



## Rashmika's take

Rashmika Mandanna shares how children inherit emotional burden and pain from parents

LEISURE | P2



## Mali's defence min killed

Mali's Defence Minister Sadio Camara was killed in an attack by an al Qaeda affiliate on his residence

INTERNATIONAL | P10



## India-NZ FTA

India and New Zealand set to sign their free trade agreement April 27, aimed at doubling bilateral trade between the two countries

BUSINESS | P11



## Marathon milestone

Sebastian Sawa of Kenya becomes the first person to break the fabled 2-hour barrier in the marathon

SPORTS | P12

## 2 Census workers die of 'sunstroke'

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Betnoti/Sundargarh, April 26:** Two teachers engaged in Census work died of reported sunstroke in separate incidents in the state Sunday.

In Mayurbhanj district, Rajkapur Hembram, a teacher of Baidyanath High School at Purinda Kakharua under Betnoti block, died Sunday evening while undergoing treatment at PRM Medical College and Hospital in Baripada. He had been engaged in the Central government's Census exercise, conducting door-to-door surveys in panchayat areas.

Hembram reportedly fell ill Thursday due to extreme heat and had taken two days' leave. As per reports, he had earlier informed colleagues about pressure from authorities to continue census duties despite his illness. He died during treatment Sunday. Family members and local teachers' associations expressed grief over his death.

In a similar incident in Sundargarh district, Anurag Ekka, a teacher of Jarda Government High School under Gurundia block, fell ill while on Census duty Saturday. He was first taken to Gurundia community health centre and later shifted to the district headquarters hospital as his condition worsened. He died during treatment the same day.

District Emergency Officer Ashwini Kumar Panda said the exact cause of death will be ascertained after postmortem report arrive, adding that it is yet to be established whether heatstroke led to his death.

The incident took place at around 8:34pm local time when dinner was served. At that time, Trump was seen having a conversation with Weijia Jiang, President of White House Correspondents' Association, and mentalist Oz Pearlman, who was scheduled to present a show at the marquee event at the Washington Hilton here.

Trump and his officials were the likely targets of the shooter, US Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche said Sunday. CCTV footage released by Trump on Truth Social showed the suspect running rapidly through a security checkpoint, momentarily catching security personnel off-guard before they drew their weapons. No shots were fired at the gunman who got through two checkpoints before being brought down.

"You know, he charged from 50 yards away, so he was very far away from the room. He was moving. He was really moving," Trump said after the gala dinner was canceled. Officials believe he is a "lone wolf," Trump said.

Secret Service officials and other security personnel covered the President, First Lady Melania Trump, Vice President JD Vance, and the Second Lady Usha Vance, who were seated at the head table, and escorted them out of the ballroom.

Several guests at the dinner, including leaders across the political spectrum, journalists and other invitees, ducked under the table, apparently as a reflex reaction. Putting up a brave face, President Trump later announced on Truth Social that the dinner would be rescheduled within 30 days.

"Boom, boom, boom, boom is all that I heard, and many guests ducked under the table," a C-SPAN reporter at the dinner said. Hours later, Trump addressed a presser at White House and announced that the security personnel had captured one person who hails from California.

"I heard a noise and sort of thought it was a tray going down. I've heard that many times. It was a pretty loud noise, and it was from quite far away. He (the attacker) hadn't reached the area at all. They really got him," Trump told reporters, recalling the incident.

Trump said one security officer was shot at but saved as he was wearing a bulletproof vest. Several protesters had lined up on the road outside the hotel, raising slogans against the Trump administration and Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth.

The suspect, Cole Tomas Allen from California, has been arrested.

# Shots fired at WH dinner; Trump safe

TRUMP LIKELY TARGET OF SHOOTING ■ OFFICIALS BELIEVE ATTACKER IS A LONE WOLF, SAYS US PREZ

A media dinner party hosted by US President Donald Trump took a harrowing turn Saturday when an assailant laced with multiple weapons breached the security and opened fire during the event at Washington Hilton. The President and First Lady Melania Trump were evacuated unharmed but the breach has sparked intense scrutiny of the President's security detail. The location of the attack added a chilling layer of significance, as the Washington Hilton was the site of the 1981 attempted assassination of President Ronald Reagan by John Hinckley Jr. This latest incident serves as a grim reminder of the persistent threats faced by sitting presidents near this specific venue



Security personnel detain suspect Cole Tomas Allen at White House Correspondents' Association dinner in Washington

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AGENCIES

**Washington, April 26:** US President Donald Trump and other top officials were evacuated unharmed from the annual dinner of White House correspondents after a man armed with multiple weapons fired shots outside the ballroom of the hotel.

The incident took place at

## Boy's death at CHC sparks violent stir



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Basudevpur, April 26:** Angry residents ransacked Basudevpur community health centre (CHC) in Bhadrak district following the death of a 14-year-old boy, allegedly due to a wrongly administered injection.

The deceased was identified as Mukesh Barik, son of Debakant Barik and a student of Class IX of JK High School at Padmapur and a native of Melaksahi village under Padmapur panchayat.

Mukesh was playing cricket when a bamboo splinter pierced his leg, causing heavy bleeding.

He was rushed to a local quack at Edatal before being shifted to the CHC, where doctors stitched his wound and administered an injection. However, his condition deteriorated and he died at the CHC.

Family members alleged the boy died due to the wrong injection. They staged a protest at the doctor's chamber. Angry locals vandalised the hospital properties and staged a road blockade by placing the body at the gate and burning tyres. Police tried to pacify the crowd but failed. As protesters tried to enter the hospital, police resorted to lathicharge, leaving at least four to five persons injured.

Sub-Collector Sourav Chakraborty, Additional SP Anshuman Dwivedi and tehsildar Priyabrata Das reached the spot and began an inquiry.

The bereaved family submitted a memorandum to the Collector, demanding ₹10 lakh compensation, govt job for a family member, and action against the doctor and hospital staffers over the issue.



IN FULL SWING: Maharana servants busy preparing wheels for the chariots ahead of annual Rath Yatra in Puri, Sunday

OP PHOTO

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



The anti-defection law is clear. It permits defection only to the ruling party

## Light pollution threat to Atacama's pristine night skies

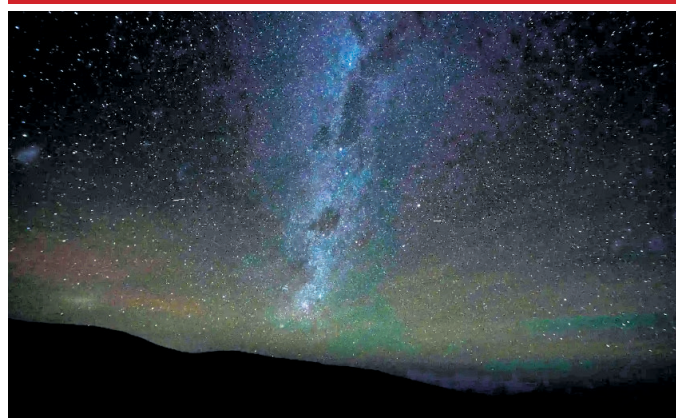
ASSOCIATED PRESS

**The Atacama Desert (Chile), April 26:** In Chile's Atacama Desert, the night sky feels infinite. Considered the driest place on Earth, it also offers one of the clearest windows into the universe. A rare combination of an extremely dry climate, high altitude, and—crucially—minimal exposure to urban light pollution makes the Atacama an unrivaled hub for world-class astronomy and home to some of the largest ground-based astronomical projects. However, driven by urban sprawl, industrial development, and the expansion of mining and wind farms, the desert is gradually losing the pristine beauty of its night sky.

"The conditions in Atacama Desert are unique in the world," said Chiara Mazzucchelli, president of the Chilean Astronomical Society. "There are more than 300 clear nights per year, meaning no clouds and no rain."

**World's darkest skies may be at risk**  
Last year, the desert became

## NIGHTS LOSING DARKNESS



a battleground between scientists and an energy firm proposing a green power complex just a few miles from Paranal Observatory. Managed by the European Southern Observatory, ESO, the site also is the future home to what is to be the most powerful optical telescope ever built.

Although the energy project was cancelled in January following a massive appeal from astronomers, physicists and

Nobel laureates, it exposed deep concerns that existing sky preservation laws are lax, outdated and unclear. Since then, several environmental regulations have come under review, including one from Chile's science ministry targeting protected astronomical zones.

"We are working to ensure the new criteria are strict enough to guarantee that there will be no impact on astronomical areas," said Daniela Gonzales, director of Cielos de Chile Foundation, a nonprofit founded in 2019 to protect the quality of Chile's night skies.

The Associated Press spent three days visiting the Paranal facilities in the heart of the so-called Photon Valley. In this high-altitude corridor, several observatories operate side by side using some of the most sophisticated instruments ever engineered.

"Many of these large facilities are located in Chile, and ESO's telescopes in particular are the most powerful astronomical facilities on the planet," said Itziar de Gregorio-Monsalvo, the intergovernmental organization's representative in Chile.

The exceptional conditions of Atacama have enabled some of the most ambitious astronomical projects ever conceived, like Extremely Large Telescope (ELT) - a USD 1.5 billion endeavour by ESO scheduled for completion in 2030.

With 798 mirrors and a light-gathering area of nearly 1,000 sq m, the ELT will be 20

times more powerful than today's leading telescopes and 15 times sharper than NASA's Hubble Space Telescope.

**Darkness under threat**  
Twenty years ago, the Atacama Desert was "an ocean of darkness", recalled Eduardo Unda-Sanzana, director of the Astronomy Centre at the University of Antofagasta. "It was just you and the universe".

Over the years, however, the landscape has changed drastically. Driven by urban sprawl, industrial development, and the arrival of mining and wind farms, the desert has become a coveted territory where balance is not always easy to reach.

In Paranal, specialists live like moles in an underground residence designed to keep their presence almost undetectable. Windows must remain covered, hallways stay dark, and any outside movement is guided only by flashlight. Even the faintest light can interfere with the telescopes.

## Iconic photographer Raghu Rai dies at 83

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 26:** Raghu Rai, one of India's best known photographers who distilled the essence of an evolving India and its people through his lens, died at a private hospital here in the early hours of Sunday. He was 83.

"Dad was diagnosed with prostate cancer two years ago but he was cured. Then it spread to the stomach, that too was cured. Recently, the cancer spread to his brain and then there were age-related issues too," Nitin Rai, photographer and Rai's son, told PTI.

He is survived by wife Gurmeet, son Nitin and daughters Lagan, Avani and Purvai. Born December 18, 1942, in Jhang, Punjab (now in Pakistan), Rai was qualified as a civil engineer and only took up photography at 23 before joining

"The Statesman" as its chief photographer in 1966. Life from that point onwards was anything but a blur. Over the next six decades, Rai's lens froze for posterity fleeting moments with unmatched clarity, documenting a growing India's socio-political landscape.

The prolific photographer, a protege of Henri Cartier-Bresson, shot some of the most significant events in Indian modern history, including the Bangladesh refugee crisis of 1972 and the Bhopal gas tragedy of 1984.

Rai received the Padma Shri in 1972 for his coverage of the Bangladesh war and its aftermath, apart from several national and international awards. He received the Photographer of the Year award in the United States for his photo essay "Human Management of Wildlife in India", published in National Geographic. **MORE PAGE 9**

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# leisure



## KUDROW SHARES 'BRUTAL' EXPERIENCE ON SET

Lisa Kudrow has opened up about the darker side of *Friends*, revealing the female cast endured intense scrutiny from a largely male writers' room. Kudrow, famed for playing Phoebe Buffay across all ten seasons, said the environment often felt harsh despite the show's global success

## KIDMAN REVEALS HER UNIQUE MOM ROUTINE

Nicole Kidman revealed a heartfelt parenting habit, sharing that her teenage daughters, Sunday Rose and Faith Margaret, also hug her every day. The actress, who co-parents with Keith Urban, said this simple ritual helps maintain emotional connection and closeness within their family



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
 Today, you will focus your lens on the one you've taken a fancy to! You are high on energy, but low on commitment to work. It won't be surprising if your bosses are miffed. But still, says Ganesha, it's a day of flowers and love notes.

**TAURUS**  
 There ain't no mountain high enough and there ain't no valley deep. Today, you will find yourself on an invincible run. You might be your own worst enemy today if you waste your effort and energy for unproductive purposes. Overall, it is smooth sailing today and Ganesha advises you to stay focussed.

**GEMINI**  
 You will be dressed to kill today. People around you may or may not comment, but they will definitely notice you. Your sense of style and taste will bowl everyone over. People would scramble for a glimpse of you. You will be a celebrity. Most probably, your beloved will share the limelight with you.

**CANCER**  
 You are at your industrious best today. You will be able to think the unthinkable, achieve the unachievable, and impress an emotionally impregnable boss. Your confidence level will be sky-high; in fact, it will make over-confidence wallow in self-doubt. Your colleagues will be awestruck, considering themselves lucky to see you in action.

**LEO**  
 The thing with skills is that they are not static; they are as dynamic as anything else. It is akin to being on a treadmill — you need to continuously keep moving just to stay in the same place, says Ganesha. So keep refreshing yourself by learning new things in order to sustain your progress. What you need is passion to help you shine in your profession, according to Ganesha.

**VIRGO**  
 One scale weighs work and the other weighs personal matters. But you Leos will keep both in check. Revel in stag debauchery and tonnes of merrymaking today. The desire to succeed will be fuelled even more today as you cut yourself loose, says Ganesha.

**LIBRA**  
 If one were to put an earnest spirit and a frank attitude together, the result would be a Leo; it's like your hallmark. And with qualities like these in your kitty, don't be surprised if you happen to reach a milestone or two today. So, is it marital bliss or career success? That may be the question to ask; but no matter what, be assured that your societal standing gets a heady boost today, says Ganesha.

**SCORPIO**  
 A shadow of foreboding grows large in your mind today. Your senses are at the highest alert, feels Ganesha. Keep your eyes and ears open to avoid troubles both at home and work.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
 Your dedication to work is set to shift to the top gear. Find yourself swamped by excess of workload in the forenoon. Things, however, will lighten as the afternoon progresses. Expect a fun-filled, exciting evening.

**CAPRICORN**  
 Opportunities are rare, and good opportunities rarer still. Today, you will run to grab an opportunity and will make the most of it, says Ganesha. This move will yield instant results, and place you better in comparison with your opponents. Rivals, in fact, will try to do you down but will fail miserably in their attempt. Your social standing, on the other hand, will grow manifold and all because of your extraordinary traits.

**AQUARIUS**  
 You roar with absolute bliss today! Simplicity is your new avatar, and naturally, friends and acquaintances are mystified. You may wish to commune with the higher spirit and will seek solace in a quiet temple. Ganesha approves and predicts peace in plenty.

**PISCES**  
 Staying afloat needs about as much effort as swimming. Cryptic as this may sound, what it means is you need to constantly reinvent yourself if you wish to keep going. You will shine in your profession only if it is also your passion, says Ganesha.

### MUMBAI: Kritika Kamra is discovering that choosing a path outside mainstream cinema comes with its own set of struggles. After earning appreciation for *The Great Shamsuddin Family*, she was motivated to back another intimate, character-driven independent film. However, turning that vision into reality has been far from easy.

## Kritika on shifting industry dynamics

Without a big male star and with a debutant director, securing financial backing and industry support has proved to be a major hurdle. Kamra admitted that the current environment makes it difficult for new voices and unconventional stories to find space. Despite the emotional impact and audience connection her previous work achieved, it hasn't necessarily translated into smoother opportunities. She



revealed that watching her indie project struggle has made her cautious about stepping into production herself. The uncertainty around funding, distribution, and even release continues to be a constant concern. Still, Kritika remains committed to meaningful storytelling, even if the journey is unpredictable. On work front, she is now seen in *Matka King* on Amazon Prime Video, balancing mainstream visibility with her passion for smaller, impactful cinema.



## AMEESHA'S career regret

MUMBAI: Ameesha Patel has opened up about one of the biggest "what-ifs" of her career, revealing that she was the original choice for *Tere Naam*, a role that eventually went to Bhumi-ka Chawla. In a candid reflection, she admitted that turning down the film remains a major regret. Patel shared that when Salman first approached her, the project was still in its early stages. While the core concept and music were ready, there was no finalised director or shooting schedule, making it difficult for her to commit. As an actor juggling multiple projects, she couldn't afford to keep dates open indefinitely.

She recalled that the film went through a prolonged development phase before late filmmaker Satish Kaushik eventually came on board. By the time everything was finalised and the film was ready to begin production, Ameesha had already committed to other work. Looking back, she expressed admiration for the film's story and music, acknowledging its success and emotional impact. Calling it "definitely my loss," Patel admitted she wishes she had made a different decision.

## Ulka backs meaningful cinema

MUMBAI: Ulka Gupta says meaningful, socially driven stories matter more to her than screen time, following the success of *The Kerala Story 2 Goes Beyond*. She believes strong narratives and impactful messages are what truly connect with audiences and make a difference. Talking about her upcoming film *Rajini Ki Baraat*, directed by Aditya Aman, Ulka shared her excitement about playing a bold character who challenges societal norms. The story, inspired by real events, follows a woman who takes charge of her own baraat to support the man she loves, an unconventional and powerful decision. Ulka also revealed her personal connection to the film, sharing her roots in Bihar, which helped her naturally adapt to the character's language and back-



ground. Reflecting on her journey, she acknowledged the challenges of transitioning from television to films without industry backing, noting it required persistence and time. Having worked across Telugu, Bengali and Marathi cinema, she continues to explore diverse roles, including her upcoming projects *Premaku Namaskaram* and *Agadha*. Ulka emphasises that experimentation and meaningful storytelling remain central to her career choices, as she strives to leave a lasting impact through her performances.

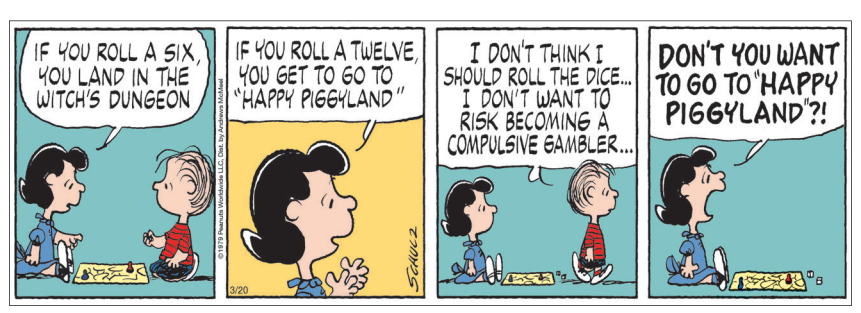
## Rashmika sparks parenting debate

MUMBAI: Rashmika Mandanna has sparked an important conversation around parenting, emotional inheritance and the unseen pressures children often carry. Her remarks highlight how families can unintentionally pass down unresolved pain, expectations and fears, shaping a child's life in ways rarely acknowledged. She candidly pointed out that having children is ultimately a choice made by adults, and it should not come with the burden of forcing them to fulfill unhealed dreams or

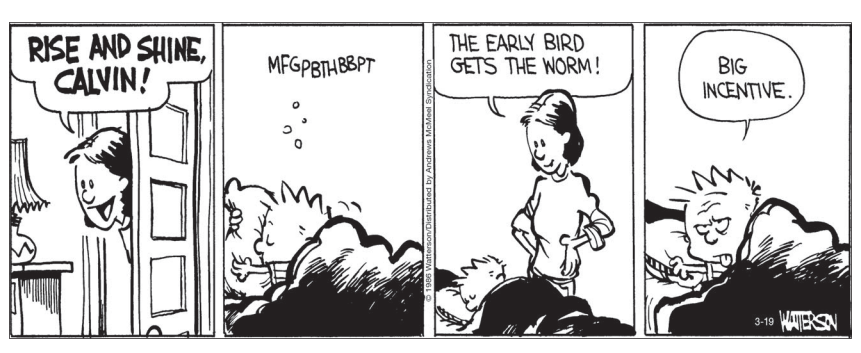
emotional gaps. Her statement resonates because it challenges a long-standing belief, that children must absorb family struggles or live up to inherited expectations. Instead, it reinforces the idea that they are individuals, not extensions of their parents. Increasingly, younger generations are questioning traditional parenting models and advocating for emotional awareness, accountability and healthier boundaries. Rashmika's perspective also sheds light on how trauma often persists quietly through silence, control, guilt, or conditional love. By calling attention to this, she emphasises the need for healing before passing experiences forward. Her words encourage a shift in thinking: parenting should not be about legacy or emotional dependence, but about creating a space where children can grow freely, without carrying burdens that were never theirs to bear.



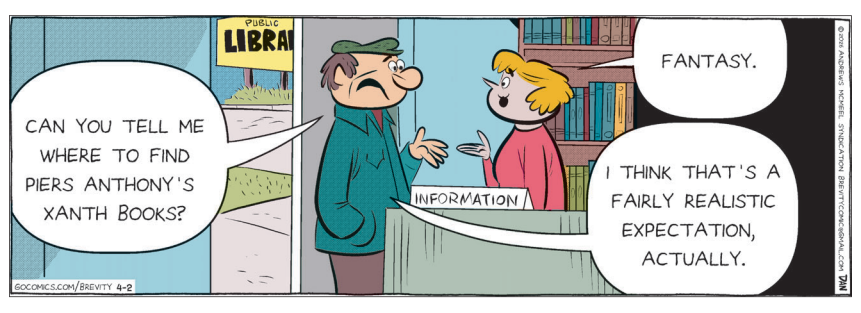
### PEANUTS



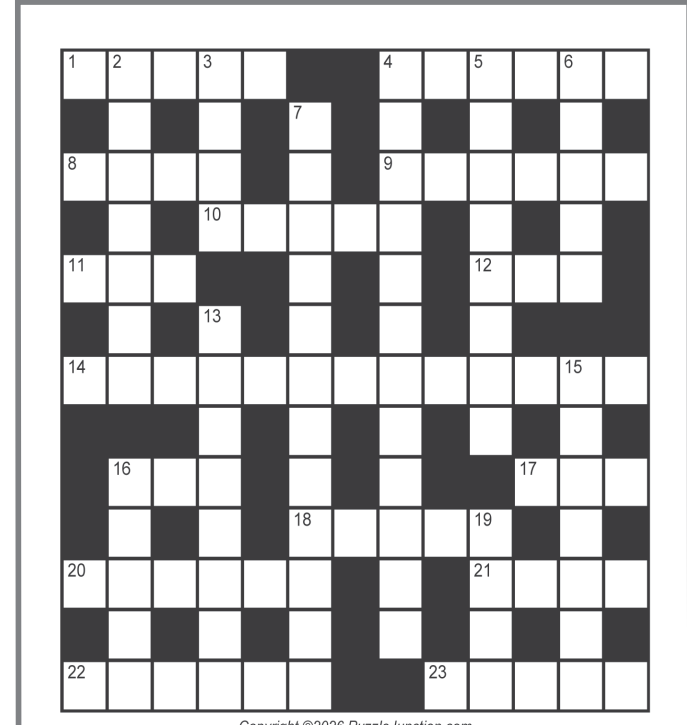
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



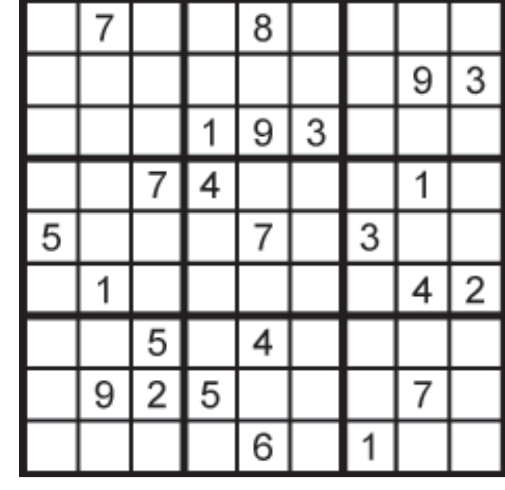
### FUN POST CROSSWORD



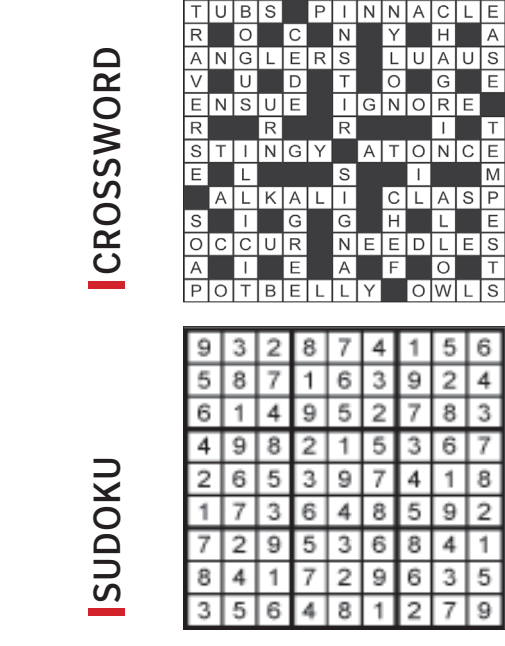
- Across
- 1 Crackers
  - 4 Tradition
  - 8 Dentist's order
  - 9 Uprights
  - 10 Digress
  - 11 Circle segment
  - 12 Negative joiner
  - 14 Mutinous
  - 16 Hilo garland
  - 17 Quandary
  - 18 Oomph
  - 20 Papeete locale
  - 21 Time to beware
  - 22 Verse form
  - 23 Large edible ray
  - 4 Computer commands (4-3-5)
  - 5 Moribund
  - 6 Bouquet
  - 7 Heart specialist
  - 13 Screen test
  - 15 Three-pronged spear
  - 16 Grassy plain
  - 19 Farm call
- Down
- 2 Headache helper
  - 3 Marshlands

### 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



**SHRI NARENDRA MODI**

Honourable Prime Minister of India



**JSW JFE Steel Limited**

(Formerly Known as JSW Sambalpur Steel Limited)

# FORGING AHEAD STRONGER TOGETHER



LEFT TO RIGHT: Shri Jayanarayan Mishra, Hon'ble MLA - Sambalpur, Shri Tankadhar Tripathy, Hon'ble MLA - Jharsuguda, Shri. Rabi Narayan Naik, Hon'ble Minister of Rural Development, Panchayati Raj, and Drinking Water of Odisha. Shri. Suresh Pujari, Hon'ble Minister of Revenue and Disaster Management of Odisha, H.E. Mr. Keiichi Ono, Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary of Japan to India, Shri. Dharmendra Pradhan, Hon'ble Union Minister of Education, GOI, Shri. Mohan Charan Majhi, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Odisha, Mr. Sajjan Jindal, Chairman, JSW Group, Mr. Yoshihisa Kitano, President & CEO, JFE Holdings, Inc., Smt. Anu Garg, Chief Secretary of Odisha, Mr. Parth Jindal, MD, JSW Cement & JSW Paints and Chairman, JSW Dulux, Mr. Jayant Acharya, JMD & CEO, JSW Steel, Mr. Hiroyuki Ogawa, Board Director, JFE Steel Corporation.

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**A STEP FORWARD IN BUILDING A STRONGER, AATMANIRBHAR BHARAT.**



# Heatwave sweeps Western Odisha; 7 places above 43°C



PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, April 26:** The industrial town of Jharsuguda recorded the hottest place in Odisha Sunday at 44.8 degrees Celsius, even as heatwave conditions swept through the western region of the state, IMD said.

Seven places in Western Odisha recorded temperatures of 43 degrees Celsius and above. Jharsuguda (44.8) was followed by Subarnapur (43.7), Titlagarh (43.6), Bhawanipatna (43.4), Bolangir (43.1), Boudh and Sambalpur 43 degrees Celsius each.

The other hot places in the western region were Sundergarh (42.8), Rourkela (42.7), Nuapada (42.5), Hirakud (42.4), Angul (41.9), Talcher (41.5) and Nayagarh at 42.5 degrees Celsius, it said.

According to the evening bulletin issued by the IMD, at least 17 places across Odisha recorded temperatures at or above 40 degrees Celsius.

However, there was some respite in coastal parts of the state, including Bhubaneswar,

There was a fall in mercury level at least by one degree Celsius in the entire coastal region, even as the high relative humidity caused a lot of discomfort, an IMD official said.

Bhubaneswar Meteorological Centre Director Manorama Mohanty said that the fall in temperature in coastal districts is due to moisture incursion from the Bay of Bengal. She said that no significant rise in daytime temperatures is expected in coastal regions over the next 24 hours.

In a forecast for Monday, the IMD said hot and humid conditions are very likely to prevail at 11 districts of Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Cuttack, Puri, Jagatsinghpur, Khurda, Nayagarh, Ganjam and Gajapati.

The weather office also issued a yellow warning (be aware) of thunderstorms accompanied by lightning and gusty surface wind (wind speed reaching up to 30 to 40 kmph) likely to occur in the afternoon/evening hours over the districts of Ganjam, Gajapati, Rayagada, Koraput, Mayurbhanj and Balasore Monday. Notably, roads have been wearing a deserted look after 11 am, as people largely stayed indoors across the state to avoid the intense heatwave.

Following concerns over heatstroke incidents, the state government has also halted census work between 11 am and 3 pm in view of the safety of enumerators.

Meanwhile, the state government has also advanced summer vacations for schools, which will begin from Monday.

## CM's public grievance hearing postponed

**BHUBANESWAR:** State government Sunday announced the postponement of the Chief Minister's Public Grievance Hearing programme, scheduled to be held Monday, owing to the prevailing severe heatwave conditions across the state. The General Administration and Public Grievance (GA&PG) department made the announcement through an official statement. The department further stated that applicants who had registered online to present their grievances to CM in person are not required to register again. "Those who had registered online to meet the Chief Minister on the said date need not register again for the next grievance hearing. The date of the next grievance hearing in Bhubaneswar will be communicated to them through newspapers," the GA&PG department said.

where the maximum temperature was recorded at 35.5 degrees Celsius. Cuttack recorded a maximum temperature of 35 degrees Celsius.



IN SYNC: Artists perform Kathak during 28th annual concert titled Adda and Abhinay at GKCM Odissi Research Centre in Bhubaneswar Sunday

PICT: BHASKAR NAYAK

# OLM workers plan agitation against restructuring

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 26:** Women's collectives associated with Odisha Livelihood Mission (OLM) have announced plans to launch statewide protests, alleging that the ongoing restructuring process by the state government is effectively dismantling the programme and jeopardising the livelihoods of millions.

At a state-level meeting of 'Nikhila Odisha Jeebika Mission EC Sangha' at Bhagabati Bhavan here Sunday, leaders from multiple districts voiced strong concerns over what they described as a systematic weakening of the mission over the past year.

Speakers highlighted that OLM currently connects more than 7 lakh women's Self-Help Groups (SHGs), engaging over 70 lakh women annually in income-generating activities. Around 1.5 lakh EC members play a key role in mobilising households, encouraging women



to take up handicrafts, cottage industries, and small-scale businesses alongside domestic responsibilities. Leaders claimed that these efforts had transformed OLM and Mission Shakti into a large-scale socio-economic movement empowering women across the state.

However, the Sangha alleged that since early 2025, policy changes under the current state government have disrupted the system. They claimed that loan recommendations were halted from April 2025, restricting financial access for SHGs and impacting livelihood opportunities. Additionally, they

alleged that over 1.5 lakh EC members face removal under departmental orders, raising concerns about job losses and institutional weakening.

The group further alleged that the restructuring exercise is rendering the system inactive and could pave the way for political interference. They also criticised the Subhadra Yojana, arguing that direct financial assistance of Rs 10,000 annually may increase dependency rather than promote sustainable livelihoods.

Referring to legal developments, the Sangha stated that despite a reported stay order

issued by Orissa High Court in mid-April 2025 on the restructuring process, banks have allegedly been instructed to change account operators of SHGs and federations—an action they termed unlawful.

To strengthen their legal response, the Sangha has advised all GPLF, BLF, and DLF units to remain in close coordination with legal representatives.

The meeting unanimously resolved that EC members and associated women workers will observe International Workers' Day May 1, 2026, across all blocks, taking a pledge for unity and collective struggle.

## Ensure strict compliance with legal provisions: Govt

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, April 26:** Amid reports of procedural violation on document registration process, the Revenue and Disaster Management department has directed all registering authorities to ensure strict compliance with legal provisions related to document registration.

The government has taken note of a growing number of instances where registration work is being carried out at individuals' homes. It clarified that such practices are not in line with the objectives and framework of the Indian Registration Act, 1908, and the Odisha Registration Rules, 1988.

Additional Chief Secretary Arvind Padhee has directed the Inspector General of Registration to enforce these norms rigorously, said officials.

Registration at a residence is permitted only under exceptional circumstances in accordance with the rules. This includes cases where a person is unable to visit the registration office due to physical illness, legal custody, or other compelling reasons. Only in such genuine situations are registration officials authorised to conduct the process outside the office premises.

The department emphasised that registration outside office premises is an exception and should not become a routine practice. All such cases must strictly follow the procedures laid down under Rules 48 to 52 of the Odisha Registration Rules, 1988.

## CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

I, Kandarp Jena, S/o Late Babaji Jena, Village-Nuadiha, PO-Mancheswar, PS-Gurudijhatia, Dist.-Cuttack, Odisha-754027, IC/Army No.-JC-693184-L, Rank N/SUB declare by affidavit No-990, dt.16.04.2026 before Executive Magistrate, Athgarh that change my spouse name Bijayalaxmi to Bijaya Laxmi Jena.

## WOMEN'S RESERVATION

# Implement 2023 Act without delay: BJD

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, April 26:** Ahead of the special session of the Assembly convened by state government to discuss women's participation in politics April 30, Opposition BJD Sunday demanded immediate implementation of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adiniyam Bill passed in 2023.

The BJD, which had fully supported the bill in 2023, made such a demand at a press conference addressed by party MP Sulata Deo and senior general secretary Lekhashree Samantasinghar.

"Although the Women's Reservation Bill, introduced as the Nari Shakti Vandan Act, 2023, was passed in both Houses of Parliament and received the President's assent, the BJD did not implement it in the 2024 elections. Now, by falsely alleging that the bill could not be passed due to lack of cooperation from the Opposition, the BJP is staging drama across the country in the name of public outrage rallies," Deo told reporters.

She said that the act was



passed in 2023 to provide 33 per cent reservation for women in Parliament and state Assemblies. Deo said that everyone expected it to be implemented immediately in the 2024 general elections. However, the BJP-led NDA government did not implement it. Then, it was stated by the BJP that after the 2026 Census, delimitation of Parliamentary and Assembly constituencies would be carried out based on the census, and then the reservation would be implemented, she said.

"However, during elections in five states, a sudden special session of Parliament was convened to pass delimitation based

on the 2011 Census, along with women's reservation. Since the proposed delimitation would reduce representation of states like Odisha and other southern and eastern states, Opposition parties did not support it," the Rajya Sabha MP said.

She alleged that after the bill failed, the BJP is now labelling Opposition parties as 'anti-women' and creating political drama.

"The people of the country have clearly understood this falsehood. BJP, which has been delaying justice for women, is now attempting to project itself as a pro-women party," she said.

Samantasinghar stated that after the passage of the act in 2023,

the BJP avoided implementing it in 2024 elections through excuses. Moreover, the BJP did not give adequate priority to women candidates in the 2024 general elections, she alleged.

Samantasinghar said that under the leadership of Naveen Patnaik, BJD fielded women candidates in 33 per cent of Parliamentary constituencies in the state. Similarly, in the 2019 elections, BJD had also fielded women candidates in 33 per cent of seats, she said.

"This clearly shows that BJD is at the forefront in the implementation of women's reservation and empowerment. The process of reserving constitutional positions for women in the country was initiated by the legendary leader Biju Patnaik. In 1992, during his tenure as chief minister of Odisha, he introduced 33 per cent reservation for women in the three-tier Panchayati Raj system and Urban Local Bodies. His son, former chief minister Naveen Patnaik, later increased this reservation to 50 per cent," she said.

## Release librarian application process soon, aspirants to CM

**BHUBANESWAR:** A group of job aspirants has appealed to Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Sunday, seeking early commencement of the application process for librarian posts announced under OSSC Specialist CGL 2025 recruitment. In a memorandum to the CM, the candidates stated that the indicative advertisement issued December 30, 2025, had notified vacancies for librarian posts, but the detailed advertisement and online application process are yet to begin. Sunil Kumar Mishra, an aspirant said that the notified vacancies include 30 Librarian posts in DIET/BIET under the Director of TE and SCERT, along with one Librarian post under the Director of TE and SCERT. The aspirants said many eligible candidates across the state have been eagerly waiting for the recruitment process to start so they can apply and prepare accordingly. They requested the government to take necessary steps for the early publication of the detailed notification and immediate commencement of applications for the posts.

# LoP, photojournalists remember Raghu Rai

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 26:** A condolence meeting was organised to pay tribute to renowned photojournalist Raghu Rai, one of county's most celebrated visual storyteller who chronicled modern India. Rai died at a private hospital in New Delhi early Sunday. He was 83.

The event took place at Photojournalist Dot Com forum premises. Photojournalists associated with various media organisations across the state, along with several distinguished personalities from different fields of photography, attended the gathering. They offered final respect and expressed deep condolences over the loss.

Speakers at the meeting reflected on the remarkable life and contributions of the late photographer, highlighting his dedication to capture the social and cultural essence of India through his lens. His work and legacy were fondly remembered by all present. A silent prayer was observed during the programme, seeking peace and salvation for the departed soul.

BJD president Naveen Pat-



naik also condole the demise of eminent photographer, and said his frames were not just pictures but living histories.

"Deeply saddened to learn about the passing away of legendary photojournalist #RaghuRai. Through his lens, he chronicled the spirit of India, its people and everyday life, which will remain etched in our collective memory," Patnaik said in a post on X.

"His frames were not mere pictures, but living histories. May his legacy inspire generations of storytellers. My heartfelt condolences to his family and countless admirers. Om Shanti," the Leader of Opposition in Odisha Assembly, added.

The prolific photographer, a protege of Henri Cartier-Bresson, captured some of the most poignant events in Indian modern history, including the Bangladesh refugee crisis of 1972 and the Bhopal gas tragedy of 1984.

# Stone depicting Ramayana character found at Chandikhola

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jajpur, April 26:** A rare Ramayana memorial stone has been discovered near the banks of a pond at the foothills of Mahavinayak Hill in Jajpur district recently by the members of the Rediscover Lost Heritage Trust (RLHT).

Acting on information provided by Mahavinayak Temple servitor Kamal Lochan Panda, RLHT members including Deepak Kumar Nayak, Nrupati Nihar Sial, and Suman Prakash Swain identified the stone as a significant ancient relic.

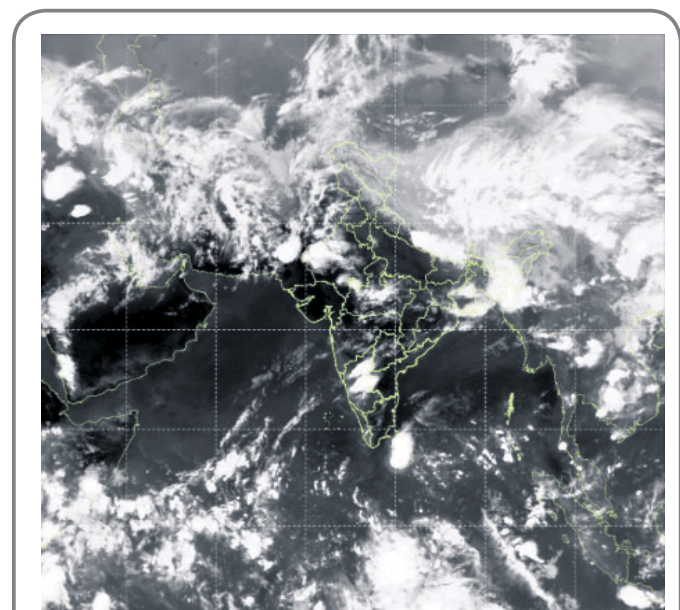
Speaking about the discovery, Nayak stated that various types of memorial stones are found across the state and other parts of India. These stones sometimes appear as hero stones (Veerashila), commemorating warriors who sacrificed their lives in battle,



while at other times they depict historical or mythological events. However, memorial stones depicting characters or narratives from the Ramayana are extremely rare in Odisha. The discovered stone, measuring approximately 2 feet in height and 1 foot in width, features an engraving of Lord Hanuman holding a mace and a mountain. Above this, an image of Lord Rama as an archer is carved. While depictions of the

Ramayana are commonly found in temple architecture and traditional art across Odisha, the portrayal of its central characters on a standalone memorial stone is exceptionally rare, Nayak added.

Chandikhola is a historically rich region that showcases a confluence of both Buddhist and Hindu archaeological heritage. The Mahavinayak Temple is believed to have been originally constructed during the Eastern Ganga period and later destroyed during external invasions. The present structure has been rebuilt over the remains of the earlier temple. Although it is difficult to precisely determine the age of the memorial stone, considering the historical background of the temple, there is a strong possibility that it dates back to the Eastern Ganga period, Sial stated.



WEATHER			
	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	35.5°	35.0°	Light to Moderate rain or thunderstorm likely to occur at one or two places over the districts of Odisha
Min Temp	27.7°	24.8°	
Humidity	78%	83%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	

# Interstate BEd admission racket busted; 2 arrested

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jharsuguda, April 26:** In a significant breakthrough, Jharsuguda police have uncovered a major interstate education fraud racket that allegedly duped hundreds of students across Odisha. Operating under the name One World Academy, the racket lured students with false promises of guaranteed admission into BEd colleges in Andhra Pradesh and duped them of lakhs of rupees.

Police have arrested two accused, identified as Chittaranjan Barik and Rima Das, and forwarded them to court.

As per the investigation, the accused had been running the fraudulent operation for nearly five years from a rented house in Basant Vihar near Jyoti Vihar, Burla. They primarily targeted students by claiming they could secure easy admissions in reputed institutions such as Seven Hills BEd College and Ramakrishna BEd College in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh.

However, instead of facilitating genuine admissions, the accused allegedly issued fake



admission letters and certificates after collecting money from unsuspecting students. They also misled candidates by falsely claiming that BEd, a regular course, could be pursued through distance mode.

Moreover, the scam was not limited to BEd programmes. The network is suspected of issuing fake certificates for courses like MEd, BA, and BSc, amassing crores of rupees in the process.

To avoid suspicion, the accused mainly targeted students from districts in western Odisha. The fraud came to light after two students from Brajarajnar filed a complaint at the cyber police station in Jharsuguda, prompting a detailed investigation.

Police are also probing the role of the owner of the house where the academy was operating. Preliminary findings suggest the building may have been constructed on encroached government land.

Authorities have intensified efforts to track down other members of the network, with raids underway at multiple locations.

Police have urged students and parents to verify the credentials of educational institutions before taking admission, specifically checking for recognition from the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) and proper university affiliation.

They have also appealed to anyone who may have fallen victim to such fraud to report the matter to the police immediately.



**IN MEMORIAM:** Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida along with local MLA Rupesh Kumar Panigrahi, his Mohana counterpart Dasarathi Gamang, other leaders and district officials paid tributes to former Paralakhemundi royal Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati Narayan Dev garlanding his statue on his 135th birth anniversary in Paralakhemundi, Sunday

# Poverty still stalks Nagada Juang families

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jajpur, April 26:** Poverty continues to plague several Juang families in Nagada, a cluster of villages under Sukinda block in this district, which had drawn nationwide attention in 2016 after more than a dozen children died from malnutrition.

Following the July 2016 infant deaths, the state government had rolled out special development initiatives in the area. Nearly ₹23 crore was invested on improvement of physical infrastructure such as roads, drinking water and electricity within two years. However, the economic condition of many residents saw little improvement.

A Juang family in Ashokjhar, located on the foothills of Nagada, is currently facing an acute food crisis. The family of Sanuj Pradhan, 35, who died by



suicide over a domestic dispute, has appealed for government assistance.

Sanuj had a small family – his father Sanatan, wife Suniti and their six children. However, pangs of poverty and food scarcity led to frequent domestic disputes. Subsequently, Sa-

nuj allegedly consumed poison February 21 and later died at a hospital in Cuttack.

The family now receives 5kg rice each, under government scheme, in the names of her and her father-in-law, but it is quite insufficient to meet their needs.

Social activist Bishwaranjan Swain alleged that the family's health is deteriorating due to lack of adequate food. He said he visited Ashokjhar April 22 and provided some essential supplies to the family.

Meanwhile, Sukinda BDO had directed the local panchayat executive officer to ensure adequate rice supply. However, the family is yet to receive the required assistance, leaving them in a dire situation.

Currently, Suniti, along with her eldest daughter and father-in-law, is surviving on about 10kg rice per month, supplemented by salt and wild leafy vegetables.

In preparation for the monsoon, the family has cleared a patch of land on a nearby hill to cultivate paddy.

Swain questioned the efficacy of government schemes as crores are spent in the name of

Nagada's development.

Despite more than ₹100 crore in development spending over the last decade, residents of the mining-affected Nagada region report that life for the Juang tribal community remains stagnant.

While the government has provided concrete housing, electricity, and drinking water, the local economy has collapsed. Locals said increased mechanisation in the mines has eliminated manual labour, while out-of-state contractors prioritise hiring non-Odia workers.

The lack of local opportunity is forcing heads of households to migrate for labor. Many are taking their children with them, disrupting their education.

"We receive government rice, but there is nothing to eat with it except salt," rued the locals.

# Groom's brother stabbed to death in wedding procession

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Berhampur, April 26:** A man was allegedly stabbed to death during a marriage procession in Ganjam district over playing a particular music demanded by him, police said Sunday.

The deceased was identified as Akash Jena, 25, the younger brother of the groom, Rinku Jena. The incident took place at Balighai village under Polasara police station limits Saturday night, allegedly over the playing of a particular music in the marriage procession, police said.

According to police, an altercation began initially between the deceased and a member of the band party, which was engaged in playing music in the marriage procession. When the band party members refused to oblige Akash, he allegedly slapped one of them.

Later, police said, the band party people called their friends, who attacked Akash and stabbed him in the belly. He was first rushed to the Community Health Centre (CHC), Polasara and later shifted to MKCG Medical College and Hospital here.

Jena, however, succumbed to his injuries during the treatment, said police.

Kaushik Majhi, Inspector-In-Charge of Polasara police station, said no arrest had been made so far in the incident. The police, however, detained several persons who were present in the wedding procession for questioning, after registering a murder case. "We have identified the accused persons, and they will be arrested soon," he said.

Rinku's marriage was, however, solemnised peacefully, police said.

# Suspended HM held for molesting minor

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Tentulikhunti, April 26:** A headmaster of a government-run residential school under this block in Nabarangpur district was arrested Sunday, a day after his suspension over alleged molestation of a Class VII student.

The accused was identified as Sukantha Kumar Sarangi, headmaster of the Sebashram school under the block. He was arrested after a formal complaint was filed by the survivor's family members Saturday at the Nabarangpur police station. The victim's family, accompanied by former MP Pradeep Majhi, submitted the complaint.

Nabarangpur Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO) Krushna Chandra Bhadra and the local inspector-in-charge processed the initial complaint. Because the incident occurred within the jurisdiction of the Tentulikhunti police station, the case was transferred there for investigation under the supervision of Inspector Seema Pradhan.

Authorities said the arrest followed a medical examination of the accused and the recording of his statement. According to the investigation, the incident occurred on the night of April 15. The student alleged that Sarangi pulled her into a room and touched her inappropriately. The student's family previously reported the incident to the District Welfare Officer (DWO). Following an investigation by the DWO April 24, District Collector Maheswar Swain issued an order suspending Sarangi from his post.

# Ex-banking correspondent held for misappropriation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jajpur, April 26:** Odisha Police in Jajpur district have arrested a former banking correspondent of a nationalised bank for allegedly misappropriating around ₹27 lakh of depositors' money, officials said Sunday.

The accused has been identified as Prakash Rana, a resident of Abhayapur in the district's Dharmasala block.

Police said Rana was working as a banking correspondent for a branch in Dharmasala and used to collect money from customers for deposit into their accounts.

However, he allegedly did not deposit the funds and issued fake receipts to customers.

He also allegedly withdrew money from customers' accounts by collecting signed blank forms and photocopies of Aadhaar cards under the pretext of KYC updates, ATM

card applications, and mobile number linking, police said.

The fraud came to light in October last year when a depositor detected a mismatch of ₹6 lakh in his account. Following this, more customers checked their accounts, and irregularities amounting to around ₹21 lakh were found in nine more accounts, police said.

The customers then lodged complaints against Rana with Dharmasala UCO Bank branch, following which the branch manager lodged a police complaint against him. Rana was also terminated from the job.

The accused has misappropriated around ₹27 lakh belonging to at least 10 customers. Of this, about ₹15 lakh collected from depositors was not deposited, while another ₹12 lakh was allegedly withdrawn from customer accounts, said Dharmasala police station IIC Chinmayee Sahu.

# Tyre factory gutted



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rajgangpur, April 26:** A fire broke out at a tyre factory at Padajampali under Rajgangpur police limits in Sundargarh district Sunday. However, no casualties were reported in the incident.

The blaze erupted around 5:30am for reasons yet to be ascertained, engulfing the premises in thick smoke and blaze. Firefighting teams from Rajgangpur, Kutra and Rourkela, along with a unit from Dalmia Cement, rushed to the spot. The fire was brought under control after nearly six hours of effort.

# Woman murdered, body set on fire; hubby, mother-in-law held

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Mahakalapara, April 26:** A 28-year-old woman was allegedly murdered and her body set on fire by her in-laws at Benakandha village under Tantiapal Marine police limits in Kendrapala district, late Saturday night.

The deceased, identified as Tapoi Mandal, was found in a half-burnt state. Her father, Manoranjan Dinda, of Naladiha village under Pattamunda police limits lodged a complaint alleging that she was killed and later doused with petrol and set ablaze.

Acting on the complaint, police arrested her husband Biswajit Mandal, 30, and mother-in-law Namita Mandal, 60, and produced them in court. The partially charred body has been sent to the Kendrapala



District Headquarters Hospital for post-mortem.

Police said Tapoi had married Biswajit three years ago and the couple used to engage in frequent disputes ever since. Hours before her death, a rec-

onciliation meeting was held at her in-laws' house in the presence of her parents and village elders Saturday night. After the meeting, her father left for his village Naladiha around 2:30am.

A few hours later, he received information about his daughter's death. On reaching Benakandha village Sunday morning, he found the half-burnt body lying near the house. Suspicious items, including straw and a jerry can, were found at the spot, raising doubts of a planned killing.

Police, led by Tantiapala Marine police station officer Rati Ranjan Nayak, reached the scene and launched an investigation. A scientific team was also pressed into service. A murder case (67/26) has been registered, and further investigation is underway.

# Royal Bengal Tiger enters STR core area

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Baripada, April 26:** The authorities of Similipal National Park Sunday confirmed the entry of a male Royal Bengal Tiger (RBT) into the core area of the reserve and said that it might continue to stay there, a senior official said.

Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR) field director Prakash Chand Gogineni said, "It is a fact that a Royal Bengal Tiger entered Similipal during December-January. The big cat entered Sundargarh district from Chhattisgarh side. It passed through Deogarh district and Dhenkanal district before entering Similipal." The official said the tiger's



FILE PHOTO

arrival was recorded in trap cameras fitted in the forests for tiger census.

"However, we cannot say from which state it came and how much distance it covered

before reaching Similipal," he said, adding that it was an adult male tiger.

When asked whether the tiger is still in Similipal or has left, Gogineni said, "We hope the animal is in the Similipal core area, but cannot confirm it now. We will again install trap cameras in December-January to locate it."

"It is a good development that a tiger from another area has come to Similipal. This indicates that Similipal's biodiversity attracts animals from far-off areas," he added.

STR is known globally for its rare melanistic (black) tigers. According to the 2023-24 estimation, the reserve has 27 adult tigers and eight cubs.

# Jumbo calf rescued from well after hrs-long effort

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Chhendipada, April 26:** A male elephant calf was rescued from an open well after a prolonged operation in Angul district late Saturday night, forest officials said Sunday.

A herd of 19 elephants entered Dhanguramunda village under the Chhendipada forest range around 9pm Saturday while moving toward agricultural fields in search of food. During the movement, the four to five-year-old calf slipped and fell into an uncovered ring well. Hearing loud trumpeting, villagers alerted the forest personnel, who

rushed to the spot and launched a rescue operation using two excavators. The presence of the herd near the well and their repeated attempts to approach the calf disrupted the operation, officials said.

Senior forest officials, including the DFO Nitish Kumar, supervised the rescue, ensuring minimal harm to the animal. After nearly two hours of effort, the calf was safely pulled out of the well. The calf sustained minor injuries but later rejoined the herd and is currently under observation. Forest officials said its condition will be monitored using drone surveillance.

FOCUS SOCIETY

# DEMOCRACY & INEQUALITY



The answer to the ongoing resurgence of authoritarianism is not to patch up a broken system, but to embrace a bold, unifying progressive vision

ensure individual security and agency. More broadly, rebuilding democracy requires restoring the state's role in providing essential public goods such as education, healthcare, and housing. These investments can be funded through tax reform, which remains one of the most powerful tools for reducing income and wealth inequality and, ultimately, for determining how economic gains are shared.

The transition to a just economy demands a new development model that aligns economic progress with social inclusion and environmental priorities. For too long, the idea of economic planning has been dismissed as outdated. But development is a deliberate political project, not the inevitable outcome of well-functioning markets. Public investment and industrial policy are critical for shaping sustainable economies and directing resources toward collective goals rather than narrow private interests.

By advancing a clear and compelling alternative to prevailing policy priorities, the Global Progressive Mobilisation offers a unique opportunity to move beyond rhetoric and advance an economic model that reduces inequality, protects the planet, strengthens public institutions, and restores the material foundations of democratic life. The answer to the ongoing resurgence of authoritarianism is not to patch up a broken system, but to embrace a bold, unifying progressive vision. Democracy cannot survive on procedures alone. It needs a foundation of equality, security, and shared prosperity. Otherwise, we end up where we are now.

The writer is Vice President and Chief Economist of the Global Fund for a New Economy.

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The recently concluded Global Progressive Mobilisation meeting in Barcelona brought together political leaders, policymakers, and activists from around the world, united by a shared concern: democracy is under attack. Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez described it as a collective effort to confront the global rise of authoritarianism, while Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva called for rebuilding multilateralism and "putting social justice back at the center of the global agenda." Beyond these declarations, the gathering pointed to an emerging consensus that defending liberal democracy requires rethinking its economic foundations. As Lula observed, democracy cannot survive unless it improves people's living standards.

Underlying that sentiment is the recognition that our current economic system—based on free markets, limited government intervention, and the primacy of individual choice—has failed to deliver shared prosperity or sustain democratic governance. Increasingly, its survival depends on coercion and authoritarian practices. A pro-democracy discourse that seeks to preserve the status quo, therefore, risks deepening the crisis.

The prevailing economic model has eroded stable employment, weakened labour protections, and privatised core public services, leaving large segments of society exposed and vulnerable. For many, this has meant precarious work, rising living costs, and diminished prospects. The result has been not just economic hardship, but also a profound sense of abandonment and resentment.

This economic discontent has had far-reaching political consequences. When liberal democracy fails to provide

material well-being, social protections, and a sense of fairness, anti-democratic forces, particularly on the far right, channel popular frustration and anger toward migrants, minorities, and imagined enemies. At the same time, authoritarian movements present themselves as vehicles for advancing economic agendas that no longer rely on workers' consent, but on coercion.

At the heart of this failing model lies the powerful myth that markets are neutral arbiters of merit, rewarding individuals according to effort and talent. Inequality is treated not as a problem but as a driver of efficiency and innovation. Yet as income and wealth disparities widen and opportunities narrow, the narrative begins to unravel, with people increasingly questioning how economic rewards are divided and losing confidence in the fairness of the rules of the game.

To defend democracy, we must move beyond treating the symptoms and address the underlying causes of today's crisis. During its G20 presidency, South Africa has taken an important step in this direction by convening the Extraordinary Committee of Independent Experts on Global Inequality, chaired by Nobel

laureate economist Joseph Stiglitz. Treating inequality as a systemic risk to both economic stability and democracy, the Committee has proposed the creation of a permanent international body to support coordinated global action.

Modeled on institutions like the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, such a body could consolidate evidence, track global trends, and shape policy debates. It could also serve as a platform for coordination among governments, international organisations, and civil society, complemented by national inequality panels that translate global insights into country-specific strategies. These efforts should include systematic assessments of the distributive impact of public policies, close monitoring of labour-market dynamics—particularly those associated with technological change—and regular public reporting, enabling policymakers to translate analysis into sustained, collective action.

Delivering on this agenda requires a structural shift toward fair and inclusive labour markets. Strong minimum wages, stable employment, and collective bargaining are not merely policy instruments; they are democratic institutions that



Pedro Rossi

**DEMOCRACY CANNOT SURVIVE ON PROCEDURES ALONE. IT NEEDS A FOUNDATION OF EQUALITY, SECURITY, AND SHARED PROSPERITY**

SPECTRUM ECONOMY

## Rupee slide costs RBI \$40 billion

The Iran war is hurting India more than it could ever imagine. It's hitting gas supplies, NRI remittances, FDI and causing immense losses to the RBI. As of April 2026, the RBI burnt approximately \$40 billion in foreign exchange reserves to defend the rupee from dropping further in massive intervention measures. This aggressive action is in response to the rupee touching a record low of over 95 to the dollar on 30 March, driven by heavy oil import bills (with crude over \$100 a barrel), foreign capital outflows, and massive arbitrage speculation. The RBI imposed strict limits, forcing banks to unwind roughly \$30-\$40 billion in arbitrage positions where they were betting against the rupee.

Oil companies were directed to use specialized credit lines rather than the open market for dollar purchases to prevent further depreciation. Following these measures, the rupee recovered to around Rs 93.20 to the dollar by April 16. The forced, rapid unwinding of positions has led to potential losses of Rs 3,000-4,000 crore for the banking sector. Despite the intervention, analysts warn that high oil prices and geopolitical tensions may keep the rupee

under pressure, with the RBI likely to maintain tight control.

The rupee's weakness is not a short-term fluctuation but reflects deeper structural imbalances in India's external sector. A key factor is the country's heavy dependence on imported energy which makes the currency highly vulnerable to global shocks.

At the same time, capital flows have turned adverse. Heightened geopolitical uncertainty has triggered risk aversion among foreign investors, leading to sustained outflows from Indian equity and debt markets. Even prior to the West Asia conflict India was struggling to attract sufficient foreign capital with FDI stagnating and portfolio flows weakening.

Against this backdrop, the RBI has stepped up intervention in currency markets, selling large amounts of dollars in both spot and forward segments to curb depreciation. More recently, it has introduced unconventional measures, including restrictions on banks' foreign exchange positions and curbs on offshore market linkages. While these actions are officially framed as efforts to manage volatility, their scale and nature suggest an attempt to influence the exchange rate level itself. Such intervention carries

significant risks. By distorting price discovery, it weakens the role of the exchange rate as a market signal. Policy unpredictability—especially sudden regulatory shifts—can undermine investor confidence, raise hedging costs, and discourage both foreign and domestic participation in financial markets.

The fundamental issue is that the rupee's depreciation reflects underlying economic pressures that cannot be sustainably offset through intervention alone. A weaker currency, while uncomfortable, plays an essential adjustment role: it discourages imports, supports exports, and can make domestic assets more attractive to investors. Over-intervention may stabilise the rupee temporarily, but at the cost of credibility and efficiency. A more durable approach would involve addressing structural weaknesses, restoring investor confidence, and allowing the exchange rate to function as a genuine market-driven price within an increasingly open financial system.

The remittances sent back home by Indians working abroad have registered a 14% rise in FY25 to a record \$135.46 billion, from 18.8 million Indian workers abroad, according to data compiled by the RBI. They sent home

a record \$129.4 billion in 2024. India tops the list of recipient countries for remittances in 2024 and is way ahead of second-placed Mexico with \$68 billion. China (\$48 billion) is in the third spot, followed by the Philippines (\$40 billion) and Pakistan (\$33 billion), according to World Bank.

Peace, when it comes, is unlikely to be shaped by traditional Western powers. It will more plausibly be brokered by Russia and China, reflecting a shifting global balance. This raises a difficult but unavoidable question for India: how should it position itself in an emerging geopolitical configuration that may increasingly be anchored by a Russia-China-Iran axis? Ignoring these shifts carries risks.

Strategic misalignment could translate into greater instability along India's periphery, particularly in sensitive border regions. India cannot afford a reactive posture. It must reassess its strategic options with clarity and speed—balancing geopolitical realities with its long-term national interests, economic resilience, and social cohesion. This evolving challenge demands more than short-term responses. It calls for a broader rethinking of policy, institutions, and priorities.

INFA

To stand for the Truth in all circumstances, to declare it if necessary in the teeth of the worst opposition and to be ready to all you can for its sake, is the definition of heroism.



THE MOTHER

## Economic Shocks

The latest projections by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) offer a sobering snapshot of India's economic trajectory. As per IMF estimates, Bangladesh may once again edge past India in per capita income in 2026. Bangladesh's per capita GDP is projected at \$2,911, higher than India's \$2,812. Per capita income remains a critical indicator of the lived economic reality of a country. That Bangladesh, a smaller economy, could achieve a higher per capita income than India underscores the fact that high GDP growth is not enough; the benefits of the growth must consistently reach all demographic groups. This is not the first time Bangladesh has outperformed India on per capita income. Between 2018 and 2025, Bangladesh maintained a steady lead over India, driven by strong export performance, particularly in garments, and improvements in social sector performance. While India briefly regained the edge, the IMF's projection of another reversal in 2026 suggests that the gap is not merely cyclical but reflects structural issues.

India's economy, over a decade or so, has been plagued by host of woes such as a depreciating currency, high unemployment, widening income inequality and an ever rising cost of living. Adding to these, two shocks received by the economy over the last one year have worsened the situation. One is the tariff shock that US President Donald Trump's administration slapped on India and other is crude oil prices moving past US\$100 per barrel over the past two months in the wake of the crisis in West Asia. Together, these shocks struck at both ends of India's external sector. While, the steep tariffs, at 50 per cent, weakened the country's export momentum, the oil price surge sharply inflated the import bill. For an economy structurally reliant on energy imports, the latter presents a far more complex challenge. Unlike export losses, which can sometimes be offset through market diversification or currency adjustments, import shocks of this nature transmit directly into domestic inflation, fiscal stress, and current account imbalances.

Events from the past year underscore the fact that India's growth model, which has been based on consumer demand from its vast population, is not at all insulated from external shocks. High consumption can sustain demand, but it cannot neutralise the macroeconomic impact of elevated input costs, disrupted supply chains, or volatile capital flows as seen in recent months.

A nearly 10 per cent depreciation of the rupee against the US dollar over the last one year coupled with an exodus of foreign capital from India's equity markets has pushed India's GDP below the \$4 trillion mark.

The ongoing tensions in West Asia highlight the fragility of global supply chains. The near disruption of tanker movements through the Strait of Hormuz has already driven crude oil prices to multi-year highs. For an energy-import-dependent economy like India, this translates into immediate inflationary pressures and a widening current account deficit. The Reserve Bank of India, in its latest bulletin, has flagged the risk of such supply shocks morphing into demand shocks if the war in the Middle East persists for some more time.

Compounding these external risks is the looming threat of El Niño, which could disrupt the southwest monsoon considered the lifeline for India's agrarian economy. A weak monsoon not only affects agricultural output but also triggers food inflation, rural distress, and a slowdown in consumption demand. In a country where a significant portion of the population remains dependent on agriculture, such climatic uncertainties can have outsized macroeconomic consequences.

Facing economic challenges of such proportions are not unique to India. Other countries have and are facing them successfully because, instead of only brave talk, they usually carry a lot of substance. We in India are unfortunate to see only chest thumping but backed by absolutely no comprehension of economics or how foreign relations are no joke.

### WISDOM CORNER

The individual has always had to struggle to keep from being overwhelmed by the tribe. If you try it, you will be lonely often, and sometimes frightened. But no price is too high to pay for the privilege of owning yourself.

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

The truth is a snare: you cannot have it, without being caught. You cannot have the truth in such a way that you catch it, but only in such a way that it catches you.

SOREN KIERKEGAARD

Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.

VIKTOR E. FRANKL

### THIS DAY IN HISTORY

1810: Ludwig van Beethoven composes "Für Elise". "Bagatelle No. 25" for solo piano is one of the German composer's most popular works and one of the most recognized melodies in the history of music. But it wasn't known to the world until 1867, decades after he died, when a scholar found it. And we still don't know who, exactly, the Elise in Beethoven's dedication was—or whether there actually was an Elise.

1822: Ulysses S. Grant, who commanded the Union armies during the American Civil War and served as president of the United States from 1869 to 1877, was born.

1865: The worst maritime disaster in U.S. history occurred when a boiler exploded on the overloaded steamship SS Sultana as it sailed the Mississippi River, killing some 1,800 people, many of whom were former Union POWs returning home from the Civil War.

1961: Sierra Leone becomes an independent republic. The West African country's first Prime Minister, Sir Milton Margai, ended over 150 years of British colonial rule.

1981: The Xerox Star personal computer debuted, developed by Xerox PARC, and it included the first mouse sold to consumers. (The mouse had been invented by Douglas Engelbart decades earlier, in 1963-64, when he built a device with a carved wood casing and a button to navigate a display screen.)

1992: For the first time in its 700-year history, the British House of Commons is presided over by a female Speaker. Betty Boothroyd served as Speaker of the House of Commons from 1992 to 2000.



Shivaji Sarkar

**THE RUPEE'S WEAKNESS IS NOT A SHORT-TERM FLUCTUATION BUT REFLECTS DEEPER STRUCTURAL IMBALANCES IN INDIA'S EXTERNAL SECTOR**

## 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, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

### Systemic inertia

Sir, The report "Prepare action plan to implement ICU guidelines" exposes a chronic malaise in our healthcare system. The Supreme Court's directive for a "realistic and practical" roadmap underscores how even minimum ICU standards remain uneven across states. While guidelines exist, implementation falters due to poor planning, manpower shortages and weak monitoring. Deadlines alone cannot cure systemic inertia. Governments must prioritise essential infrastructure, trained personnel and strict accountability. Otherwise, such directives risk becoming ritualistic exercises, offering little solace to critically ill patients who depend on timely, quality intensive care.

Sidhartha Kar Mohapatra, BARIAPADA

### US U-turn

Sir, US President Donald Trump ordered his envoys not to travel to Pakistan to continue talks with Iranian officials on ending the war. The decision came as Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi wrapped up a visit to Islamabad. Since the last round of talks, efforts to bring the two sides back to the table have hit an impasse, with Iran refusing to participate as long as a US naval blockade remains in place. Iran has imposed a de facto blockade of its own on the Strait of Hormuz, allowing only a trickle of ships to pass through the waterway.

Dorai Mani Suresh, GHAZIABAD

### Automated warfare

Sir, China's unveiling of the "Atlas" drone swarm system reflects a major shift toward AI-driven, automated warfare. A single operator can control up to 96 drones simultaneously, launched from a fixed ground platform at an interval of three seconds, forming a coordinated "kill chain" from scouting to strike. These drones act as a network: some conduct reconnaissance, others relay signals, jam enemy sensors, and finally execute precision strikes. Powered by AI algorithms, each drone has a "smart brain," allowing autonomous coordination even under disrupted communication. This enables saturation attacks capable of overwhelming air defences and targeting logistics routes, bridges, and communication nodes. Future warfare will depend less on numbers of soldiers and more on intelligent, networked systems.

RS Narula, PATIALA

# Fuel crisis hits Andhra

Amid serpentine queues at fuel stations in Andhra, CM directs oil firms to restore supply by Monday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Amaravati, April 26:** With panic buying of petrol and diesel in Andhra Pradesh on shortage concerns forcing closure of over 400 outlets, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu Sunday directed officials and oil companies to ensure adequate fuel supply and restore normalcy across the state by Monday.

Naidu's remarks came after the state witnessed serpentine queues at various fuel stations across the state, causing concern among consumers over a possible shortage.

The chief minister directed district collectors to establish a task force and control room involving revenue, police and legal metrology departments to monitor the situation until normalcy is restored.

As many as 421 out of 4,510 fuel stations across the state had to close operations following a sharp surge in demand driven by panic buying, official sources said.

During a teleconference with officials and representatives of



oil companies, Naidu reviewed the reasons behind the sudden fuel shortage and sought immediate corrective measures.

He also questioned the delay in corrective action after officials said the issue had been identified Thursday.

"Ensure there is no inconvenience to the public and restore normal supply without delay," the CM said in an official press release Sunday, warning that any disruption in essential services would not be tolerated.

Naidu made it clear that by Monday, no fuel station in the state should display "No Stock" boards, and directed officials to ensure seamless supply across all districts.

Officials informed the CM that the situation arose due to

commercial consumers shifting to retail outlets, leading to an abnormal surge in demand. Petrol sales, which usually stand at 6,330 Kilolitres (KL) per day, rose by 34 per cent to 8,489 KL Saturday, while Sunday consumption remained 22 per cent higher at 7,750 KL.

Diesel sales also witnessed a spike, increasing from a normal 9,048 KL per day to 10,556 KL Saturday, a 16 per cent rise, while Sunday demand stood at 9,392 KL, about 3 per cent higher than usual, said the press release.

District collectors noted that reduced supplies from private players further worsened the situation. Officials also pointed out that oil companies had tightened credit facilities to retail outlets. Questioning representatives of

Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL), Indian Oil Corporation (IOCL) and Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL), the Chief Minister asked why credit support was reduced.

Officials further said that bulk purchases in drums, particularly in the aqua sector, are creating additional pressure on availability of petroleum products.

He warned that if oil companies "deliberately" create inconvenience for the public or the government, permissions granted to them may be reconsidered, and stressed those irresponsible decisions affecting essential supplies would not be tolerated.

Expressing concern over delays in response, Naidu questioned why corrective steps were not taken despite the issue being identified earlier, and emphasised that preventive action is more important than post-crisis reporting.

He also instructed officials to ensure that diesel shortage does not affect paddy harvesting operations and suggested considering a coupon system for farmers to regulate supply.

Further, he ordered strict monitoring at fuel stations through police deployment and CCTV surveillance, and directed that black marketing be prevented at all costs.

# THIRD TIGER CUB DIES IN 5 DAYS IN KANHA RESERVE

24 fatalities since January in MP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mandla (MP), April 26:** A tiger cub was found dead in the Sarhi zone of the Kanha Tiger Reserve (KTR) in Madhya Pradesh, taking the count of such fatalities in the facility to three in the past five days, officials said Sunday.

Overall, Madhya Pradesh, which had 785 tigers as per a 2022 Census and the highest in the country, has lost 24 big cats, including cubs, since January 7, when the first death was reported in the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve.

Among the 24 fatalities, ten tigers, including the three cubs, have died since April 2 when a tiger was found dead in the forested area of Burhanpur, according to officials.

The female cub was found dead on Saturday evening, and the carcass was sent to Jabalpur for postmortem, KTR field director Ravindra Mani Tripathi told PTI.

He said all three deceased cubs belonged to the Amahi area tigress (T-141).

Officials said a male cub was found dead near Amahi nulla in



Sarhinakan beat April 21, with the cause of death reported as natural. Another male cub was found dead April 23 in a decomposed condition near Intawara nulla.

All three cubs are around one, officials said, adding that they are now concerned over the fourth cub of the tigress.

Preliminary findings suggest that the tigress may be weak and unable to hunt, raising the possibility of cubs dying due to

starvation, officials said, adding that the exact causes could be ascertained after an investigation.

The tigress is being monitored and provided supplementary diet to improve her condition, they said.

With these incidents, the number of tiger deaths in KTR has risen to four in April, including one adult tigress that died April 5 in Kanhari beat, reportedly due to infighting.

# MP launches water conservation drive for Ganga Dussehra

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Bhopal, April 26:** In a bid to intensify water conservation efforts, the Madhya Pradesh government will organise special activities across the state May 25, marking Ganga Dussehra, as part of the ongoing 'Jal Ganga Samvardhan Abhiyan'.

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, while reviewing the campaign at a state-level meeting via video conferencing late Saturday, said the initiative (Jal Ganga Samvardhan Abhiyan) -- launched March 19 -- will continue until June 30, with a focus on expanding public participation.

"The Jal Ganga Samvardhan Abhiyan must become a mass movement. Collective voluntary efforts such as cleaning wells, stepwells, ponds and canals, along with tree plantation, ghat cleaning and water conservation activities, should be carried out at village and ward levels," CM Yadav said.

He directed officials to ensure that the Ganga Dussehra programmes witness participation from Panchayats, urban local bodies, NGOs, social and religious organisations, women's self-help groups and trade associations, so that water conservation becomes a people-driven effort.

Highlighting the scale of the campaign, the Chief Minister noted that 82 activities across 16 departments have been identified under the initiative. He added that Madhya Pradesh has emerged as a national leader in participatory water conservation, with Dindori and Khandwa districts securing the top two positions nationally.

He further pointed out that under the Centre's Jal Sanchay Jan Bhagidari Abhiyan, Dindori has ranked first in the country, while Khandwa has secured the second position, reflecting the state's strong performance in community-driven water conservation.

CM Yadav also stressed the need for continuous monitoring of departmental activities and called for the introduction of a district-wise ranking system to promote efficiency and innovation.

He instructed officials to ensure arrangements for public drinking water kiosks during the summer, maintain cleanliness around water sources, and conduct regular water quality testing in schools and Anganwadi centres.

During the meeting, officials informed that more than 2.43 lakh works worth ₹6,232 crore have been planned under the Panchayat and Rural Development Department, with districts such as Khandwa, Khargone, Dindori, Rajgarh and Balaghat leading in implementation.



People from the Jain community perform 'Abhishek' ritual on an occasion marking Teerthanker Mahaveer's 'Gyan Kalyanak', in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, Sunday

# Coal-rich Singrauli district gets 3 e-checkposts to curb illegal transport

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Singrauli (MP), April 26:** Three AI-powered e-checkposts have been installed in the coal-rich Singrauli district of Madhya Pradesh to curb illegal transportation of minerals, enhance revenue and improve transparency, officials said Sunday.

The gates have been set up at Telai village in Singrauli tehsil,

Nigri in Sarai tehsil and Khanhana barrier in Dudhmaniya tehsil, they said.

Singrauli, situated in the northeast of MP close to Uttar Pradesh, is widely known as the "Energy Capital of India" due to its vast coal reserves and numerous thermal power plants operated by companies like NTPC Limited and private players.

Officials said the system, introduced for the first time in the

state, is equipped with artificial intelligence (AI), varifocal cameras, automatic number plate recognition capabilities and Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) readers.

District Mining Officer Akanksha Patel said RFID tags have been made mandatory for all vehicles transporting minerals in the region.

"The tag will be affixed on the front windshield. The sys-

tem will automatically verify vehicle number, mineral quantity and weight, and detect violations such as overloading or absence of e-transit permits," the official said.

Immediate online action will be taken against violators, including penalties, suspension or cancellation of vehicle registration and seizure of vehicles under the collector's authority, officials said.

# Andhra eyes apple farming after Rayalaseema success

The unexpected success of an enterprising state farmer in growing the temperate climate fruit in drought-prone Anantapur district has created a sensation, spurring the state government to look at the possibility of scaling up this novel horticultural activity

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Amaravati, April 26:** After several years of dominating India's apple market, north Indian states Jammu & Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh may see a challenger emerging from the southern part of the country, Andhra Pradesh, in the years to come.

The unexpected success of an enterprising state farmer in growing the temperate climate fruit in drought-prone Anantapur district has created a sensation, spurring the state government to look at the possibility of scaling up this novel horticultural activity.

The KLD apple variety's adaptation to local conditions and realising higher prices than traditional growers in the northern states has sprung a surprise.

KV Ramana Reddy from Kotanka village in Garladinne mandal of the Rayalaseema

district blazed a trail by cultivating this apple variety on a 2.5-acre field.

Procuring apple saplings from agriculture heavyweight Israel at around ₹280 per plant, the pioneering farmer spent ₹4.2 lakh on 1,500 saplings and employed 12 x 6 spacing cultivation method to yield one tonne apples for the first crop.

"Apple cultivation has emerged as a novel horticultural activity in select mandals of Anantapur district with early-stage results showing viable fruiting, good taste, and market prices of ₹120 to 170 per kg - significantly higher than what growers in traditional apple regions of HP and J&K typically realise at the mandi (market)," a government source told PTI.

Emerging as an opportunity in non-traditional horticulture, 15 acres across Garladinne, Kundurpi, and Peddapappur mandals of Anantapur dis-



trict, historically notorious for drought-like conditions, are now under apple cultivation.

Incidentally, Reddy's apple orchard produced medium-sized fruits with good taste and went on to command a price of ₹170 per kg for top grade and ₹120 per kg for medium grade.

On comparing production economics between the Anantapur experimental apple culti-

vation and HP and J&K apples, it was observed that the fruits produced in the Rayalaseema district have commanded a higher market price of up to ₹170 per kg, compared to anywhere between ₹50 and ₹100 per kg for the northern Indian varieties, said the source.

The key advantage for the Rayalaseema variety has been identified as off-season premium, compressed gestation, a semi-high-density model, diversification and farmer in-

**KV Ramana Reddy from Kotanka village in Garladinne mandal of the Rayalaseema district blazed a trail by cultivating this apple variety on a 2.5-acre field**

apples enjoy an established supply chain mechanism.

Traditional Kashmir varieties have the advantages of scale, yield and brand value while high-density apple orchards in the region are renowned for their high productivity.

However, the strategic significance of the Anantapur apple story for the southern state includes off-season premium, compressed gestation, a semi-high-density model, diversification and farmer in-

come potential.

"The Anantapur apple story, while nascent, carries several features of strategic interest. North Indian apples arrive in the markets between September and November. Anantapur fruit, with December flowering and a different harvest window could command sustained price premiums if quality and volumes are maintained," the source pointed out.

Unlike the seven to eight years gestation period for HP and J&K apples, the KLD variety being grown in Anantapur begins yielding fruits from the second year itself, dramatically reducing the farmer's payback period and risk exposure during the non-bearing phase.

Through the semi-high density plantation model, nearly 3,700 apple plants can be sown per hectare in Anantapur, compared to just 250 trees per hectare in traditional HP and J&K orchards.



**Go and tell your friends, relatives and neighbours to vote for TMC candidates in this election. Didi has to win this fight against the BJP, which wants to take away your citizenship rights as part of a bigger game plan to win the polls**

ARVIND KEJRIWAL | AAP LEADER & FORMER DELHI CM

## KERALA: SNAKEBITE TOLL RISES TO SEVEN

Two elderly women died due to snakebite in Kannur and Idukki Sunday. With two new deaths, the number of snakebite fatalities reported in Kerala in recent days has risen to seven, including in Thiruvananthapuram, Alappuzha, Thrissur, Idukki and Kannur districts



## of the day vote

India's strides in clean energy and indigenous technology reflect the country's growing self-reliance



PRAMOD SAWANT | GOA CM

Rajasthan is moving toward building a strong agritech-driven economy by integrating its traditional agricultural strengths with modern technology. The state government is creating an investor-friendly environment



BHAJANLAL SHARMA | RAJASTHAN CM

Under the visionary leadership of Narendra Modi, a 'New India' is emerging, with the country's economy reaching new heights. India is supplying affordable and high-quality medicines to around 200 countries



YOGI ADITYANATH | UTTAR PRADESH CM

# AAP seeks disqualification of 7 MPs after BJP switch

The AAP has urged the Rajya Sabha chairman to terminate the memberships of the seven MPs, claiming that they were elected to the Upper House on AAP tickets but later decided to leave the party and join the BJP



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 26: Aam Aadmi Party MP Sanjay Singh said Sunday that he has submitted a petition to Rajya Sabha Chairman C P Radhakrishnan seeking the disqualification of seven party MPs in the Upper House, who recently quit the AAP and announced their merger with the BJP.

Addressing a press conference, the AAP Rajya Sabha member also said the party would pursue legal action in the matter if needed, alleging that the move by the seven MPs violated the anti-defection law.

The AAP has urged the Rajya Sabha chairman to terminate the memberships of the seven MPs, claiming that they were elected to the Upper House on AAP tickets but later decided to leave the party and join the BJP.

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

"According to the Constitution, two-thirds of the total MPs of a party can merge with another party," Chadha said, pointing to the fact that AAP had a total of 10 MPs in the Ra-

ja Sabha. At the presser, Singh claimed that many Supreme Court judgments, including in cases related to Uttarakhand and Arunachal Pradesh, had clarified how such defections could lead to disqualification.

He also referred to the 10th Schedule of the Constitution, saying that "it clearly does not permit such political defections". "While delays in such cases could lead to disappointment, the AAP would pursue the matter in court if required. These members were elected by the party but later chose to leave and join another outfit. This is a betrayal of the people of Punjab and also of the Constitution of India," Singh said.

Incidentally, six of the seven MPs who quit the party were Rajya Sabha MPs from Punjab.

Rejecting speculation that some AAP MLAs in Punjab were in touch with the BJP, Singh termed such reports "false propaganda" being spread by the BJP and the "defected" MPs. Singh also claimed that there was public anger and protests in Punjab against the MPs who quit the AAP for "betraying" the party and the state.

Responding to allegations on the 'Sheesh Mahal' controversy, Singh claimed that the images circulated by Delhi minister Parvesh Sahib Singh were fake, which had already been "exposed". The BJP Saturday cornered AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal over a new bungalow

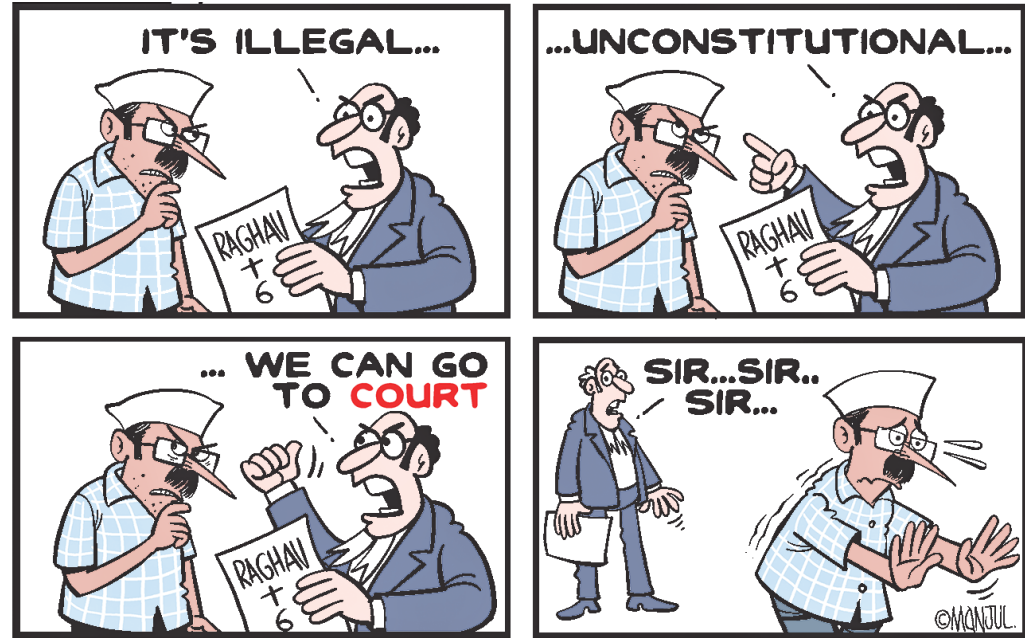
## Protest outside Raghav's residence

Mumbai: Police Sunday detained some Aam Aadmi Party activists in Khar area of Mumbai for demonstrating outside the residence of Rajya Sabha member Raghav Chadha, who has crossed over to the BJP, and raising slogans. Aam Aadmi Party's Mumbai unit president Preeti Sharma Menon claimed the police prevented AAP workers from protesting peacefully against "traitor" Chadha and detained local leader Ruben Mascharanhas. A Khar Police official confirmed that Mascharanhas and some other activists have been taken to the police station, without elaborating.

allotted to him at Lodhi Estate here, dubbing it as 'Sheesh Mahal 2' and alleging expenditure of private money to build amenities in it.

Addressing a press conference, Delhi PWD minister Parvesh Singh shared some images of the Type VII bungalow allotted to Kejriwal by the Centre, and said the Central PWD does not spend so much money on bungalows, alleging that "private money" was spent to create superior quality amenities in it. Singh said the AAP would initiate defamation proceedings and take action against channels that aired the "false" images.

## POLITICKLE by MANJUL



## Pawan Khera moves SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 26: Congress leader Pawan Khera Sunday moved the Supreme Court against an order of Gauhati High Court which rejected his anticipatory bail petition in connection with his allegations that Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's wife possessed multiple passports and undisclosed properties abroad.

According to the apex court case status, the matter is yet to be assigned to a bench. Justice Parthiv Jyoti Saikia April 24 had rejected Khera's anticipatory bail application after the Congress leader was asked by the Supreme Court to approach the Gauhati High Court. Following the allegations, the CM's wife, Riniki Bhuyan Sharma, filed criminal cases against Khera and others at Guwahati Crime Branch police station under various sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). The Telangana High Court had earlier granted Khera a seven-day transit anticipatory bail, but the Assam Police moved the Supreme Court against it.

## 2ND PHASE OF WB POLLS

# EC announces tight security in 142 seats



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, April 26: The Election Commission Sunday announced a stringent security plan for the second phase of the West Bengal Assembly polls, making it clear that any attempt to disrupt voting or obstruct electors would be dealt with firmly, an official said.

The poll body directed security personnel to carry out constituency-wise deployment and step up area domination exercises in interior lanes and sensitive neighbourhoods to ensure that voters can exercise their franchise without fear.

During a high-level coordination meeting, attended by poll officials, senior police officers and commanders of central forces from three election districts under Kolkata, the EC reviewed the preparedness in 142 constituencies that would go to polls April 29.

"As part of the plan, 160 motorcycles carrying two CAPF personnel each will patrol localities across the constituencies for quick deployment. The focus is on force deployment, vulnerability mapping, communication between the civil and police administration and ensuring a visible security presence in every area," the official said.

The meeting was also attended by the Commissioner of Kolkata Police, district election officers of Kolkata Uttar, Kolkata Dakshin and South 24 Parganas, returning officers, general and police observers, Special Observer Subrata Gupta and Special Police Observer

Security personnel will be deployed constituency-wise to ensure voter safety and prevent disruptions

Motorcycle patrols and increased security presence are planned for sensitive areas

CCTV cameras will be installed at every polling station to monitor voting

The Election Commission aims to restore confidence in the electoral process and ensure free and fair polling

N K Mishra. Meanwhile, state Chief Electoral Officer Manoj Kumar Agarwal, who visited Kakkdwip in South 24 Parganas district ahead of the second phase of polling, held a meeting with representatives of various political parties and urged them to encourage voters to participate freely.

"We have requested everyone to ensure peaceful and normal voting. Bogus voting or booth capturing will not be allowed. People must be able to exercise their democratic right without fear. Anyone trying to prevent that will face action," Agarwal said.

He said CCTV cameras would be installed at every polling station, central forces would remain deployed at booths, and unauthorised persons would not be allowed within 100 metres of polling premises.

The commission has been conducting similar preparedness reviews in several districts ahead of the second phase as part of efforts to ensure free, fair and peaceful polling in the state, another official said.

## 100 crude bombs recovered from TMC worker's house

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, April 26: The Election Commission Sunday directed the police to launch a special drive to arrest those involved in illegal manufacturing of crude bombs in poll-bound West Bengal, and asserted that all cases related to the making of any such explosive would be probed by the National Investigation Agency, a senior poll official said.

The directive came after the police recovered around 100 crude bombs from the house of a person, allegedly a TMC worker, at Bhangar in South 24 Parganas district, days ahead of the second and final phase of the assembly polls in the state. The explosives were recovered during a search at the residence of Rafikul Islam following specific inputs, the official said.

# Russia crude oil import data confidential: CIC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 26: Data on oil imports from Russia to India cannot be provided as it is exempted under the RTI Act due to its "commercial and confidential" nature, according to the Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell (PPAC) under Oil Ministry, with the Central Information Commission (CIC) too backing it, citing strategic and economic interests of the country.

The case relates to an RTI plea seeking details of crude oil imported from Russia to India between June 2022 and June 2025, including a company-wise breakup for firms such as IOCL, BPCL, HPCL, ONGC Videsh, Reliance Industries and Nayara Energy. The Central Public In-



formation Officer (CPIO) had denied the information, stating, "The information pertaining to country-wise and company-wise details of crude oil import is of commercial and confidential nature and is exempted from disclosure under Section 8(1) (d)&e of the RTI Act 2005. However, the total quantity and value of crude oil import (both current and historical) can be downloaded from the PPAC website."

The First Appellate Authority upheld this reply. During the hearing recently, the appellant

argued that the information was not provided and said he wanted to understand how India is functioning in the sector.

In its interim decision, the Commission observed that disclosure of the requested data "would prejudicially affect the strategic and economic interest of the State and also affect the relations with foreign states," adding that the information is linked to geopolitical relations.

The Commission also issued a show-cause notice to the official concerned of the PPAC, which functions under the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, for being absent from the hearing despite receiving prior notice, asking why a penalty under Section 20(1) of the RTI Act should not be imposed.

## FROM CONFLICT TO PROGRESS

# Remote Irpanar village in Ch'garh gets electricity

Having relied on lanterns and firewood for years, villagers described the moment as historic and thanked the administration and the electricity department for the effort

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Raipur, April 26: A remote village in Chhattisgarh's Abujhmad region, once a stronghold of Maoists, has got electricity for the first time after decades without power supply and other basic facilities, officials said

Sunday. When bulbs lit up for the first time Friday, residents of Irpanar village saw not just light but a powerful symbol of development, a local said.

Having relied on lanterns and firewood for years, villagers described the moment as historic and thanked the administration and the electricity department for the effort.

The electricity would enable children to study at night and provide access to basic facilities like mobile charging.

The availability of fans, lights and small appliances is expected to ease daily life, while opening possibilities for digital education, healthcare access, communication and small businesses in the future,



the resident added. Around 10 families will benefit from the electrification, which was done at a cost of Rs 56.11 lakh in the village, located deep inside the forested and hilly terrain of Narayanpur district, as per officials.

Bastar region, compris-

ing seven districts including Narayanpur, has been witnessing significant transformation following a decline in Maoist influence as the state has got rid of the menace, a government official here said.

The electricity supply in remote villages has reduced fear

and isolation, improved living standards and accelerated development, signalling a safer and more prosperous future for the region.

After decades of darkness, Irpanar has lit up for the first time under the state government's 'Niyad Nella Nar' (your good village) scheme, aimed at delivering basic amenities to remote and sensitive areas of the Bastar region, the official said.

A nearby village, Handawada, has also been electrified in recent months, marking the beginning of a broader push to connect remote habitations with essential services such as electricity, roads, drinking water, education and healthcare, he said.

Providing electricity through the grid to Irpanar was not a

routine technical task. Though located around 30 km from the district headquarters, the route involves rough tracks, steep climbs, dense forests and stretches that require travel on foot, with connectivity worsening during the monsoon, Narayanpur Collector Namrata Jain said.

The Chhattisgarh State Power Distribution Company Limited executed the work on priority, relying on manual labour and local support in several stretches where machinery could not be used, she said.

Despite difficult geographical conditions, officials completed the expansion of power lines, installation of poles and household connections in a time-bound manner, she added.



I am told that many people have been inconvenienced by the anti-encroachment drive. I would like to tell them that even the stairs leading to my house have been demolished as part of the drive

SAMBART CHOUDHARY | BIHAR CM

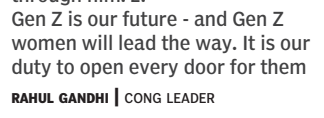
THREE DIE OF SUSPECTED INHALATION OF TOXIC GAS

Three workers died Sunday after suspected inhalation of toxic gas inside a drainage tank at a mushroom farming unit in Purandar taluka in Pune district of Maharashtra, police said



of the day quote

Two things are clear: 1. The magician has run out of tricks. Young India can see right through him. 2. Gen Z is our future - and Gen Z women will lead the way. It is our duty to open every door for them



RAHUL GANDHI | CONG LEADER

Changing statements does not change the truth. Uttar Pradesh has never seen such a weak chief minister, under whose watch poor and helpless victims are pressured to alter their statements



AKHILESH YADAV | SP PRESIDENT

A corrupt group remains around Arvind Kejriwal, and it's natural that they (seven AAP's Rajya Saha MPs) left the party. It's possible that more people will leave in the future



PIYUSH GOYAL | COMMERCE & INDUSTRY MINISTER

POST OF THE DAY

India had 95 of the world's 100 hottest cities this week, that should scare us, how is this not a national emergency?

Why are no serious people talking about this loudly? We keep cutting forests and turning every open space into concrete & glass, then we act shocked when cities become ovens This is not normal heat, This is a warning

@theprayagtiwari

SHORT TAKES

WB bomb blast: NIA arrests prime accused

New Delhi: The National Investigation Agency Sunday arrested a prime accused in the West Bengal bomb explosion case, in which one person was killed and three others were seriously injured last month. The accused, Ahidul Islam Molla of Bijoyganj Bazar area in South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal, was arrested following detailed examination of his role in the explosion that took place at Dakshin Bamunia village, a statement issued by the NIA said.

Goa Class X results: 94.51% students pass

Panaji: The results of the Goa board's class 10 examination, declared Sunday, showed girls have outperformed boys, with an overall pass percentage of students 94.51 per cent. Addressing a press conference, Goa Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education (GBSHSE) chairman Bhagirath Shetye said that out of 20,618 students who appeared for the examination conducted in March, 19,486 have successfully passed.

Havildar found dead in barracks

Patna: The body of a Bihar Police personnel was found hanging from the ceiling of a room in his barracks here, a senior officer said Sunday. Patna Senior Superintendent of Police Kartikeya Sharma said a havildar with Bihar State Armed Police-1, popularly known as "Gorkha battalion", died allegedly by suicide as he had been suffering from some ailment. The deceased left behind "two suicide notes", one in Hindi and the other in his native language Nepali.

Swiss plane suffers engine glitch; 4 hurt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 26: A Zurich-bound Swiss International Air Lines' plane carrying 245 people aborted takeoff at the Delhi airport early morning Sunday due to an engine issue, following which a full emergency was declared and passengers were evacuated, with four of them suffering injuries, according to the airline.

There were 232 passengers, including four infants, and 13 crew members onboard the A330-300 aircraft with registration HB-JHK that was to operate the flight LX147 when the incident took place around 1am. Swiss International Air Lines is known as Swiss.

"Four passengers remain in the hospital... A cabin crew member sustained a sprained ankle. The other crew members are unharmed," an airline spokesperson said in an updated statement and added that the one cabin crew member suffered a minor foot injury.

Details about how the passengers suffered injuries could not be immediately ascertained.

"Shortly after 1am, local time April 26, an issue occurred with one of the engines during the takeoff of flight LX147 in Delhi. The crew aborted the takeoff and, after assessing the situation, decided as a precaution to evacuate the aircraft," the spokesperson said.

Sources said smoke was observed from the port side of the main wheel and initial input was about smoke coming from



There were 232 passengers, including four infants, and 13 crew members onboard the A330-300 aircraft with registration HB-JHK that was to operate the flight LX147 when the incident took place around 1am. Swiss International Air Lines is known as Swiss

one of the landing gears.

According to sources, a call regarding full emergency and the aircraft suffering tyre burst was received from the Air Traffic Controller (ATC) initially. After the checking was done by the airside team, it was confirmed that during the rejected takeoff, smoke was observed originating from the port side of the main wheel, they added.

Delhi airport operator DIAL said in the early hours of Sunday, a full emergency was declared for flight LX147 on Runway 28/10. "All prescribed safety protocols were promptly executed, and passengers were safely evacuated. Airport operations remained unaffected,"

DIAL said in a post on X.

Regretting the inconvenience caused, the Swiss spokesperson said, "We are aware that such an event can be stressful and traumatic for those affected. Our teams remain in close contact with our passengers and continue to support them even beyond the immediate situation."

It further said Swiss technical specialists will travel to Delhi to inspect the aircraft and initiate the next step. Passengers have been accommodated in hotels and rebooked onto alternative flights. "We were able to find a solution for all guests to continue their journey. We will remain in contact with them," the airline spokesperson assured.

SNIPPETS

Under flak, Dharendra Shastri apologises

Nagpur: Amid backlash in Maharashtra, Bageshwar Dham head Dharendra Shastri Sunday said he was "extremely sorry" for his remarks on Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, which he claimed were twisted by some people on social media. Referring to his controversial remarks that people should give birth to four children and dedicate one of them to RSS, Shastri clarified that he had suggested making children staunch "Rashtrawadi like Sangh" with Sanatani ideology. A row erupted after Shastri claimed at a programme in Nagpur that Shivaji Maharaj had expressed his desire to renounce his responsibilities because he was tired of warfare, and approached his "guru" Samarth Ramdas with his crown. Addressing a press conference in Nagpur Sunday, the spiritual preacher claimed that his remarks on Shivaji Maharaj were misrepresented on social media.

PM to visit Sikkim, UP April 27 to 29

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Sikkim and Uttar Pradesh from April 27 to 29 during which he will participate in Sikkim's 50th year of statehood celebrations in Gangtok and a women conference in Varanasi. In Uttar Pradesh, the prime minister will also inaugurate the Ganga Expressway in Haridwar, marking a significant milestone in the development of world-class infrastructure in the country, dedicate 48 completed projects worth more than ₹1,050 crore and lay the foundation stone of 112 projects worth around ₹5,300 crore. Modi will arrive in Gangtok in the afternoon of April 27 and in the early morning next day, he will participate in the closing ceremony of Sikkim's 50th year of statehood celebrations at Paljor Stadium, an official statement said. In Gangtok, he will inaugurate, launch and lay the foundation stone of multiple development projects worth over ₹4,000 crore across Sikkim and also address a gathering on the occasion.

Smoke, sparks: Charminar Express halted

Hyderabad: Smoke and sparks emanated from a wheel of a coach of Charminar Express, prompting the train to be halted at a railway station in Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district of Telangana, SCR officials said Sunday. There were no damage or casualty in the incident which occurred due to "brake binding" April 25, they said. In a post on X Sunday, the South Central Railway (SCR) said: "Train No.12760 Hyderabad - Tarambaram Charminar Express which left Hyderabad yesterday i.e., 25th April, 2026 was stopped at Aler Railway station of Secunderabad Division of South Central Railway at 19:47 hrs due to BRAKE BINDING in 55 coach". Smoke and spark was noticed in the wheel of the coach which was extinguished immediately by the railway staff, it said.

BENGAL POLLS

Kejriwal urges 90L deleted voters to support TMC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, April 26: AAP leader and former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal Sunday alleged that a BJP-EC conspiracy led to the deletion of 90 lakh voters from the electoral rolls in West Bengal under the SIR exercise, claiming it was part of a larger plan to target citizenship documents.

Addressing an election rally in Rasbehari constituency here, Kejriwal also accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of "insulting" the people of the state by deploying 3.5 lakh security personnel for the Assembly polls.

He urged those whose names were allegedly deleted from the voters' list to support the Trinamool Congress. "Go and tell your friends, relatives and neighbours to vote for TMC candidates in this election. Didi has to win this fight against the BJP, which wants to take away your citizenship rights as part of a bigger game plan to win the polls," he said.

Bengal: Shah vows UCC, triple talaq ban

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ranaghat/Tehatta (West Bengal), April 26: Union Home Minister Amit Shah Sunday said if the BJP is voted to power in West Bengal, it would set up a special squad to curb cattle smuggling and end "goonda raj" and "syndicate raj" in the state.

Addressing election rallies at Tehatta and Ranaghat in Nadia district, Shah said if the BJP is voted to power in the state, it would implement the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), end polygamy and enforce the ban on triple talaq.

Shah alleged that successive Congress governments and the TMC under Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had adopted a soft approach towards terrorism, claiming that "terrorists were served biryani" during their rule.

Speaking in Ranaghat, Shah alleged that most of the cattle smuggling takes place through Nadia district. "Cattle smuggling has been the highest in this district. It has happened in such a manner that it will take 71 years for Mamata Banerjee to wash off her sins. After forming the government in West Bengal, we will form a special squad to stop the menace," he said.

"During the rule of the Congress and Mamata Banerjee governments, terrorists were being fed biryani. After Narendra Modi became prime minister, India answered terror attacks with surgical strikes and air strikes," Shah said.

Shah also accused Mamata Banerjee of allowing infiltration and alleged that illegal migrants had been accommodated in the state for political reasons.

'India's position on Palestine unchanged'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 26: Sharp differences among the BRICS member states over the US-Israel war on Iran stalled India's efforts to build a consensus position on the conflict during a meeting of the grouping in New Delhi last week, official sources said Sunday.

There was no change in India's position on the Palestine issue at all, they said days after the meeting of the BRICS Deputy foreign ministers and special envoys on Middle East and North America held in New Delhi.

As consensus on the West Asia conflict eluded, a "chair's statement" was released at the end of the deliberations. India is the current chair of the BRICS. The BRICS meeting of officials on the Middle-East could not produce a consensus document because there was "sharp difference of positions among members who are party to the conflict", the sources said.

It is learnt that the United Arab Emirates' position on the conflict resulted in the meeting ending without producing a collective statement.

Efforts to bridge the gaps by all others were not successful, the sources said. On the Palestine issue, India had only as recently as in January reached an agreed position with the Arab League, including Palestine, they said.

India has been clear in its support for a two-State solution, the sources said.

"Many BRICS members had hosted/supported/ attended the Sharm el-Sheikh summit and the UNSC resolution 2803. These have been notable developments in the last year," a source said.

The Sharm el-Sheikh summit in October last paved the way for ending the Israeli military offensive in Gaza. The summit culminated in the conclusion of a ceasefire agreement in Gaza.

Following the BRICS meeting Friday, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said the members expressed deep concern on the conflict in the Middle East and offered views and assessments on the matter.

In January, India and the Arab League nations had pitched for a sovereign and viable Palestine state living side-by-side with Israel.



People dressed in costumes take part in the TCS World 10K marathon, in Bangalore, Karnataka

India mourns loss of iconic photographer Raghu Rai

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 26: Veteran Indian photographer Raghu Rai, widely regarded as a pioneer of photojournalism in the country, died Sunday after a two-year-long battle with cancer. His photographs did not simply accompany stories. They often became the story.

More than what made news on a daily basis, Rai's camera caught the ordinary, the every-person, with equal, if not more, sensibility and sensitivity. The mundane was made extraordinary, often in black and white, as if trying to soften the edges of life's ruggedness.

In a PTI interview in 2023, Rai said the best thing about capturing moments on camera is coming face-to-face with questions about life and its ever-changing nature. His pictures live on, seared into India's collective memory. One of the most haunting images

that came out of the Bhopal disaster is that of an infant, eyes open forever in a cold dark gaze, as a hand caresses the child into an eternal slumber.

Another picture, among his most telling perhaps, shows a pensive group of Congress ministers, all male, standing huddled around Indira Gandhi as she sits at her desk. The photo is simply captioned: "Indira Gandhi with Congress men, Delhi, 1967".

The contrast, while stark, between the two images, conjures up the shadow of a photojournalist standing too close for comfort to his subjects.

Photographer Aditya Arya, founder of Museo Camera, said Rai introduced Indian journalism to such photography that you were almost one with the subject.

Rai believed that the purpose of photography is "to capture the time we live in".

From the quiet rituals of



cremations to the spiritual vibrations of the Ganga aarti, from the busy city streets with hurried movements to intense discussions at tea stalls, Rai's lens caught the holy city in its element, filled with raw and unmatched energy. He saw a Banaras that was "less aware of its own image, a place that hadn't yet learned to

pose for the lens", said photographer Samar Jodha, who felt like "a son and a friend" of Rai.

During his long and illustrious career, Rai worked with leading Indian magazines Sunday and India Today. Over the years, his photo essays appeared in renowned international publications, including Time, Life, The New York Times, The Inde-

pendent, and The New Yorker. He served three times on the jury of the World Press Photo and twice on the jury of UNESCO's International Photo Contest, according to Magnum Photos, where he was nominated to join by Cartier-Bresson in 1977.

Rai also left behind a large number of books, including "Raghu Rai's India: Reflections in Colour and Reflections in Black and White" and "Exposure: Portrait Of A Corporate Crime".

Rai was working on his 57th book, according to the website of the Raghu Rai Foundation, which was established in 2010 and has archived more than 50,000 of his images.

Tributes poured in from across political and creative fields. Prime Minister Narendra Modi condoled the death of Raghu Rai and said his photography had extraordinary sensitivity, depth and diversity. While

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi credited Rai for preserving "our nation's memory" and chronicling "the soul of India" its people, its struggles, its joys, and its defining moments" in a post on X, Priyanka Gandhi said that the legendary photographer "etched the stories of joys and sorrows, elation and grief, challenges and struggles of ordinary Indians into his images".

Shashi Tharoor shared on X that his memories of Rai stretched back to his childhood, as his father and the photographer were colleagues at The Statesman.

BJD president Naveen Patnaik said his frames were not just pictures, but living histories.

Lalicist-writer Varun Grover called Rai "the silent storyteller, the interpreter of light, the most gentle and kind". Rai's last rites were performed at Lodhi Crematorium Sunday.



It remains a warning over the use of ever more powerful technologies. I hope that at all decision-making levels, wisdom and responsibility always prevail, so that atomic power can always be used to support life and peace

NORTHERN JAPAN WILDFIRE CRISIS

Japan has deployed 1,400 firefighters and dozens of Self-Defense Force personnel to battle mountain blazes that have been raging in the north for five days and threaten to reach homes in the picturesque coastal town of Otsuchi, officials said Sunday.



of the day quote

I will visit Japan, China, and South Korea this week for talks on energy security in the face of disruptions caused by the Middle East conflict

PENNY WONG | FOREIGN MINISTER, AUSTRALIA

The President therefore believes that before addressing the pardon request itself, efforts should first be exhausted to reach an agreement between the parties, outside the courtroom

ISAAC HERZOG | PRESIDENT, ISRAEL

Our 23 million people have the right to engage with the international community. The greater the external pressure we face, the more courage and resolve we have

LAI CHING-TE | PRESIDENT, CHINA

US-Iran peace hopes fade

REUTERS

Islamabad/Washington, April 26: Hopes of reviving peace efforts in the US-Israeli war with Iran receded Sunday as Iran's foreign minister returned to Pakistan despite the absence of US counterparts after President Donald Trump told envoys not to resume talks.

While Abbas Araqchi continued to shuttle between mediating countries over the weekend, Trump scrapped a visit to Islamabad by his envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner.

US forces removed security equipment from the city, Pakistani government sources said, signalling that any US delegation was unlikely to return for negotiations soon.

Although a ceasefire has paused full-scale fighting in the conflict, which began with US-Israeli strikes on Iran February 28, no agreement has been reached on terms to end a war that has killed thousands, driven up oil prices, fuelled inflation and darkened the outlook for global growth.

Tehran has largely closed the Strait of Hormuz, which normally carries a fifth of global oil shipments, while Washington has imposed a blockade of Iran's ports. After holding talks in Pakistan, Araqchi flew to Oman - another mediator in the war - where he met the country's leader, Haitham bin Tariq al-Said, Sunday. They discussed security in the strait and Araqchi called for a regional security framework free of outside interference, according to Iran's foreign ministry.

Araqchi later returned to Islamabad, Iranian state media reported. Pakistani govern-



Araqchi shuttles between mediators Pakistan and Oman

Iran demands blockade lifted before any negotiations begin

US removes security equipment from Pakistan, sources say

Trump said Iran's peace offer better but still inadequate

ment sources said he would hold talks with the country's leadership before heading to Moscow.

IRAN 'OFFERED A LOT, BUT NOT ENOUGH', SAYS TRUMP

Speaking in Florida before being rushed out of the White House Correspondents' Association dinner in Washington, Trump said he cancelled his envoys' visit due to too much travel and expense for what he considered an inadequate Iranian offer.

An earlier round of talks in Islamabad - in which Vice President JD Vance led the US delegation opposite Iran's parliamentary speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf - ended without agreement. After the latest diplomatic trip was called off, two US Air Force C-17s carrying

Netanyahu's biggest rivals join forces for Israel's next election

REUTERS

Jerusalem, April 26: Two of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's most formidable political rivals said Sunday they were joining forces in a bid to oust his coalition government in the upcoming election expected later this year.

The former prime ministers - right-wing Naftali Bennett and centrist Yair Lapid - issued statements announcing the merger of their parties, Bennett 2026 and There is a Future.

"This move is intended to unite the bloc, put an end to internal divisions, and focus all efforts on winning the crucial upcoming elections - and leading Israel forward into the future," opposition leader Lapid said. Bennett's office said the new party will be called Together, and that he will be its leader.

Bennett and Lapid have joined forces before, putting an end to Netanyahu's successive 12-year tenure in a 2021 election, only to form a coalition government that survived barely 18 months. Before that, they muscled their way into his 2013 coalition government in a move that left Netanyahu's traditional ultra-Orthodox allies out.

Netanyahu, Israel's longest-serving prime minister, made a comeback when he won the November 2022 election and formed the most right-wing government in Israel's history.

But Hamas' 2023 attack on southern Israel, which plunged the Middle East into turmoil and saw Israel fighting on multiple fronts, left Netanyahu's security credentials in tatters and polls since then have successively predicted that he will lose the next election, due by the end of October.

Mali's defence minister killed in major assault

REUTERS



Mali's Defence Minister Sadio Camara was killed in an attack by an al Qaeda affiliate on his residence near the main army base outside Bamako Saturday, France's RFI radio and two relatives said Sunday.

The operation in Kati, 15 km north of Bamako, was part of a wider assault by the affiliate, Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM), which cooperated with a Tuareg-dominated rebel group in what analysts and diplomats described as one of the largest coordinated attacks in the country in recent years.

A relative of Camara's told Reuters he had been killed, while a Malian journalist known to be a brother-in-law of the defence minister posted about his death on Facebook. A spokesperson for Mali's defence ministry and a government spokesperson did not re-

- French media, relatives say Sadio Camara is dead
Al Qaeda-linked JNIM and Tuareg-dominated group staged attacks
Russian mercenaries wounded in battle, Russian TV reports

spond to requests for comment on Sunday. A statement by the armed forces said operations were continuing in various parts of the country to repel the insurgents.

MAJOR SHOCK FOR MALI'S MILITARY LEADERS

The United Nations called for an international response to violence and terrorism in West Africa's Sahel region following Saturday's assault, for which authorities have not provided a death toll.

"The Secretary-General is deeply concerned by reports of attacks in several locations across Mali. He strongly condemns these acts of violence," a UN spokesperson posted on X.

If confirmed, Camara's death would represent a major shock for Mali's military leaders, said Djenabou Cisse, associate fellow at the Foundation for Strategic Research (FRS), which specializes in West African security. The current government, led by Assimi Goita, took power after coups in 2020 and 2021 and has pursued closer ties with Russia while spurning Western military cooperation - a strategy Camara promoted.

"As a key figure within the junta and a central architect of the Mali-Russia rapprochement, his removal would underscore JNIM's capacity to strike at the core of state power," Cisse said.

SHORT TAKES

Car explosion outside Ireland police station

London: Police in Northern Ireland have condemned a car-bomb attack on a police station as an attempt to undermine the 1998 agreement that brought peace to the region. The bomb, fashioned from a compressed gas cylinder, exploded as police were evacuating nearby residents in Dunmurry, on the outskirts of Belfast, Saturday night, Deputy Chief Constable Bobby Singleton told reporters Sunday. "This clearly demonstrates that what this type of device may have lacked in terms of its sophistication and scale, it more than made up for in its reckless unpredictability," Singleton said. "For a device like this to have been deployed against police and in such proximity to the public was idiotic. It was absolute madness."

Israeli attacks kill at least 4 Palestinians

Cairo: Israeli military attacks killed at least four Palestinians in the Gaza Strip Sunday, health officials in the enclave said. Medics said an airstrike carried out by Israel's forces killed one person near the central village of Al-Mughraqa, while Israeli gunfire and tank shelling killed two others near Gaza City. In another incident, Israeli forces shot and killed a 40-year-old woman in Khan Younis, in the south of the territory, health officials said. The Israeli military said it was unaware of any attack by its troops in that area at the time of the reported incident Sunday.

Russian defence min visits North Korea

Moscow: Russian Defence Minister Andrei Belousov has arrived in North Korea, Russia's defence ministry said Sunday, the second senior Russian official to visit Pyongyang in recent days. Earlier, North Korean state media KCNA reported that Russia's State Duma Chairman Vyacheslav Volodin had also arrived in Pyongyang and will attend the opening ceremony of a newly built memorial for North Korean troops who died fighting in the Ukraine war. Belousov is due to hold talks with North Korea's top leadership and senior military officials and will take part in "ceremonial and commemorative events," the Russian defence ministry said. Separately, Russian President Vladimir Putin sent a telegram to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un to mark the opening of the memorial, the Kremlin said.

Colombia explosives attack kills 13, injures 17

The attack took place on the Pan-American Highway in the El Tunel area of Cajibío municipality, about 35 km (22 miles) from Popayan, the capital of Cauca province

REUTERS

Bogota, April 26: At least 13 people were killed and 17 wounded in an explosives attack in western Colombia Saturday, a police source told Reuters, in violence authorities have blamed on dissidents of the FARC guerrilla group.

The attack took place on the Pan-American Highway in the El Tunel area of Cajibío municipality, about 35 km (22 miles) from Popayan, the capital of Cauca province, according to authorities. Cauca Governor Octavio Guzman said on X the attack was one of several criminal actions reported in the province Saturday.

Dashcam footage shows debris flying through the air at the moment of the explosion that killed over a dozen people, in Cajibío



"Cauca cannot continue to face this barbarity alone. We are facing a terrorist escalation that demands immediate responses. We demand forceful, sustained and effective action from the national government in the face of the grave public order crisis we are experiencing," he added.

Presidential candidate Paloma Valencia, a member of the opposition right-wing Democratic Center party who is from Cauca, called the attack "terrorism" carried out by the dissident FARC faction, which rejected a 2016 peace deal.

Hindu man's body found hanging from tree in B'desh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhaka, April 26: A Hindu temple caretaker was found hanging from a tree three days after he went missing from his home in southeastern Bangladesh, a minority group said and demanded stern action against the perpetrators.

Nayan Sadhu, the 40-year-old resident of Dohazari area under Sthania Upazila of Chhatogram district, was serving as a caretaker-cum-priest at a Shivakali temple in Khurushkul union in Cox's Bazar Sadar Upazila, Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council (BHBCUC) said late Saturday.

Two unidentified men took Nayan with them late on the evening of April 19, and three days later, his body was found hanging from a tree in a hilly area on the outskirts of the village, according to the police and residents in the Cox's Bazar neighbourhood.

"We recovered the body when it had started getting decomposed," the Kaler Kantha newspaper said, quoting an unnamed police official.



The police are yet not sure if it was a case of murder or suicide, he said. In a statement, the council demanded stern punitive action against the perpetrators of his murder.

"The Unity Council strongly condemns the incident and demands immediate arrest and exemplary punishment against the perpetrators," the forum said in the statement.

"We just cannot understand what could be the motive of killing an ordinary caretaker of a relatively small temple in a remote area," BHBCUC senior member

Kajal Debnath told PTI. Bangladesh Puja Celebration Council's Cox's Bazar unit general secretary Jony Dhar said the body was recovered three days after Nayan went missing, indicating that he was murdered.

Police said the body has been sent for an autopsy to determine the exact cause of the death.

An investigation was launched following the missing person's report filed by the deceased's wife April 19. Meanwhile, police Sunday detained four people in east-

"There have been 133 incidents of communal violence between January 1 and March 31 this year in Bangladesh"

ern Cumilla in connection with the mysterious death of a young Hindu Customs official, whose family suspected it was a murder.

The body of 35-year-old Bullet Bairagi was found on Saturday by the side of the Dhaka-Chattagram road.

"We have arrested four suspects after raiding different areas in Cumilla since Saturday night," specialised Rapid Action Battalion's (RAB) company commander Major Sadman Ibne Alam told reporters.

Officer in charge of Cumilla Sadar Model Police Station Sirajul Mostafa said, "We are putting in our best efforts to unearth the mystery of the death by engaging several teams."

Ukraine marks 40th anniversary of Chornobyl disaster

Millions were exposed to radiation, hundreds of thousands forced to flee, and wide swathes of land contaminated after the accidental explosion and resulting meltdown inside reactor four at the Soviet-built Chornobyl plant in the early hours of April 26, 1986

REUTERS

Kyiv, April 26: Ukraine is commemorating the 40th anniversary of the Chornobyl disaster Sunday, amid fears that Russia's four-year war could spark a repeat of the world's worst nuclear accident that led to thousands of deaths and devastating environmental consequences.

Kyiv says Moscow has repeatedly sent missiles and drones on a flight path near the plant to attack Ukrainian cities, even damaging a critical protective shield in an attack last year.

Marking the disaster - which spewed radioactive materi-

al across much of Europe as Soviet authorities sought to hide its true scale - has taken on sharp new meaning during Russia's invasion of its smaller neighbour.

Foreign officials including the EU energy commissioner arrived in Kyiv to commemorate the event and pledge fresh support for Ukraine's power system, which is regularly targeted by Russian air strikes.

Somber ceremonies took place at a Kyiv memorial honoring fallen first responders, as well as in the purpose-built city of Slavutych in northern Ukraine for evacuated plant employees. "Chornobyl has become both a symbol of the crim-



inal irresponsibility of the Soviet totalitarian system and of the heroism of the liquidators who responded to the catastrophe," said Denys Shmyhal, Ukraine's energy minister, on X Sunday. "Chornobyl is one of humanity's key lessons. Russia's war against Ukraine has further heightened these risks."

WAR DAMAGE

A Russian drone strike in February 2025 punctured a massive arc installed over part of the

Chornobyl plant in 2016 to shield a sarcophagus built in 1986 to cover tons of radioactive debris. No leaks were detected, and workers have patched up the hole.

But the arc needs at least 500 million euros' worth of more extensive repairs to prevent permanent damage, according to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, which is helping raise funds for the project.

Speaking in Kyiv Sunday,

- Ukraine commemorates world's worst nuclear disaster
Russia's war heightens risks of new tragedy at plant, minister says
Recent drone strike punctured protective arc, needs repairs

International Atomic Energy Agency Director General Rafael Grossi said repairs should start as soon as possible.

Kyiv's top state prosecutor told Reuters that Ukrainian radars had detected at least 92 Russian drones that had flown within a 5-km (3-mile) radius of the shield since June 2024.

Nuclear power has become the backbone of Ukraine's energy system since Russia's 2022 invasion, accounting for around 70% of total power generation, according to state-owned firm Energoatom.

Control of the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant - Europe's largest - is a major sticking point in

US-brokered peace negotiations between Kyiv and Moscow.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Sunday the plant risked a disaster worse than Chornobyl if it was not transferred back to Ukrainian control.

LONG-LASTING CONSEQUENCES

Millions were exposed to radiation, hundreds of thousands forced to flee, and wide swathes of land contaminated after the accidental explosion and resulting meltdown inside reactor four at the Soviet-built Chornobyl plant in the early hours of April 26, 1986.

Thousands have since succumbed to radiation-related illnesses such as cancer, although the total death toll and long-term health effects remains a subject of intense debate.

Pope Leo Sunday said the Chornobyl disaster had left a mark on humankind's collective conscience, and he urged that atomic power "always be used to support life and peace".



**“I hope that the spectrum prices go down because 5G has seen a lot of capital infusion without ROI. Till the time we start getting ROI, investing in a very expensive spectrum will have to be judged as a cost-effective business purpose”**

**SP KOCHHAR** | DIRECTOR GENERAL, COAI

## WGC PROPOSES PHYSICALLY-BACKED COMMON INFRA TO SCALE DIGITAL GOLD

The World Gold Council (WGC) has proposed an initiative to build a physically-backed shared infrastructure to advance the growth of digital gold. WGC through a white paper has proposed the concept of 'Gold as a Service', a platform owned and operated by the World Gold Council and built as shared infrastructure that any market participant can access to build digital gold products without needing to develop their own end-to-end systems



### of the day quote

India represents one of FlixBus' most strategic growth markets globally and is expected to become the company's largest market by passenger volume by 2030

**MAX ZEUMER** | CHIEF COMMERCIAL OFFICER, FLIXBUS



Recent employer and workforce studies show that 92 per cent of Indian knowledge workers already use AI at work, and 80 per cent of leaders in India say they would prefer a less experienced candidate with AI skills over a more experienced one without them

**SHANTANU ROOJ** | FOUNDER AND CEO, TEAMLEASE ETECH



Looking ahead, markets are expected to remain highly news-driven and volatile, with key focus on developments in US-Iran negotiations, trends in crude oil prices, and broader global cues

**PONMUDI R** | CEO, ENRICH MONEY



# Indian IT faces AI reset

Top-5 firms post mixed FY26 amid macro headwinds

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 26:** India's top five IT majors - TCS, Infosys, HCLTech, Wipro, and Tech Mahindra - closed FY26 at a critical inflection point, navigating a structural reset driven by macroeconomic headwinds, West Asian geopolitical risks, and the dual-edged sword of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Earnings analyses reveal a sector transitioning rapidly away from traditional effort-based delivery. AI-driven productivity is causing revenue deflation in legacy services. However, this near-term compression is being offset by a multi-billion-dollar surge in new AI-native engagements, prompting a decisive shift in client priorities from sheer scale to modular, outcome-driven contracts.

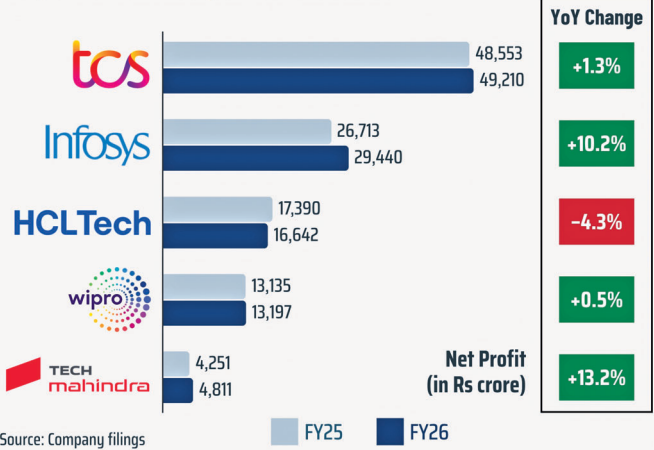
This paradigm shift is starkly reflected in mixed FY27 outlooks and evolving talent metrics. While TCS and Infosys signalled that the worst macro headwinds are receding, peers like HCLTech and Wipro flagged continued volatility and soft discretionary spending.

"AI may cause about 2-3 per cent annual deflation in traditional IT services revenues for the next couple of years. Indian IT services could see an incremental AI-led TAM of USD 300-400 billion by 2030," says a report by ICICI Direct.

The country's largest IT services firm reported a 12.22 per cent jump in its March quarter net profit to Rs 13,718 crore. Its revenue from operations for Q4 jumped 9.64 per cent to Rs 70,698 crore. For the full fiscal year 2025-26, profit after tax increased 1.35 per cent to Rs

## FY26 Report Card: How India's Top IT Firms Fared

Net profit for the financial years 2024-25 & 2025-26



**“Our #1 priority in FY27 is to ensure the company is positioned right to take advantage of AI opportunities for multi-decade value creation”**

**C VIJAYAKUMAR** | CEO, HCLTECH

49,210 crore, while revenue grew 4.58 per cent to Rs 2.67 lakh crore.

TCS noted that the company is entering the new fiscal year with positive momentum, asserting that the bulk of recent headwinds are mostly behind them. Its annualised AI services revenue crossed \$2.3 billion, which is over 6 per cent of its overall revenue.

TCS CEO K Krithivasan said TCS is entering the new fiscal year with positive momentum on the back of new deal signings and asserted that a bulk of the headwinds it had experienced in the recent past are mostly behind.

Krithivasan said the impact

of the West Asia crisis will be limited to the challenges faced by clients in the travel and transportation segment and those based in the Gulf region.

Infosys reported a 20.8 per cent rise in consolidated net profit to Rs 8,501 crore in the January-March quarter, while revenue from operations increased 13.4 per cent to Rs 46,402 crore.

For the full FY26, net profit climbed 10.20 per cent to Rs 29,440 crore, and revenue rose 9.6 per cent to Rs 178,650 crore.

The management acknowledged that AI is beginning to cannibalise traditional IT services but noted that this deflation is being offset by a surge in new AI-driven services.

HCLTech reported a 4.2 per cent year-on-year rise in consolidated net profit to Rs 4,488 crore in Q4 FY26, with revenue rising 12.34 per cent to Rs 33,981 crore. For the full fiscal year, the company recorded a net profit of Rs 16,642 crore (a 4.30

# India, NZ to ink free trade pact today

The countries aim to double bilateral trade to \$5bn in five years



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 26:** More than four months after announcing the conclusion of negotiations December 22 last year, India and New Zealand are set to sign their free trade agreement April 27, aimed at doubling bilateral trade between the two countries.

The pact will be signed in the presence of Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and Todd McClay, New Zealand's Minister for Trade and Investment, here at Bharat Mandapam, according to the commerce ministry.

The deal will also give India more temporary employment visas, easier access for pharmaceuticals and medical devices.

While the agreement will eliminate or reduce tariffs on 95 per cent of New Zealand's exports of items ranging from wool, coal, wood, wine, to avocados and blueberries to India, New Delhi made no concessions on allowing imports of dairy, onions, sugar, spices, edible oils and rubber to protect farmers and domestic industry.

New Zealand, which com-

The pact will give India companies duty-free access to the island nation's markets, and bring in \$20bn of investment over the next 15 years

India has so far finalised FTAs with three members of the Five Eyes alliance - Australia, the UK, and New Zealand

mitted to investing \$20 billion in India over the next 15 years in manufacturing, infrastructure, services, innovation and job creation, will also get quota-based tariff cuts for kiwifruit and apple exports.

The deal is aimed at doubling bilateral trade to \$5 billion in five years. The pact will help Indian exporters, reeling under the impact of global uncertainties, including the West Asia crisis, diversify shipments in the Oceania region. India has already implemented a trade pact with Australia.

Under the pact, New Zealand will get duty-free access to goods such as sheep meat, wool, coal and over 95 per cent of forestry and wood articles.

Besides it will also get duty concessions on a number of items such as kiwifruit, wine, some seafood, cherries, avocados, persimmons, bulk infant formula, Manuka honey, and milk albumins.

To protect the interests of domestic farmers and MSMEs, India will not give any duty concessions in the politically sensitive dairy sector, like milk, cream, whey, yoghurt, and cheese.

## SHORT TAKES

### Mcap of 7 of top-10 firms erodes by ₹2L-cr

**New Delhi:** The combined market valuation of seven of the top-10 most-valued firms eroded by Rs 2 lakh crore last week, with Tata Consultancy Services and Reliance Industries emerging as the biggest laggards, in tandem with a bearish trend in equities. Last week, the BSE benchmark Sensex tanked 1,829.33 points, or 2.33 per cent, and the NSE Nifty dropped 455.6 points, or 1.87 per cent. The combined market valuation of seven of the top-10 most valued firms dropped by Rs 2,05,343.06 crore. The market valuation of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) tumbled Rs 66,699.44 crore to Rs 8,67,364.12 crore. Reliance Industries remained the most-valued domestic firm followed by HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India, ICICI Bank, TCS, Bajaj Finance, Larsen & Toubro, Hindustan Unilever, and LIC.

### Axis Bank axes 3K

**New Delhi:** Axis Bank Saturday reported a marginal decline in its employee headcount at the end of the financial year 2025-26, attributing the reduction to sustained investments in technology that have begun to yield productivity gains. Speaking during a post-earnings conference call, managing director and chief executive Amitabh Chaudhry said the trend of headcount optimisation is a natural outcome of the bank's long-term focus on digital transformation. The bank's workforce declined to around 1.01 lakh employees in FY26 from 1.04 lakh in the previous fiscal year, marking a reduction of roughly 3,000 employees. Axis Bank clarified that the decline was not targeted at any specific business segment but occurred broadly across functions, even as the bank continued expanding its physical presence.

### CIL plans to slash 243 MT coal imports

**New Delhi:** State-owned Coal India Ltd is planning a comprehensive 10-year roadmap to slash the current 243 MT coal import volume through ramped-up domestic production, coal quality upgrades, and logistics cost parity. The proposed roadmap targeting coal import cuts includes a detailed forensic audit of imports, backed by sector-specific policies and phased shift strategies to boost local supply, a source said. It will also include the National Washery & Logistics Grid to streamline coal washing and transport, addressing key bottlenecks in the supply chain.

## MARKET OUTLOOK

### West Asia situation, crude prices key drivers for mkt movement this week

**NEW DELHI:** The geopolitical situation in West Asia, particularly developments around the Strait of Hormuz, Q4 earnings from corporates and crude oil prices are the major factors to drive sentiments in the stock market in a holiday-shortened week ahead, analysts said. Stock markets would remain closed Friday for Maharashtra Day. The standoff in the Strait of Hormuz has kept crude oil prices higher, reinforcing inflation concerns. The US Fed interest rate decision would also be keenly tracked by investors. Hariprasad K, Research Analyst and Founder, Livelong Wealth, said, "The continued escalation in West Asia, particularly around the Strait of Hormuz, and the breakdown of US-Iran negotiations have introduced a significant event risk premium into global markets. This uncertainty is directly feeding into crude oil prices, with Brent hovering near \$107 per barrel." Last week, the BSE benchmark Sensex tanked 1,829.33 points or 2.33 per cent, and the NSE Nifty dropped 455.6 points, or 1.87 per cent.

### Gold, silver may face selling pressure as Fed meeting, US-Iran talks loom

**NEW DELHI:** Gold and silver may face some selling pressure this holiday-shortened week as traders track peace talks between the US and Iran, crude oil rates and the Federal Reserve's policy decision, analysts said. "Focus in the coming week will remain on the progress in peace talks between the US and Iran, and their potential impact on oil, gold, and broader financial markets," Pranav Mer, Vice President, EBG - Commodity & Currency Research, JM Financial Services Ltd, said. On the macroeconomic front, traders will monitor monetary policy decisions from the US Federal Reserve, Bank of Japan, Bank of England and European Central Bank. On the Multi Commodity Exchange, gold futures dropped Rs 1,910, or 1.23 per cent, to close the week at Rs 1.54 lakh per 10 grams, while silver plunged Rs 12,506, or 4.9 per cent, to settle at Rs 2.44 lakh per kilogram. According to analysts, gold's downside in the domestic market was limited by a weaker rupee, which declined around 1.4 per cent during the past week. In the international markets, Comex gold fell \$138.7, or 2.8 per cent to close the week at \$4,740.9 per ounce, and silver declined \$5.4, or 6.6 per cent to \$76.41 per ounce.

# Power demand hits fresh peak

Extreme heat triggers unprecedented power usage as peak power demand crosses 256 GW

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 26:** India's peak power demand hit an all-time high of 256.11 GW Saturday due to an intensifying heat wave, which increased the use of cooling devices such as air conditioners and desert coolers, according to the latest power ministry data.

The peak power demand Saturday eclipsed the previous record of 252.07 GW, hit just a day earlier Friday, April 24, at 15:48 hrs.

According to the power ministry data, peak power demand set a new high of 256.11 GW at 15:38 hrs Saturday, and it was fully met. Experts stated that peak power demand is inching towards the power ministry's estimate of 270 GW for this summer season, as mercury levels have begun to rise.

Temperatures in several regions have been significantly above normal - by 5 degrees Celsius or more - indicating a developing heat stress scenario across parts of the country, according to the India Meteorological Department.

On Saturday, Delhi recorded its highest maximum temperature of the year so far at 42.8 degrees Celsius, marking the



**HISTORIC SURGE**  
April 25 - 256.11 GW  
April 24 - 252.07 GW

highest maximum since 2022, when it reached 43.5 degrees Celsius on April 28.

Saturday had been the third consecutive day of a heatwave, according to the IMD.

The country's peak power demand has risen with temperatures in April. The highest electricity supply April 22 was 239.70 GW which rose to 240.12 GW April 23, 2026. In the first fortnight of this month, the peak power demand met, or the highest supply of electricity in a day, remained lower than the

235.32 GW recorded in April 2025. Experts are of the view that demand and consumption of electricity may further rise due to more intense heat waves, with more frequent use of air conditioners, air coolers, and other appliances by domestic and commercial consumers to beat rising mercury levels in the country. The IMD has projected harsh summers this year.

Last summer, the peak power demand was 242.77 GW, recorded in June, 2025, but stayed below the government's estimate of 277 GW. In May 2024, the peak power demand was 250 GW, a record at the time and exceeding the previous all-time peak of 243.27 GW set in September 2023.

# Gig workers' body seeks heatwave protections

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, April 26:** As scorching temperatures grip large parts of India, a national body representing gig and platform workers has urged the government to introduce enforceable heatwave protections.

The Indian Federation of App-Based Transport Workers has written to the Ministry of Labour and Employment, seeking the introduction of binding safeguards under the Code on Social Security, 2020.

The legislation governs social security entitlements for gig and platform workers across the country.

In its letter, the federation



proposed a series of measures aimed at protecting workers from the harsh impact of heatwaves.

These include paid cooling breaks during orange and red heat alerts issued by the India Meteorological Department,

along with safeguards against penalties, ID blocks, or reduced incentives if workers pause duties due to extreme heat.

The federation has also called for mandatory access to drinking water, oral rehydration salts, and cooling shelters for workers operating in high temperatures.

Additionally, it recommended the introduction of in-app emergency distress systems and public compliance dashboards to ensure accountability among aggregators.

Highlighting the urgency of the issue, IFAT noted that delivery personnel, ride-hailing drivers, and home-service workers continue to operate under severe heatwave con-

ditions without adequate protections, exposing them to serious health risks.

To strengthen its case, the federation pointed to international examples, noting that countries such as South Korea, Singapore, France, Japan, the United Arab Emirates, and the US state of California have already implemented similar protections for platform workers.

"Heat protection is not a privilege. It is a labour right, a public health necessity, and a matter of dignity," the federation said.

"Heat protection is not a privilege. It is a labour right, a public health necessity, and a matter of dignity," IFAT said in its letter.

# Trump bought at least \$51 million in bonds in March

REUTERS

**New York, April 26:** US President Donald Trump bought at least \$51 million in bonds in March, according to financial disclosures released Saturday, with the purchases spanning several sectors.

Trump carried out 175 financial transactions last month, according to forms released by the US Office of Government Ethics. The forms don't include exact values for each sale or purchase, only a range of values for each.

Most of the assets disclosed were municipal bonds issued by states, counties, school districts and other entities with ties to government agencies or public-private partnerships.

His 26 largest transactions, in the \$1 million to \$5 million range, were mainly municipal bonds or US Treasuries, although two of the deals listed were purchases of corporate offerings from Weyerhaeuser and General Motors. He also invested in an exchange-traded fund tracking a high-yield bond index.

The president bought corporate bonds across energy, technology, healthcare and financial services, with issuers including Constellation Energy, Occidental Petroleum, Broadcom, Nvidia, Meta Platforms, Microsoft and Wall Street banks Citigroup, Goldman Sachs, and JPMorgan Chase, along with Boeing.

The combined maximum value of Trump's bond purchases across all asset classes is about \$161 million.



# Sai's masterclass

Gaikwad's unbeaten 74 in vain as Sudharsan's clinical 87 steers Gujarat Titans to victory over Chennai Super Kings

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Chennai, April 26:** A dominant top-order performance led by Sai Sudharsan, Shubman Gill, and Jos Buttler helped Gujarat Titans chase down a 159-run target against hosts Chennai Super Kings with remarkable ease, sealing an eight-wicket win with 20 balls to spare at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai Sunday.

Chasing 159, Gujarat got off to a brisk start despite some early discipline from the Chennai bowlers. Gill looked in fluent touch from the outset, striking three sixes in his 33 off 23 balls, while Sudharsan complemented him well as the duo stitched together a quickfire opening stand. The Titans raced to 55/0 in the Power-play, but soon after, Gill was stumped off Noor Ahmad, courtesy sharp glove-work from Sanju Samson.

However, any hopes of a Chennai comeback were quickly extinguished as Sudharsan and Buttler took control. The left-hander continued his rich vein of form, bringing up a 33-ball fifty and targeting both spin and pace with authority. Buttler, after a watchful start, grew in confidence and found boundaries at crucial intervals, ensuring the required rate never became a concern.

The pair added a decisive partnership, with Sudharsan particularly severe on Akeal



Hosein, smashing multiple sixes to tilt the contest firmly in Gujarat's favour. Some missed chances by the fielders only added to Chennai's woes as the Titans batters capitalised fully.

Sudharsan eventually fell for a superb 87 off 46 balls, laced with four boundaries and seven sixes, after a brilliant catch in the deep by Dewald Brevis. By then, however, the result was a mere formality. Buttler remained composed till the end and fittingly finished the chase in style, hammering a straight six to seal the win.

Earlier, CSK had posted 159,

recovering well after a disastrous start. The pitch offered variable bounce, making stroke-play difficult in the first half of the innings. Their top order struggled to get going against disciplined bowling, but a crucial middle-overs revival helped them reach a fighting total.

Shivam Dube played a key role in that recovery, stitching an important partnership with Rituraj Gaikwad. The duo focused on batting deep after early setbacks, rotating strike effectively before accelerating towards the end. Dube's approach against pace, in par-

ticular, helped Chennai regain momentum on a surface where timing the ball wasn't easy.

With this comprehensive victory, GT returned to winning ways after back-to-back losses, while CSK were left to reflect on missed opportunities.

**Brief scores:**  
**Chennai Super Kings** 158/7 in 20 overs (Rituraj Gaikwad 74\*, Shivam Dube 22; Kagiso Rabada 3-25, Arshad Khan 2-43) lost to **Gujarat Titans** 162/2 in 16.4 overs (Sai Sudharsan 87, Jos Buttler 39\*; Noor Ahmad 1-29, Akeal Hosein 1-46) by 8 wickets

# KKR tide over LSG in Super Over

Rinku, Narine star as KKR hand LSG their fifth loss in a row

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Lucknow, April 26:** After Lucknow Super Giants walked with them toe-to-toe in regulation time, Kolkata Knight Riders found a familiar saviour in Sunil Narine to register a tight Super Over victory in their IPL match here Sunday.

Both Super Giants and Knight Riders ended up at 155 when a total of 40 overs were bowled, but Narine made all the difference in the Super Over.

Conjuring his years' of experience, the spinner dismissed Nicholas Pooran and Aiden Markram to limit LSG to 1 for two, which was also the lowest score in a Super Over.

The Kolkatans did not fumble and notched up the required two runs with Rinku Singh, who also had wonderful day on the field taking four catches, fittingly fetching the winning runs.

It was Rinku's well-paced 83 not out off 51 balls that worked as the catalyst for KKR total of 155 for seven earlier.

Once the Super Giants restricted KKR to that modest total, courtesy Mohsin Khan's five-for, they had an excellent

**TODAY'S MATCH**

**DC vs RCB**

TIME: 7:30 PM

Star Sports channels & JioHotstar

chance to register a rare home victory.

But the hosts slipped against a set of spot-on Kolkata bowlers on a slow black soil pitch.

The result pushed KKR to eighth on the table with five



points, while LSG plummeted to the bottom of the pile with four points.

The Super Giants have some big names in their roster - skipper Rishabh Pant, Markram, Mitchell Marsh and Pooran. But none of them could give direction and shape to LSG's chase.

Pant (42) and Markram (31) looked to be in good touch and they added 57 runs for the second wicket after the early departure of Marsh. But Markram fell to Cameron Green's pace-off delivery, while Pant's attempt to reverse scoop Narine, resulted in a catch to stumper Tim Seifert.

It left LSG's fate in the hands of a clutch of young domestic players like Ayush Badoni, Himmat Singh and Mukul Choudhary to see off the chase.

They whittled down the equation 17 off the last over with luck and pluck. Two successive no-balls by Kartik Tyagi reduced the equation to 12 off 5 balls. But the pacer was allowed to continue to bowl even after two waist-high no balls because the second illegal delivery was deemed non-dangerous by the officials.

He jettisoned Himmat Singh, leaving LSG to make 8 off 3 balls, but Mohammed Shami's last-ball six pushed the match into the seasons' first Super

Over. Earlier, LSG pacer Mohsin added another sordid chapter to KKR's batting woes, taking five wickets to restrict them to 155 for seven.

Mohsin's 5 for 23 tore apart an already struggling KKR batting unit, as he snaffled the cream wickets of Ajinkya Rahane, Seifert, Green, Rovman Powell and Anukul Roy.

**Brief Scores:**  
**Kolkata Knight Riders** 155/7; 20 overs (Rinku Singh 83 not out, Cameron Green 34; Mohsin Khan 5/23). **Lucknow Super Giants** 155/8; 20 overs (Rishabh Pant 42). KKR won via Super Over

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
GT	8	4	4	-0.475	8
CSK	8	3	5	-0.121	6
DC	7	3	4	-0.184	6
KKR	8	2	5	-0.751	5
MI	7	2	5	-0.736	4
LSG	8	2	6	-1.106	4

## SHORT TAKES

### Uber Cup: Shuttlers revive QF hopes

**Horsens :** The young Indian women's team received a massive morale boost with a commanding 4-1 victory over European Championships bronze medalist Ukraine in their second Group A clash here, bouncing back strongly after a narrow 2-3 loss to hosts Denmark in the opener. The youngsters hit the court with intent Saturday, with Unnati Hooda setting the tone early as India produced a spirited all-round performance to register its first win of the campaign in emphatic fashion.

### Barcelona closes in on La Liga title race

**Barcelona:** Barcelona closed in on a second consecutive La Liga title after a rare win at Getafe Saturday, while Atletico Madrid got a much-needed boost before facing Arsenal in the Champions League semifinals. Fermin Lopez dedicated his 45th-minute opener to the injured Lamine Yamal, Barcelona's leading scorer and assist maker who will miss the rest of the season with a muscle injury but hopes to be fit for the World Cup with Spain. Marcus Rashford went on as a substitute and sealed the 2-0 victory in the 74th as Barcelona earned its first win at Getafe in six seasons. Barcelona increased the gap over second-placed Real Madrid to a commanding 11 points with just five rounds to go, including a clasico between them at Camp Nou May 10.

### Swiatek withdraws from Madrid Open

**Madrid:** Iga Swiatek withdrew from the Madrid Open due to an unspecified illness while playing her round-of-32 match against American Ann Li Saturday. Li got the walkover win when the fourth-ranked Swiatek withdrew with Li winning 7-6 (4), 2-6, 3-0. Swiatek, the 2024 Madrid champion, required a medical timeout while down 2-0 in the deciding set. She returned to the court but called it quits after Li held serve.

### Kothari enters last-16

**Carlrow:** Veteran Martin Goodwill of England scored a shock win over reigning champion Sourav Kothari in the final Group 'A' league match of the IBSF World Billiards Championship here Sunday. Goodwill, 63, registered a nail-biting 276-275 victory to finish his league engagements with an all-win record. Despite the defeat, Kothari too made the knockout pre-quarterfinals with two wins from three matches.

# Tapan clinches All-Around title

Odisha shines on Day 2 of Artistic Gymnastics Nationals

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 26:** The second day of the Junior and Senior Artistic Gymnastics National Championship 2026-27 witnessed high-intensity performances and remarkable achievements in the Senior Men's Artistic Gymnastics (MAG) category, highlighting the growing depth of talent in Indian gymnastics.

Representing Odisha, Tapan Mohanty emerged as the All-Around Champion in the Senior MAG category with an outstanding score of 73.433, delivering a consistent and technically strong performance across all apparatus. His victory marks a significant achievement for the host state and underscores Odisha's rising prominence in the sport.

He was followed by Yogeshwar Singh of Haryana, who secured the second position with a score of 72.667, and Shayan Sharma, who finished third with a score of 71.268, completing a highly competitive podium lineup.

The day's events were attended by esteemed dignitaries including Sudhir Mital, President of the Gymnastics Federation of



India, and Rajeev Mehta, Secretary General of the Fencing Association of India, whose presence added significance to the championship and encouraged participating athletes.

Adding to the success of the host contingent, Odisha qualified for the Senior MAG Team

Championship Final, further reinforcing its strong performance at the national level.

The Day 2 of the championship successfully showcased elite-level competition, determination, and excellence, setting the stage for an exciting finale in the upcoming events.

# Kenya's Sawe etches marathon milestone

Sabastian Sawe wins London Marathon in world-record time, first to finish under two hours

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**London, April 26:** Sabastian Sawe of Kenya has become the first person to break the fabled 2-hour barrier in an official marathon.

In a huge, once-inconceivable moment in sports history, Sawe smashed the men's world record by 65 seconds in winning the London Marathon in 1 hour, 59 minutes and 30 seconds Sunday.

Remarkably, the second-place finisher, Yomif Kejelcha of Ethiopia, also dipped under 2 hours by crossing the line in 1:59:41 in his first-ever marathon, while Jacob Kiplimo of Uganda broke the previous world-record time - set by Kenya's Kelvin Kiptum in Chicago in 2023 - by seven seconds, finishing in 2:00:28.

The 29-year-old Sawe, who retained his title in London, said it was a "day to remember for me" and thanked the huge crowds who lined the streets of the Brit-

ish capital to cheer him on.

In an exhilarating sight, Sawe ran quicker as the race went on, covering the second half of the marathon in 59 minutes and 1 second. He pulled clear with Kejelcha after 30 kilometers and then made his solo break in the final two kilometers, sprinting along the finish on The

Mall to loud cheers.

**Assefa defends crown**  
The women's race turned into a three-way sprint down the Mall, with the Ethiopian Tigst Assefa defending her title after kicking



What comes today is not for me alone, but for all of us today in London

## ISSF JUNIOR WC

### Shooters finish on top of medal tally

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Cairo, April 26:** Hemant Burman won silver in the men's 50m rifle 3 positions and the pair of Zuhair Khan and Addya Katyal won bronze in the trap mixed team event as India completed the ISSF Junior Shooting World Cup on top of the table with a total of 16 medals, including five gold, six silver, and five bronze.

In the first finals of the day, Burman won silver after shooting 351.7 across the three positions in the 50m 3Positions event.

The 18-year-old had qualified for the final in seventh place with a score of 578-24x and was joined by Vedant Nitin Waghmare and Rohit Kanyan in the finals, who shot 581 and 580 respectively. Rohit finished in sixth place in the final with a score of 311.9, and Vedant finished in seventh with a score of 300.5. Oleg Noskov of Kazakhstan, with a new world junior record score of 355.6, won the gold medal and Nikita Solokov of Uzbekistan won bronze with a score of 341.2.

The Indian junior athletes will now shift their focus to the ISSF Junior World Championship, the blue ribbon event in the calendar, which will be held at Suhl, Germany in June.

**The 31-year-old, who has never lost a marathon, shattered the world record previously held by the late Kelvin Kiptum who set a time of 2:00:35 at the Chicago Marathon in Oct 2023**

from home in sight of Buckingham Palace.

Her time of 2:15:41 was a women's only world record, which applies to races with only women's pace makers but is nearly five minutes slower than the official women's world record.

In second place, 12 seconds back, was Kenya's Hellen Obiri, while her compatriot Joyciline Jepkosgei finished third.

# Chelsea set up summit clash with Man City

The Blues salvage season with FA Cup run after PSG 8-2 exit, worst league run in 114 years



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**London, April 26:** Chelsea's season might be unravelling but it will still include an appearance in the FA Cup final.

Enzo Fernandez's 23rd-minute header secured Chelsea a 1-0 win over Leeds in the semifinals Sunday, setting up a meeting with Manchester City in the May 16 title match back at Wembley Stadium.

Chelsea's run in the FA Cup is salvaging a campaign that has veered off the rails after a humiliating exit from the Champions League - 8-2 on aggregate to Paris Saint-Germain in the last 16 - and five straight losses in the Premier League that marks the team's worst run of league results in 114 years and led to the mid-week dismissal of manager Liam Rosenior.

Calum McFarlane, Rosenior's unheralded and inexperienced assistant, has taken control of Chelsea until the end of the season and he will now be leading the team back out at Wembley next month, in search of what would be the club's ninth FA Cup title and a first since 2018.

### Fernandez makes amends after controversy

Fernandez met a right-wing cross from Pedro Neto with a firm header low into the net for the only goal. The Argentina midfielder recently courted controversy by speaking publicly about wanting to live in

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Madrid, earning him a two-match suspension by the team, but McFarlane was happy

to give Fernandez the captain's armband against Leeds.

Leeds, seeking to reach a first FA Cup final since 1973, piled on the pressure in the second half and Sanchez notably produced a stunning, one-handed save to keep out a piledriver from Anton Stach.

**Chelsea will try to stop City's treble bid**

City rallied to beat second-tier Southampton 2-1 Saturday to advance to the final and stay on course for a domestic treble. Pep Guardiola's team already has won the English League Cup and is battling with Arsenal for the Premier League title. Chelsea was most recently in the FA Cup final in 2022, when it lost to Liverpool on penalties. That marked a third straight loss in the competition's title match and Chelsea has lost its last six domestic cup finals.

## Alex wins Spanish MotoGP again

**Jerez:** Alex Marquez turned his 25th Grand Prix start into a late birthday gift by winning the Spanish Grand Prix for the second straight year Sunday while watching his brother and pole sitter Marc crash out in dramatic fashion. The Gresini Racing rider, who celebrated his 30th birthday Thursday, started fifth on the grid but quickly moved up to overtake his elder sibling before stretching clear for victory. Marc's quest for a milestone 100th Grand Prix win across all classes came to an abrupt end on lap two when he lost control at turn 11, crashing out while chasing down his younger brother and stunning the home crowd. "Not many words to describe this moment, we struggled a lot at the beginning of the year," Alex said. Championship leader Marco Bezzecchi finished second for Aprilia after failing to reel in the flying Alex over 25 laps, while VR46 Racing's Fabio Di Giannantonio completed the podium to move up to third in the championship standings. Marc's crash now leaves the reigning champion 44 points behind Bezzecchi in the championship hunt, as a first Jerez victory since 2019 remains elusive.

