triggered a security scare Saturday evening, but nothing suspicious was found during a thorough check, police said. According to Delhi Police, a PCR call was received at around 5.30 pm regarding a suspected bomb at the metro station. Following the alert, Bomb Disposal Squad and Bomb Detection Team personnel, along with Central Industrial Security Force staff, rushed to the spot and conducted a comprehensive search of the premises.

SNIPPETS

Jharkhand ATS arrests 3, US-made pistol seized

Deoghar: Three persons were arrested by the Jharkhand Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) in Deoghar, and a US-made pistol was seized from them, officials said Saturday. The operation was conducted in the Town police station area Friday, based on a tip-off, they said. "Three persons were nabbed in the raid. Two pistols, including a US-made one, were seized from them, along with seven cartridges," Deoghar SP Praveen Pushkar said.

Ghazipur teen death: SP, Congress demand justice

Ghazipur: As Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to visit Uttar Pradesh for the inauguration of an expressway April 29, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav is set to visit the family of a Dalit girl whose death has triggered a political storm in the state. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday claimed that the victim, belonging to the Vishwakarma community, was raped and brutally killed and that her family was threatened to prevent the filing of an FIR.

Girls outshine boys in U'khand board exams

Dehradun/Pithoragarh: Girls outpaced boys in the Uttarakhand board examinations, the results of which were announced Saturday, as the state recorded an uptick in pass percentages of Class X as well as Class XII, officials said. Education minister Dhan Singh Rawat, releasing the results at the board's headquarters in Nainital's Ramnagar, noted that the Class XII pass rate rose to 85.11 per cent, marking a 1.88 per cent improvement over last year.



Monks from the Maha Bodhi Society take out a peace march, in Bangalore, Karnataka

TN: 2 workers killed in blast at firecracker unit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Theni (Tamil Nadu), April 25: Two workers were killed in a powerful explosion at a firecracker manufacturing unit near Cumbum in this district Saturday, police said.

The mishap occurred at a factory located on Kattupallivasal road. The unit, owned by one Muthulakshmi, had reportedly been closed for the past four days due to election holidays and had only reopened for work Saturday morning. According to police sources, the blast took place when two workers, identified as Surya (22) and Dinesh alias Deena (23), opened the room where raw materials and chemicals were stored. The duo was killed on the spot as the impact of the explosion caused their bodies to be ripped apart. Two other workers, Ayyappan and Nagarjun, who were present at the facility, managed to escape unhurt as they fled the premises immediately after hearing the loud blast.

Naravane calls memoir controversy a closed chapter

The general, who recently released "The Curious and the Classified: Unearthing Military Myths and Mysteries", said that he has moved on since then and has already written two books and a third will soon be released

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

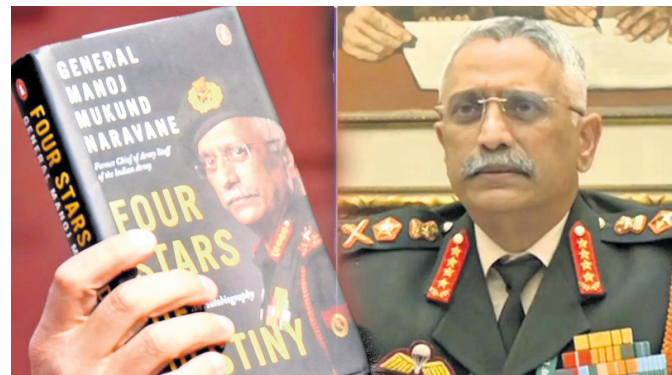
New Delhi, April 25: Former Army chief Gen Manoj Naravane has come out with two books since his unpublished memoir, "Four Stars of Destiny", caused a controversy earlier this year and looking back, he said it was "not warranted" to unnecessarily quote and drag him into the limelight for the book.

The general, who recently released "The Curious and the Classified: Unearthing Military Myths and Mysteries", said that he has moved on since then

and has already written two books and a third will soon be released.

"The Ministry of Defence had asked the publisher to put it on hold till it was vetted. As far as I am concerned the matter rested there, and I have moved on so that is a closed chapter. And unnecessarily quoting me and dragging the unpublished book into the limelight and indirectly me to the limelight was I think not warranted," Naravane told PTI Videos in an interview.

In February this year, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was



stopped from citing excerpts from the memoir in the Lok Sabha, as it had not yet been published.

Naravane's writing career has taken a turn since the episode, as his latest book is "supposed to be an entertaining read and not a serious ac-

ademic endeavour".

"The Curious and the Classified: Unearthing Military Myths and Mysteries", published by Rupa Publications, explores some of the most riveting nuggets about the legends and lore of the Indian Army, Navy and Air Force.

Naravane in the book traces the origins of the ubiquitous military greeting "Jai Hind" from the freedom movement to its adoption by the Indian armed forces.

He said that "Jai Hind" was first used by the Indian Air Force and only later embraced by the Army and Navy, adding that the standard practice of saluting was originally silent, with regiments adding their own greetings like

"Sat Sri Akal" or "Ram Ram". "It was initially the Air Force that started saying 'Jai Hind', and we have now followed that across all three services. With the salute we say 'Jai Hind', and even in lectures we greet with 'Jai Hind'."

"But where does this 'Jai Hind' come from? You realise it has got much deeper roots. And

that was a revelation to me also. So it was something even I did not know about, I must have said 'Jai Hind' a million times," Naravane said.

The former Army chief delves into the legends of Badluram, a soldier of the Assam Regiment, and a military mule, named Pedongi.

Badluram died in the Battle of Kohima in 1944 but arriving allotted to him kept arriving after his death, helping the besieged company to survive the war. The story inspired British Indian Army officer Major M T Prokter to write a foot-tapping song, "Badluram ka Badan", that has become the unofficial regimental anthem of the Assam Regiment and is sung at their functions.



**“Mandis were being developed along expressways. The pace of development has stalled. Even farmer markets are not being built now”**  
AKHILESH YADAV | SP PRESIDENT

## AADHAAR HELPS REUNITE DIVYANG CHILD WITH FAMILY

A divyang child in Assam was reunited with her family after nearly a year Saturday with the help of biometrics data stored during the Aadhaar enrolment process



### of the day uote

They (BJP) have no faith in democracy. They want to somehow capture power. They will do all wrongs, all anti-democratic, anti-constitutional activities to come to power. That is the BJP. The worst political party in India is the BJP



TKS ELANGOVAN | DMK SPOKESPERSON

The inhuman act of asking students to remove their ear studs, bangles, hijab or sacred thread, and even cutting long sleeves with scissors thereby affecting their morale is unacceptable and condemnable



DINESH GUNDU RAO | K'TAKA HEALTH MINISTER

The BJP washing machine is back along with the Modi washing powder. Those who projected themselves as paragons of virtue, integrity, and ideology stand brutally exposed



JAIRAM RAMESH | CONGRESS LEADER

## POST OF THE DAY

"Middle Class" are the most ROBBED ones in India. >They pay taxes >They don't get any benefit, >No state schools for their kids >No Hospital for their Treatment >No Infrastructure >No Clean Air & what not. Middle Class is the most clown & stupid class, they cry on 1 Feb. Budget day every year for taxes, then proceeds to vote BJP again.

@anubhavgupta\_ji

# Rahul Gandhi criticises PM, Mamata for ignoring poor

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Serampore (WB), April 25:** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi Saturday sought to put Prime Minister Narendra Modi and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in the same bracket, accusing both of helping the rich instead of the poor, while hankering for power.

Addressing an election rally at Serampore in Hooghly district, Gandhi said that Modi "claims to be a 'deshbhakt' (patriot), but is selling off the country".

"While CM Mamata Banerjee is helping the rich, and not the poor in West Bengal, Modi is doing the same across the country... Both have nothing to do with creating job opportunities. They want power but don't work for people," he said. "Wherever the PM goes, he spreads hatred and fear among people," the leader of the opposition in Lok Sabha alleged.

He claimed that the country is witnessing a fight between two ideologies.

"It is the Congress' unity and brotherhood against the BJP and RSS' hatred and violence," he added. He accused the PM of harming small industries in the country through demonetisation and implementing GST in a "wrongful manner".

"West Bengal used to be the centre of industry in the country, but first the Left Front and then the TMC destroyed everything," he claimed.

Stating that only the Congress can fight the BJP on the basis of ideology, Gandhi, at another public meeting in Kolkata, said, "We cannot compromise with them."

Gandhi said he undertook the 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' in 2022 to promote brotherhood and love, claiming that "BJP spreads violence across the country and



**RAHUL GANDHI ACCUSES NARENDRA MODI AND MAMATA BANERJEE OF PRIORITISING THE RICH OVER THE POOR**

**GANDHI CLAIMS BOTH MODI AND BANERJEE ARE FOCUSED ON POWER AND NOT CREATING JOB OPPORTUNITIES**

**GANDHI ALLEGES MODI SPREADS HATRED AND FEAR, WHILE THE CONGRESS PROMOTES UNITY**

**HE CRITICISES MODI'S DEMONETISATION AND GST IMPLEMENTATION FOR HARMING SMALL INDUSTRIES**

**GANDHI ASSERTS THAT WEST BENGAL'S INDUSTRIAL DECLINE IS DUE TO THE LEFT FRONT AND TMC**

the TMC does the same in West Bengal".

The Congress leader accused the Narendra Modi government of compromising the country's interests in the India-US trade deal, "selling out the country's agriculture sector, small and medium industries, energy security and also handing over India's data to the US".

Alleging that Modi has done nothing for the welfare of the poorer sections of the society, Gandhi said, "Whatever he does is in the interest of the super-rich."

Accusing the BJP of "specialising in stealing votes and destroying democracy", Gandhi alleged that the saffron party indulged in such activities in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, and brought down the Congress government in Karnataka by using illegal means.

Training his guns on the Mamata Banerjee dispensation, Gandhi accused it of destroying an industry-rich West Bengal and driving entrepreneurs away from the state.

Accusing the Narendra Modi government of harming the interests of India's farmers in the US-India trade deal, he said that the Centre has vowed to buy Rs 9.5 lakh crore worth of goods from the US.

"If India buys Rs 9.5 lakh crore worth goods from America, then our country's small and medium industries will close down," the Congress leader said. He also accused the Modi government of undertaking to buy oil from the countries which the US would permit.

Gandhi said that while Mamata Banerjee had, before the 2021 assembly elections, promised five lakh jobs in the state, Narendra Modi had assured people of providing two crore jobs in the country.

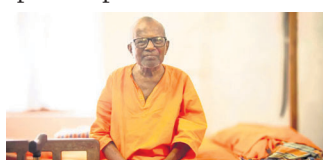
## Narayana Gurukula head Muni Narayana Prasad dies at 87

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Thiruvananthapuram, April 25:** Eminent philosopher, spiritual leader Muni Narayana Prasad, who headed the famed Narayana Gurukula, passed away early Saturday, sources said.

He was 87. He breathed his last while undergoing treatment for a brief ailment at a private medical college hospital in Venjaramoodu here, said sources at Narayana Gurukula, a Varkala-based philosophical and educational organisation inspired by the teachings of saint-social reformer Narayana Guru.

A recipient of the Padma Shri in 2024 and Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award for his contributions to literature and philosophy, Prasad was an engineering graduate before choosing the spiritual path.



He worked in the state government service before joining as an inmate in Gurukula, founded by Sree Narayana Guru's disciple Nataraja Guru in 1923. Prasad later became the head of Gurukula following the demise of its then chief and prominent philosopher, Nitya Chaitanya Yati.

An eminent scholar and a prolific writer, he wrote several books on various streams, especially on philosophy and spirituality. Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar, in his message, said that Muni Narayana Prasad carried forward the timeless message of Sree Narayana Guru with great wisdom, clarity, and compassion.

Noting that his life and teachings will continue to inspire generations to come, the Governor recalled that the contributions of Muni, especially towards the betterment of weaker sections, will always be remembered.

# Crime scene recreated in rape-murder case of IRS officer's daughter



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 25:** Crime scene recreation was carried out by investigators Saturday at the southeast Delhi residence where the 22-year-old daughter of a senior IRS officer was allegedly raped and murdered April 22, police sources said.

The investigators are working to piece together the exact sequence of events and have conducted a detailed mapping of the crime scene.

They are also collecting "minute-to-minute" information regarding the accused, starting from Alwar, where he allegedly committed a rape, to the Delhi crime, the police sources said.

An iPhone stolen from the victim in Delhi has been recovered from a park, while a potency test of the accused has been conducted as part of the rape investigation, they said.

"Crime and forensic teams recreated the sequence of events inside the house for over two hours to establish how the crime unfolded. Every single minute detail has been recreated," the source said.

Access to the house was cordoned off, with a heavy police presence in and around the premises during the exercise.

The 22-year-old woman, an engineering graduate and UPSC aspirant, was fatally attacked at her residence in southeast Delhi's Kailash Hills locality Wednesday morning.

Rahul Meena, who had been a domestic help at the residence but was fired over financial misconduct, used his familiarity with the house layout and access points to enter the flat.

Citing the investigation, sources said Meena was addicted to online betting and card games such as "teen patti" and had lost over Rs 7 lakh in the last few months, which drove him to frequently borrow money to sustain the habit.

He had been spending his money on prostitution and used to watch porn videos on his mobile phone, besides gambling, they said.

He allegedly went to the rooftop study room where the woman was studying, attacked her with a heavy object, raped her and dragged her downstairs to use her fingers to open a biometric locker and steal cash.

The autopsy confirmed strangulation as the cause of death and found multiple injuries, including a nasal bone fracture, indicating a struggle.

## SHORT TAKES

### Former Maoist beaten to death

**Chaibasa:** A former Maoist was allegedly beaten to death by suspected members of the proscribed outfit in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district, police said Saturday. The victim, identified as Ramesh Champia, was allegedly taken away from his house in Dugunia village in the Gailkera police station area Friday night by suspected members of CPI (Maoists), they said. Champia's wife tried to resist, but the assailants threatened her and forcibly took him to a nearby forest area, where he was allegedly beaten to death, they added.

### 2 undertrial prisoners found dead in jails

**Nagaon:** Two undertrial prisoners lodged in two different jails in Assam's Nagaon district were found dead in their beds Saturday morning, officials said. The incidents were reported from Nagaon Central Jail and Nagaon Special Jail, both located in the same premises but run by separate administrations. Rupsingh Dera, an undertrial accused in a murder case, was found dead during morning inspection inside Nagaon Special Jail, officials said.

### No repoll ordered in TN, Bengal: EC officials

**New Delhi:** No repoll has been recommended in any of the polling stations in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu where Assembly elections were held Thursday, the EC officials said Saturday. While all 234 Assembly seats in Tamil Nadu went to vote in a single phase, 152 seats in West Bengal voted in the first phase. The remaining 142 seats will go to the polls April 29. Poll panel officials had earlier cited rules to point out that if webcasting in any of the polling stations is "deliberately" disrupted, a repoll will be ordered.

# Manipur protestors clash with security personnel

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Imphal, April 25:** Thousands of people demanding permanent peace in strife-torn Manipur Saturday clashed with the police as they were prevented from marching towards the chief minister's residence here.

However, a group of agitators were later allowed to meet Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh and they submitted a memorandum on the matter.

The agitators, under the aegis of Meitei organisation COCOMI (Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity) took out four different rallies, which were, however, stopped at different locations ahead of the CM's bungalow in Babupara area.

Additional security forces were deployed and barricades were put up on all four directions leading to the CM's residence,

including Keisampat junction, Kangla Gate, Konung Mamang and Moirangkhom in the heart of Imphal, officials said.

At Khurai Lamlong in Imphal East district, nearly 2 km from the CM's bungalow, security forces fired several rounds of tear gas shells to disperse the protesters after they attempted to break through the police barricades, they said.

The agitators raised slogans and held placards demanding justice for two children killed in a recent bomb blast in Bishnupur district and rehabilitation of the internally displaced persons affected by the ethnic conflict.

COCOMI convenor Y K Dhiren, after meeting the CM, told reporters, said that the organisation, along with the public, will intensify agitation to press for people's demands.



A woman beats the heat on a hot summer day, in Jammu, Jammu and Kashmir

PTI PHOTO

## KANNUR DENTAL STUDENT DEATH CASE

# Court denies anticipatory bail to doctor

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kannur (Kerala), April 26:** A court Saturday dismissed the anticipatory bail plea of the main accused doctor in connection with the death of a student at Kannur Dental College, while granting relief to another faculty member.

Kannur District and Principal Sessions Court in-charge Judge Vimal J rejected the anticipatory bail petition of prime accused Dr M K Ram, former head of the Anatomy Department at Kannur Dental College, a private management institution in Anjarakandy.

Another faculty member, Dr Sangeetha Nambiar, was granted anticipatory bail. First-year BDS student Nithin Raj was found dead April 10 after falling from a building on the college campus in a suspected suicide.

Though police initially registered a case of unnatural death, they later arraigned Ram and Nambiar on charges of abetment of suicide and under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act after Raj's family alleged that he had been harassed by faculty members on the basis of caste and complexion.

Kannur Cyber Police subsequently registered a separate case after it emerged that Raj had borrowed money through a loan app and that its operators had contacted his teacher, who then complained to college authorities. Following Raj's death, both Ram and Nambiar went into hiding and approached the court seeking anticipatory bail.

During the hearing, Ram denied harassing Raj on the basis of caste or complexion. He contended that Raj was "weak in studies" and that he had only advised him to improve, as his internal marks were very low.

# Multi-pronged contests to mark Gujarat local body polls

As many as 9,992 local representatives are in the fray in 15 municipal corporations, including Ahmedabad, Surat, Vadodara and Rajkot, 84 municipalities, 34 district panchayats and 260 taluka panchayats, with more than 4.18 crore voters eligible to exercise their franchise

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ahmedabad, April 25:** Multi-cornered contests among the BJP, Congress, and AAP will play out in elections to local and civic bodies, being dubbed a mini-Assembly contest, in Gujarat Sunday, while the AIMIM is hoping to queer the pitch of traditional players.

For the BJP, the challenge lies in retaining its political dominance of around three decades in the home state of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah. Voting will begin at 7 am and conclude at 6 pm. If required, re-polling will be held the next day, and votes will be counted April 28.

As many as 9,992 local representatives are in the fray in 15 municipal corporations, includ-

ing Ahmedabad, Surat, Vadodara and Rajkot, 84 municipalities, 34 district panchayats and 260 taluka panchayats, with more than 4.18 crore voters eligible to exercise their franchise.

The polls are being held under revised norms for Other Backward Classes (OBC) reservations, and required extensive delimitation and restructuring of wards in several districts.

Political observers believe that the electoral outcome will indicate the mood of voters in the state, a crucial pointer ahead of the 2027 Assembly elections. The campaigning was marked by rallies, roadshows and door-to-door visits.

Civic issues such as road conditions and drinking water supply dominated the campaign, while leaders also raised broader issues, including women's



reservation in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies.

While politics in Gujarat has been traditionally dominated by the BJP and Congress, the Aam Aadmi Party is attempting to expand its footprint.

The AAP had taken the lead over other parties in launching the campaign, with its national convener, Arvind Kejriwal, and Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann addressing several rallies across Gujarat.

In a first for AAP, the Kejriwal-led party is contesting on around 5,000 seats in local polls. Other contestants include the Nationalist Congress Party, All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM), and Independents.

AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi campaigned in the final phase, addressing public meetings in Ahmedabad and Bhuj. For the BJP, Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel campaigned extensively.

Among notable candidates are former Gujarat-cadre IPS officer M L Ninama, ex-radio jockey Abha Desai, and former AAP MLA Bhupendra Bhayani. Ninama will contest from the Odi seat in Shamlaji taluka for the Arvalli district panchayat elections, while Bhayani has been nominated by the BJP

from the Bhesan seat of the Junagadh district panchayat.

Desai, popularly known as RJ Abha, is contesting as a Congress candidate from ward number 10 of the Rajkot Municipal Corporation.

In March 2021, the BJP scored a landslide once again in local polls in Gujarat, winning 6,236 out of 8,470 seats across various municipalities and establishing a wide gap with rival Congress.

The BJP had then dominated all six municipal corporations, besides 81 municipalities, 32 district panchayats, and 231 taluka panchayats.

Notably, elections will also be held for the first time in nine newly-created municipal corporations, including Navsari, Gandhidham, Morbi, Vapi, Anand, Nadiad, Mehsana, Porbandar and Surendranagar.



EU is ready to work with Persian Gulf countries for new projects conveying energy to global markets that wouldn't be held hostage to war or geopolitical strife. The events of the past month have taught us a hard lesson.

THIRD LARGEST WILDFIRE RECORDED IN JAPAN

More than 1,000 firefighters in northern Japan battled to contain two wildfires for a fourth straight day Saturday, as the blazes pushed closer to residential areas and forced more than 3,000 residents to evacuate.



of the day quote

Our goal is to achieve a full reopening in the coming days and weeks, in accordance with international law, guaranteeing freedom of navigation without tolls on the Strait of Hormuz. Then things can gradually return to normal.



From great suffering, understanding can grow. From former enemies, friendships can blossom. The relationship between Türkiye, Australia and New Zealand is built on remembrance, respect and recognition of our shared humanity.



But more broadly than those, Australia looks to India, especially across the Indian Ocean, as a stabilising force, as a country which shares our ambition for a region which is governed by rules, which shares our ambition for a region in which no country dominates and no country is dominated.



DEPORTATION SHIELD

Trump says judges have no role

REUTERS

Washington, April 25: Among President Donald Trump's main arguments at the US Supreme Court defending his moves to rescind humanitarian protections that shield hundreds of thousands of immigrants from deportation, one stands out: Courts cannot review his administration's decisions in this area.

Federal judges in New York and Washington, DC, barred Trump's administration from stripping from more than 350,000 Haitians and 6,000 Syrians a legal status provided by the US government that protects them from deportation. Citing widespread violence, crime, terrorism and kidnapping, the administration currently warns against traveling to either of these countries for any reason.

The justices are due to hear arguments Wednesday in the administration's appeals of those rulings as it defends former Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem's actions to terminate Temporary Protected Status, or TPS, for people from Haiti and Syria.

Revolving TPS and other humanitarian protections is part of Trump's broader crackdown on legal and illegal immigration since he returned to office in January 2025.

When it took up the matter, the Supreme Court did not act on the administration's request



to immediately end TPS protections for Haitians and Syrians while the case plays out. The court under similar circumstances last year let the administration end TPS for Venezuelans.

WARS AND DISASTERS

Under a US law called the Immigration Act of 1990, TPS is a designation that allows migrants from countries stricken by war, natural disaster or other catastrophes to live and work in the United States while it is unsafe for them to return

to their home countries.

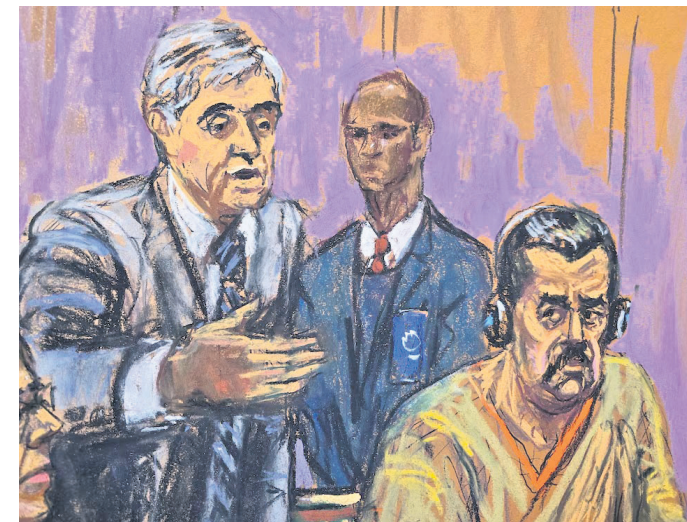
The legal dispute could have wide implications, affecting 1.3 million immigrants from all 17 TPS-designated countries, according to the plaintiffs.

Trump's administration has sought to rescind the protections for 13 of those countries so far.

Lower courts have ruled against the administration's TPS terminations, finding that officials failed to follow protocols required under the Immi-

Supreme Court to hear arguments Wednesday. Temporary Protected Status for Haitians, Syrians at issue. Ending TPS among Trump's actions restricting immigration. US government awarded TPS status for humanitarian reasons.

US to let Venezuela pay Maduro's lawyer in drug trafficking case



REUTERS

Washington, April 25: The United States has agreed to modify its sanctions on Venezuela to allow the South American country's government to pay Nicolás Maduro's defense lawyer, backing off a restriction that had threatened to derail the drug trafficking case against the ousted Venezuelan president, a court filing showed Friday.

Maduro, 63, and his wife Cilia Flores, 69, were captured from their home in Caracas by US special forces January 3 and brought to New York to face criminal charges including narcoterrorism conspiracy. They have pleaded not guilty and are jailed in Brooklyn pending trial.

Maduro's lawyer Barry Pollack in February asked Manhattan-based US District Judge Alvin Hellerstein to dismiss the case because US sanctions were preventing the Venezuelan government from paying his legal fees.

Pollack said that prohibition amounted to a violation of Maduro's rights under the US Constitution to the counsel of his choice.

Neither Maduro nor Flores can afford lawyers on their own, and the Venezuelan government is prepared to pay their fees, their lawyers have said.

All criminal defendants in the US have constitutional rights regardless of whether they are US citizens.

Hellerstein said in a March 26 court hearing that he did not intend to dismiss the case, but appeared skeptical that the government was justified in blocking the payments.

Prosecutor Kyle Wirshba said in court that the US sanctions blocking the payments were based

on legitimate national security and foreign policy interests. Wirshba also said that Hellerstein could not order the Treasury Department to modify its sanctions because the executive branch, not the judiciary, is in charge of foreign policy. Hellerstein noted that the US had relaxed sanctions on Venezuela since Maduro's ouster. Relations between Caracas and Washington have improved since Delcy Rodríguez, Maduro's former vice president, began leading Venezuela on an interim basis.

"The defendant is here, Flores is here. They present no further national security threat," said Hellerstein, a judicial appointee of Democratic President Bill Clinton. "The right that's implicated, paramount over other rights, is the right to constitutional counsel."

MADURO CAPTURED IN US MILITARY RAID ON CARACAS IN JANUARY. CHARGES AGAINST HIM AND HIS WIFE INCLUDE NARCOTERRORISM CONSPIRACY. DEFENSE LAWYERS CALL RESTRICTIONS ON PAYMENTS UNCONSTITUTIONAL.

SHORT TAKES

Major Russian attack on Ukraine kills seven

Dnipro/Kyiv: A major Russian overnight attack on Ukraine killed seven people and injured dozens more as Moscow launched over 600 drones and missiles in a barrage that targeted the city of Dnipro in southeastern Ukraine, and hit several other regions. A large chunk of an apartment building in Dnipro collapsed after being hit during the attack. Four corpses were recovered from the rubble, regional governor Oleksandr Hanzha said. The site was struck again in a daytime attack, authorities said, while rescuers were working there. The second attack killed one person and injured seven.

Kenya overturns key abortion rights judgment

Nairobi: A court of appeal in Kenya Friday overturned a ruling that affirmed the right to access abortion, setting up a legal clash that is likely to be appealed again to the Kenyan Supreme Court. The appeal was based on the 2022 case of a teenager who went to the hospital with pregnancy complications. A doctor who examined her determined she had lost the pregnancy, and provided emergency post-abortion care. They were acquitted by the high court. The high court in 2022 had ruled that access to abortion was a fundamental right under the constitution, declaring the arrest and prosecution of women and health care providers unconstitutional. The court of appeal Friday reiterated that abortion denies a child the right to life as guaranteed in the constitution and is prohibited except in circumstances such as when the life of the mother is at risk.

B'desh on high alert over militant threat

Dhaka: Bangladesh Police issued a nationwide security alert over possible militant attacks on key installations, including the parliament complex, officials and media reports said Saturday. "The alert has been issued based on intelligence reports," a police headquarters (PHQ) official said, requesting anonymity. The official described the alert as "urgent and confidential". A PHQ letter warned of possible coordinated attacks targeting the parliament complex, places of worship, entertainment facilities, and military and police installations, with armories seen as potential targets, Bengali daily Prothom Alo reported.

US judge dismisses Musk's fraud claims in OpenAI case

REUTERS

Washington, April 25: A US judge Friday dismissed Elon Musk's fraud claims in his lawsuit accusing OpenAI and co-founder Sam Altman of betraying OpenAI's original mission, but plans to proceed to trial on Musk's breach of charitable trust and unjust enrichment claims.

The ruling was issued by US District Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers in Oakland, California.

Jury selection is scheduled to begin Monday, and opening arguments are expected Tuesday.

Musk had said dismissing his fraud and constructive fraud claims, which he proposed, would streamline the case and keep jurors focused on his goal of ensuring that OpenAI benefit humanity rather than be a "wealth machine."

The case centers on Musk's claim that OpenAI, Altman and Microsoft, one of OpenAI's largest investors, conned him and the public by forming a for-profit entity in 2019, after he left OpenAI's board.

OpenAI is preparing for a potential initial public offering that could value it at \$1 trillion, Reuters has reported.

Musk is seeking \$150 billion in damages, according to a person involved in the case, with proceeds going to OpenAI's charitable arm.



A Palestinian couple participates in a mass wedding ceremony in Deir al-Balah, central Gaza Strip, Friday. PTI PHOTO

Insurgents attack military bases across Mali; airport shut

REUTERS

Bamako, April 25: Insurgents launched attacks in Mali's capital and other locations across the country Saturday, with the army urging people to remain calm as the military-led government faced one of the biggest operations yet in a long campaign against it.

A UN security note said there had been "simultaneous complex attacks" in Kati, near Bamako's airport and in cities and towns further north including Mopti, Gao and Kidal, while the US embassy in Mali urged its citizens to shelter in place.

Two explosions and sus-

tained gunfire were heard shortly before 6 am (0600 GMT) near Mali's main military base Kati, north of its capital Bamako, and shots were still ringing out in the area more than four hours later as army helicopters flew overhead, a Reuters witness and two residents said.

"There's gunfire everywhere," a witness in the central town of Sevare said. Two other witnesses said Defence Minister Sadio Camara's house in Kati was hit and destroyed.

Mali is battling insurgencies by the West African affiliates of al Qaeda and Islamic State. It is also grappling with a much longer history of Tuareg-led rebel-



lion in the north. The government led by Assimi Goita took power after coups in 2020 and 2021 vowing to restore security, but has struggled to do so.

Mali's army said shortly after 11 am (1100 GMT) that the situation was under control but

"sweeping operations" were ongoing. It was unclear if that applied to the whole country.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility from al Qaeda affiliate Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM), which frequently stages attacks

Philadelphia museum brings rocky statue inside after years of tension

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Philadelphia, April 25: Every day, visitors from around the world make their way to the steps of the Philadelphia Museum of Art - not necessarily for the galleries inside, but for a statue of a fictional boxer from South Philadelphia.

The bronze figure of Rocky Balboa - arms raised in victory, clad in boxing trunks and boots - has become a point of pilgrimage for people around the world.

For decades, the museum kept an uncomfortable distance from this kind of devotion. Now, it is embracing it - and inviting Rocky in.

Opening this weekend, "Rising Up: Rocky and the Making of Monuments" examines how

a fictional fighter became a real-world symbol, placing the statue within the sweep of art history and Philadelphia's identity. The exhibition is the brainchild of guest curator Paul Farber, who spent years exploring the meaning of the statue and public monuments - including through his NPR podcasts - before bringing the conversation into the museum.

The exhibition spans more than 2,000 years of boxing imagery, tracing a thread of human struggle that Louis Marchesano, the museum's deputy director of curatorial affairs and conservation, said helps explain Rocky's enduring pull.

"The common theme that runs throughout 2,000 years of boxing imagery is that people respond to the body under



struggle, a conflict in much the same way today as they did 2,500 years ago," Marchesano said. "It's not simply about watching two people beat each other up - it's about endurance,

internal fortitude and internal struggle."

When the bronze statue was left on the steps after filming the "Rocky" movies, the museum fought to have it removed.

It was eventually relocated to South Philadelphia before returning to the bottom of the steps in 2006. It was welcomed back, but never fully embraced. The city owns the spot where the statue sits - not the museum.

"The museum has had - and I hate to say this, no pun intended - a rocky relationship with the statue," Marchesano said.

"It took us decades to come to terms with it," he added. "But I'm glad that we did." One gallery places Rocky in the global boxing fever of the 1970s, featuring works by Keith Haring, Jean-Michel Basquiat and Andy Warhol - all created during a time when boxing had the world's attention.

"In the 1970s, we knew minute by minute who the heavyweight champion of the world was,"

Marchesano said. "The artists in this gallery are responding to that global frenzy. Sylvester Stallone, in 'Rocky,' was doing the same - thinking about internal and external struggle."

Another gallery turns to Philadelphia itself, presenting photographs of the Blue Horizon boxing gym and a section on Joe Frazier, whose real-life story at least partially inspired Rocky.

"Without Joe Frazier, Rocky doesn't exist," Marchesano said. When the exhibition closes in August, the statue inside will move to a permanent home at the top of the museum's steps - a place it has never officially held. The statue currently outside remains on loan from Stallone. Rocky's longtime spot at the bottom of the steps won't be empty - a statue of Frazier will replace it.

# business



Not just Sebi but all regulated entities will have to remain exceptionally vigilant. The tools of attack are evolving at high speed, and the tools of defence must evolve even faster

**NIRMALA SITHARAMAN** | UNION FINANCE MINISTER

**P&G FLAGS \$1BN OIL SHOCK HIT**

US consumer goods giant Procter & Gamble warned of a roughly \$1 billion post-tax hit to its fiscal 2027 profit from surging oil prices, joining a host of global companies flagging significant cost pressures from the Iran war. The Pampers and Tide maker's estimated profit hit is among the highest outside of airlines, which rely heavily on oil for fuel



**of the day** **QUOTE**

The proposal to introduce private participation in Air Traffic Control services, without first operationalising an independent Air Navigation Services (ANS) structure, is viewed with grave concern

**K RAMMOHAN NAIDU** | CIVIL AVIATION MINISTER



What is heartening is that this performance has come through despite multiple geopolitical headwinds in the last 12 months, reaffirming the resilience of housing demand from the top brands

**ABHISHEK LODHA** | MD & CEO, LODHA DEVELOPERS



This assurance is important, especially for lakhs of small traders, shopkeepers, street vendors, hawkers, self-employed persons and women entrepreneurs who have been using Paytm extensively for day-to-day payments and digital transactions

**PRAVEEN KHANDELWAL** | SECRETARY, CAIT



**Q4 RESULTS**

**India Cements rises 4X**

**New Delhi:** The India Cements Ltd (ICL) Saturday reported over fourfold jump in consolidated net profit at ₹59.5 crore for March quarter FY26, helped by an increase in volume and sales realisation. ICL had logged a profit of ₹14.67 crore in January-March FY25, helped by asset sales, according to a BSE filing. ICL is a subsidiary of UltraTech Cement, an Aditya Birla group firm. Revenue from operations was up 2.6 per cent to ₹1,228.65 crore in March quarter FY26. Total expenses were at ₹1,174.79 crore, down 10.5 per cent year-on-year. In Q4, domestic sales volume was 3.12 million tonne, recording a growth of 18 per cent year-over-year, as per an earnings presentation by the company. In entire FY26, ICL narrowed its loss at ₹67.25 crore from ₹143.69 crore a year ago. Total consolidated income was at ₹4,572.35 crore, up 5.33 per cent.

**RBL Bank net up 3X**

**Mumbai:** RBL Bank Saturday said its March quarter FY26 standalone net profit more than tripled to ₹230 crore aided by lower provisions and improvement in asset quality. The private sector bank logged a profit of ₹69 crore in the year-ago period. In the full financial year 2025-26, net profit rose 18 per cent to ₹222 crore. Core net interest income (NII) grew 7 per cent on-year to ₹1,671 crore in January-March FY26 compared with ₹1,563 crore a year ago, a statement said. On the asset quality front, the bank reported continued strengthening in its loan book. Gross non-performing assets (GNPA) ratio improved to 1.18 per cent at the end of March 2026 from 2.60 per cent a year earlier.

**Axis Bank sees drop**

**Mumbai:** Private lender Axis Bank Saturday reported a 0.64 per cent drop in profitability for the March quarter (Q4) of FY26, with net profit dropped 0.64 per cent year-on-year (YoY) to ₹7,071 crore. The lender had posted a net profit of ₹7,118 crore in the corresponding quarter of the previous financial year (Q4 FY25), according to its latest stock exchange filing. The bank's interest income showed healthy growth during the quarter, rising 4.7 per cent to ₹32,724 crore from ₹31,243 crore a year ago. At the same time, interest expenses climbed 4.7 per cent year-on-year to ₹18,267 crore, compared to ₹17,432 crore in year-ago period.

**SOARING MERCURY**

## Peak power at record high of 252 GW

Power Ministry projects 270 GW peak demand amid intensifying summer heatwaves

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 25:** India's peak power demand hit a record high of 252.07 GW Friday following an intensifying heat wave, which pushed up the use of cooling devices like air conditioners and desert coolers, according to the latest power ministry data.

The previous record high of 250 GW peak power demand was recorded in May 2024.

The country's peak power demand (the highest supply in a

day) was recorded at 252.07 GW, an all-time high. April 24, higher than 240.12 GW April 23, 2026, the power ministry data showed. The highest electricity supply April 22 was recorded at 239.70 GW.

The power ministry had earlier projected a peak power demand, the highest supply in a day, of 270 GW for this year's summer season, but the actual demand met was well below the estimate.

Last year in the summer season, the peak power demand was 242.77 GW, which was recorded in June, 2025.

In the first fortnight of this month, the peak power demand remained lower than the 235.32 GW recorded in April 2025.

Experts are of the view that



the demand and consumption of electricity may further rise due to increase in intensity of heat wave conditions with more frequent use of air-conditioners, air coolers, and other appliances by domestic as well as commercial consumers to beat the rising mercury levels in the country.

According to the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), there will be heatwave conditions over major parts of northwest, central and eastern India till this weekend.

The IMD has projected harsh summers this time, the impact

- The previous record high of 250 GW peak power demand was recorded in May 2024
- Last year, the peak power demand was 242.77 GW, which was recorded in June 2025

of which can be seen from now onwards, especially in May and June, experts stated.

The peak power demand touched an all-time high of about 250 GW in May 2024. The previous all-time peak demand of 243.27 GW was recorded in September 2023. During the last summer season (April 2025 onwards), the peak power demand reached 242.77 GW in June but stayed below the government's estimate of 277 GW.

**COTTON CRUNCH**

## Textiles, garment exports fall 2.2% in 2025-26: GTRI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Apr 25:** The country's textiles and garment exports fell 2.2 per cent to USD 35.8 billion in 2025-26 due to contraction in shipments of key segments such as cotton, think tank GTRI said Saturday.

In rupee terms too, the exports fell 2.1 per cent during the last fiscal.

GTRI said the declining pattern is visible across major segments - cotton textiles (- 3.9 per cent), ready-made garments (- 1.4 per cent), and carpets (- 5.3 per cent). Only handicrafts grew slightly by 1.5 per cent during the fiscal.

The contrast between INR and USD growth highlights a deeper structural concern, the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said.

Its founder Ajay Srivastava said India is exporting more in value terms domestically, but earning fewer dollars globally.

For instance, man-made textiles show a 3.6 per cent rise in INR (Indian Rupee) but a 0.8 per cent decline in dollar terms, and garments show a 2.9 per cent INR increase despite a 1.4 per cent dollar contraction, he said.

This suggests that currency depreciation and not competitiveness is behind the apparent growth, he said adding in real terms, India is losing market share or failing to expand in key global markets, particularly in labour-intensive sectors where it should be gaining ground.

He added this "raises a critical policy question: why are ongoing reforms not translating into export growth despite initiatives on production-linked incentives, logistics improvements, and trade facilitation, the data shows stagnation or decline in core segments. The government must urgently investigate bottlenecks".

# Domestic investors offset foreign outflows

On the liquidity front, FIIs remained net sellers, offloading equities worth ₹1,369cr during the week, while DIIs bought equities worth ₹9,782cr

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, April 25:** Domestic investors raised their shareholding to a record 29 per cent in Indian equities, offsetting the decline in foreign participation, a new report has said.

Foreign portfolio investor (FPI) ownership in Indian equities dropped to its lowest level in 16 years in the March quarter, the report from Morgan Stanley said.

Domestic ownership in the listed universe surged 40 basis points from the previous quarter. With the increase primarily driven by domestic institutions, which raised ownership by 58 basis points to 19.3 per cent. Direct household ownership rose 20 basis points.

Resilient local flows and weaker foreign positioning could support demand for primary issuances and a pick-up in buybacks, it said.

Institutions gave an overweight call on financials and consumer discretionary shares and remained underweight on materials, energy, health care and utilities.



**STAKE SHIFT**

DOMESTIC INVESTORS' PARTICIPATION IN INDIAN EQUITIES TOUCH RECORD LEVEL OF 29%

FPI OWNERSHIP IN EQUITIES DROPPED TO LOWEST LEVEL IN 16 YEARS IN MARCH QUARTER

Foreign investors held their largest overweight position in financials, although they reduced active positions during the quarter. Industrials remained their biggest underweight sector, the report said.

Domestic institutions maintained their largest underweight position in financials, though that underweight position narrowed. Consumer staples remained their largest overweight position.

On the liquidity front, for-

eign institutional investors (FIIs) remained net sellers, offloading equities worth ₹1,369 crore during the week, while domestic institutional investors (DIIs) bought equities worth ₹9,782 crore.

The domestic equity markets closed on a weak note this week, with benchmark indices declining about 2 per cent amid escalating tensions in West Asia, a sharp spike in crude oil prices, and heavy selling in IT stocks weighing on sentiment.

On a weekly basis, headline indices Sensex and Nifty ended lower, falling 2.3 per cent and 1.9 per cent, respectively.

According to analysts, markets remained volatile with a cautious undertone during the week, as early recovery attempts fizzled out amid resurfacing US-Iran tensions and continued disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz.

**CUSTOMER PROTECTION**

## RBI proposes tighter rules for digital wallets

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, April 25:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has issued a draft Master Direction on Prepaid Payment Instruments (PPIs) to enhance security, customer protection and operational clarity for digital wallets and prepaid cards.

RBI's draft would allow banks that issue debit cards to offer PPIs after informing the Department of Payment and Settlement Systems (DPSS), according to reports.

"A non-bank applicant shall have a minimum net-worth of ₹5 crore, and shall submit a certificate...from its statutory auditor," the draft said.

The central bank invited public comments on the proposal by May 22, 2026. Further, a non-bank PPI issuer should attain a minimum net-worth of ₹15 crore by the end of the third financial year of authorisation. The proposal also mandated non-bank PPI issuer to keep the



funds collected against issuance of PPIs in a separate rupee escrow account, maintained with a commercial bank in India.

Under proposed limits, general purpose PPIs can carry an amount outstanding of ₹2 lakh with a cash-loading cap of ₹10,000 per month.

The draft said the maximum value of such a PPI may be capped at ₹10,000 and in case of transit PPI, it may be capped at ₹3,000.

"Loading of such PPI shall be against receipt of foreign exchange by cash or through any payment instrument. Total amount debited from such PPI during any month shall not exceed ₹5 lakh," the RBI's draft read.

## BSNL Odisha Circle bags 2 nat'l honours

**BHUBANESWAR:** BSNL Odisha Circle has achieved a significant distinction at the national level during the financial year 2025-26 by securing two prestigious recognitions. The Circle has been conferred awards by the Minister of Communications, Jyotiraditya M Scindia, for being the 'Overall Best Performing Circle' and for 'Best Performance in Enterprise Business (EB)'. This noteworthy accomplishment reflects the sustained efforts and dedicated performance of the Odisha Circle in a challenging telecom environment under the leadership of Dushmanta Kumar Behera, Chief General Manager, BSNL Odisha Circle. BSNL, in its Silver Jubilee year, continues to play a pivotal role in strengthening digital connectivity across the state. In line with the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat and to extend affordable services to customers, BSNL is also offering SIM cards at a nominal cost of ₹1, enabling wider access to telecom services. Behera has called upon all staff members of BSNL Odisha to ensure doorstep delivery of services, including mobile connectivity in saturation sites and FTTH connections in both urban and rural areas. He has further urged all employees to maintain the momentum and strive for even better performance in the current financial year 2026-27.



# India's digital currency push targets its leaky welfare system

**GLOBALLY, 49 COUNTRIES ARE CURRENTLY RUNNING CBDC PILOTS WHILE ONLY A HANDFUL HAVE DONE A FULL LAUNCH**

REUTERS

**Mumbai, April 25:** In the western Indian village of Phulenagar, Samadhan Sonawane set up a drip irrigation system on his small onion farm using digital currency issued directly from the central bank.

The funds come from a pilot programme that is part of India's efforts to boost its e-rupee, a central bank digital currency (CBDC), and tighten its \$80 billion welfare payment system, which has historically suffered from corruption and inefficiency.

While India's early efforts are modest compared with those of China, where more than 200 million people use the e-yuan, the world's most populous nation could in theory become its biggest CBDC issuer if the system gains traction.

For now, Indian authorities are working to establish use cases in the farm and subsidised food distribution sectors, where welfare often struggles to make it to the right recipients.

"Where we are right now is looking for some kind of killer use case that differentiates CBDC ... I think that's what India's trying to do, to find those kinds of killer applications," said John Kiff, an independent

digital currency adviser who formerly worked with the IMF and Bank of Canada.

The pilot, run jointly by the World Bank, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the Maharashtra government and Punjab National Bank, is one of around 10 experiments under way across India to test whether the e-rupee can be used to deliver welfare payments more efficiently, two people familiar with the initiatives said.

China and India are the only countries with programmable CBDCs at scale, analysts say. India's pilot scheme has an estimated 10 million users.

India kicked off the e-rupee in late 2022, pitching it as the future of payments while warning that privately issued cryptocurrencies pose risks to financial stability, but adoption has been limited.

Transactions using the e-rupee have totalled about \$3.6 billion since its launch, a fraction of the more than \$300 billion processed monthly on India's popular Unified Payments Interface (UPI). Officials and analysts see welfare payments as a potential way to give the CBDC a clearer purpose.

The sources declined to be identified as they are not autho-



rised to speak to media. India's federal government and the central bank did not respond to emails seeking comment.

Details about India's plans to expand welfare payments via CBDC have not been previously reported.

**ADOPTION VIA WELFARE**

The CBDC system of direct transfer appeals to Sonawane as he does not have to pay for the equipment upfront or wait weeks or months for a government refund.

The drip irrigation system costs about ₹103,000 (\$1,235), more than twice the roughly ₹50,000 he earns in a five-month growing season. Under the pi-

lot, the government transfers the subsidy directly into a digital wallet in e-rupees covering 80% of the total costs. The funds are programmed to be spent at approved vendors.

In Sonawane's home district, nearly 1,400 farmers have applied to receive irrigation subsidies via the e-rupee, officials said.

"The programmable aspect of CBDC ensures funds cannot be misused while also removing the need for farmers to make an upfront payment," said Vijay Kolekar, an economist at a Maharashtra government agency overseeing the project.

The experiment is also testing whether the CBDC can enable a more "equitable and

- Ten experiments across India to test e-rupee delivery
- CBDCs can be used to deliver welfare payments more efficiently
- Welfare payments to boost use of e-rupee, reduce misallocations
- Critics say heavily programmed money could deter CBDC adoption

inclusive subsidy delivery system", he said. Vendors, typically from socially dominant groups, are reluctant to offer credit to farmers lower in the social hierarchy. The mechanism has also boosted sales.

Vaiabhv Vhalgade, who owns a farm equipment store about 20 km (12.4 miles) from Sonawane's farm, said he usually makes about 200 sales of such equipment every season between February and August. This year he has received around 50 applications through CBDC till April alone.

**PROMISE AND PITFALLS**

Similar trials are taking place elsewhere.

In Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home state of Gujarat, about 15,000 beneficiaries have been enrolled in a pilot that us-

es the digital rupee to distribute subsidised food through government ration shops, said Mona Khandhar, a senior state official.

The aim is to eventually cover all 7.5 million families eligible for subsidised food in Gujarat by June, she said.

"It's a win-win," Khandhar said, pointing to better tracking and efficiency in running a large welfare programme.

The central bank intends to use separate CBDC versions, with welfare payments offering higher transparency while retail ones carry greater privacy protections, the first source quoted earlier said.

However, critics warn that restrictions on how money can be spent may come at a cost and run counter to the argument that CBDCs are similar to cash.

"Trying to enact this level of control over economic activity is very challenging," said Neha Narula, director of the Digital Currency Initiative at the MIT Media Lab.

Narula said heavily programmed money - with conditions on when, where and for what purpose it can be spent - could deter people from adopting a CBDC or saving in it.

"This is a really dangerous road to go down," she said.

# PBKS hunt down record 265

## Rahul's historic knock goes in vain as Prabhsimran, Iyer fifties help PBKS continue unbeaten run

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 25: Punjab Kings rewrote the T20 record books with a breathtaking batting blitz, pulling off the highest-ever successful chase in the format's history by overhauling a daunting 265-run target to outgun Delhi Capitals by six wickets in an IPL run-fest here Saturday.

KL Rahul blended grace with power to script a stroke-filled 152, the third-highest individual IPL score, while Nitish Rana (91) batted with authority as the duo powered hosts Delhi Capitals to a mammoth 264 for 2 after opting to bat first.

Chasing the target, Punjab's dynamic opening pair of Prabhsimran Singh (76) and Priyansh Arya (43) came out all guns blazing, adding 126 runs in just 42 balls to lay a formidable foundation for the chase and set the tone for their sixth win of the season.

Skipper Shreyas Iyer, who was dropped by Karun Nair twice in the span of three balls, then scored an unbeaten 71 off 36 deliveries to take PBKS over the line with as many as seven balls to spare.

Incidentally, the previous highest successful run chase in T20 as well as IPL history also belongs to PBKS when they chased down 262 against the Kolkata Knight Riders in 2024.

They remain unbeaten this season and on top of the points table with 13 points from seven games.

In a match where 49 boundaries and 33 sixes were hit, with only six wickets falling, the bowlers were arguably the biggest losers.

The visitors showed remarkable composure and intent, building on their previous out-



**The home team hit a total of 29 fours and 13 sixes to put on board the highest total of the 2026 IPL season**

ing where they had scored the previous highest total of the season.

Local lad Priyansh and Prabhsimran consistently sent the ball to and over the fence. The latter hit six fours against Mukesh Kumar in the sixth over.

There were anxious moments during the chase when Delhi Capitals pacer Lungi Ngidi was hit the back of the head on the ground while attempting a catch off Arya's bat.

The South African had to be stretchered off the field after a

delay of over 15 minutes, momentarily halting proceedings.

Both sides were also guilty of sloppy fielding, with dropped catches and misfields adding to their woes.

Earlier, setting a target for the first time this season, the Capitals came out with clear intent, attacking anything in their arc from the outset.

Striking at over 200 throughout the 20 overs, Rahul (152 off 67 balls) unfurled a range of classical strokes all around the ground, seamlessly combining timing with aggression to put up the highest-score ever by an Indian in the IPL.

With the knock, he also became only the third player to go beyond 150-run mark after Chris Gayle (175) and Brendon McCullum (158).

Dropped twice, Rahul made full use of the reprieve, forging a 220-run stand with local boy

Rana for the second wicket. It was second biggest stand in IPL history behind 229 set by Virat Kohli and AB de Villiers.

### Brief Scores:

**Delhi Capitals** 264/2 in 20 overs (KL Rahul 152 not out, Nitish Rana 91; Arshdeep Singh 1-49, Xavier Bartlett 1-69) lost to **Punjab Kings** 265/4 in 18.5 overs (Prabhsimran Singh 76, Shreyas Iyer 71 not out; Kuldeep Yadav 2-46, Vipraj Nigam 1-24) by six wickets

**KL RAHUL JOINS ELITE 150 CLUB**

Runs - 152\*  
Balls - 67  
6s - 9  
4s - 16  
SR - 226

# SRH eclipse Sooryavanshi's third-fastest IPL century

## Kishan's explosive 74 guides SRH to five-wicket win over RR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur, April 25: Teen sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi's thrill-a-second 103, the third fastest IPL hundred off 36 balls, was eclipsed by a collective batting effort by Sunrisers Hyderabad as the visitors etched a commanding five-wicket win here Saturday.

Ishan Kishan smacked a 31-ball 74 while Abhishek Sharma rode on a couple of lifelines to make 57 off 29 balls to lead SRH's charge as they scaled down a 229-run target with nine balls to spare.

It, in fact, was the fourth highest run chase ever in the IPL, close on the heels of a record 265-run chase mounted by Punjab Kings against Delhi Capitals earlier in the day at New Delhi.

Heinrich Klaasen (29) and Nitish Kumar Reddy (36) put on 53 runs for the fourth wicket to finish the job.

IPL STANDINGS					
TEAMS	P	W	L	NRR	PTS
PBKS	7	6	0	1.333	13
RCB	7	5	2	1.101	10
SRH	8	5	3	0.815	10
RR	8	5	3	0.602	10
CSK	7	3	4	0.118	6
DC	7	3	4	-0.184	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



The Royals, despite having a par total on board, deployed as many as eight bowling options but poor fielding let their bowlers down.

Apart from two dropped chances to get rid of Abhishek early, the Royals also failed to apply pressure when Brijesh Sharma spilled Reddy off Jofra Archer (2/34) on 14.

Despite the hiccups, Abhishek and Kishan went about their job with ease as none of the bowling changes could prevent their charge. They put on 132 for the second wicket from only 55 balls to place their team on track for a comfortable win.

Earlier, Sooryavanshi went hammer and tongs, powering Rajasthan Royals to 228 for six.

Sooryavanshi made SRH pay a heavy price for an early reprieve when he was on 32 to notch up his second hundred in the league and first of the season, which followed three whirlwind fifties earlier.

The 15-year-old once again displayed his rich repertoire of strokes executed with brute force and timing. He used the

long handle to maximum effect to clobber 12 sixes as against five fours in his 37-ball 103.

He brought up his ton with a six off Sakib Hussain (1/62) on his 36th delivery, recording the third fastest century in the IPL after his own 35-ball hundred last year and Chris Gayle's 30-ball ton for Royal Challengers Bengaluru in April 2013.

**Brief Scores:** **Rajasthan Royals:** 228/6 in 20 overs (Vaibhav Sooryavanshi 103, Dhruv Jurel 51; Pat Cummins 1/27, Eshan Malinga 2/38) lost to **Sunrisers Hyderabad:** 229 for 5 in 18.3 overs (Ishan Kishan 74, Abhishek Sharma 57; Jofra Archer 2/34, Brijesh Sharma 2/44) by 5 wickets

**TODAY'S MATCHES**

CSK VS GT  
TIME: 3:30 PM

LSG VS KKR  
TIME: 7:30 PM

Star Sports channels & JioHotstar

## SHORT TAKES

### Jasmine, Amritpal handed two-yr ban

New Delhi: National Games gold medal-winning shot putter Jasmine Kaur of Punjab has been handed a two-year ban by the NADA's Anti-Doping Disciplinary panel (ADDP) after being found guilty of using a prohibited substance. The 23-year-old, who won gold at the National Games in Dehradun earlier this year with a personal best throw of 15.97 metres, had tested positive for Terbutaline - a stimulant commonly found in cough syrups. She was placed under provisional suspension by the National Anti-Doping Agency early last year. Former India basketball player Amritpal Singh, who has played in Australia's National Basketball League, has been handed eight-year ban from March 5, 2025 onwards, after he committed a second offence at the National Games in Dehra Dun.

### Betis dent Madrid's fading title bid

Seville: Real Madrid's already slim hopes of winning La Liga were dealt another blow when Real Betis scored a stoppage-time equalizer in a pulsating 1-1 result. Madrid was left trailing league leader Barcelona by eight points with only five games to play. Barcelona has a game in hand at Getafe Saturday. The match started well for visiting Madrid as Vinicius Junior scored for the second time in four days. Betis goalkeeper Alvaro Valles could only parry Federico Valverde's long range shot and the Brazilian striker followed up to slot in the rebound. The result meant Madrid has failed to win five of its last six games in all competitions. Betis, meanwhile, was in fifth place, six points ahead of Getafe and seven behind Atletico Madrid.

### BWF approves 3x15-point system

New Delhi: The Badminton World Federation (BWF) on Saturday approved a big change in how it scores games. Starting in January 2027 a new 3x15-point system will be used after getting a lot of support from its member associations. The change comes after more than a year of testing at certain tournaments as part of the federation's effort to make the sport more modern. With the new structure, matches will be played as best-of-three games to 15 points, but if the score is tied, they can go up to 21 points.

## MEN'S ARTISTIC GYMNASTICS Odisha impresses with fifth place finish



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 25:** The Men's Artistic Gymnastics (MAG) Junior Team Championship was held successfully as part of the ongoing national-level artistic gymnastics championships in Bhubaneswar for the 2026-27 season, drawing participation from top young talent across the country at the Gymnastics Centre, Kalinga Stadium Saturday.

The event showcased a high standard of competition, with teams delivering impressive routines across apparatus. Uttar Pradesh emerged as champions, securing the top position with a consistent and dominant performance. Maharashtra finished second, followed by West Bengal in third place. Delhi claimed the fourth spot in the closely contested championship.

The host state, Odisha, also put up a spirited showing,

finishing fifth overall. Competing against some of the strongest teams in the country, the Odisha contingent demonstrated determination and skill, earning recognition for their commendable effort at the national level.

The championship forms part of the broader Junior and Senior Artistic Gymnastics National Championships, which continue to highlight emerging talent and strengthen India's gymnastics pipeline.

## Olympic medallist Gurbax Singh Grewal passes away

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chandigarh, April 25:** Olympic hockey medallist Gurbax Singh Grewal has died following a heart attack in Zirakpur near here. He was 84.

Grewal, who was part of the Indian team that secured a bronze medal at the 1968 Mexico City Olympics, died on Friday.

In a rare distinction, he represented India at the same Olympics alongside his brother Balbir Singh Grewal, marking one of the few instances of siblings featuring together in the national hockey side at the Games.

Beyond his playing career, Grewal served as a senior sports officer with Western Railways, where he played a key role in identifying and inducting talent, including several players from Rajasthan, into the Railways hockey setup.

After retiring from service in Mumbai, he remained actively involved in the sport's administration, serving as honorary



secretary of the Mumbai Hockey Association.

Expressing his condolences, Hockey India President Dilip Tirkey said, "The Indian hockey fraternity is deeply saddened by the passing of Gurbax Singh Grewal ji. He was a valued member of India's Olympic medal-winning team and a true servant of the sport whose contributions extended far beyond the field. His passion for hockey and his dedication towards nurturing future generations will always be remembered. On behalf of Hockey India, I extend my heartfelt condolences to his family and loved ones in this hour of grief."

## The seven-time Grand Slam champion withdraws from Rome and Roland Garros due to wrist injury, citing caution

REUTERS

**Washington, April 25:** Carlos Alcaraz's hopes of a French Open 'three-peat' were effectively ended on Friday after the world number two said a wrist injury has ruled him out of Roland Garros next month.

The seven-time Grand Slam champion picked up the injury in the first round of the Barcelona Open earlier this month before withdrawing from the tournament.

Scans showed the issue was more serious than initially thought, after which the 22-year-old also withdrew from

## India set to bid for 2038 Asian Games in Ahmedabad

REUTERS

**New Delhi, April 25:** India will bid to host the 2038 Asian Games in Ahmedabad, the country's Olympic chief told Reuters Saturday, in its latest push to stage elite multi-sport events.

The world's most populous nation will stage the 2030 Commonwealth Games in Ahmedabad and is also bidding for the 2036 Olympic Games in the western Indian city.

"Indian Olympic Association has already sent an expression of interest to OCA (Olympic Council of Asia) for organising the 2038 Asian Games in Ahmedabad," IOA President P. T. Usha told Reuters by telephone from China. "I met the OCA president and other functionaries here and they are all happy and want to support us."

India hosted the inaugural Asian Games in 1951 in New Delhi and again in 1982 in the capital city. The country hosted the 2010 Commonwealth Games, which was mired in mismanagement and allegations of corruption.

## FRENCH OPEN

# Alcaraz's three-peat dreams dashed

the Madrid Open. The Spaniard said he would also skip the Masters tournament in Rome.

"After the results of the tests carried out today, we have decided that the most prudent thing to do is to be cautious and not participate in Rome or Roland Garros as we wait to evaluate the progress so we can decide when to return to the court," Alcaraz said.

Having won the Australian Open earlier this year, Alcaraz was gunning for his third straight Roland Garros crown after also winning the title in 2024.

He will now skip the entire claycourt swing, with one eye on Wimbledon in June. The last time Alcaraz missed a major was the 2023 Australian Open due to a leg injury.

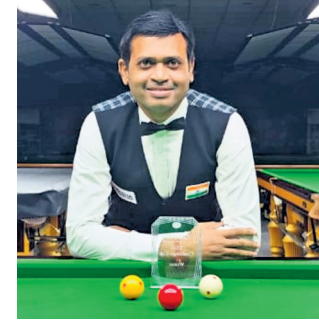
A claycourt specialist, Alcaraz had won titles at Monte Carlo, Rome and Roland Garros last year while he had also finished runner-up in Barcelona. He beat current world num-

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 25:** Odisha cueist Subrat Das produced a remarkable comeback to clinch the Irish Open Challenge Cup 2026, marking a proud moment for Indian billiards on the international stage. Representing the Indian team on tour in Ireland, Das showcased resilience, skill, and composure throughout the tournament.

In a gripping final against fellow Indian Srinu Katipogu, Das scripted a stunning turnaround victory, winning 220-200. The one-hour contest seemed to be slipping away as Das trailed by nearly 100 points for the first 51 minutes. However, in a dramatic final flourish, he displayed exceptional cue control and temperament, crafting brilliant breaks of 60 and 40 in the last nine minutes to seize the title by a 20-point margin.

Das's journey to the championship was equally commanding. He began his campaign with a dominant 200-54 win over John MacIntyre in the Top 32 round. Continuing his fine



form, he defeated Dom Halligan 200-139 in the Top 16, followed by a convincing 200-91 victory against Peter Stanyer in the quarterfinals. In the semifinals, Das delivered one of his most emphatic performances, overpowering Joe Doheny 325-133.

The Odisha star also recorded the highest breaks of the tournament, registering impressive efforts of 96 and 85, underlining his technical brilliance.

With this triumph boosting his confidence, Subrat Das now turns his focus to the upcoming IBSF World Billiards Championship, scheduled from April 25 to 28, where he will aim to continue his impressive run on the global stage.



**This is a difficult time for me, but I am sure we will come out of it stronger**

CARLOS ALCARAZ

ber one Jannik Sinner in last year's marathon final at Roland Garros, saving three championship points before coming out on top after five hours and 29 minutes.

Alcaraz's absence boosts Jannik Sinner's chances for a Career Slam

French Open main draw begins May 24 without defending champion Alcaraz

Alcaraz's withdrawal paves the way for Sinner to potentially complete a Career Slam. The Italian has won the Australian Open twice, Wimbledon last year and the US Open in 2024.

Sinner, who learned about Alcaraz's withdrawal during the post-match interview following his win over Benjamin Bonzi at the Madrid Open, wished the Spaniard a quick recovery.

"It's sad for tennis. Me being a competitor, I always want to play against the best in the world and he definitely is the best in the world here on this surface... I wish him to recover as fast as possible," Sinner said.

The main draw at the French Open gets underway May 24.