

leisure

FORTUNE FORECAST

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181*

ARIES
Ganesha advises you to look before you leap. One hasty decision may undo a lot of hard work accomplished over a long period of time. After a tense morning, you may simply want an evening with kids, helping them grow the Dahlias.

TAURUS
Love is on the cards, says Ganesha. Your senses are likely to remain highly active today. Stay alert and avoid drifting into your own world at the cost of work. It is best for you to keep your eyes and ears open to avoid any misunderstanding with your near and dear ones, suggests Ganesha.

GEMINI
You have been aching to arrange a family reunion or get-together at your house. Well, today is the perfect day to do it. And why just family? You are also likely to invite some of your close friends and important business associates over to your place. Your spouse will enjoy the company of your loved ones.

CANCER
Today, you will be extremely impulsive and spontaneous, feels Ganesha. You better get rid of your negative thoughts and beliefs and start taking charge of things at hand. Also, stop focussing so much on the pitfalls, and start working. Listen to music that speaks to your heart and you will be at peace with yourself.

LEO
The ever energetic Scorpio's dictionary lacks the word dependence, says Ganesha. And true to this, you shall remain very active today. Your abundant energy will allow you to take work by its horns, and this will go a long way in giving you the moniker 'workaholic'. So, wipe the slate

VIRGO
Leadership is your forte and you shall receive kudos for the manner in which you handle your team. Much awaited promotions will materialise and so will some extra cash in your wallet. Wisely enough, you didn't get all this by not effectively balancing home and work, says Ganesha.

LIBRA
Expect some annoyance from the 'man in the chair', or people in charge who may be looking towards throwing a wench in your way. But know that it is just a blip on the radar. Your fortune is too powerful for anyone to affect it negatively. Stick to your task and dig into your imagination to find a way around the blips.

SCORPIO
Your rung in the social ladder just went higher today. But be wary of green-eyed monsters and ill words. Fight tooth and nail - if necessary - to protect our reputation, says Ganesha. But also learn to find your enemies' Achilles's heel and target it ferociously.

SAGITTARIUS
Your business is likely to grow with leaps and bounds, foresees Ganesha. Increase in financial returns will keep you happy for the entire day. Work in progress gives out positive signals. Your expert advise will be valued at work. In short, a day full of activities.

CAPRICORN
Your exuberance and self-confidence will become the talk of the day for those around you. But it's not for nothing that you will attract so much attention. You will derive pleasure in accomplishing herculean tasks today, and Ganesha says you will do justice to work too.

AQUARIUS
Team work and cooperation bring out the best in you, so you must make the most of a chance to work in a group. It could be brainstorming, or campaigning for an environmental cause or even playing beach ball! A game of cards in the evening, and consider your day well spent, says Ganesha.

PISCES
The workaholic in your bursts to the fore with a vengeance, and today will see you tackle pending projects with the zeal of a Holy Templar crusader. Your energy levels will be unflinishing, and your enthusiasm to wipe your slate clean admirable. Make the most of it, says Ganesha.



TIMBERLAKE'S MID-AIR SHOW FOR CO-PASSENGERS

Hollywood multi-hyphenate Justin Timberlake recently made air travel for his co-passenger on his flight to Argentina. The singer, 44, took over an airplane while traveling to South America for the next leg of his *Forget Tomorrow* world tour, reports *People* magazine.

SIA FILES FOR DIVORCE FROM 2ND HUSBAND

Singer Sia has filed for divorce from second husband Daniel Bernad after 2 years of marriage. The 49-year-old singer, whose real name is Sia Furler, recently separated from her husband after two years of marriage, and she filed for a divorce in Los Angeles.



Tamannaah: I'm a people person

New Delhi: Tamannaah Bhatia has addressed the ever-growing curiosity about her personal life.

Asked how she safeguards her personal life considering there's a constant want of people knowing

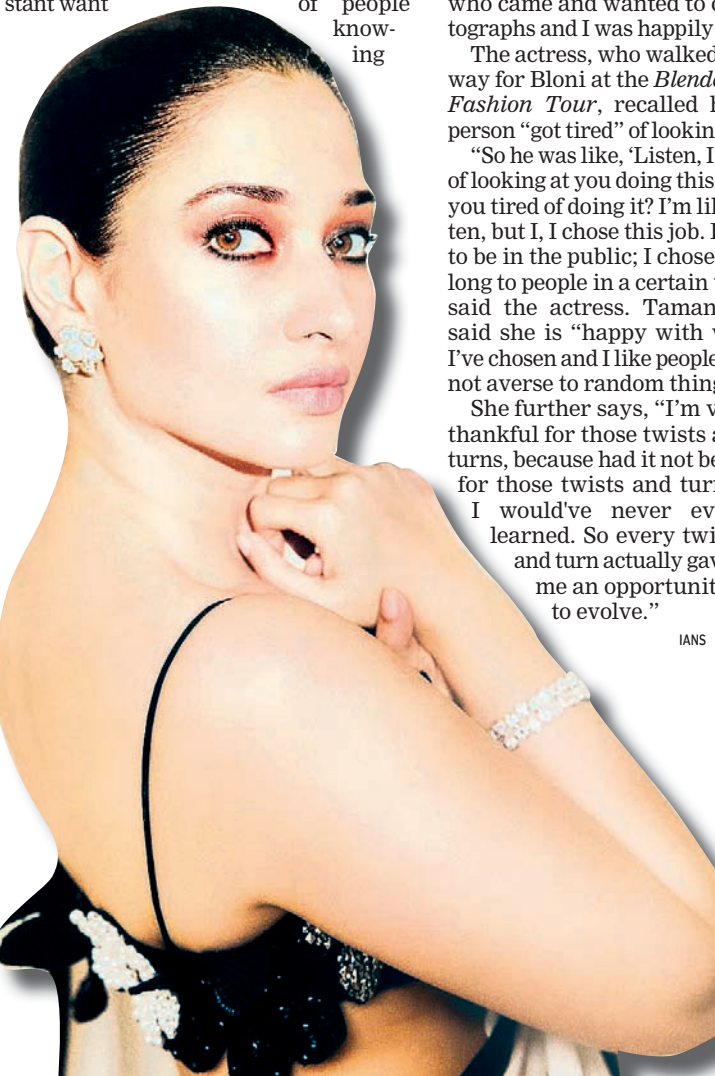
more about her, Tamannaah told the news agency: "I am a people person. I enjoy people. In fact, I bumped into a gentleman at the airport, and I was just giving photographs to people who came and wanted to click photographs and I was happily doing it."

The actress, who walked the runway for Bloni at the *Blenders Pride Fashion Tour*, recalled how the person "got tired" of looking at her.

"So he was like, 'Listen, I'm tired of looking at you doing this. Aren't you tired of doing it?' I'm like, Listen, but I, I chose this job. I chose to be in the public; I chose to belong to people in a certain way," said the actress. Tamannaah said she is "happy with what I've chosen and I like people. I'm not averse to random things."

She further says, "I'm very thankful for those twists and turns, because had it not been for those twists and turns, I would've never even learned. So every twist and turn actually gave me an opportunity to evolve."

IAN S



IAN S

Amaal's shocking revelation

ly back, to cut ties with them.

Amaal's long note on IG read, "I've reached a point where I can no longer keep silent about the pain I've endured. For years, I've been made to feel like I am less in spite of spending days and nights toiling away to make a safe life for people. Cancelled every dream of mine to only find myself to be spoke down to and question what I've ever done. I have spent my blood, sweat & tears to create each of the 126 melodies that have released over the last decade."

The singer further talked about suffering from clinical depression. He shared, "But today I stand at a point where I have been robbed of my peace, drained emotionally & maybe financially too but that's the least of my concerns. What really matters is that I am clinically depressed because of these happenings. Yes, I have only myself to blame for my actions but myself worth has been diminished countless times by actions of near and dear ones that stole pieces of my soul. Today, with a heavy heart, I announce that I am stepping away from these personal ties. From now on, my interactions with my family will be strictly professional."

IAN S

Kritika bats for women artisans



Mumbai: Actress Kritika Kamra is set to visit her hometown in Madhya Pradesh to spend quality time with the women artisans who are an integral part of her unique initiative she began in 2024 that helps empower women. She says she has always believed to use her medium to uplift the next tribe of women.

"My mother hails from Madhya Pradesh, that is what is a deep personal connection for me to the state and the place. Growing up she introduced me to Chanderi and its beautiful people and craftsmanship of textiles. When we started off, our larger goal and attempt was to employ women from the state, especially those from this region, to empower them and being their work forth. We continue to strive increase employment, give these women agency and give them the power of fair prices helping them elevate their lifestyles." Kritika said

She added: "As an actor personally for me I have always believed that we need to use our mediums to use our voices to uplift the next tribe of women. We will continue to possibly work with more and more women as we grow and help them be empowered".

IAN S

Ranjeet, Rekha ended professional ties on good note

Mumbai: Bollywood legend Rekha is celebrated for her exceptional acting talent and timeless elegance. However, during a recent podcast, actor-director Ranjeet shared an interesting and somewhat tense experience from their collaboration. Ranjeet, famous for his villainous roles in the 1970s, recounted how things went sour during the making of his film *Kaarnama* (1990), leading to a point where he had to ask Rekha to return her signing amount.

Ranjeet explained that af-

ter years of being dissatisfied with the roles offered to him, he decided to make his own films. "I had absolutely cut doing pictures. I never signed any pictures for ten years. People would call me, but they soon realised I was producing my own film," he said. When casting for *Kaarnama*, Ranjeet, who had known Rekha since the days of *Sawan Bhadon*, thought she was a perfect fit for the role. Despite knowing that another producer had signed her for Rs 5 lakh less, he in-



sisted on paying her the price she quoted, emphasising that



he wanted his artistes to be fairly compensated.

However, Ranjeet soon found himself frustrated with Rekha's behavior on set. While they shared a friendly rapport, Rekha's demands became increasingly difficult. She preferred to shoot during the day, which conflicted with the film's schedule, and she wasn't comfortable with the dance director. These issues, combined with other logistical challenges, led Ranjeet to a breaking point. "I realised I would soon be treated like other producers standing at her gate," he recalled. He

eventually decided to ask Rekha to return the signing amount, ending their professional relationship on a friendly note.

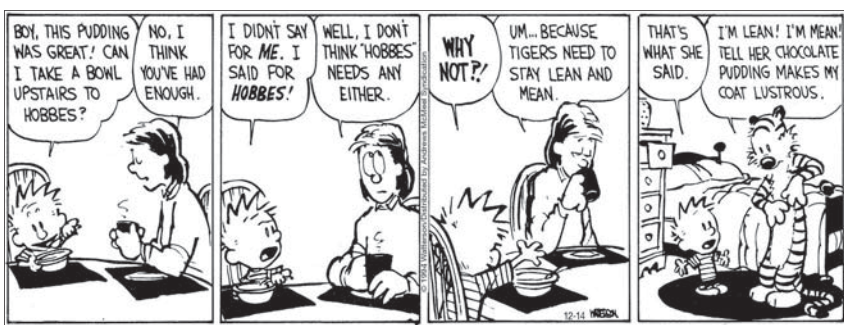
Ranjeet attributed Rekha's reluctance to shoot in the film's chosen locations and her complicated relationship with Amitabh Bachchan at the time. Despite the parting, he maintained that their bond was cordial. *Kaarnama* eventually featured Vinod Khanna, Kimi Katkar, Farha Naaz, and Amrish Puri.

AGENCIES

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

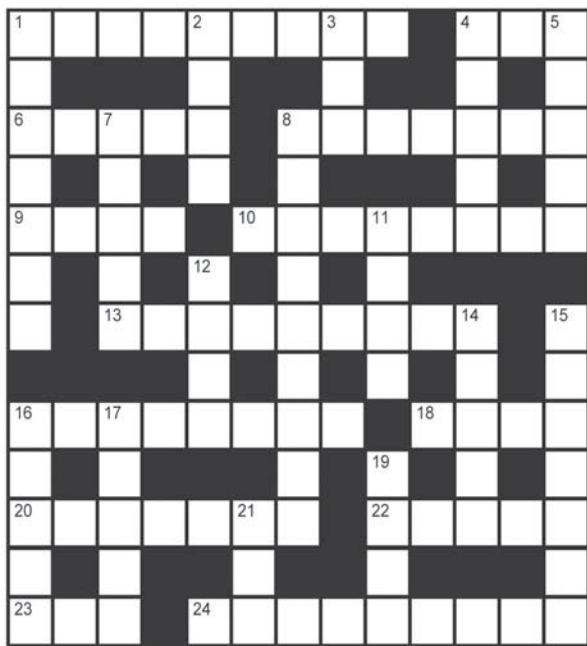


BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD



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Across

- 1 Unerasable
- 4 Winery sight
- 6 Blasé
- 8 Down payment
- 9 Tall woody
- 10 Ballpark figure
- 13 Leading man (5,4)
- 16 Extremely pleasing
- 18 Monster

Down

- 20 Submerge
- 22 It comes from the heart
- 23 Cow chow
- 24 Combine
- 1 Hurt
- 2 Lord's mate
- 3 Falsehood
- 4 Scene
- 5 Form of address
- 7 Woolgather

- 8 Low esteem
- 11 Greek letter
- 12 Egg-shaped
- 14 "I read you"
- 15 Small explosive
- 16 Religious belief
- 17 Like some roads
- 19 Narthex neighbor
- 21 Slump

SUDOKU

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

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

SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

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

SUDOKU

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

State to get CoE on skill devpt: Minister

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 20: Union Minister Jayant Chaudhary Thursday said Odisha will get one Centre of Excellence (CoE) in the field of skill development.

The Union Minister of State for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship said this while meeting Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi here.

Chaudhary said the Union Budget this year has made provision for opening five CoEs in the field of skill development.

“Odisha will get one of the five such centres,” he said, according to a press release issued by the CMO.

The meeting discussed the opening of more skill development centres in Odisha, strengthening ITIs in the state, setting up more ‘World Skill Centres’, multi-language training centre for skill development of students, including ITIs in PM-Janman Yojana for skill development of youth in tribal areas.

The minister gave a positive opinion on all these proposals and said that a decision on these proposals would be taken soon, the release mentioned.

Earlier in the day, while attending the valedictory session of the two-day capacity building workshop on ‘Catalysing Entrepreneurial Growth: Enhancing Financial Inclusion, Market Access and Digital Competence’, Chaudhary said the world is

looking towards India and the country presents a significant competitive advantage.

“The world is eyeing India for the quality of its products, its citizens, and its businesses, which presents a significant competitive advantage. Our industries must focus on product quality to distinguish themselves globally. To achieve this, industries need to invest in entrepreneurs and support them in every possible way for our economy to progress,” he said.

Stating that the Union Budget 2025 has emphasised initiatives targeting women and underserved categories, the minister said that loan sanctions of around ₹10,000 crore under the Fund of Funds (FoF) are now made accessible for them to embark on their entrepreneurial journeys.

He said the government has implemented various schemes to assist citizens in pursuing their dreams, but these will only be effective if “we learn to utilise them as our right.”

This two-day training session will catalyse the entrepreneurial spirit in budding entrepreneurs and help them to gain a deeper understanding of government initiatives, financial literacy, market access, and digital competence, he said.

The workshop was attended by more than 100 entrepreneurs from Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh.

Chaos in House as MLAs blow whistles

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 20: The state Assembly Thursday witnessed chaotic scenes as members of the Opposition Congress blew whistles as a mark of protest against “rising crimes against women across the state” after the BJP came to power last year.

The BJD members also created ruckus in the House demanding the withdrawal of restriction on videography and photography by journalists during Question Hour.

Ruckus erupted in the House immediately after an obituary reference was made on the death of former MLA Debaraj Seth of Sonepur Assembly seat. Seth died Wednesday. He was 84.

Deputy Chief Minister Pravatī Parida, Leader of Opposition Naveen Patnaik, Congress Legislature Party leader Rama Chandra Kadam were among the members who paid tributes to the departed legislator, as the House observed a one-minute silence.

Soon after the obituary reference, Congress MLAs, wearing black badges, rushed to the well of the House, holding placards and raising slogans against the state government.

They demanded a statement from Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi over “rising crimes against women”.

The CLP also said that they will continue the stir in the Assembly till a House Committee was formed to probe all the



crimes against women that took place in the last eight months of BJP rule in the state.

Unable to continue the proceedings, Speaker Surama Padhy adjourned the House till noon. When the House re-assembled, the Congress members again raised the issue and staged a walkout as the Speaker allowed a discussion on the admissibility of an adjournment motion on the poor condition of state-run hostels for tribal and Dalit students in the state.

The House conducted the debate in the absence of the Congress members. The BJD MLAs actively participated in

the debate moved by the party.

In the afternoon session that commenced at 4pm, the BJD MLAs staged a protest in the House raising objections to restrictions imposed on electronic media, especially TV camerapersons, and also print photographers to record videos or click photographs during Question Hour. The issue was raised by BJD’s deputy leader in the House, Prasanna Acharya, who asked why the mediapersons were not allowed to record videos or click photographs during Question Hour.

The journalists should be given a free hand and an Emer-

gency-like situation should not be created, he said.

Acharya said that as per the practice, camerapersons of both the print and electronic media cover the Question House, which is also live telecast every day.

When he completed his speech, BJD members created a ruckus and demanded a ruling from the chair.

Deputy Speaker Bhabani Shankar Bhoi, who was presiding over the session, assured the agitating BJD members that he would inform the Speaker about their concerns.

However, the BJD members

CONDOLENCE MEET

Members of Utkal Sahitya Samaj pay tributes to eminent poet Padma Bhushan Ramakanta Rath at a condolence meet organised by the outfit at Sriram Chandra Bhawan in Cuttack Thursday



The journalists should be given a free hand and an Emergency-like situation should not be created, said BJD’s deputy leader in the House, Prasanna Acharya

continued sloganeering and accused the state government of attempting to control the media. Unable to run the House, Bhoi adjourned the proceedings first for 10 minutes and later for another 15 minutes.

Later, the Speaker allowed a discussion on the demand for a grant of the Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water department.

Outside the House, senior BJD MLA Arun Kumar Sahoo came down heavily on the BJP government and alleged that the Assembly releases photographs and videos of only ruling party members.

“They have deliberately stopped the camerapersons from taking photographs of the opposition’s agitation in the House... this is undemocratic,” Sahoo alleged.

Opposition chief whip Pramila Mallik also blamed the government for the chaos in the House.

“It is the responsibility of the government to bring normalcy in the House, but the BJP has utterly failed in this,” Mallik said.

Odisha needs more entrepreneurs who can provide jobs: Chaudhary

12TH SHAMBHAVI PURASKAR

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Mar 20: Odisha needs more entrepreneurs who can provide jobs in order to bridge the economic disparities among people of the state, Union Minister of State for Skill Development & Enterprise Jayant Singh Chaudhary said.

Speaking as the Chief Guest at a function to present the Bansidhar and Ila Panda Foundation (BIPF) 12th Shambhavi Puraskar here, Thursday, Chaudhary said, “Odisha is a resource rich state and skill development is very important for people here. Institutionally, Odisha is ahead of the game. But like any resource rich region there is economic disparity in the people. To bridge this more entrepreneurs who can give jobs, are needed.”

The award was given to the Centre for Integrated Rural and Tribal Development (CIRTD) - an Odisha-based NGO for its



contribution to society, by Chaudhary and renowned doctor Padma Shri Ashok Kumar Mahapatra.

CIRTD has been helping farmers, women, children, and youth in Sundargarh district by improving their lives through various programmes, according to a statement.

Sibaji Panda from Sonepur district also received the jury commendation certification for his efforts in supporting children with hearing impairments and helping them reach their full potential.

The BIPF instituted Sham-

bhavi Puraskar in 2014 to facilitate the efforts of emerging social catalysts actively working to bring positive change in society.

The award includes a cash prize of ₹5 lakh along with a citation and trophy.

The jury commendation certification comprises a cash prize of ₹1 lakh and a citation.

Adhyasha Satapathy , Chief Executive Dharitri and **Orissa POST**; Rama V Baru , Faculty at Centre of Social Medicine and Community Health, JNU; Sourav Bhattacharjee, Nutrition Specialist UNICEF, Odis-

ha; Shaifalika Panda, trustee & founder CEO of BIPF were present on the occasion.

Shaifalika Panda, trustee & founder CEO of BIPF said, “Shambhavi Puraskar awardees remind us that real transformation is rooted in deep human connection. By uplifting communities, they are not just improving lives but reshaping the future with compassion and commitment.”

The BIPF was established in 2011 as the social development arm of Indian Metals and Ferro Alloys Limited.

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 20: Congress MLAs Thursday said that they will continue their protest in the Assembly till the Speaker forms a House committee to probe alleged rising atrocities against women and girls in the state.

Holding a press conference here, Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader Rama Chandra Kadam said 44,824 women and children went missing in Odisha over the past four years (2020 to 2024), as per information given by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi himself in the Assembly.

At least 11 Congress MLAs, including Kadam, attended the press conference.

“Such a huge number of people are missing. At the same time, it was also reported that minor school-going girls have become pregnant...,” Kadam said.

During the last nine-month rule of the BJP government, more than 1,800 cases of atrocities against women were regis-



tered in Odisha, he said, adding, “It shows that women and girls are not safe in the state. So, we have been fighting for their rights and safety for the past several days.”

“We will continue our protest demanding the formation of a House committee to probe such cases,” he said.

The Congress has been protesting over the issue of the alleged rise in crimes against women in the state since the beginning of the second phase of the Budget Session March 7. The party has also announced to gherao the Assembly March 27.

Instead of taking any action to address the issue, the Speaker has suspended senior Congress MLA Taraprasad Bahinipati from Assembly for seven days, he said.

“Unparliamentarily word used against Bahinipati, he was insulted, attacked and suspended. However, we continued our protest because the BJP government cannot suppress our voice by taking such action,” Kadam said.

The CLP leader further alleged, “The Speaker has now put restrictions on camera persons to cover the proceedings during the Question hour. After imposing the restriction, specific direction was also issued not to cover our protest inside the House.”

Senior Congress MLA Bahinipati, who was also present in the meeting, condemned the Speaker’s action against him and said the Assembly is not the personal property of anybody; it belongs to the people of Odisha.

Man arrested for sedating, sexually abusing woman

Bhubaneswar: Laxmisagar police Thursday arrested a 36-year-old man for allegedly sexually abusing a woman by spiking her drinks with sedatives and later forcing her to terminate her pregnancy. The accused, identified as Shyam Sundar Das, had forced the woman to consume abortion pills which resulted in the miscarriage following her pregnancy, said inspector-in-charge (IIC) of Laxmisagar police station P Shyam Sundar Rao. The IIC said a relationship developed between Das and the woman, his neighbour, when the former opened a grocery shop in the vicinity a few months ago. A few days ago, Das had told the woman to lend him ₹1 lakh, which, he said, would repay very soon. Though the woman was initially unwilling to lend him the amount, later she gave in to Das’ proposal of mortgaging her gold ornaments to avail the loan. Rao said a few days earlier, finding the woman alone, Das entered the woman’s house and forced himself on her. Das, October 9, 2024, called the complainant asking her to meet at a specified location, and collect her gold ornaments. Upon reaching the spot, Das offered the woman a drink after mixing sedatives in it secretly. Later, he clicked a few nude photos of the woman, with an intention to blackmail her. The IIC said the woman’s ordeal did not stop there as Das continued to sexually assault her. He threatened to make the pictures viral if she did not give in to his demands. Later, Das committed her miscarriage by forcing her to consume an abortion pill. Laxmisagar police has booked Das under Sections 64 (2) (m), 89, 127 (2), 296, 351(2), and others of BNS.

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Experts call for renewed attention to role of forests

Bhubaneswar, March 20: As the world celebrates the International Day of Forests March 21 with this year’s theme – Forests and Food, experts and activists have stressed the need for renewed attention to the critical role forests play in sustaining both ecosystems and human livelihoods.

While forests provide oxygen, medicine, and raw materials, they also serve as an essential source of food, particularly for indigenous and rural communities.

In regions like Odisha, forests offer a treasure trove of edible resources, including jackfruit, mangoes, rambutan, peanuts, mushrooms, and medicinal plants. For tribal communities such as the Santal, Dongria Kandha, Juang, Mankidia, and Khadia, these forest foods are not just supplementary nutrition but a cultural and ecological lifeline. These communities have long depended on these resources, using traditional

methods to harvest, process, and preserve food without resorting to artificial chemicals or electricity.

Environmentalists and forest rights activists, such as Trilochan Sahoo and Y Giri Rao, argue that deforestation is threatening the livelihoods of these tribal communities.

Highlighting the impact of deforestation on indigenous and tribal communities, Environmentalist Sahoo said, “These communities often rely heavily on forests for their daily needs—food, shelter, and medicinal resources. When forests are destroyed, their livelihoods are directly threatened.”

Sahoo maintains that the tribal communities are not just dependent on the forests but they also play a crucial role in conserving them. “Their knowledge and practices have historically been vital in maintaining ecological balance,” he said.



He cautions that by disconnecting tribal people from their natural environment, the government may inadvertently harm both the people and the forests. “Instead of marginalising these communities, there needs to be a more integrated approach where tribal communities are seen as key stakeholders in forest conservation, not as outsiders,” Sahoo says, adding that this would involve respecting their rights, understanding their traditional ways of life, and supporting sustainable practices that benefit both

the environment and the indigenous peoples.

The tribals practice sustainable farming techniques like crop rotation and employ preservation methods to ensure food availability throughout the year.

Despite the richness of forest foods, they are not typically dietary staples. Instead, they serve as supplementary sources of nutrition, filling in gaps during periods of scarcity, such as hunger seasons or emergencies.

However, rising deforesta-

tion and the encroachment of commercial agriculture are rapidly threatening this fragile relationship. Experts warn that if indigenous knowledge and forest-based food systems are lost, both biodiversity and food security could suffer irreversible consequences.

Forest rights activist Y Gi-

ri Rao points out the value of traditional knowledge in preserving food culture, nutrition, and environmental sustainability. “Forest foods, often rich in nutrients and medicinal properties, are a valuable resource that can contribute to climate change adaptation and food security,” Rao says.

“We also must document tribal and forest food which has not been done properly till date. This will help in conservation of forest food,” he adds.

Sanjukta Basa, an environmentalist, emphasises the

critical role played by tribal communities in forest conservation. According to her, these communities rely on forest resources for their survival, using them in a sustainable manner by only taking what they need and wasting nothing, including food.

“Instead of forcing these forest-dependent communities out for development purposes, the government should work with them,” she says.

Basa suggests that the Forest department should establish village community committees, and provide training to these communities to enhance their capacity for forest conservation.

“This approach would not only preserve forests but also integrate local knowledge and practices that have been sustainable for generations,” Basa concludes.

PAKHALA DIBASA

CM Majhi, BJD leader Patnaik greet people



The traditional dish, rooted in Odisha's heritage, continues to be a summer staple, evolving from a humble household meal to a sought-after delicacy in upscale restaurants

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 20: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, Leader of Opposition Naveen Patnaik, and several dignitaries Thursday extended their heartfelt greetings to the people of Odisha on the occasion of 'Pakhala Dibasa,'

Pakhala, believed to have originated from the Jagannath Temple, remains an integral part of Odisha's culinary and cultural identity

Once a simple home-cooked meal, Pakhala has now found a place in high-end restaurants and five-star hotels, gaining widespread appreciation

'Dahi Pakhala' (with curd), 'Sugandhi Pakhala' (flavored with herbs), and 'Meetha Pakhala' (sweetened).

Taking to X, Chief Minister Majhi called Pakhala a symbol of Odia heritage and his favorite dish. "Pakhala is deeply linked to Odisha's 'asmita' (pride) and holds a special place in our culture. It is an integral part of our daily lives. Heartiest greetings to all on Pakhala Dibasa," he wrote.

Echoing similar sentiments, BJD president and Leader of Opposition Naveen Patnaik said, "Pakhala has a unique place in Odia tradition. Best wishes to all on Pakhala Dibasa."

Once considered a simple meal for the common man, Pakhala has now gained widespread popularity, making its way into high-end restaurants and even five-star hotels, where special 'Pakhala Thalis' are now a sought-after delicacy.



ROLE PLAY: Artistes from Hrudaya theatre perform a drama titled 'Natuanka Maudamani Baishnaba Pani' at Rabindra Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Thursday

PIC: BIRASH NAYAK

Guv urges transparency in tax revenue

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 20: Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati urged the Odisha Taxation and Accounts Services (OT&AS) probationers to be prompt, transparent, and accountable in their roles, during a courtesy call here, Thursday.

Addressing a total of 39 OT&AS probationers from the Madhusudan Das Regional Academy of Financial Management (MDRAFM), Kambhampati emphasised that tax revenue



is the backbone of government funding and the officers play a crucial role in raising funds for the state and mobilising resources for public welfare. "Maintaining accounts and

ensuring timely audits is a critical responsibility. Many public sector undertakings are failing in this aspect, and it is up to you to change the situation," Kambhampati stated.

BJD supports power consumers' protest

Bhubaneswar: The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) extended its support to the Odisha Rajiya Vidyut Upabhogta Mahasangha's protest scheduled for March 21 in front of the Assembly. The demonstration aims to oppose the recent electricity tariff hikes and the installation of smart meters, which have caused widespread concern among consumers. BJD spokespersons Lenin Mohanty and Bhrugu Bauxipatra criticised the BJP-led state government for failing to honour its election promises of providing 300 units of free electricity and preventing tariff hikes. Instead, they alleged, the government has increased rates and introduced smart meters, burdening consumers.

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

I, Abhimanu Sahu, S/O Late Agadhu Sahu, resident of ward no.-3 , PO - Panigrahi Pentho, PS - Bada Bazar, At - Gurumurthy Pentho Sahi, Aska Road, Berhampur, Dist : Ganjam, Pin - 760006, Odisha,declare by this Affidavit No - 935, Dtd : 01.03.2025, that now onward I shall be known as Abhimanyu Sahu for all future purposes.

I, Rafik Raheman, S/o- Late Syed Raheman, Mathasahi, Station Bazar, P.O.- College Square, Dist.- Cuttack-753003, Odisha declare by this affidavit No.-624, dt. 27.01.25 that in my son Samsur Rahman Passport my name has been wrongly recorded as Rafique Rahman instead of Rafik Raheman, it should be corrected as Rafik Raheman. Rafik Raheman and Rafique Rahman is one and same person. Henceforth, I shall be known as Rafik Raheman for all purposes.

FROM P1

'The couple's case is one of the biggest in alleged tax evasion'

"The couple's case is one of the biggest in alleged tax evasion, with at least \$129 million in lost taxes, according to prosecutors' estimates, not including interest or penalties. Prosecutors said he could face a decade or more in prison," the WSJ reported.

Edelman grew wealthy on the backs of the American taxpayers in the post-9/11 war effort, only to engage in a decades-long scheme to evade paying his own taxes, prosecutors alleged in a December court filing.

Edelman's trial is set to begin in October. A recent court filing said plea negotiations are ongoing.

Beyond the charges of tax evasion and fraud, the case has drawn attention from lawyers and accountants due to potential implications for other Americans living abroad.

The US is unusual in taxing Americans living abroad. In

virtually every other country, governments tax people based on residence, not citizenship. Americans generally pay taxes to the government where they are living, and must also file US tax returns, with foreign-tax credits to avoid double taxation. But foreign spouses usually don't pay US taxes if they aren't living there.

Meanwhile, a decades-long effort to ease rules for expats is picking up steam in the US. In December, Rep. Darin LaHood (R., Ill.) introduced a bill to end foreign-income tax on overseas Americans, allowing them to pay taxes only where they live. President Trump promised in his election campaign to end worldwide taxation on Americans, a practice that was introduced in the 1860s to help finance the Civil War, it reported.

AGENCIES

Integrated waste hubs to boost sanitation



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 20: A high-level meeting chaired by Housing & Urban Development (H&UD) Minister Krushna Chandra Mahapatra Thursday focused on enhancing sanitation in urban local bodies (ULBs) through improved waste management strategies.

The meeting reviewed the status of Compressed Biogas (CBG) plants in five Municipal Corporations, the Puri-Konark Cluster, and the Boudhgarh-So-

nepur Cluster. Minister Mahapatra urged officials to accelerate project completion to improve waste processing efficiency.

To streamline urban waste management, the minister proposed establishing integrated waste processing complexes in municipal corporations and select municipalities. These facilities will house multiple processing units, including CBG plants, reducing infrastructure and transportation costs. He also directed officials to reno-

vate and restore non-functional toilets and e-toilets under the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC).

Addressing garbage accumulation, officials were instructed to expedite waste processing at the Temporary Transfer Station (TTS) near Sainik School and operationalise the mega waste processing centre at Palasuni.

The minister suggested developing a digital sanitation monitoring application for municipal corporations and select municipalities, integrating it with the SUJOG portal for better oversight.

H&UD principal secretary Usha Padhee proposed sharing a model agreement with ULBs to encourage self-help groups (SHGs) to participate in the operation and maintenance of public toilets and urban sanitation services.

WEATHER		
	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	36.2°	35.5°
Min Temp	24.6°	23.5°
Humidity	82%	82%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
FORECAST Partly cloudy sky		

MARKET WATCH		
INDEX	VARIATION	
SENSEX BOUNCES	SENSEX	76,348.06 ▲ 899.01
	NIFTY	23,190.65 ▲ 283.05
	DOLLAR	86.38 ▼ 0.07
	EURO	93.70 ▼ 0.57
	GOLD	₹88,581 ▲ ₹17
SILVER	₹99,216 ▼ ₹675	

WORLD POETRY DAY

'AI a great tool, but it can never replace human mind'

As AI-powered tools reshape creative landscapes, poets and literary experts debate whether technology enhances artistic expression or diminishes the emotional depth of poetry

RESHMI YADAV, OP

Bhubaneswar, March 20: Poetry has long been regarded as the purest form of human expression—an art that transcends language, culture, and time. However, in an era where

artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly influencing creative fields, poetry is no longer untouched. While some see AI as a tool to enhance creativity, others fear it may threaten the essence of artistic expression.

"AI is undoubtedly a powerful tool, but it can never replace the human mind," says Sunaina Mohanty, Social Media & Content Executive at Bangalore, and author of 21 Days 21 Shades and Expressions: Rhythmical Thoughts. "Poetry comes from within—it's an expression of emotions, not just a string of well-placed words. No matter how well AI is trained, it cannot capture the depth of human emotions."

As AI-powered tools like ChatGPT, Sudowrite, and Bard gain popularity, the debate intensifies: Is AI enhancing creativity or diminishing its



authenticity?

For some, AI serves as a creative companion rather than a threat. Ananya Mishra, a post-

graduate student in English literature, sees AI as a valuable collaborator. "I don't consider AI a threat but a partner in

the creative process. It helps me overcome writer's block by suggesting new themes and metaphors. But the soul of a poem still comes from a human heart."

However, many literary purists argue that AI-generated poetry lacks depth and emotional authenticity. Girish Ranjan Sahoo, a professor at Centurion University and an Odia satirist, believes poetry is a reflection of personal experience and societal observation—something AI cannot replicate.

"I write about overlooked issues, social struggles, politics, and human emotions. True poetry is born from lived experiences and deep contemplation. AI merely compiles data and patterns—it doesn't feel pain, love, or longing," says Sahoo. "When a poet writes, they reflect, struggle, and refine their

thoughts. AI, on the other hand, generates results based on pre-existing information. That is not creation—it is reproduction."

He further warns against over-reliance on AI, questioning its long-term impact on future poets. "If young poets grow up depending on AI for inspiration, will they ever learn to dig deep into their own emotions? Poetry is meant to challenge us, to give voice to what words often struggle to express. If we surrender that to AI, we risk losing something profoundly human."

While AI continues to evolve, one truth remains: poetry is deeply tied to human emotion and experience. Whether AI will complement or compromise this essence is a debate that will shape the future of creative expression.

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Nothing, not even the darkest falsehood can stop the ultimate triumph of Truth.

THE MOTHER



Self-Inflicted Disaster

US President Donald Trump's return to the White House has been accompanied by dramatic economic-policy shifts, setting countries around the world on edge. The new administration has imposed sweeping tariffs on Chinese, Mexican, and Canadian imports – pausing, reinstating, and later granting temporary exemptions for goods compliant with the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA). In response, both Canada and Mexico have announced retaliatory tariffs on key US industries, while Trump has vowed to impose “reciprocal” tariffs on “everybody across the board.”

Since no other country wields as much influence over the world economy as the United States, these abrupt and unpredictable policy shifts have fueled fears of a global slowdown, triggering a stock-market selloff – starting in the US itself. In fact, Trump's trade policies may inflict even greater damage at home than abroad. While some of his moves – especially his administration's efforts to boost domestic semiconductor manufacturing – could prove beneficial, his erratic policy shifts jeopardize America's economic stability, undermining its competitiveness and long-term growth.

Trump has long been frustrated by the fact that the US runs trade deficits with many countries. During his recent meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he specifically raised concerns about America's \$45.6 billion trade deficit with India. In response, Modi pledged to increase energy imports from the US.

But not every trade relationship needs to be perfectly balanced. Trade imbalances are a natural part of global commerce, enabling economies of scale that ultimately benefit all countries.

Consider everyday transactions between individuals. Adam buys groceries from a neighbourhood store owned by Eve, who spends that money at various other stores and online platforms. Now imagine that one day, a furious Adam barges into Eve's store and declares, “I keep buying from you, and you buy nothing from me!” He then demands to “balance” their business relationship. If everyone insisted on such terms, commerce would grind to a halt, effectively dragging society back to the barter system.

Although striving for balanced trade with every country is uncalled for, America's overall trade deficit does raise legitimate concerns. At the start of this year, the deficit reached an all-time high of \$131.4 billion. What that means is that other countries are selling goods to the US and retaining a portion of the dollars earned, planning to use them for future purchases.

But it is important to recognise that this is the price of having a currency the world trusts and depends on. No one would willingly sell goods to North Korea and stockpile North Korean won for future use. The US dollar, on the other hand, serves as a global reserve currency precisely because of the world's confidence in its stability. Trump's tariffs now threaten to undermine the dollar's global role.

Pointing to the high tariffs some countries impose on US goods, Trump has repeatedly threatened to retaliate with “reciprocal tariffs,” that is, matching those countries' tariffs product by product. While such an approach may appeal to him and to rallygoers on the campaign trail, its effectiveness is questionable.

Trade, after all, is fundamentally driven by comparative advantage, which means that the goods a country exports to one trading partner are typically different from those it imports from that partner. For example, one country might export pharmaceuticals while importing airplanes. Thus, matching another country's import tariffs on a specific good would be futile, especially if the US does not import that good in significant quantities to begin with.

But let's set aside these nuances. We already know what will happen if the US were to apply this policy “across the board,” as Trump suggests. Canada and Mexico will raise tariffs on US goods, leading the US to retaliate, creating a vicious cycle.

This dynamic is already playing out between the US and Canada. In February, Trump announced 25 per cent tariffs on Canadian steel and aluminum. In response, Ontario levied a 25 per cent tax on electricity exports to the US, prompting Trump to declare a national emergency and double his steel and aluminum tariffs to 50 per cent. Within hours, Ontario Premier Doug Ford suspended the surcharge after the US rescinded the tariff hike and agreed to negotiate.

The same retaliatory cycle would likely unfold with the European Union, China, Brazil, and many other trading partners. As a result, the US, which relies heavily on imports, will find itself behind a tariff wall – a strategy once favoured by many developing countries, often with disastrous consequences. Trump's tariff wall will drive up domestic inflation and increase US production costs, thereby making American goods less competitive and enabling Europe and China to outpace the US in key markets.

Notably, Trump's tariffs have already sparked intense discussions among other countries about strengthening economic collaboration. India and the EU, for example, are close to finalising a new trade agreement. There is also talk of deepening business and trade among Mexico, Canada, and China. In the short term, Trump's trade policies will undoubtedly cause economic hardship worldwide. But in the long run, the greatest damage may be inflicted on the US itself. Ironically, by trying to promote his MAGA agenda, Trump could end up driving a global shift that makes other countries great again.

The writer, a former Chief Economist of the World Bank and Chief Economic Adviser to the Government of India, is Professor of Economics at Cornell University and a non-resident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution.

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WISDOM CORNER

“If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.

HENRY DAVID THOREAU

“To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

“Things are as they are. Looking out into it the universe at night, we make no comparisons between right and wrong stars, nor between well and badly arranged constellations.

ALAN WATTS

FOCUS

MELTING GLACIERS

TROUBLE IN HIMALAYAS



The United Nations has declared 2025 as the International Year of Glacier Preservation, given the critical problem of glacier melting. The melting of glaciers has adverse consequences for a country like India, causing floods, avalanches and the like. As the source of many major rivers, including the Ganga, Brahmaputra, and Indus, the melting of Himalayan glaciers can have far-reaching impacts on water availability, irrigation, hydropower generation, and socio-economic development in the region.

Scientists have cautioned that glaciers in the Hind Kush Himalayas are melting at unprecedented rates and could lose up to 75% of the volume by the end of this century. Obviously, this poses a threat of dangerous flooding and water shortages for nearly two billion people living downstream along the rivers originating in this mountainous region.

The ISRO found that over 27% of Himalayan glacial lakes that have been identified have significantly expanded since 1984, with 130 of those lakes being in India. Significant alterations in glacial lakes have been observed in the catchments of the Indian Himalayan river basins between 1984 and 2023, as per a statement by the space agency. “Of the 2,431 lakes larger than 10 hectares identified during 2016-17, 676 glacial lakes have notably expanded since 1984,” it said.

The Himalayan mountains, often referred to as the Third Pole because of their extensive glaciers and snow cover, are highly sensitive to changes in the global climate, both in terms of their physical characteristics and societal impacts, says ISRO. “Research conducted worldwide has consistently shown that glaciers across the globe have been experiencing unprecedented rates of retreat and thinning since the onset

of the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century.”

The ISRO had found 676 lakes have expanded more than twice, while 10 lakes have grown between 1.5 to two times and 65 lakes 1.5 times. It said 130 of the 676 lakes are situated within India, with 65, 7, and 58 located in the Indus, Ganga and Brahmaputra river basins, respectively. An elevation-based analysis revealed that 314 lakes are located in the 4,000-5,000-metre range and 296 above 5,000 metres.

The bodies of water, created by the melting of glaciers, are known as glacial lakes and play a crucial role as freshwater sources for rivers in the Himalayan region. “However, these also pose significant risks such as Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs), which can have devastating consequences for communities downstream,” said ISRO.

Meanwhile, climate activist, Sonam Wangchuk in a recent letter to the Prime Minister, very pertinently stated that India should take the lead in addressing climate change. This, as he said: “As we all know the glaciers of the Himalayas are melting fast and if this and the accompanying deforestation continue at current rates, then in a few decades our sacred rivers like Ganga, Brahmapu-

tra and Indus might become seasonal rivers. This may also mean that the next Maha Kumbh might only happen on sandy remains of the sacred rivers.”

It may be pertinent here to point out that the Himalayas have the third largest deposit of ice and snow on Earth after the Arctic and Antarctica. In this connection, Wangchuk's suggestion of setting up a commission and declaring major glaciers like the Gangotri and the Yamunotri national treasures need to be adhered to so that there is adequate protection of the Himalayan glaciers, which are a source of the perennial rivers.

It is generally accepted that melting of the Himalayan glaciers could impact the water resources of the country. This can lead to an increase in the volume and intensity of river flows, which can cause flash floods and landslides. The population living in and around the Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna basin was estimated to be over 700 million people in 2022. Also, it is a well-known fact that the Himalayas exert a significant influence on seasonal shifts in the monsoon circulation and the distribution of rainfall in India and this has been decreasing over the years.

Not just the Himalayan glaciers, but with global tem-

peratures exceeding the critical 1,50C threshold above the pre-industrial levels for the first time in 2024, it has been found that the Arctic would be practically ice-free at times in the coming decades, observed Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM) Director, Dr. R. Krishnan. Speaking at the PIC Climate Emergency Conference recently, the scientist presented comprehensive data showing how human activities accelerated global warming. This phenomenon could be observable as early as 2030s.

According to projections of the IPCC, the melting of glaciers could indicate a likely increase in summer rainfall by 4-12% in the near term and 4-25% in the long term. This again will affect the country as the south-west monsoon accounts for 70% of annual rainfall. Moreover, changing monsoon patterns, including increased severity and frequency of storms, could lead to mountain hazards that may destroy critical infrastructure.

Additionally, the melting of Himalayan glaciers could affect agriculture and the availability of water for irrigation, which could lead to a decline in crop yields and have a significant impact on farmers' livelihoods. Already, the shortage of water is being felt in several parts of western and central India, and it is expected to accentuate over the years. Moreover, this shortage has added to water pollution affecting the livelihoods of large sections of the population.

Finally, it goes without saying that the crisis requires a concerted effort to foster regional change in quantifying effects, assessing vulnerability and combating climate change impacts on glacial ecosystems through mitigation and adaptation measures. The world must prioritise the reduction of carbon emissions.

INFA

SPECTRUM DIGITALIZATION

The digital productivity paradox

From the World Wide Web to generative artificial intelligence, the ever-changing landscape of digitalization defines this century. From the 16-megabyte floppy disk, CDs and DVDs to multi-terabyte digital storage devices and online storage drives, the rapid evolution of innovative products and processes in digitalization is evident. These advancements are constantly accelerating due to ongoing research and developments in science and technology. The pace of change is so rapid that one must be a continuous learner to keep up with daily digital advancements. Digitalization has enhanced human welfare and social progress with the rise of information technology and communication. It has increased the speed of information, accessibility of goods and services to people with purchasing power and digital links. Digitalization has also increased the productive power of labour.

However, digitalization is not necessarily leading to increased productivity growth. Such a slowdown is called digital productivity paradox. It refers to the slowdown in

productivity growth despite the rise of an information technology-driven digital environment, where the nature of work, workers, and the workplace is increasingly shaped by digitalization. Prof. Erik Brynjolfsson termed it “The Productivity Paradox of IT,” building on the work of Prof. Robert Solow. As a result, it is often referred to as the Solow Paradox. This puzzle of digitalization has continued to expand over the last two decades. It appears that the slowdown in productivity growth and the rise of digitalization is occurring simultaneously.

There are several reasons behind the slowdown in productivity growth during digitalization. Unlike past technological innovations, digitalization exhibits inherent class and urban biases. The digital divide is its inevitable outcome. The process is largely controlled by a few individuals and their large platform companies, giving these corporations an unfair advantage in leveraging digitalization for productivity growth. Meanwhile, many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have struggled to reap its benefits. As a result, digitalization has rein-

forced the dominance of large corporations over people and their productive capacities. The concentration of power in the hands of these dominant corporations and their digital partners has led to a decline in creative competition, stifling new innovations that could drive productivity growth. The diminishing digital dividend and the slowdown in productivity growth are thus integral aspects of digital capitalism.

Public investment in digitalization by states and governments largely benefits large corporations. For example, the National Science Foundation funds various technological innovations using American taxpayers' money, yet private multinational companies like Apple Inc. reap the benefits. This is not unique to the United States but reflects a global pattern where public funds are used to fuel the expansion of private corporations. This trend has only intensified with the advancement of digitalization under digital capitalism.

Technology can enhance the productive power of labour only when workers have access to it and receive adequate technological training. The slowdown in productivity growth

is not inherent to digital technology itself but rather stems from the way it is accessed, owned, managed, controlled, and distributed by a select few. Digital capitalism, like all forms of capitalism, acts as a barrier to the democratization of digitalization, leading to stagnation, corporate dominance, and a decline in productivity growth. Therefore, democratizing digital technology—through inclusive innovation, research and development, public ownership, equitable control, fair distribution, and transparent management—is essential to bridging the digital divide and reversing the slowdown in productivity growth.

The availability and accessibility of technology, technological education, training, platforms, and a digital environment for all are central to overcoming the capitalist-driven slowdown in productivity growth. This approach is essential to creating an egalitarian, transparent, democratic and prosperous digital world that is free from inequality and exploitation.

The writer teaches at the London Metropolitan University.

L

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



Long overdue

Sir, Post-2014, one thought the Congress party would thrash out new communication channels with renewed vigour to tackle the combative Narendra Modi. Nothing of that sort has happened. Good interactive ability is the cornerstone for the success of any organisation—a political party is no exception. Most of the party's top leaders talk; but unfortunately they do not seem to differentiate between speech and noise. It is said that the grand old party is planning to hold a national conference of chiefs of the district congress committees (DCC) soon. This idea should have dawned on the high command long ago because it was in 2009 that the last DCC chiefs' conference was held. Refurbishment of the party has to be done from scratch. Local leaders have to be groomed, grassroots workers need to be encouraged and decentralisation of power has to be hastened. The writing on the wall is loud and clear: a few handful of dynastic leaders at the top cannot bring the party back to power.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Precision & passion

Sir, Sunita Williams safe landing is a story of sorts and the nine-month long wait is over. Scientists and astronauts all were eager to see the touchdown after a long but expected delay after a snag in the system. Space exploration is about pushing the limits of human potential, daring to dream, and having the courage to turn those dreams into reality. Sunita Williams, a trailblazer and an icon, has exemplified this spirit throughout her career. They have demonstrated what happens when precision meets passion and technology meets tenacity. It was a test of patience and perseverance and the will to succeed. Thus, Sunita Williams and the trained crew of 9 astronauts displayed courage and have once again shown us what perseverance truly means. Astronauts Sunita 'Suni' Williams and Barry 'Butch' Willmore have finally returned to Earth after their nine-month-long journey at the International Space Station (ISS). The two astronauts were aboard SpaceX's Dragon capsule and splashed off the Florida Coast in a successful and dedicated operation.

CK Subramaniam, NAVI MUMBAI

Situation in Manipur still tense

Schools and shops remained shut, while church leaders and civil society groups worked to restore peace

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Imphal, March 20: The situation in Manipur's curfew-bound Churachandpur district remained tense Thursday, two days after clashes between the Hmar and Zomi communities left one dead and several injured, police said.

Schools and shops remained shut, while church leaders and civil society groups worked to restore peace, an official told PTI.

Security personnel conducted flag marches Wednesday night to prevent further violence.

At least one person, 51-year-old Lalropui Pakhuangte from the Hmar community, was killed in Tuesday night's clashes.

He suffered bullet injuries and was taken to Sielmat Christian Hospital, where he was declared dead.

The clashes between the two tribes started after Hmar Inpiu general secretary Richard Hmar was attacked by some Zomi people Sunday, leading to violence and imposition of curfew in the district the next day.



Meanwhile, several displaced people from the Kuki community in relief camps were moved to safer locations.

Churachandpur town is mainly home to Zomi people, with Hmar and Kuki communities living in some areas.

Hours after a fresh shutdown was imposed by a student body in Churachandpur district Wednesday, a group of MLAs

and tribal organisations separately appealed for peace.

In a joint statement, at least 12 Kuki-Zomi and Hmar organisations based in Churachandpur district have called for peace among communities and agreed to form a joint peace committee to monitor the situation and prevent misunderstandings in the future.

Six MLAs from Churachandpur and Pherzawl districts

Six MLAs from Churachandpur and Pherzawl districts have also issued a joint appeal for peace and harmony, urging the administration to take necessary measures to restore law and order

have also issued a joint appeal for peace and harmony, urging the administration to take necessary measures to restore law and order.

Notably, more than 250 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in Manipur in ethnic violence between Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups since May 2023.

The Centre had imposed President's rule in the state February 13 after N Biren Singh resigned as chief minister. The state Assembly, which has tenure till 2027, has been put under suspended animation.



School students use umbrellas to protect themselves from the scorching sun during summer season, in Bangalore, Karnataka

PTI PHOTO

Arunachal Dy CM inaugurates historic war memorial honoring Adi warriors

The memorial commemorates the bravery of Adi warriors from Pasi Village, who defended their homeland against a British expedition during the third Anglo-Abor War of 1893-94

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



The deputy chief minister emphasised that the war memorial will serve as a lasting tribute to their sacrifices, embedding their contributions in the history of India's freedom movement

movement. Mein commended the local community for constructing the memorial through their contributions, calling it an inspiration for other communities.

Highlighting the deep connection between state's people and their land, the deputy chief minister stressed the importance of balancing development with environmental preservation.

"True progress is measured not just by infrastructure and industry, but by how well we protect our forests, rivers, and biodiversity," he said, emphasising sustainable development to ensure future generations inherit a thriving environment.

The deputy chief minister

called on the people of the state to take pride in their cultural heritage, preserving traditional knowledge, languages and customs.

"Our festivals, rituals and traditions define us. Just as our ancestors defended their land with courage, we must safeguard our identity and resources with equal dedication," he remarked.

Addressing concerns over development projects, Mein spoke about the significance of the proposed Upper Siang Multipurpose Project and the challenges posed by China's proposed 60,000 megawatt dam over the Yarlung Tsangpo River.

The Assam Police is hoping that the conviction percentage under the new laws will improve further within the next two years as a lot of things are being upgraded continuously

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, March 20: The three new criminal laws, which were rolled out almost nine months ago across the country, have resulted in over 2.5 times higher conviction rate in Assam compared to the century-old colonial Acts of the earlier phase, a senior official said Wednesday.

With mandated use of technology during the investigation process, the incidents of witnesses turning hostile have come down drastically during the trials, Assam Police Special Director General (CID) Munna Prasad Gupta told PTI in an interview.

He said that the conviction rate of the cases tried under the three new laws is 66 per cent, while that in matters registered under the old laws now stands at around 25 per cent, an increase of 2.6 times.

"The new Acts have made certain things easier for investigators and the justice system. A lot of importance has been given



to digital evidence. It is convenient to place in the court and also tamper-proof for the trial," he added.

Gupta emphasised that videography has been made mandatory during search and seizure operations, making it almost impossible for witnesses to turn hostile in the courts, while introducing e-summons under the new provisions. "This has become a game-changer for us as investigation has become transparent and accountable. Because of these steps along with some other new rules, the conviction rate of the cases tried under the three new laws has reached 66 per cent," he added.

The conviction rate was arrived at considering all the cases registered under the new laws where judgements have been delivered by courts, meaning 34 per cent have been acquitted.

The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA) replaced the colonial-era Indian Penal Code (IPC), Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) and Indian Evidence Act (IVA) respectively from July 1, 2024.

The Special DGP said, "The present conviction rate of the cases registered under the old laws in Assam stands at around 25 per cent. It has increased to this level in the last 3-4 years from earlier around six per cent in 2020."

The Assam Police is hoping that the conviction percentage under the new laws will im-

prove further within the next two years as a lot of things are being upgraded continuously, he added.

"There is always a scope for further improvement as we are studying the 34 per cent acquittals... More cases under new laws will come up for trials in the next 1-2 years. Only then, we will see a visible change in the entire Inter-Operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS)," Gupta stressed. He said that the investigating officers used to look for shortcuts during tough cases under the old laws, but it is not possible nowadays due to some mandatory steps prescribed in the new acts, leading to increased police accountability.

"The use of technology is exceptionally high now. For any crime with seven years or more punishment, visit of forensic experts to the crime scene is a must. This has improved the quality of evidence, resulting in a higher conviction rate," Gupta said.

The new laws have also prescribed time limits to the judiciary for different stages of the trial such as not more than two adjournments are allowed to defence compared to innumerable such grants during earlier times, he added.

With mandated use of technology during the investigation process, the incidents of witnesses turning hostile have come down drastically during the trials

Electronic signature bill passed in K'taka Assembly

The Karnataka Stamp (Amendment) Bill, 2025, piloted by Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda amends the Act of 1957, bringing digital e-stamping within the ambit of 'duly stamped'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, March 20: The Karnataka Assembly Wednesday passed several bills, including the one that gives legal support for electronic signatures, and enables payment of stamp duty by electronic means.

The Karnataka Stamp (Amendment) Bill, 2025, piloted by Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda amends the Act of 1957, bringing digital e-stamping within the ambit of "duly stamped".

The Registration (Karnataka Amendment) Bill, 2025, to compulsorily register power-of-attorney authorizing transfer of immovable property with or without consideration, also piloted by the Minister, was passed by the Assembly.

It also aims at compulsorily registering of documents relating to any grant of immovable property by the Government, and prove any power-of-attorney by producing it.

The bill also proposes to send the documents electronically to the registering officers by the government officers, or certain public functionaries, as notified under Section 88.

The Karnataka Land Grabbing Prohibition (Amendment) Bill, 2025 was passed in the Assembly. It is aimed at protecting government lands.

It also seeks to introduce the accurate way of measuring distance while filing cases against encroachment of government lands. It also proposes to enhance the penalty from ₹25,000 to ₹50,000 and punishment of three years of imprisonment in cases of land grabbing.

Also passed in the Assembly was the Karnataka Land Revenue (Amendment) Bill, 2025, which gives more clarity regarding regularisation of unauthorised cultivation committee that are constituted in Assembly constituencies, and to introduce an accurate way of measuring distance while granting land, de-



fining government kharab land (unfit for cultivation), and using and disposing such land, naming and renaming of revenue areas.

It also proposed to make the government grant land where private agricultural land is permanently lost due to alluvion or diluvion caused by natural occurrences, like change in course of river, flash floods, landslides, flooding of lakes, by suitable amendments. The Bill also aims at bringing stringent norms to check malpractices and preventing fraudulent entries in revenue records by revenue officers, and making them more accountable.

Also passed was the Karnataka Village Offices Abolition (Amendment) Bill 2025, to substitute the reference of the provisions of the Indian Penal Code,

1860 to respective provisions in the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023.

The Karnataka Gram Swaraj and Panchayat Raj (Amendment) Bill, 2025, to bring in all assets under the purview of the rural local authorities under their network of financial resources, was also passed.

The bill piloted by Rural Development Minister Priyank Kharge extends provisions of property tax to the premises and buildings in unauthorised settlements, other than government land and to unauthorised buildings in official settlements, as provided in the 1993 Act.

It proposes a penalty on officers in case of non-compliance with provisions of the law.

The Legislative Assembly also passed a bill that gives powers

It also proposed to make the government grant land where private agricultural land is permanently lost due to alluvion or diluvion caused by natural occurrences, like change in course of river, flash floods, landslides, flooding of lakes, by suitable amendments

The Bill also aims at bringing stringent norms to check malpractices and preventing fraudulent entries in revenue records by revenue officers, and making them more accountable

to the city civic body Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) to declare any street in Bangalore as public street, and to ascertain development of even private roads under its jurisdiction. The Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike (Amendment) Bill, 2025 that was piloted by Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H K Patil, on behalf of Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar, proposes to amend the act of 2020.

The bill provides powers to BBMP authorities (zonal commission) to declare any street as public street, and ascertain development of even private roads within the BBMP area.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
HIGHER EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
No. HE-NCNE-PLAN-0003-2024/15691
Dt.20.03.25

TENDER CALL NOTICE
(For Science Laboratory Equipment)
No. N-200: Sealed quotations are invited from Manufacturers/Authorized Dealers of reputed brands having valid GST Registration and Income Tax PAN for supply of Science Laboratory Equipment of different items used in Physics, Chemistry, Botany & Zoology laboratories of Government & Non-Government Aided Degree Colleges situated in different places in Odisha. The last date and time for submission of the quotation is on or before Dt.23.04.2025 (5.00 P.M.). For more details, please visit our Department website: www.dhe.odisha.gov.in.
Sd./- Director, Higher Education
OIPR-11001/11/0042/2425

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER (AGRI.),
SOUTHERN ZONE, BERHAMPUR
(E-mail: seagrilsz@gmail.com)
Notice No.520/SE (Agril.) Date: 19.03.25
1st Corrigendum

E-Procurement Notice No.SE (Agril.), SZ 08/2024-25 for works
No.L-200:1.2025_AGRIL_111611_1-Construction of RCC Pre-Cast Boundary wall at Govt. Agril. Farm, Umerkote, Dist - Nabarangpur.
2. 2025_AGRIL_111611_2 -Construction of RCC Pre-Cast Boundary Wall at Govt. Agril. Mix Farm, Semiluguda, Dist - Koraput.
1. The bidders participating in the tender process must have experience of having completed a SINGLE RCC Pre-Cast Boundary wall project costing at least 30% of the present tender amount or must have completed TWO nos. of RCC Pre-Cast Boundary wall project costing at least 40% of the present tender amount or must have completed THREE nos. of RCC Pre-Cast Boundary wall project costing at least 50% of the present tender amount during the last 05 financial year i.e. 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23, 2023-24 & 2024-25.
2. Experience mentioned in uploaded tender-notice Sl. No. 1.12 of Instruction to Bidders (Page No-9/30): Sl. No. 1.14 of DTCN (Page No-12/30) & Sl. No. 3.1 (1) of DTCN (Page No-19/30) may be read as above and the bidders having experience as mentioned above can participate in the tender process.
3. All other terms and conditions remained unchanged.
Sd./- Superintending Engineer (Agril.)
Southern Zone, Berhampur
OIPR-01504/11/0008/2425

of the day

quote

Based on the information provided by the recommendees, out of 715 high court judges appointed since 2018, 22 belong to the SC category, 16 to the ST category, 89 to the OBC category, and 37 to minorities

ARJUN RAM MEGHWAL | LAW MINISTER

We had a very good discussion on varied subjects, including Maharashtra's initiatives and schemes for youth, farmers, the poor, and women, such as Lakhpati Didi and Ladki Bahin Yojana, which has contributed immensely to the economic upliftment

DEVENDRA FADNAVIS | MAHARASHTRA CM

Deeply saddened by the passing of former legislator Faqeer Mohd Khan. He was a true grassroots leader. My heartfelt condolences to his family. May his soul rest in peace. The House observed a two-minute silence in his honour

OMAR ABDULLAH | J&K CM

XPOST

OF THE DAY

Europe and India have some of the highest indirect taxes in the world.

- US State sales tax: 2.9% to 7.25%
- EU: 17% to 27%
- UAE: 5%
- Australia: 10%
- Canada: 5%
- China: 6% to 13%
- India: 5% to 28%

Indirect taxes hit everyone. At least in Europe: you get good pavements to walk. And, non-eroded roads. What do we get after paying so much GST?

@Akshat_World

SHORT TAKES

TASMAC: HC directs ED not to proceed further

Chennai: In a temporary relief to TASMAC, the Madras High Court Thursday directed the Enforcement Directorate (ED) not to proceed further pursuant to its searches at the state-run liquor retailer's headquarters in the city recently. While giving an oral direction to ED in this connection, the HC also directed the central agency to produce copies of FIR and Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR) along with any other materials which it relied upon against the Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation.

Man dies in road accident

Latur: A man was killed Thursday in Latur after being hit by an MSRTC bus that went out of control on being rammed by a truck, a police official said. The incident took place at AUSA T point at 6:40am, he added. There were 13 passengers in the bus, none of who were injured, he said.

Mamata slams Oppn

Kolkata: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Thursday criticised the BJP and the Left for attempting to tarnish her reputation over her upcoming visit to London to deliver a lecture at the University of Oxford, saying that attacking a leader ahead of a foreign trip damages the country's image. Banerjee acknowledged that political differences exist but insisted that no leader should be defamed before an international visit as they represent the country on such occasions.



Today, the construction of 36,000 homes is starting in the state. This day will mark the beginning of a better future for all these families

NAYAB SINGH SAINI | HARYANA CM

BJP MLAS WAVE BLACK FLAGS IN BENGAL ASSEMBLY

Accusing West Bengal Assembly Speaker Biman Banerjee of not being impartial, Opposition BJP legislators Thursday waved black flags and staged a walkout from the House demanding his resignation



Rana Daggubati, Vijay Deverakonda, Prakash Raj booked

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hyderabad, March 20: A case was registered against six Telugu film actors, including Rana Daggubati, Prakash Raj, Vijay Deverakonda and 19 social media influencers, for allegedly promoting betting apps, police said Thursday.

Actors Lakshmi Manchu, Praneetha, and Nidhi Agarwal were also booked in the case, a police official at Miyapur Police Station said. The complainant, a businessman, accused the celebrities and the influencers of promoting the betting apps on social media through pop-up ads among others.

Based on the complaint, a case was registered under relevant sections of the BNS, Gaming Act and IT Act March 19, the official said.

The police official further said they were planning to issue notices to those named in the FIR.

Further investigation is on. According to the complainant, while he was interacting with youths in his colony recently, most of them were discussing investing money in betting, gambling and casino apps which are being promoted by celebrities and influencers on social media.

He was even influenced by such betting applications, and was about to deposit in one such betting/gambling/casino website, but due to his family's word of caution, he did not do so, the complainant said.

The FIR said the complainant, while using his social media applications, came across several celebrities and influencers who are actively promoting several of the "il legal" betting apps, websites and other platforms that have to be downloaded on mobile phones and used for betting and gambling.

FARMERS' PROTEST

Traffic resumes at Shambhu border

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, March 20: A day after Punjab Police detained protesting farmers and demolished their temporary structures, traffic resumed on the Shambhu-Ambala Highway Thursday after more than a year, and Khanauri border point is also set to open, with Haryana Police removing road-blocks on their side of the road.

The road clearance exercise continued even as angry farmers held protests at several places in Punjab including Moga, Tarn Taran, Muktsar and Faridkot against the last evening crackdown on the protesters. A group of farmers, including women, entered into a scuffle with police personnel in Moga while on their way to hold a protest outside the deputy commissioner's office.

Meanwhile, in a statement issued in Delhi, the Aam Aadmi Party reaffirmed its support to farmers but emphasised the urgent need to reopen key roads to protect Punjab's economy.

The protesting farmers lashed out at the AAP government for detaining their leaders and removing protesters from the Shambhu and Khanauri border points, where they had been camping since February 13 last year after their march to Delhi was thwarted by security personnel.

As the protests got stretched, farmers built temporary structures on the highway to accommodate protesters and sustain their agitation.

Haryana Police had fortified the border points with cement blocks, iron nails and barbed



The road clearance exercise continued even as angry farmers held protests at several places in Punjab including Moga, Tarn Taran, Muktsar and Faridkot against the last evening crackdown on the protesters

wire to scuttle any attempt by the farmers from Punjab to move towards the national capital. Thus, the traffic on the Shambhu-Ambala and Sangrur-Jind roads remained closed for over a year.

Security personnel from Haryana Thursday removed the cement barricades on their side of Shambhu-Ambala Highway, opening the road for traffic, while barricading on the road at the Khanauri border point is still being removed. Earlier in the day, Punjab Police resumed its operation to dismantle the remaining part of the temporary structures on the Punjab side of the Shambhu and the Khanauri points to clear the roads.

Police took trolleys to an open ground so farmers could later take them by showing their identity proofs.

Meanwhile, farmers claimed that those detained have started a hunger strike in protest against the police action. The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha -- the two organisations spearheading the protests -- have announced to hold dharnas outside the offices of deputy commissioners in protest against the Punjab Police crackdown.

Both the bodies slammed the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government in Punjab for evicting the protesters and detaining farmer leaders Wednesday.

Criticising the police action, a group of farmers held a protest in Gidderbaha in Muktsar district while another group, also comprising women, entered into a scuffle with police personnel in Moga while going to protest outside the DCP office.

Chahal, Dhanashree granted divorce



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 20: A family court here Thursday allowed the joint plea filed by cricketer Yuzvendra Chahal and his estranged wife seeking divorce by mutual consent.

The estranged couple appeared before the family court in Bandra. Chahal's advocate Nitin Gupta said the family court has granted decree on the joint petition filed by Chahal and Verma for divorce by mutual consent. The court noted that the parties have complied with the consent terms.

"The family court has accepted the joint petition filed by Chahal and Verma seeking divorce by mutual consent," Gupta said. Chahal and Verma got married in December 2020.

₹54,000cr defence boost

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 20: India Thursday approved the capital acquisition of a plethora of military hardware worth more than ₹54,000 crore, including airborne early-warning and control-aircraft systems, torpedoes and engines for T-90 tanks.

In a significant move, the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) also approved the guidelines for reducing the timelines at various stages of the capital acquisition process to make it "faster, more effective and efficient", according to the defence ministry. The decision on a "more effective" procurement process was in line with the ministry's initiative to celebrate 2025 as the "Year of Reforms".

The approval to the procurement proposals was accorded by the DAC chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, the ministry said. The DAC accorded acceptances of necessity (AoNs) or initial approvals to eight capital acquisition proposals amounting to more than ₹54,000 crore, it said.



«The approval to the procurement proposals was accorded by the DAC chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, the ministry said

«The DAC accorded acceptances of necessity (AoNs) or initial approvals to eight capital acquisition proposals amounting to more than ₹54,000 crore, it said

For the Indian Air Force (IAF), an approval for the procurement of Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) Aircraft Systems was accorded by the DAC, the ministry said. AEW&C systems are capability

enhancers, which can change the complete spectrum of war fare and exponentially increase the combat potential of various weapon systems.

The ministry said the DAC also cleared a proposal to procure 1,350-HP engines to upgrade the T-90 battle tanks. This will enhance the battlefield mobility of these tanks, especially in high-altitude areas, by increasing the power to weight ratio, it said in a statement.

The DAC also cleared another proposal for the procurement of the Varunastra torpedo for the Indian Navy.

Both Houses adjourned



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 20: Both houses of Parliament were adjourned Thursday without transacting any significant business following protests over delimitation by DMK MPs who wore T-shirts with slogans to oppose any redrawing of electoral boundaries.

While Lok Sabha witnessed two adjournments in the pre-lunch period till the house was adjourned for the day at 2 PM, Rajya Sabha was adjourned thrice in the pre-lunch period till the final adjournment at 2 PM. Both the houses were adjourned for the day as opposition members protested wearing T-shirts with slogans to highlight the issue of delimitation of parliamentary and assembly constituencies.

This is the first day during the second part of the Budget Session when the Houses were adjourned without transacting any business except for the laying of papers. DMK MPs have been raising the issue of delimitation in both the houses of Parliament, claiming that the exercise would lead to reduction of Parliament seats in the southern states if it is car-

ried out on the basis of census population.

The Chair in both houses have rejected adjournment notices in this regard by DMK members. Objecting the wearing of T-shirts with slogans on delimitation, Krishna Prasad Tenneti, who was in the Chair, requested the Opposition members to come back to the House in "proper shape".

"We have a discussion on agriculture. Such an important topic of the country you are not allowing the discussion to take place. I request you to cooperate and let the proceedings go on," he urged the Opposition members. When they did not comply, Tenneti adjourned the House for the day.

Earlier, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla objected to the DMK members wearing T-shirts with slogans written on them, and said such actions were against the rules of procedure of the House. Birla adjourned the proceedings till noon. Similar scenes were witnessed when the House reconvened at 12 noon and TDP member Tenneti, who was in the chair, adjourned the proceedings till 2 pm.

25 Indians on death row in UAE, govt tells RS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

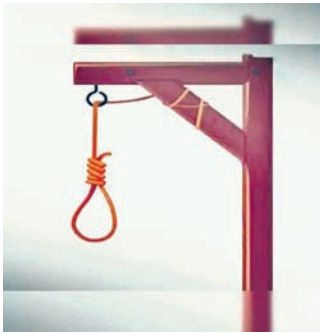
New Delhi, March 20: As many as 25 Indian nationals in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and 11 in Saudi Arabia have been awarded death sentence but the judgement is yet to be implemented, the government informed Parliament Thursday.

Citing the "informal information" available with the local Indian Mission, the government also detailed that no Indian national has been executed in the UAE between 2020-2024.

Replying to a question in Rajya Sabha on 'Indians languishing in prisons in foreign countries', Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vard-

han Singh said in a written response that, as per the information available with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), the number of Indian prisoners, including undertrials, in foreign prisons at present stands at 10,152.

While revealing the country-wise list, the minister highlighted that, due to strong privacy laws prevailing in many countries, the local authorities do not share information on prisoners unless the person concerned consents to the disclosure of such information. Even countries which share information do not generally provide detailed information about the foreign nationals imprisoned, he mentioned.



"The government attaches high priority to the safety, security and well-being of Indian nationals in foreign countries, including those in the foreign jails. Indian Missions/Posts abroad remain vigilant and closely monitor the incidents

of Indian nationals being put in jail in foreign countries for violation/ alleged violation of local laws. As soon as the information about the detention/arrest of an Indian national is received by an Indian Mission/Post, it immediately gets in touch with the local Foreign Office and other concerned local authorities to get consular access

to the detained/arrested Indian national to ascertain the facts of the case, confirm his/her Indian nationality and ensure his/her welfare," the minister informed. According to the details submitted by the MEA, as many as seven Indian nationals - three each in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and one in Zimbabwe - were either executed or given capital punishment in 2024. The number of Indian na-

tionals who have been awarded death sentence but the judgement is yet to be implemented include 25 in UAE, 11 in Saudi Arabia, six in Malaysia, three in Kuwait and one each in Indonesia, Qatar, USA and Yemen. While the issue of release and repatriation of Indian nationals in foreign prisons is regularly pursued by Indian Missions and Posts abroad with the local authorities concerned, the government also follows it up during consular and other consultations with other countries. The Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) has also been set up in Indian Missions and Posts abroad for assisting overseas Indian nationals in distress situations on a means tested basis in deserving cases.

According to data, the figures stand as 25 (UAE), 11 (Saudi Arabia), six (Malaysia), three (Kuwait), and one each for Indonesia, Qatar, the US, and Yemen

of the day
Quote

Trump's letter was more a threat, but it claims to have opportunities. We paid attention to all points held in the letter and will consider both threat and opportunity in our response

ABBAS ARAGHCHI | FOREIGN MINISTER, IRAN

The EU is a political project of soft power and also we have hard power duties nowadays. We're very committed not only to increase our defence expenditure but also to have this angle of security

PEDRO SANCHEZ | PRIME MINISTER, SPAIN

To push back gang crime and restore security in society, the police must have access to effective tools

GUNNAR STROMMER | JUSTICE MINISTER, SWEDEN

SHORT TAKES

SL sets May 6 for local elections

Colombo: Sri Lanka's local council elections will be held May 6, the country's election commission announced Thursday. The commission set the date after accepting nominations from political parties and independent groups. Councillors will be elected to 340 councils throughout the island. Over 17 million people are eligible to vote. This would be the first electoral test for the current government led by Anura Kumara Dissanayake since it won the presidential and parliamentary elections in the last quarter of 2024.

China starts flight to Nepal's Pokhara

Kathmandu: Direct flight between Pokhara, the famous tourist destination of Nepal, and Chengdu in China commenced marking a new chapter in connectivity between the two cities. Sichuan Airline expressed its willingness to operate at least 10 chartered flights -- one flight per week -- in the Pokhara-Chengdu route before transiting into regular commercial flights. A 126-member Nepali delegation, led by the mayor of Pokhara Metropolitan City, Dhana Raj Acharya, went to Chengdu March 18 on a chartered direct commercial flight of Sichuan Airlines. The delegation was welcomed at Tianfu international airport, Chengdu by the Sichuan Provincial Government representatives.

Pak, Saudi discuss economic ties

Islamabad: Pakistan and Saudi Arabia Thursday reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening defence and security cooperation, recognising the importance of collaborative efforts in addressing regional security challenges, according to the official media. The resolve was expressed at a meeting between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Saudi Crown Prince Muhammed bin Salman in Jeddah during the former's visit, state-run Radio Pakistan reported Thursday.

Ethiopia introduces new tax to fill gap

Addis Ababa: Ethiopia's parliament Thursday introduced a new tax for all workers as part of measures to fill the financial gap left by the USAID funding pause. The funds collected will go to a new Ethiopian Disaster Risk Response Fund to pay for projects previously funded by USAID, Ethiopia's biggest partner for development and humanitarian efforts.



We have to monitor the situation in southeastern Europe, primarily the stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the situation in Serbia

ANDREJ PLENKOVIC | PRIME MINISTER, CROATIAN

GERMANY REOPENS ITS EMBASSY IN SYRIA

Germany reopened its embassy in Damascus Thursday, 13 years after it was shut in the early days of Syria's civil war. Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock reopened the embassy during a visit to Damascus, her second since the fall of former President Bashar Assad in December, German news agency dpa reported



ISRAEL ABANDONS TRUCE

REUTERS

Cairo/Gaza, March 20: At least 91 Palestinians were killed and dozens wounded in airstrikes across Gaza Thursday after Israel resumed bombing and ground operations, the enclave's health ministry said.

After two months of relative peace, Gazans were again fleeing for their lives after Israel effectively abandoned a ceasefire, launching a new all-out air and ground campaign.

Israeli aircraft dropped leaflets on residential neighbourhoods, ordering people out of Beit Lahiya and Beit Hanoun towns in the north, the Shejaia district in Gaza City and towns on the eastern outskirts of Khan Younis in the south.

"War is back, displacement and death are back, will we survive this round?" said Samed Sami, 29, who fled Shejaia to put up a tent for his family in a camp on open ground.

A day after sending tanks into central Gaza, the Israeli military said Thursday it had also begun conducting ground operations in the north of the enclave, along the coastal route in Beit Lahiya.

Palestinian militant group Hamas, which had not retaliated during the first 48 hours of the renewed Israeli assault, said its fighters fired rockets into Israel. The Israeli military said sirens sounded in the centre of the country after projec-



- Israeli fire kills 91 people in Gaza Thursday
- Hamas says it seeks resumption of talks
- Israel cuts off vital road in Gaza
- Israel orders evacuations in north and south Gaza
- Hamas suffers big losses, fires rockets into Israel

tiles were launched from Gaza.

Palestinian medics said Israeli strikes targeted several houses in northern and southern areas of the Gaza Strip.

HUNDREDS DEAD

It said Thursday that its forces had been engaged for the past 24 hours in what it described as an operation to expand a buffer zone separating the northern and southern halves of Gaza, known as the Netzarim corridor.

Israel ordered residents to stay away from the Salahuddin road, the main north-south route, and said they should travel along the coast instead.

Tuesday's first day of resumed airstrikes killed more than 400 Palestinians, one of the deadliest days of the war, with little let-up since.

Ukraine strikes Russian strategic bomber airfield



REUTERS

Moscow, March 20: Ukraine struck a major Russian strategic bomber airfield Thursday with drones, triggering a huge blast and fire about 700 km (435 miles) from the front lines of the war, Russian and Ukrainian officials said.

Videos verified by Reuters showed a huge blast spreading out from the airfield, wrecking nearby cottages. Russia's defence ministry said air defences had shot down 132 Ukrainian drones over Russian regions.

Other verified videos showed a giant plume of smoke rising into the dawn sky and an intense fire.

The base in Engels, which dates back to Soviet times, hosts Russia's Tupolev Tu-160 nuclear-capable heavy strategic bombers, known unofficially as White Swans.

Roman Busargin, governor of Saratov, said there had been a Ukrainian drone attack on the city of Engels that had left an airfield on fire, and that nearby residents had been evacuated. He did not specifically mention the Engels base, but it is the main airfield in the area.

Ukraine's defence ministry said its forces had struck the airfield and triggered secondary detonations of ammunition. Kyiv said Russia had used the Engels base to carry out strikes on Ukraine.

Ten people were injured in the attack, local officials said. Some local residents expressed surprise at finding various parts of Ukrainian drones in their gardens. The Shot Telegram channel said that Ukraine struck with PD-2 and Liutyi drones.

Engels district head Maxim Leonov said that a local state of emergency had been declared but gave few details. Ukraine has conducted previous attacks on the Engels air base dating back to December 2022. In January it claimed to have struck an oil depot serving the base, causing a huge fire that took five days to put out.

A Ukrainian security source said at the time that a drone attack had struck a storage facility holding guided bombs and missiles at the Engels base.



Shiite worshippers place copies of the Quran on their heads during Laylat al-Qadr, or the Night of Destiny, in the holy fasting month of Ramadan at the shrine of Imam Ali shrine in Najaf, Iraq

PTI PHOTO

INDIAN STUDENT FACES DEPORTATION

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New York, March 20: An Indian student enrolled as a post-doctoral fellow in the US faces deportation after federal authorities said he was "spreading Hamas propaganda" and has "close connections to a "suspected terrorist", who is a senior advisor to the group.

Badar Khan Suri is a Post-doctoral Fellow at the Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding at the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University, Washington, DC.

A senior Department of Homeland Security spokesperson said that Suri, a foreign exchange student at George-

town University, was "actively spreading Hamas propaganda and promoting antisemitism on social media".

"Suri has close connections to a known or suspected terrorist, who is a senior advisor to Hamas. The Secretary of State issued a determination March 15, 2025, that Suri's activities and presence in the United States

rendered him deportable."

A report in Politico said that Suri, who was studying and teaching on a student visa, has been "detained by federal immigration authorities amid the Trump administration's crackdown on student activists whom the government accuses of opposing American foreign policy."

India ranks 118th in World Happiness Report, Afghanistan last

Finland is ranked as the happiest country in the world for the eighth consecutive year and other Nordic countries – Denmark, Iceland and Sweden – continued to remain in the top four, in that order

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, March 20: India ranked 118th in the World Happiness Report 2025 published Thursday, up from the 126th position in the previous year but below countries such as Nepal, Pakistan, Ukraine and Palestine.

The report, released coinciding with the International Day of Happiness that falls March 20 each year, focuses on the impact of caring and sharing on people's happiness, including

how sharing a meal increases happiness.

Finland is ranked as the happiest country in the world for the eighth consecutive year and other Nordic countries – Denmark, Iceland and Sweden – continued to remain in the top four, in that order.

The annual report, published by the Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford in partnership with Gallup, the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network ranks the countries according to the self-assessed life evaluations by those polled averaged over the years 2022-2024.

Country rankings for the three benevolent acts covered by the Gallup World Poll – donating, volunteering, and helping strangers – vary depending on cultural and institutional differences, the authors of the report said.

While India ranked 118th overall, in terms of the 'Coun-



try rankings for six measures of benevolence', it was listed much higher at 57 for (how people) donated; at 10 for how people volunteered; 74 for helping a stranger, and in case of wallet returned by a neighbour (115), stranger (86) and police (93).

In India's neighbourhood, Afghanistan is again ranked as the unhappiest country in the world, this year 147th against last year's 143rd rank

(last). While Nepal with 92nd rank (93 in 2024) and Pakistan, with 109th rank (108 in 2024) remained much ahead of India, Sri Lanka, with 133rd rank (128 in 2024) and Bangladesh 134th position (129 in 2024) lagged behind.

China was ranked in 68th position this year, down from the 60th last year. State of Palestine is ranked 108th (103 in 2024) while Ukraine is at 111

The report, released coinciding with the International Day of Happiness that falls March 20 each year, focuses on the impact of caring and sharing on people's happiness, including how sharing a meal increases happiness

rank (105 in 2024).

According to the World Happiness Report website, the annual report and much of the growing interest in happiness research "exists thanks to Bhutan," which had sponsored a resolution for considering happiness for a holistic approach to development.

Bhutan's resolution was

adopted by the UN General Assembly July 19, 2011 and the first World Happiness Report was brought out in 2012. After the UN General Assembly adopted and declared March 20 as the International Day of Happiness, the World Happiness Report is released around that day each year. However, Bhutan, which focuses on Gross National Happiness, does not feature in the ranking of the 147 countries in this year's World Happiness Report.

Explaining the methodology for this year's report, the authors wrote: "Our measurement of subjective wellbeing continues to rely on three main wellbeing indicators: life evaluations, positive emotions, and negative emotions. Our happiness rankings are based on life evaluations, as the more stable measure of the quality of people's lives."

The United States dropped to its lowest-ever position at 24.

of the day quote

Our mantra 'AI for All' is backed by concrete action. India is number one in the world in AI skill penetration -- the AI skill index even outstrips the US and Germany

JITIN PRASADA | UNION MINISTER

Average 5G data consumption in India per user was recorded at 40 GB in December 2024.

We expect the 5G user base to grow to around 770 million by 2028 from 290 million in 2024

SANDEEP SAXENA | HEAD OF TECHNOLOGY AND SOLUTIONS (MOBILE NETWORKS), NOKIA

Strengthening our capital base through perpetual bonds will enable us to scale up financing for renewable energy projects, accelerating India's transition to a cleaner and more sustainable future

PRADIP KUMAR DAS | CHAIRMAN AND MD, IREDA

SHORT TAKES

Gold ends 3-day rally

New Delhi: Gold prices declined by ₹300 to ₹91,650 per 10 grams Thursday, bringing an end to the three-day rally in the national capital, amid fall in precious metal rates globally, according to the All India Sarafa Association. On Wednesday, the precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity closed ₹700 higher at its lifetime high of ₹91,950 per 10 grams. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity, which ended the previous session at ₹91,500 per 10 grams, slipped by ₹300 to ₹91,200 per 10 grams Thursday. Silver prices also tanked by ₹1,500 to ₹1,02,000 per kg from Wednesday's closing level of ₹1,03,500 per kg, also its historic high. In the preceding three sessions, gold added ₹2,500 per 10 gram to hit its all-time high level, while silver surged by ₹2,300 per kg to reach its fresh peak during the period.

Ola Electric in soup

New Delhi: The Heavy Industries Ministry has directed Automotive Research Association of India (ARAI) to probe the mismatch between Ola Electric's reported sales figures and actual vehicle registrations along with numerous consumer complaints against the Bhavish Aggarwal-owned electric two-wheeler maker and submit a report within 15 days, sources said. While the total number of registrations by Ola Electric on the Vahan portal for February stood at 8,652, the company had reported sales of over 25,000 units during February 2025. As of March 20, the company's registrations stood at 11,781 on the Vahan portal. Ola Electric is a beneficiary of the FAME II and PM E-DRIVE schemes and its eligibility certificate has been provided by ARAI, a certification and testing agency under the administrative control of the ministry.

Adani may buy Emaar

New Delhi: Billionaire Gautam Adani's group is in advanced talks to acquire real estate company Emaar India for an enterprise value of around \$1.4-1.5 billion as it looks to expand its property business, according to sources. Dubai-based Emaar Properties entered the Indian real estate market in 2005 in partnership with India's MGF Development and invested ₹8,500 crore through the joint venture firm Emaar MGF Land. In April 2016, Emaar Properties decided to end the joint venture through a demerger process. Emaar India has a large portfolio of residential and commercial spaces across Delhi-NCR, Mumbai, Mohali, Lucknow, Indore and Jaipur.

FOUR DAYS OF MARKET RALLY

Investors' wealth swells ₹17.43L-cr



Shares rise buoyed by the prospect of two rate cuts by the Federal Reserve this year amid brewing tariff concerns

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 20: Market investors kitty surged by ₹17.43 lakh crore in four days of sharp rally in equities where the BSE benchmark Sensex jumped over 3 per cent.

On Thursday, the 30-share benchmark Sensex jumped 899.01 points or 1.19 per cent to settle at 76,348.06, regaining the 76,000 level. During the day, it soared 1,007.2 points or 1.33 per cent to 76,456.25.

In four days, the Sensex zoomed 2,519.15 points or 3.41 per cent.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms surged ₹17,43,418.8 crore to ₹4,08,61,851.73 crore (\$4.73 trillion) in four days.

"Benchmark indices got a Fed booster shot on Thursday extending gains for fourth straight session, after the US Fed kept the forecast for two rate cuts in 2025 intact despite inflation risks from Trump's trade war. Broader mid and smallcaps also posted gains for the day. All major sectors also logged gains in broad-based rally with Nifty IT recovering from steep losses in recent weeks," Satish Chandra Aluri, Analyst, Lemonn Markets Desk, said.

The US Fed is undoubtedly the driving force behind today's market rally as markets took comfort from the strong over-

night gains in US indices, after Fed kept the projection for two rate cuts in 2025 unchanged, he added.

The NSE Nifty surged 283.05 points or 1.24 per cent to reclaim the 23,000-mark to finish at 23,190.65.

"Nifty surged by 283 points, marking gains for the fourth consecutive day as all sectors closed in the green. Optimism was driven by signals of two Fed rate cuts in 2025 and hopes of a halt in FII selling," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

From the Sensex pack, Bharti Airtel, Titan, Tata Consultancy Services, Hindustan Unilever, Infosys, Nestle, Reliance Industries, Mahindra & Mahindra, HDFC Bank and Tata Motors were the biggest gainers.

However, IndusInd Bank, Bajaj Finance and UltraTech Cement were the laggards.

The BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.73 per cent and midcap index went up by 0.61 per cent. All BSE sectoral indices ended higher where telecommunication jumped 1.94 per cent, teck (1.89 per cent), oil & gas (1.56 per cent), energy (1.42 per cent), auto (1.39 per cent) and BSE Focused IT (1.23 per cent).

"The rally was driven by gains in the US market after the Federal Reserve maintained its forecast of two rate cuts this year despite the ongoing tariff concerns," Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Research, Wealth Management, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said.

As many as 2,410 stocks advanced while 1,606 declined and 129 remained unchanged on the BSE.

EPFO's net member addition rises 11.67% to 17.89 lakh in Jan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 20: Retirement fund body EPFO has added 17.89 lakh net members in January this year, reflecting a year-on-year growth of 11.67 per cent, according to payroll data released Thursday.

An increase of 11.48 per cent has been registered in net payroll addition in the month under review compared to December 2024, a labour ministry statement said.

According to the statement, the Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO) has released provisional payroll data for January 2025, revealing a net addition of 17.89 lakh members.

Further, the year-on-year analysis reveals a growth of 11.67 per cent in net payroll additions compared to January 2024, signifying increased employment opportunities and heightened awareness of employee benefits, bolstered by EPFO's effective outreach initiatives, it added.

The EPFO enrolled around 8.23 lakh new subscribers in January 2025. The new subscribers addition shows a growth of 1.87 per cent year-on-year. It also stated that a noticeable aspect of the data is the dominance of the 18-25 age group, as 4.70 lakh new subscribers were added in the category, constituting a significant 57.07 per cent of the total new subscribers added in January 2025.

New subscribers in the 18-25 age group added in the month show a growth of 3.07 per cent year-on-year. Further, the net payroll addition for the age group 18-25 for January 2025 is approximately 7.27 lakh, reflecting an increase of 6.19 per cent compared to December 2024 and an 8.15 per cent growth year-on-year.

The payroll data highlights that approximately 15.03 lakh members exited and subsequently rejoined EPFO, reflecting a 23.55 per cent growth year-on-year.

State-wise analysis of payroll data denotes that the top five states/ UTs constitute around 59.98 per cent of net payroll addition, adding a total of around 10.73 lakh net payroll during the month.

Of all the states, Maharashtra is leading by adding 22.77 per cent of net payroll during the month. The states/UTs of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Telangana individually added more than 5 per cent of the total net payroll during the month.

medium term.

Hans, one of Odisha's most influential entrepreneurs, is of the view that the steep rise in gold prices over the past half-decade owes to the fact that the precious metal is increasingly being considered as an attractive investment instrument, more than anything else.

"It is easy to notice that, because demand for gold bars and gold coins is significantly higher than a few years ago and it continues to surge. People don't

Technology is shaping economies more profoundly than ever before

RAJESH NAMBIAR | PRESIDENT, NASSCOM

NOW RENAULT HIKES PRICES

Automaker Renault India Thursday said it will increase prices of its entire model range by up to 2 per cent from April. Various carmakers, including Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai, Tata Motors, Kia India and Honda Cars, have already announced plans to hike vehicle prices from next month citing rising input costs



Individual creator can challenge large organisations, says Rath

Kanccha Lannka has become a go-to place for premium entertainment content for Odisha viewers in recent times. It is an aspirational OTT platform in the pursuit of disruption in the state's entertainment industry with premium services offering a tastefully curated bouquet of original web-series and select films in Odia language. Helmed by the creative mind of **Bibhu Prasad Rath, Managing Director**, the streaming platform has scripted many successful stories in Odisha's OTT landscape by offering a mixed platter of original content developed in a variety of genres including crime, thriller, romantic and comedy. In a conversation with **Orissa POST**, Rath shares his inspiring entrepreneurial journey. Excerpts...



- Please brief us about your early life. What made you enter the OTT industry?
- During my over 30-year long corporate career across sectors from manufacturing to service to entertainment, I played a key role in redefining the satellite television industry in Odisha. Under my leadership, a host of Odia satellite channels across genres were created and distributed statewide. While digital viewing was still in its infancy, I set up a full-fledged platform, anticipating the shift. Realising that consumers' viewing behaviour was rapidly moving away from linear TV to digital platforms, I co-founded Kanccha Lannka — Odisha's first premium OTT platform — in 2021 with Akshay Parija and CR Nayak, bringing high-quality content to viewers worldwide.
- OTT space has witnessed a boom after Covid-19. Do you also see this craze among Odisha viewers?
- Yes, the OTT boom has

reached Odisha as well. Post-Covid, there's been a significant rise in digital content consumption across the state, driven by affordable high-speed internet, increased smartphone penetration, and the growing preference for regional storytelling. Platforms like Netflix, Prime Video, and Jio Hotstar have gained traction, but there's also a noticeable demand for content in Odia-language including different dialects on the homegrown platforms like Kanccha Lannka. The success of the Odia web series on our platform indicates that viewers are looking for stories that resonate with their culture, language, and sensibilities.

- Yours is one of the prominent streaming platforms in the state. What are the leading challenges that the industry is facing?
- Our biggest challenge is creating differentiated content that appeals to viewers. Today, audiences have countless options across languages like Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, English, and even Korean. Odia viewers naturally compare our content with these global standards, making it essential for us to deliver unique storytelling with high production values, ensuring our content stands out and keeps audiences engaged.
- How has your journey been so far? Do you have any new shows on the pipeline?
- Our journey is satisfactory overall. We have 13 lakh app installations and 4.25 lakh activations across 17 countries. Kanccha Lann-

ka serves both Android and iOS through Play Store and App Store respectively. Besides, Kanccha Lannka's is also available on TV OS platforms like Android TV, Chromecast, Apple TV, and FireTV. To make the product easily available to customers, we have partnered with aggregator/bundling platforms such as Jio, Vodafone, OTT Play, Play Box etc. We are streaming 118 titles including web series, movies, short films and documentaries. Some of our unique offerings have been Gangs of Puri, Barang 1999, Okha Express, Hello Ravana, Bhubaneswar Night. Gangs of Puri, a web series based on gang wars in the holy city of Puri has been well appreciated and is the highest viewed content on our platform. Season 2 of Gangs of Puri is expected to be streamed next month. Another high-octane series Sachiv: The Man in a hurry is likely to be streamed by this year end. And of course, there is something or the other every month.

- Being a successful entrepreneur, what advice will you give to the new entrants in the entertainment industry?
- In the digital age, content creation has become both globalised and democratised. Our competition is not confined to Odisha — it's worldwide. With mobile phones in hand, even an individual creator can challenge large organisations. To succeed, stay aware of these shifts and focus on storytelling that stands out. A unique perspective, combined with a local touch, always makes a difference.

WAREHOUSE RAIDS

Amazon, Flipkart violate quality control norms

REUTERS

New Delhi, March 20: Retail giants Amazon and Walmart-owned Flipkart violated Indian quality control rules by stocking products that did not have the required standards certificate, India's top government-run product certification agency said Thursday.

Raids on warehouses operated by both firms, conducted on Wednesday by the Burueau of

Indian Standards in the Tiruvallur district of Tamil Nadu, found that the firms had violated rules by storing, selling and exhibiting products that did not carry the BIS standard mark.

The raids are the latest headache for the two firms, leading players in India's e-commerce market which consultancy firm Bain estimated was worth \$57 billion-\$60 billion in 2023 and set to top \$160 billion in value by 2028.

ed production slots of widebody jets after a run on supplies of smaller workhorse narrowbody jets from fast-growing airlines like India's largest carrier IndiGo.

Air India's turnaround efforts under Tata are being closely watched by investors, manufacturers and lessors after decades of decay under state ownership, but are being hindered by aircraft delivery delays.

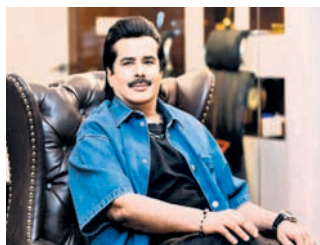
The airline, which was once considered a world-class service, saw its image tarnished since the mid-2000s due to financial troubles, an ageing fleet and poor service.

Gold to breach ₹1L-mark soon: Hans

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 20: Gold remains on an upward spiral and is widely expected to breach the ₹1,00,000 (per 10 grams) mark in the not-too-distant future as central banks worldwide continue to accumulate the precious yellow metal amidst persistent global geopolitical tensions and no let-up in inflation concerns.

Sunjoy Hans, founder chairman of Lalchnd Group and a



seasoned observer of gold prices, reckons strong demand and uncertainties in global economic outlook will keep the gold rally going in the near to

Air India explores fresh multi-billion dollar plane order

The airline is in talks for dozens of new widebody jets from Airbus, Boeing

REUTERS

New Delhi, March 20: Air India is exploring a fresh multi-billion dollar order for dozens of widebody jets from Boeing and Airbus, industry sources said, furthering the former state carrier's transformation under new owner Tata Group.

The deliberations involve

30 to 40 aircraft split between the Airbus A350 and Boeing 777X models, with one source suggesting the potential deal could exceed 50 jets. Details have not been finalised, the sources added.

"Things should become clearer closer to the Paris Air Show (in June)," one of the sources said, asking not to be named.

The planned expansion comes on top of a mammoth deal in 2023 for 470 planes from both suppliers and another 100 Airbus jets last year -- but most were for single-aisle aircraft. The latest widebody deal could boost Air India's ambitious modernisation plans to



re-capture market share lost to global rivals.

The airline has 50 Airbus A350s, 10 Boeing 777Xs and 20 787 Dreamliners on order be-

tween the two deals.

The potential new order comes as international passenger traffic from India is surging, expected to grow 15-20% in

- Order could be split between Airbus A350, Boeing 777X, sources say
- Talks on for 30-40 jets, could be over 50, sources say
- Likely deal comes on top of mammoth 470-plane order in 2023
- Air India transformation being watched by investors, lessors

the current fiscal year ending March 31, outpacing domestic travel growth of 7-10%, according to ICR, Moody's local ratings agency.

It also comes as airlines are rushing to get in line for limit-

India submits bid to host 2030 CWG



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 20: With an eye on hosting the Olympic Games in 2036, India has formally submitted its bid to conduct the 2030 Commonwealth Games in Ahmedabad, a top sports ministry source told PTI Thursday, confirming a move that has been in the making for several weeks.

The last date to submit the 'Expression of Interest' to host the Games is March 31 and India's letter was sent by the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) a few days ago.

"Yes, it is true, India's bid to host the 2030 Commonwealth Games has been submitted by the IOA and the state of Gujarat," the ministry source stated. Ahmedabad, the city that

has been finalised to organise the 2030 CWG should the event come to India, is also the front-runner to be the Olympic host if the 2036 bid is successful.

The Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF), which has re-branded itself as Commonwealth Sport, will now lead an evaluation process and the final appointment of the host will be decided by the CGF General Assembly. The decision to submit the bid comes after sports minister Mansukh Mandaviya recently asserted that the country was interested in hosting the Games.

India, which last hosted the CWG in 2010, is also aiming to host the 2036 Olympics.

The country had also expressed a desire to host all those disciplines that were axed from the 2026 CWG to ensure

that its medal tally is not affected when the event is held in Glasgow. However, that proposal was rejected by CGF.

However, the CGF CEO Katie Sadleir was quite open to the idea of India hosting the 2030 CWG and had said that it would be a step in the right direction as the country pursued the ambition of playing host to the 2036 Olympics.

The CWG has been struggling to find hosts in recent years and the 2026 edition was thrown in to turmoil when original host Victoria (in Australia) withdrew due to escalating costs.

Glasgow stepped in to salvage the event but announced a massively pruned schedule of just 10 sports to be held at four venues within an eight-mile radius of the city.

India has rarely held multi-sport extravaganzas. The 2010 CWG and the 1982 Asian Games are the only instances of multi-sport events being held in the country and both occasions, the host city was the national capital of Delhi.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had first talked about his government's aspiration to host the 2036 Olympics during the 2023 IOC (International Olympic Committee) session in Mumbai.

India will have to face competition from several other nations like Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey, who are positioning themselves as strong contenders to host the sporting spectacle. A decision on the 2036 Olympic host is not expected before 2026.

CHAMPIONS GET ₹58CR CASH REWARD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 20: The BCCI Thursday announced a cash reward of Rs 58 crore for the Indian cricket team that won the ICC Champions Trophy earlier this month in Dubai.

The Rohit Sharma-led India defeated New Zealand by four wickets in the final to grab their third Champions Trophy title.

The financial windfall will cover the players, coaching and support staff and members of the men's selection committee headed by Ajit Agarkar. The Board did not give a break-up of the reward in its statement.

In fact, it was India's third ICC trophy in the last eight months as they had won the last year's T20 World Cup, beating South Africa in the final.

India dominated the Champions Trophy from the start, registering four commanding victories en route to the final.

India began their campaign with a solid six-wicket win over Bangladesh, then secured a convincing six-wicket triumph against Pakistan.

They continued their momentum with a 44-run victory over New Zealand before overcoming Australia by four wickets in the semifinal.

From the Rs 58 crore cash reward announced by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) for the 2025 Champions Trophy winning team, Rs 3 crore each will go to the 15 players and head coach Gautam Gambhir, said BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia.

The prize money break-up for the players also extends to Arshdeep Singh, Rishabh Pant



and Washington Sundar, who didn't get to play a single game in the 2025 Champions Trophy.

"The 15-member India squad who won the 2025 Champions Trophy will get Rs 3 crore each. Head coach Gautam Gambhir will get Rs 3 crore," said Saikia.

Saikia added that the rest of the coaching group — batting coach Sitanshu Kotak, assistant coaches Abhishek Nayar and Ryan ten Doeschate, fielding coach T Dilip, as well as support staff members like physiotherapists Kamlesh Jain and Yogesh Parmar, team doctor Aditya Daftary, throw-down specialists Raghavindraa Dvigi, Nuwan Udenekke and Dayanand Garani, masseurs Chetan Kumar, Rajeev Kumar and Arun Kanade, and strength and conditioning coach Soham Desai will get Rs 50 lakhs each.

Saikia also said the rest of the BCCI officials attached to the Indian team during the tournament — like video analyst Hari Prasad Mohan, liaison officer and media managers - will be rewarded too. "The rest of the BCCI officials like the media manager and liaison officer will get Rs 25 lakhs each," he added.

The BCCI secretary also informed that chief selector Ajit Agarkar will get Rs 30 lakhs, while the rest of the committee members - Subroto Banerjee, Ajay Ratra, S Sharath and Shiv Sunder Das - will receive Rs 25 lakhs each.

Saikia further revealed the prize money given by the International Cricket Council (ICC) to the champion Indian team, which is approximately Rs 19.45 crore, has been given only to the players, and each of the squad members is getting Rs 1,43,58,000 crore from it.

"The BCCI is proud to honour the players and support staff with this well-deserved reward. Their dominance in world cricket is a result of years of hard work and strategic execution. This victory has justified India's top ranking in white-ball cricket, and we are sure the team will continue to excel in the years to come.

"The dedication and commitment shown by the players have set a new benchmark, and we are confident that Indian cricket will keep raising the bar on the global stage," Saikia had said in the BCCI statement issued Thursday.

SHORT TAKES

Himachal HC directs BFI to allow Thakur's nomination

Shimla: Former sports minister Anurag Thakur's bid to contest the Boxing Federation of India's presidential election was brought back on track after the Himachal Pradesh High Court stayed his disqualification from the Electoral College and directed the BFI to extend the date of nominations to enable his candidature. Thakur, who is also a Lok Sabha MP from Hamirpur, was declared ineligible in a March 7 notification by BFI President Ajay Singh. The reason cited was that he was not an elected member of the Himachal Pradesh Boxing Association, which he was seeking to represent in the EC. However, Justice Ajay Mohan Goel Thursday ruled that the Electoral College approved by Returning Officer R K Gauba March 13, which left out Thakur, "is prima facie bad and not sustainable in law."

Riyan Parag to lead RR in first 3 IPL games

New Delhi: Rising star Riyan Parag will lead Rajasthan Royals in their first three IPL games as regular captain Sanju Samson has been told to avoid wicket-keeping duties by the BCCI due to a finger surgery, which means that he will only be available as a batter in these games. Samson's finger was fractured after a Jofra Archer delivery hit him during the T20 International against England in Mumbai, following which he had to undergo a minor surgery last month. While he has been cleared to bat, it is understood that medical and sports science teams at the BCCI's Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru have told to give his fingers some more rest before he starts keeping wickets.

KKR-LSG clash set to be shifted to Guwahati

Kolkata: Kolkata Knight Riders' home game against Lucknow Super Giants April 6 is set to be shifted to Guwahati as police has expressed its inability to provide security for the IPL contest due to 'Ram Navami' celebrations in the city on the day, CAB president Snehasish Ganguly told PTI Thursday. BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari had announced that over 20,000 processions are being organised across West Bengal to celebrate the festival. "We have informed the BCCI to reschedule the match, but there is no scope for rescheduling the game in the city later and I'm now hearing that it's going to be shifted to Guwahati," Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) President Ganguly told PTI.

Rajawat, Muthuswamy enter men's singles second round



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Basel, March 20: India's Priyanshu Rajawat entered the pre-quarterfinals of the men's singles event of the Swiss Open Super 300 badminton tournament with a straight-game win over local player Tobias Kuenzi here.

Rajawat, ranked 35th in the world, beat Kuenzi 21-10 21-11 in just 29 minutes in an opening round match late Wednesday to set up a clash with Toma Junior Popov of France.

S Sankar Muthuswamy Subramanian also progressed to the next round, beating Magnus Johannesen of Denmark 21-5 21-16. He will face second seed Anders Antonsen of Denmark later Thursday.

But it was curtains for Kiran George in the men's singles as he lost 21-18 17-21 10-21 against Rasmus Gemke of Denmark in

the opening round.

Sindhu ousted

Two-time Olympic medalist and seventh seed PV Sindhu's poor run continued as she crashed out in the opening of the women's singles event, losing 17-21 19-21 against lower ranked Julie Jakobsen of Denmark.

In another all-Indian women's singles first round match, Anupama Upadhyay beat Annol Kharb 21-14 21-13 to set up a clash against fourth seed Putri Kusuma Wardani of Indonesia.

Sathish Kumar Karunakaran and Aadya Variyath also progressed to the second round of the mixed doubles event, beating Algerian duo of Tanina Violette Mammeri and Kocella Mammeri 21-15 22-20. PTI

The Indian duo will next play Chinese Taipei's Kuang Heng Liu and Yu Chieh Jheng.

IOC session approves inclusion of boxing in 2028 LA Olympics

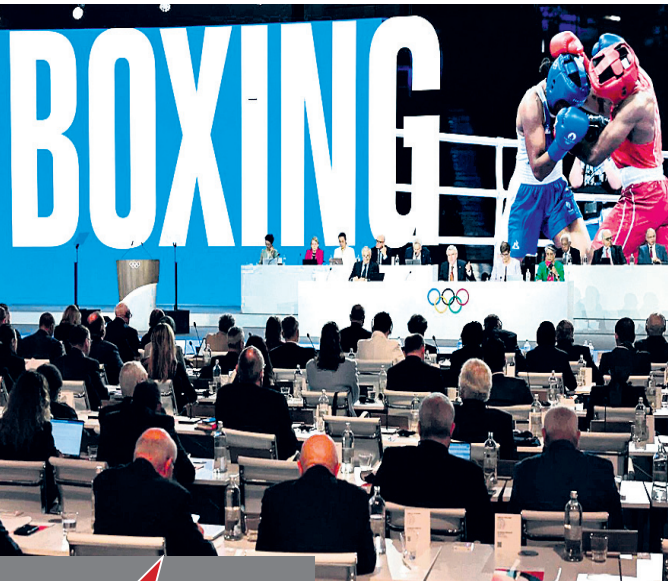
INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Costa Navarino, March 20: Boxing has been included in the 2028 Los Angeles Olympic Games (LA28) sports programme after the International Olympic Committee (IOC) unanimously voted for the move during the 144th Session meeting Thursday.

This decision came after the proposal from the IOC Executive Board (EB), following the recommendation from the Olympic Programme Commission, and the provisional recognition of World Boxing as the International Federation (IF) within the Olympic Movement governing the sport of boxing at the world level.

Boxing was not included in the LA28 initial sports programme approved by the IOC Session in February 2022, because of the then-ongoing concerns around the then-IF for boxing, the International Boxing Association (IBA). Following the withdrawal of the IBA's recognition on June 22, 2023, the inclusion of boxing in the LA28 sports programme remained on hold.

The IOC granted World Boxing recognition as boxing's new governing body last month, a move that cleared the path for boxing to be included



I thank you for the approval of having boxing back in the Olympic programme. We can look forward to a great boxing tournament

THOMAS BACH | PRESIDENT, IOC

in the Los Angeles Olympic Games in 2028.

At the most recent Olympic Games, in Paris, the boxing competition and its qualifying tournaments were or-

ganised under the authority of the Paris 2024 Boxing Unit, an ad hoc task force created by the IOC EB following the withdrawal of recognition of the IBA to protect athlete participation at Paris 2024 and deliver a clear, fair and transparent pathway for boxers to qualify.

Boxing was first included in the modern Olympic Games in 1904, and has been part of every edition since then except for Stockholm 1912, due to a local law banning the sport at the time.

Kirsty first African woman to be elected as IOC president

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Costa Navarino, March 20: Kirsty Coventry was elected president of the International Olympic Committee Thursday and became the first woman and first African to get perhaps the biggest job in world sports.

"It is a signal that we are truly global," the Zimbabwe sports minister and two-time Olympic swimming gold medalist said.

Her's was a stunning first-round win in the seven-candidate contest after voting by 97 IOC members. She gets an eight-year mandate into 2033 aged just 41 — youthful by the historical standards of the IOC.

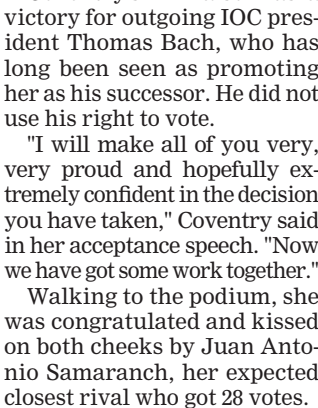
It was the most open and hard-to-call IOC presidential election in decades with Coventry expected to lead the first round short of an absolute majority. Though several rounds of votes were widely predicted, she got the exact majority of 49 needed.

Coventry's win also was a victory for outgoing IOC president Thomas Bach, who has long been seen as promoting her as his successor. He did not use his right to vote.

"I will make all of you very, very proud and hopefully extremely confident in the decision you have taken," Coventry said in her acceptance speech. "Now we have got some work together."

Walking to the podium, she was congratulated and kissed on both cheeks by Juan Antonio Samaranch, her expected closest rival who got 28 votes.

Also in the race were four presidents of sports governing bodies: Track and field's Sebastian Coe, skiing's Johan Eliasch, cycling's David Lappartient, and gymnastics' Morinari Watanabe. Also contending was Prince Feisal al Hussein of Jordan. Coventry will formally replace her mentor Bach on June 23 — officially Olympic Day — as the 10th IOC president in its 131-year history. Bach reached the maximum 12 years in office.



BCCI takes U-turn, lifts saliva ban in IPL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 20: The BCCI Thursday lifted the ban on use of saliva on the ball in the upcoming Indian Premier League after a majority of captains agreed to its proposal, making it the first major cricket competition to do away with the restriction that was a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The decision was taken at the captains' meeting in Mumbai ahead of the league starting on Saturday.

"The saliva ban has been lifted. Majority of captains were in favour of the move. Some had reservations about the re-introduction, some sat on the fence but majority of them supported the move," a top BCCI official told PTI.

The International Cricket

Council (ICC) had banned the age-old practice of applying saliva to shine the ball as a precautionary measure during the COVID-19 pandemic, during which health practitioners advocated strict hygiene protocols and physical distancing.

In 2022, the world body made the ban permanent.

The IPL too included the ICC ban

in its playing conditions in the aftermath of the pandemic but its guidelines are outside the purview of the sport's governing body.

With the development Thursday, the IPL became the first major cricketing event to re-introduce saliva's use after the pandemic.

The captains meeting, which was scheduled to begin at 12.30 pm in Mumbai, did not start on time due to a delay in arrival of a few team officials at the BCCI office.

Now that

the ban is revoked in the IPL, the ICC too might review its stance on the subject.

On the sidelines of the ICC Champions Trophy, senior India pacer Mohammed Shami had spoken about the need to use saliva on the ball in what has become a predominantly batters' game.

The likes of Vernon Philander and Tim Southee had backed Shami's call.

"We keep appealing that we should be allowed to use saliva so that we can bring reverse swing back into the game and it becomes interesting," Shami had said during the 50-over event in Dubai, where India emerged victorious.

Also on the agenda of captains' meeting was the contentious Impact Player rule which the BCCI had already extended till at least 2027.

