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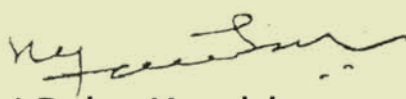


सत्यमेव जयते



## MESSAGE OF HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF ODISHA ON THE AUSPICIOUS OCCASION OF MAHA BISUBA SANKRANTI

On the auspicious occasion of Maha Bisuba Sankranti and on the first day of Odia New Year, I greet sisters and brothers of the State and extend my good wishes. I call upon all to work devotedly to make Odisha as one of the best States of the country and transform it to Viksit Odisha.

  
(Hari Babu Kambhampati)




ଓଡ଼ିଆ ନୂଆବର୍ଷ ତଥା  
ମହାବିଷୁବ ସଂକ୍ରାନ୍ତି ଅବସରରେ  
ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀଙ୍କ ବାର୍ତ୍ତା



ଓଡ଼ିଆ ନୂଆବର୍ଷ ତଥା ମହାବିଷୁବ ସଂକ୍ରାନ୍ତି ଅବସରରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ତଥା ବିଶ୍ୱର କୋଣ ଅନୁକୋଣରେ ରହୁଥିବା ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଇଭଉଣୀମାନଙ୍କୁ ମୋର ଶୁଭେଚ୍ଛା ଓ ଅଭିନନ୍ଦନ ଜଣାଉଛି ।

ଆମ ସଂସ୍କୃତି ଓ ପରମ୍ପରା ଉପରେ ଆଧାରିତ ଏହି ଦିବସରେ ଆସନ୍ତୁ, ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଗୌରବକୁ ନୂଆ ଶିଖରରେ ପହଞ୍ଚାଇବା ସହିତ ଏକ ସମୃଦ୍ଧ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଗଠନ ପାଇଁ ସଂକଳ୍ପବଦ୍ଧ ହୋଇ କାମ କରିବା ।

  
(ମୋହନ ଚରଣ ମାଝୀ)  
ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା

OIPR-15001/13/0514/2526

# Waqf fire spreads

Violent protests against the Waqf (Amendment) Act spread to newer territories in the country Sunday as hundreds fled West Bengal's strife-torn Murshidabad district, where three persons have already been killed in clashes so far, to take shelter in the adjoining Malda by crossing a river. Bengal police claimed to have arrested a total of 150 persons in connection with the communal riots amid demands by Opposition BJP to declare four districts as 'disturbed area' under AFSPA. The spiral of violence hit Assam during the day when around 400 protestors pelted stones at and clashed with the police during a rally against the Act in Cachar district, prompting police to resort to lathi-charge. Meanwhile, the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) announced to conduct a protest meeting against the Act in Hyderabad April 19. The protests stem from the fear that Act would dilute the rights of Muslims to manage religious endowments of lakhs of acres of prime land across the country.

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, April 13:** Hundreds of people affected by communal violence in West Bengal's Murshidabad have crossed the Bhagirathi River and taken shelter in adjoining Malda as 12 more people were arrested in connection with the violent protests over the Waqf (Amendment) Act in the district Sunday where three people have died.

Paramilitary forces patrolled parts of Murshidabad district which witnessed violent protests Friday and Saturday over the issue as the situation remained tense but under control, while political parties



traded charges for aggravating the situation.

West Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose said he is holding regular discussions with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee while the Centre is monitoring the situation in the district.

"The situation in Suti, Dhulian, Samserganj and Jangipur areas of the district is peaceful. Raids continued overnight, and 12 more people were arrested. With this, 150 people have been arrested so far," a senior police officer said.

Prohibitory orders under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) have been imposed in the violence-hit areas, and the internet has been suspended, he said.

Following the exodus of hundreds of people to Malda, the local administration has arranged for accommodation and food for the riot-hit families and sheltered them in schools, while deploying volunteers at the river bank to assist those arriving in boats.

BJP's Purulia MP Jyotirmay Singh Mahato has written to Union Home

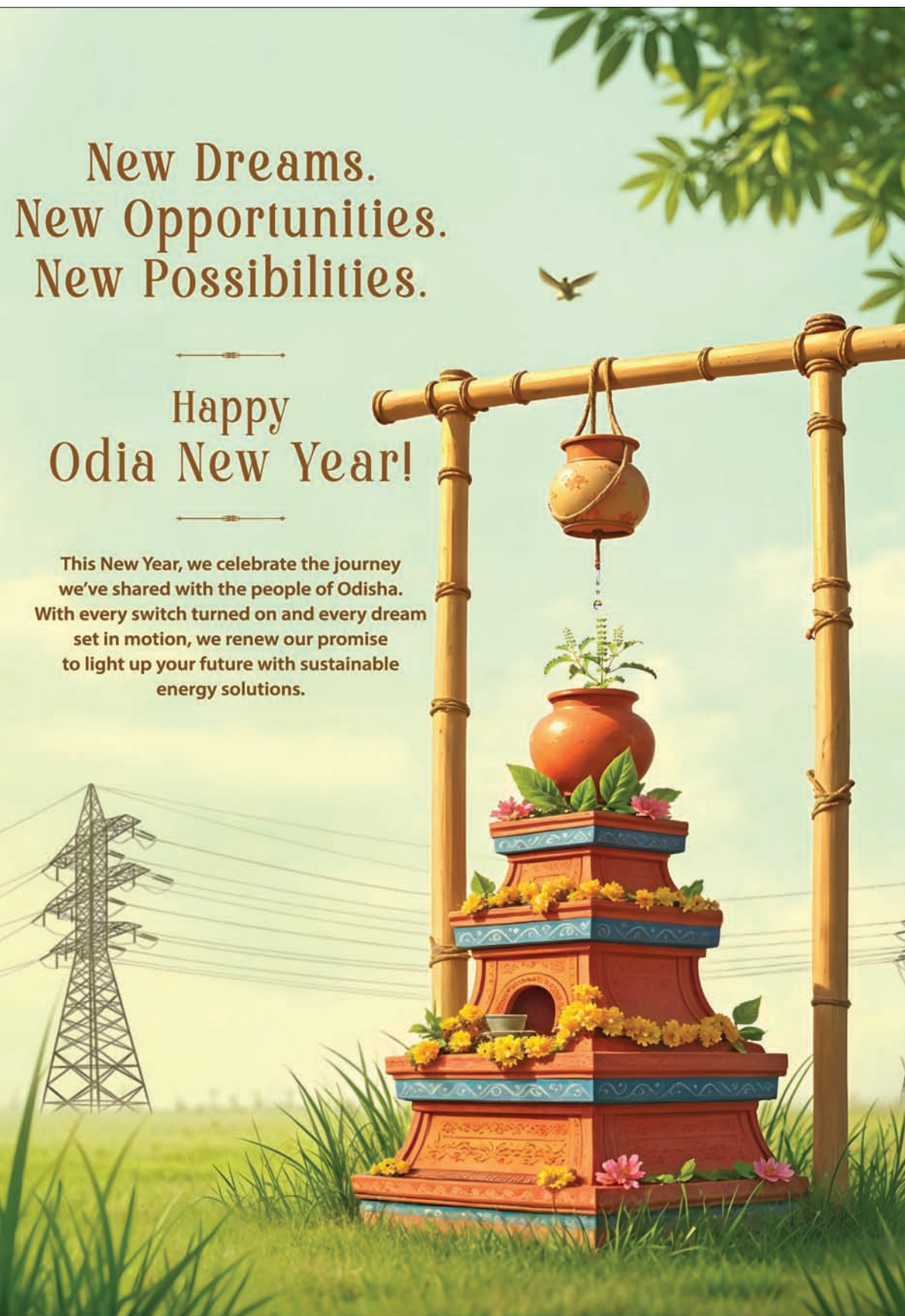
Minister Amit Shah urging the Centre to declare select bordering districts of West Bengal as 'disturbed areas' under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA), alleging repeated attacks on the Hindu community.

Meanwhile, protestors threw stones while the police used batons at a protest rally in Cachar district of Assam.

A senior official said that several hundred people hit the streets in Berenga area of Silchar town without permission to protest the recently enacted legislation.

"Around 300-400 people were protesting by blocking the road. When we tried to clear the path, a few of them threw stones at us. We had to use mild lathi-charge to disperse the crowd," he added.

The All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) said it will conduct a protest meeting against the Act in Hyderabad April 19, AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi said Sunday.



## New Dreams. New Opportunities. New Possibilities.

### Happy Odia New Year!

This New Year, we celebrate the journey we've shared with the people of Odisha. With every switch turned on and every dream set in motion, we renew our promise to light up your future with sustainable energy solutions.

TPCODL | TPNODL | TPSODL | TPWODL  
(Joint Ventures of Tata Power and Government of Odisha)

# leisure

## FORTUNE FORECAST

 **GaneshaSpeaks.com**  
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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181\*

**ARIES**  
You spend happy times with your loved ones today. Ganesha suggests you learn to play some musical instrument as it is a good way to express emotions. Besides, it gives you a novel method to attract new people. Do it promptly before the mood changes.

**TAURUS**  
Today, Ganesha sees your feelings and emotions running high. There is a strong possibility of an emotional encounter with some close to you. You are likely to be swayed and influenced by the other in course of this meeting. Avoid getting into any kind of dispute or controversy. Confrontation is most likely to have adverse consequences. Later, you will become very nostalgic and lovingly recapture the times spent with your sweetheart.

**GEMINI**  
You will meet someone special who is here to stay for good, predicts Ganesha. Your kind and considerate nature will benefit others. You need to understand that it's okay to spend a little on comforts and entertainment. Be ready for a busy, yet cheerful, day ahead.

**CANCER**  
You will have enthusiasm for swift action. Variety adds spice to life. So you may change job or trade. Ties with superiors will be good. Ganesha says this is the time for challenges.

**LEO**  
It is a good day to renew old acquaintances and make new relationships. Your friends and relatives will probably visit you today. A jovial feeling will pervade your home. You may throw a grand party for your guests, says Ganesha.

**VIRGO**  
Consummation of work and success will be the high points today, says Ganesha. You will gain the much needed appreciation for your dedication to work and your desire to succeed in whatever you do. A long-awaited promotion may materialise today, and there is also the bright prospect of some monetary arrears coming your way.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesha says that today is going to be an unforgettable day for all those people who are in love or a romantic relationship. If you plan to propose to your beloved today is a good opportunity for it as success will come easily to you. You will be able to spend a day filled with joy, happiness and enjoyment. Ganesha showers his blessing on you

**SCORPIO**  
According to Ganesha, your family and friends top your priority list today. Life looks hunky dory on personal as well as professional front. Apart from business developments, romantic relations are on the bloom. And this is evident from your blushing cheeks. Creative indulgences may give a new dimension to your life!

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Your business is likely to scale new heights, says Ganesha. You need to build up your confidence and move ahead with zest and enthusiasm. Rake in the moolah as the business yield profits.

**CAPRICORN**  
Celebrations are in the offing and all the near and dear ones are invited to the party. Today, you will enjoy yourself to the fullest, feels Ganesha. You will get the desired profits in the business irrespective of how hard you have worked to achieve them. Realty seems a good investment option for you. With cooperative bosses and supportive colleagues, today is a good day for professionals as well.

**AQUARIUS**  
If the Almighty loads you with pain, He will also bless you with pleasure, assures Ganesha. You will begin the day with a long list of things to be done, but luckily you will be able finish them off one by one. It will drain you out, so later on the day take a hot water bath, sit back and relax, says Ganesha.

**PISCES**  
You will be able to come up trumps against the competition today. You should be wary of hidden enemies, for they might be involved in slandering you. It is best to reach out to others and make friends before they take it upon themselves to hinder your progress. Apart from this, no other significant event is indicated today, says Ganesha.



## PATRICK SCHWARZENEGGER EYES ACTION FILM WITH DAD ARNOLD

Patrick Schwarzenegger expresses his eagerness to collaborate with his father, Arnold Schwarzenegger, in an action movie, feeling confident after roles in series like *The Staircase* and *Gen V*. He gained recognition for his role in *The White Lotus*, which even garnered his father's praise.

## ZOE KRAVITZ, AUSTIN BUTLER SPARK DATING RUMOURS

Rumours swirled around Zoe Kravitz and Austin Butler after steamy scene from their upcoming film leaked, igniting speculation about a possible romance. However, sources close to Kravitz deny any serious relationship, stating she's enjoying post-breakup freedom and casual connections.



# Taapsee's heartfelt gesture

**Mumbai:** In a heartfelt gesture to combat the summer heat, actress Taapsee Pannu extended a helping hand to families living in slum areas by distributing fans and water coolers.

Touched by the experience, she described the initiative as something that “moved her deeply,” highlighting her commitment to giving back to the community. As temperatures soared past 40 degrees Celsius, Taapsee joined a special sewa initiative aimed at providing relief to families in low-income and slum areas—communities where even basic comforts like cooling appliances are often out of reach.

Speaking about her involvement, the actress shared, “We often take basic comforts like a fan or a cooler for granted, but for so many people, especially in this unbearable heat, even a small breeze can feel like a blessing. Being part of this initiative moved me deeply. It's not just about giving—it's about standing with people, understanding their pain, and doing what little we can to ease it.”

On the professional front, Taapsee has completed filming for her upcoming movie *Gandhari* and shared that she poured her heart and soul into the project.

*Gandhari* marks the sixth collaboration between Kanika Dhillon and Taapsee Pannu. The duo has previously delivered a string of hits together, including *Manmarziyaan*, *Haseen Dilluba*, and *Phir Aayi Haseen Dilluba*, among others.

IAN S



## Mouni shuts down trolls

their job...I do not pay attention to such remarks. If you hide behind a screen to troll others and if you find happiness in that so be it.”

Recently, Mouni faced a lot of backlash for the drastic change in her looks, most likely due to another plastic surgery. While some guessed she had done another lip enhancement, a set of netizens suspected she had undergone forehead Botox after noticing an unusual dent on her head.

A few days ago, Mouni dropped a reel on her Instagram that garnered a log of eyeballs. In the video that had “Hit The Bucket” playing in the backdrop, the diva was seen wearing a strapless black gown, flaunting her fresh bangs. However, the netizens noticed how her face looked different from before.

On the professional front, Mouni will be seen as the nerve-chilling ghost named ‘Mohabbat’, in the upcoming horror action-comedy *The Bhootnii*.

Starring Sanjay Dutt, Sunny Singh, Palak Tiwari, Beyounick, and Aasif Khan in the lead, the movie is likely to reach the audience 18th April 2025.

IAN S

# SOHA ON COMEBACK

**Mumbai:** Actor Soha Ali Khan, who is back to acting with *Chhorii 2* after a seven-year hiatus, says she found herself drifting away from movies when she became a parent and recently realised it was time to reclaim her identity.

The actor, known for films such as *Rang De Basanti*, *Saheb Biwi Aur Gangster*, and *Tum Mile*, welcomed daughter Inaaya Naumi Kemmu with actor-filmmaker husband Kunal Kemmu in 2017. She was last seen in *Saheb Biwi Aur Gangster 3*, which released in 2018.

“Truth be told, when I became a parent, because I’m an obsessive person, I became obsessed with my child. I forgot not just films but my family, friends,

husband, and everyone. I was just obsessed with this child, and now she’s older, she doesn’t need me anymore. So, I need to find something, I need my identity,” Soha told the agency.

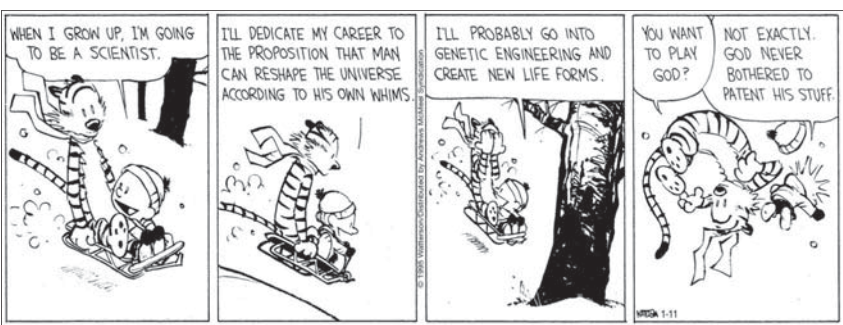
“So, now I go back and say, ‘Please, can I do some work again because nobody wants me anymore at home. So, that’s the truth that you mustn’t lose yourself. I’m one of those people who lost themselves, and now I must find myself again. I love what I’m doing. So, I took a little hiatus, but I’m back,” she added.

PTI

## PEANUTS



## CALVIN AND HOBBS



## BREVITY



## FUN post

## CROSSWORD



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### Across

- 1 Motif
- 4 Move smoothly
- 10 Dam builders
- 11 Unguent
- 12 Luxor locale
- 13 Type of jar made from baked clay
- 14 English race place
- 16 Carpenter's tool
- 21 Unique
- 23 China cabinet

### Down

- 25 Man with horns
- 26 Pasta dish
- 27 Decorate
- 28 Musical time
- 2 Bad guy in the movies
- 3 Artist of consummate skill
- 5 Also-ran
- 6 Sea World attraction

### Across

- 7 Heckelphones
- 8 One who puts you in your place
- 9 Casual wear
- 15 Zigged and zagged
- 17 Port city in France (2,5)
- 18 Actor's line
- 19 Distress signal
- 20 Type of reaction
- 22 Goldbrick
- 24 Army unit

## SUDOKU

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

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

## SOLUTIONS

### CROSSWORD

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

### SUDOKU

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



**NEW BEGINNING:** Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, along with Law Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan, Revenue Minister Suresh Pujari, Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja and SJTA chief administrator Arabinda Kumar Padhee, unveils the annual festival calendar of Srimandir in Puri on the eve of Odia New Year, Sunday

PIC: YAGNESWAR MOHANTY

### Toddler abducted from mother in City



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 13:** In a shocking incident, a 19-month-old toddler was abducted from his visually-challenged mother by unidentified miscreants from a place outside Ram Mandir here in the early hours Sunday. Significantly, the incident occurred just 200 metres away from the Kharvelnagar police station. IIC of the police station, Rajanikanta Mishra, said they were still to make any headway in the case or establish the identity of the abductors. The child’s mother, Jayanti Mallick, 25, who survives by begging and lives at a shelter home in

Niladri Vihar, lodged an FIR at Kharvelnagar police station later in the day. In the FIR, she said Saturday night she failed to return to the shelter home owing to severe body weakness. “Therefore, I decided to sleep near the temple along with my son, Subham, who I was carrying with me,” she said.

Jayanti said when she woke around 1.20am, she found her son missing from her arms. “I suspect some miscreants loitering in the area had taken him away,” she said in the FIR.

Jayanti, a widow, is also the mother of a seven-year-old daughter. She lost her husband a few years ago to an accident.

Meanwhile, Mishra said that a case has been registered under Section 137(2) of the BNS. “We are scanning CCTV footage from the surrounding areas, and a hunt is on to trace the accused and rescue the toddler,” he said.

### IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Everything's in order, sir. They have no licence or permission-but they belong to the majority community

### Class II student found hanging

**Udala:** A Class II student of an SSD Ashram School in Salakhunta under this block in Mayurbhanj was found hanging from a bamboo pole on the school premises Sunday. The deceased was identified as Kandari Madhei, 8, daughter of Sushant Madhei of Padmapokhari under Kaptipada block. She was staying in the school hostel. Her classmates found her hanging at around 2pm and informed the hostel matron, Dulari Hansdah. She was declared dead at Udala hospital. The cops have detained the headmaster for questioning.

### We have enough to nail Rana: Top 26/11 attacks' investigator



Tahawwur Hussain Rana



Ramesh Mahale

DEBASISH PANIGRAHI, OP

**Bhubaneswar, April 13:** Former Mumbai Police Senior Inspector Ramesh Mahale couldn’t have hoped for more when he heard about Tahawwur Hussain Rana’s arrival in India late Thursday. A key conspirator in the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks, Pakistan born LeT operative Rana was extradited to India following a protracted legal battle in the United States. “I hope Rana meets the same fate as (Ajmal) Kasab, or the other accused involved in the dastardly murder of 166 innocent people,” said the 60 something Mahale, who was the chief investigator of the terrorist carnage in India’s commercial capital a little over 16 years ago.

Mahale, who resigned from the force barely three months after Kasab’s execution in November 2012, now practices law. Speaking to Orissa Post, Mahale said the memories of the mayhem still make his blood boil. “Isn’t it the same way every Indian feels about the perpetrators,” Mahale said during a telephonic conversation. Asked about his recollection of Rana, or his alleged role in the crime, Mahale said the name of the Canada-based Halal meat shop owner didn’t come up in the first two chargesheets filed in the case by the Mumbai Police. “It was only at a later stage his name cropped up after the National Investigating Agency (NIA) took over the case from us,” Mahale said. **Contd...P4**

## 8 killed in AP cracker unit blast

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Visakhapatnam, April 13:** Eight people, including two women, were killed and at least seven others injured in a powerful explosion at a firecracker manufacturing unit in Anakapalli of Andhra Pradesh Sunday.

The explosion occurred around 12.45pm at Kotavuralla village and the injured were shifted to hospitals.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed grief over the incident. In a post on ‘X’, he said, “Deeply saddened by the loss of lives in a factory mishap in Anakapalli district of Andhra Pradesh. Condolences to those who have lost their loved ones. May the injured recover soon.

The local administration is assisting those affected”.

He said, “An ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh from PMNRF would be given to the next of kin of each deceased. The injured would be given Rs 50,000.”

“Eight people, including two women, died and seven others were injured in the fire accident,” Andhra Pradesh Home Minister V Anitha told PTI.

The blast ripped through the licensed crackers manufacturing unit functioning under an asbestos roof, where 15 people were reportedly present. Charred body parts were scattered around, making identification difficult, an eyewitness said. Meanwhile, postmortem of the five deceased is under-

way at a local hospital in Narsipatnam and three more at Anakapalle district hospital said an official statement.

Out of the six injured persons referred to King George Hospital (KGH) in Vizag, four have recovered, while two remain in critical condition. Two more are recovering at a Narsipatnam hospital, it said.

AP Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu expressed shock over the incident and directed Home Minister Anitha and district officials to ensure proper medical care for the injured.

He also ordered a probe into the incident. The state government has announced an ex-gratia of Rs 15 lakh to each of the deceased family.

## On the 135<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of Bharat Ratna Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

### The nation is paying tribute to Babasaheb

### Modi government is realising Dr. Ambedkar’s vision of an inclusive Bharat

#### OPPORTUNITY\_\_\_\_\_

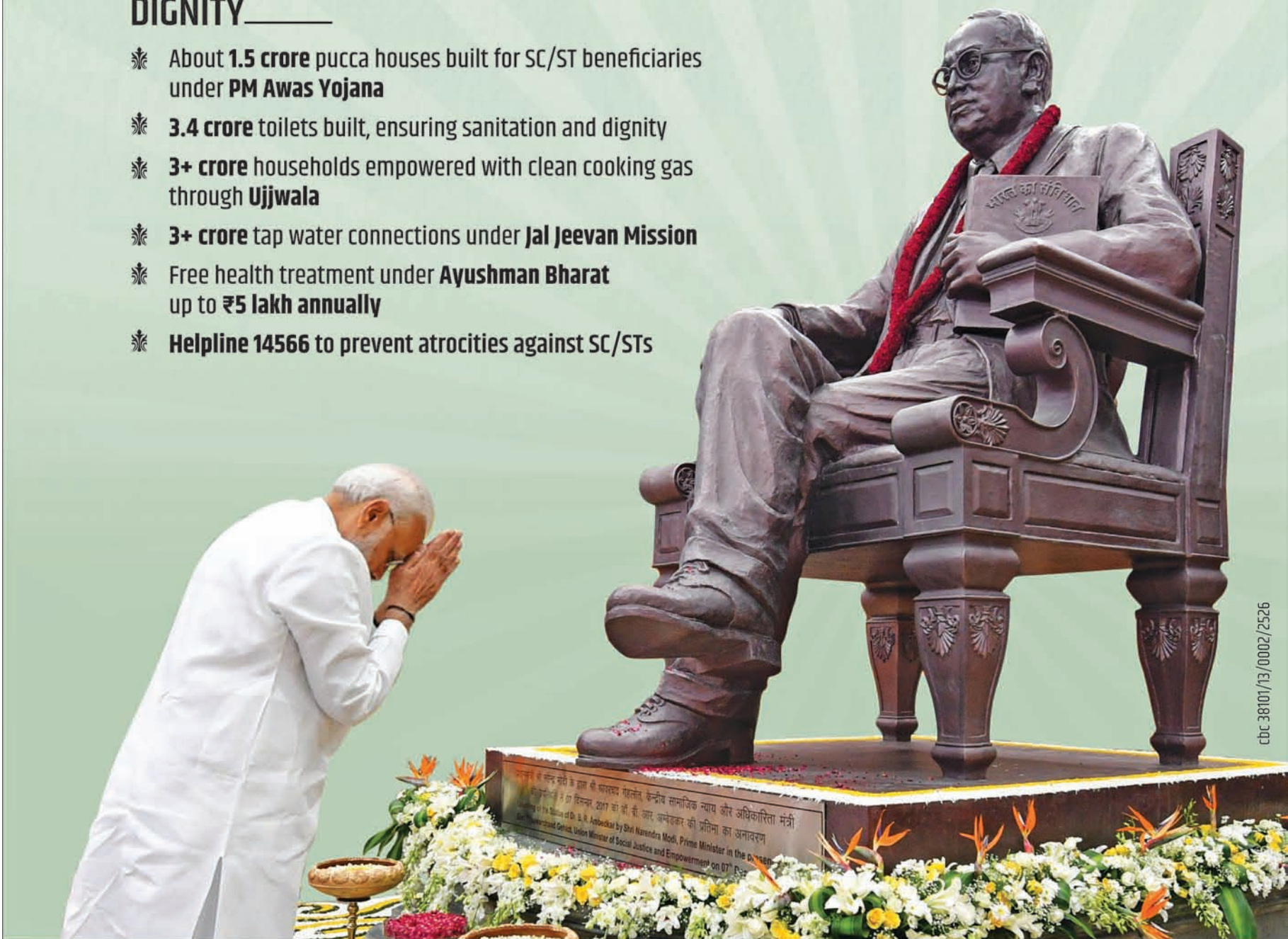
- ✦ About **8.4 crore** SC/ST students supported through scholarships worth over ₹44700+ crore
- ✦ **₹4.6+ lakh crore** in loans to SC/ST beneficiaries through **PM Mudra Yojana**

#### DIGNITY\_\_\_\_\_

- ✦ About **1.5 crore** pucca houses built for SC/ST beneficiaries under **PM Awas Yojana**
- ✦ **3.4 crore** toilets built, ensuring sanitation and dignity
- ✦ **3+ crore** households empowered with clean cooking gas through **Ujjwala**
- ✦ **3+ crore** tap water connections under **Jal Jeevan Mission**
- ✦ Free health treatment under **Ayushman Bharat** up to **₹5 lakh annually**
- ✦ **Helpline 14566** to prevent atrocities against SC/STs

#### TRIBUTE\_\_\_\_\_

- ✦ **Panchteerth** developed to honour Babasaheb’s legacy through five sacred sites:  
**Janam Bhoomi** (Mhow, MP)  
**Sikhsha Bhoomi** (London)  
**Deeksha Bhoomi** (Nagpur)  
**Mahaparinirvan Bhoomi** (Delhi)  
**Chaitya Bhoomi** (Mumbai)




All are cordially invited for Floral Tribute

Date: 14 April 2025 | Time: 9:30 AM–12:30 PM  
Venue: Prerna Sthal, Parliament House Campus

Entry via PLB Gate, Pandit Pant Marg

# New varsity Act comes into force

KEY PROVISIONS



**Recruitment of faculty in universities will not be conducted through the OPSC. Instead, universities will form a committee comprising top educationists for faculty recruitment**

**A three-member committee will be formed for the selection of Vice-Chancellors. The age limit for VCs has been increased from 67 to 70 years**

SENATE COMPRISING 68 MEMBERS WILL BE REINTRODUCED IN UNIVERSITIES

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, April 13:** With Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati giving his assent, the Odisha University (Amendment) Act, 2024 has come into effect from Sunday marking a significant reform in the state's higher education sector.

The Bill was passed April 2 after extensive deliberation in the Odisha Assembly and got the Governor's assent April 12.

Expressing his gratitude to the Governor, Higher Education Minister Suryabanshi Suraj described the development as a 'new dawn' for higher education in the state. He said the Act will bring transformative changes aimed at strengthening the education system, addressing longstanding challenges and enhancing academic excellence.

"The Act aims to bring about substantial reforms, ensuring

ists from the field of higher education will be part of this committee. The age limit for VCs has been increased from 67 to 70 years.

The new Act also ensures the reintroduction of the senate in universities. The senate is the highest advisory body of a university, comprising educationists, faculty, students and administrative staff and plays a vital role in the development of the university and the higher education sector.

As per the Act, each university will have a senate that will meet at least twice a year. The senate will consist of 68 members, out of which a minimum of 37 members will be from among teachers, educationists, and student representatives, ensuring a balanced and inclusive representation.

The minister said distance education system will be introduced in every university to provide access to quality higher education for all and to enhance the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in the state.

A finance committee will be constituted for strengthening financial management in universities. Proposals have been made to establish building and construction committees for reviewing and monitoring infrastructure development projects.

All funds received or acquired by the universities will be audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, and detailed financial reports will be presented before the Odisha Legislative Assembly, he said.

The Higher Education minister said that the Act also ensures a robust foundation and strengthened education system. "The Act will also contribute to the growth of a knowledge-driven economy in the state," he said.

# 77TH CAPITAL FOUNDATION DAY Assembly Speaker Padhy hoists flag



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, April 13:** Assembly Speaker Surama Padhy Sunday hoisted a flag and took salute in a special parade marking the 77th foundation day of Bhubaneswar as a Capital city.

The celebrations began with floral tributes at the foundation stone plaque near the Legislative Assembly, followed by flag-hoisting by the Speaker and a parade featuring police personnel and college student contingents and bands that marched from Rabindra Mandap to Soochana Bhawan.

Twenty-one contingents took

part in the Capital Day Foundation parade this year. "We have deliberately kept school students away from the parade and the function keeping in view the scorching heat," said Pradumnya Mohanty, vice president of the Capital Foundation Day Celebration Committee.

"Bhubaneswar as the new capital of Odisha was set up April 13, 1948, with a population of only 16,000. The then Prime Minister of India Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru had laid the foundation stone for the Capital city. Today, Bhubaneswar is home to over 13 lakh people," Padhy said, wishing all prosperity for the city.

BMC Mayor Sulochana Das said the City has undergone a massive transformation from witnessing running of bullock cart to flights. Bhubaneswar is now a smart city and emerged as the sports capital of India by hosting at least two hockey World Cup events. "Bhubaneswar's cultural heritage and its tradition still continue as it has been in 1949," Das said calling the citizens to keep the City green and clean.

Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and many other dignitaries greeted the people on the day and wished all-round development of the

City.

This year's festivities are spread across two days due to the summer heat, the organisers said, adding that it will be integrated with Odia New Year celebrations Monday.

A photo exhibition, showcasing Bhubaneswar's heritage traffic management measures is being organised at Soochana Bhawan while the government buildings have been decorated. Statues of eminent personalities across the City have been cleaned and adorned with garlands.

Though Bhubaneswar, earlier known as Ekamra Khetra and Ekamra Kanan in 'puranas' and Toshali, Kalinga Nagari, 'Mandir Nagari' in history books, has the 3,000-year-old history, beginning from Mahamegha-Bahana Chedi dynasty with Sisupalgarh as its capital, it became Odisha's state capital April 13, 1948. Earlier, Cuttack was the Capital of Odisha.

The master plan of Bhubaneswar was designed by German architect Otto Königsberger in 1948 for a population of 40,000 and it is among the first four planned cities of India.

autonomy for universities and enhancing the efficiency of academic functions," Suraj said.

According to the provisions of the Act, the recruitment of faculty in universities will not be conducted through the Odisha Public Service Commission (OPSC). Instead, universities will form a committee comprising top educationists for faculty recruitment.

This will allow the recruitment process to be completed within a specified period, without unnecessary delays, the Higher Education minister said, adding that it will ensure that faculty appointments align with the requirements of undergraduate and postgraduate curricula as well as subject-specific demands.

Regarding the appointment of Vice-Chancellors (VCs), the Act has provision of forming a three-member committee for the selection of the VCs. Only distinguished education-

Year and Maha Vishuba Sankranti April 14 will also mark the grand finale of the state's 14-day-long cultural campaign, 'Odia Pakhya.' Launched April 1 to commemorate Odisha Divas, the campaign was designed to rekindle pride in Odia language, identity, and heritage—especially among the younger generation.

The concluding ceremony will be held at Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT), where an auditorium will be inaugurated in the presence of dignitaries including Governor, Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Ministers Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo and Pravati Parida.

Pana Sankranti, the Odia

# CM wishes a prosperous New Year

**Pana Sankranti, the Odia New Year, is not just a festive day-it reflects the region's deep-rooted spiritual connection with nature and community**



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 13:** On the eve of Odia New Year, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi extended his heartfelt greetings to the people of Odisha. "I wish all Odias a joyful and prosperous New Year on this sacred occasion," he said.

Highlighting the cultural significance of the day, the Chief Minister announced the unveiling of the official Odia calendar for 2025-26, which was dedicated to the Srimandir deities. "All our festivals, rituals, and auspicious ceremonies are observed based on this meticulously designed calendar," he stated.

The release ceremony took place after prayers at the Srimandir in Puri. The calendar is now available statewide.

The celebration of Odia New

Year and Maha Vishuba Sankranti April 14 will also mark the grand finale of the state's 14-day-long cultural campaign, 'Odia Pakhya.' Launched April 1 to commemorate Odisha Divas, the campaign was designed to rekindle pride in Odia language, identity, and heritage—especially among the younger generation.

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Pana Sankranti, the Odia

New Year, is not just a festive day—it reflects the region's deep-rooted spiritual connection with nature and community. As part of the celebrations, April 13 witnessed a statewide traditional food festival, "Ama Ruchi Ama Aahaar," featuring iconic dishes like Pithapana, Pakhala, and Besara-Mahoora.

The campaign included cultural events like 'Ama Posaka Ama Parichaya' (Our Clothes, Our Identity), Barnabodha Utsav, Folk Art Day, and a Young Writers' Conference. The final day will bring together art, ritual, and tradition, as people across Odisha unite to welcome Odia Naba Barsha with renewed pride.

# We have enough to nail Rana...

**FROM P1**

In fact, Rana's role had surfaced following the deportation of another 26/11 plotter and key LeT operative Zabiuddin Ansari alias Abu Jundal from Saudi Arabia in 2012. Jundal's name had come to light as the man whose voice was intercepted in the Karachi-based control room which had been giving instructions to the 10 terrorists carrying out the 26/11 terror attacks. In 2012, agencies had narrowed down his location to Saudi Arabia, and had confirmed it through DNA samples taken from his family based in Maharashtra's Beed.

It was during Jundal's interrogation that the NIA learnt about Rana. And the corroboration came during Headley's virtual deposition in the special NIA court in Delhi from inside a US prison, where he is serving a 35-year jail term following his plea bargaining in the 26/11 case.

"Even if we had known about Rana during our probe, we couldn't have done much to facilitate his extradition as Central agencies like NIA are better placed to handle global hunts," Mahale admitted.

Asked if the circumstantial and oral evidence would be enough to prove Rana guilty in

the case in the absence of any material proof, Mahale said, "I think, we have gathered enough to nail him. The investigators just need to join the dots."

Interestingly, Mahale preferred to leave it to destiny when asked if the agencies would ever succeed in bringing the masterminds of the carnage, Hafiz Saeed and Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi, to justice. "It appears difficult given the fact that Pakistan cared little about sharing Dawood Ibrahim with us in the last 40 years. However, on the brighter side, there are possibilities they could meet the same fate like the Khalistani terrorists

in Canada, or other anti-India forces elsewhere in the world, these days."


Rana is said to have collaborated with others, including key conspirator David Coleman Headley alias Dawood Gilani, in the criminal plot aimed at carrying out the terrorist attack. Investigators have found that Rana had visited Mumbai and lived in a hotel, where he held several rounds of discussions with Headley, ostensibly to further the 26/11 attack plans. They are also said to be in possession of the minutes of Rana's visit, including some crucial CCTV footage of the hotel lobby where he met Headley.

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	36.2°	36.4°
Min Temp	22.9°	21.8°
Humidity	60%	59%
Rainfall	5.6	Nil

FORECAST

Partly cloudy sky with possibility of rain/thundershowers



## CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before Notary, Bhubaneswar dtd.11.04.2025, I, Manas Ranjan Mallik, Address-At: Plot No. 361/8328, Maruti Nagar, Lane 3A, Nuagaon, Bhubaneswar, P.O.- Sisupalagarh, P.S.- Dhauli, Dist.- Khurda, PIN-751002, Odisha declare that I have changed my father's name from Manamohan Mallick to Manmohan Mallik for all purposes.

RESHMI YADAV, OP

**Bhubaneswar, April 13:** Divorce, which was once considered a taboo subject in Indian society, has become increasingly common, particularly in urban areas. Over the last decade, a combination of shifting societal attitudes, heightened legal awareness, and evolving gender dynamics has contributed to the growing prevalence of marital separations.

According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), while divorce and separation rates are still relatively low compared to global standards, they have seen a noticeable increase in metropolitan cities, with rates more than doubling in the past ten years.

Sangita Majhi, an advocate and mediator who serves as the state head of the Mediators Council of India in Delhi, explained that the perception of divorce has undergone a significant transformation. "In the past, divorce was often seen as a last resort, something that

people would only consider in extreme circumstances. Today, however, it is increasingly viewed as a way to reclaim emotional well-being and personal freedom," she said.

She further added that couples are now less willing to compromise, and small, unresolved disputes tend to snowball into larger issues, ultimately leading to separation. Factors such as growing financial independence, a lack of communication, and the burden of ego play significant roles in these developments.

This shift in attitudes has also been reflected in the high-profile separations of well-known personalities, which further underscore the change in public perception.

For instance, recent speculations about the personal life of boxer Mary Kom have garnered considerable attention. "When prominent celebrities, from cricketers to actors, publicly experience divorces, it sends a strong message to society. This has made many



men apprehensive, especially about the potential for false allegations and hefty alimony," remarked Ramesh Jaiswal, a businessman.

Legal experts are increasingly vocal about the implications of the existing legal framework surrounding divorce. Byomakesh Tripathy, an advocate at the Orissa High Court, highlighted that while the awareness of women's rights has increased, there are also concerns about the misuse of

legal provisions.

"The legal landscape is evolving, and women's empowerment is a positive development. However, there has been an uptick in the misuse of certain provisions, which complicates matters," Tripathy said.

Another High Court advocate Sejal Nayak added that divorce in India can be filed on various grounds such as cruelty, adultery, or prolonged separation. While mutual consent divorces

under Section 13B are generally smoother, issues like alimony continue to raise concerns.

For younger generations, especially women, the growing trend of divorce is closely tied to the rise in women's empowerment.

Postgraduate student Gayatri Das from Bhubaneswar noted, "Today, women place a higher priority on their independence and self-respect. If a marriage becomes abusive or unsustainable, divorce is often viewed as the best option."

However, while divorce has become more common, Sangita Majhi cautioned against normalising it as a trendy solution. "Marriage requires effort and emotional maturity. Many of the cases I counsel stem from misunderstandings or ego clashes that could be resolved with proper communication," she remarked.

"Divorce should never be seen as a fashion statement. It not only affects the couple but also their families and children" she concluded.

# Jagatpur industrial hub set for upgrade

**Cuttack:** Jagatpur Industrial Estate holds the distinction of being Odisha's oldest and largest hub for small-scale industries. With both old and new industrial zones functioning actively, the estate is home to over 700 small-scale industrial units. Among them, more than 500 are fully operational, collectively providing employment to over 15,000 individuals. In a bid to transform this historic industrial area into a model industrial estate, the Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation (IIDCO) has been implementing rapid development work over the past year with support from IIDF funds. A total of "56.77 crore has been sanctioned for this purpose. EGIS has been appointed as the consulting firm for the project, while Balaji Engiconr has been entrusted with carrying out the construction work. As part of the comprehensive development plan, the entire road network within the estate is being renovated. A separate drainage system is being laid for rainwater, and another underground pipeline network is being installed to collect wastewater from the industrial units.

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FOCUS HEALTHCARE

# THE RURAL-URBAN DIVIDE

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THE MOTHER



## Aadhaar Again

The Government of India is testing a new Aadhaar app that combines face ID authentication with artificial intelligence (AI), enabling citizens to access digital Aadhaar services on their mobile devices. Developed by the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), the app features QR code-based instant verification and real-time facial recognition for authentication.

Aadhaar, which was launched fifteen years ago, assigns Indian residents a unique 12-digit ID number linked to biometric data, including fingerprints and retinal scans. Aadhaar was introduced by the Congress-led UPA government with the goal of streamlining the distribution of welfare benefits to those in need. Initially marketed as a voluntary programme, it has effectively turned into a forced necessity for anyone wanting to lead a normal life in India. Today, the ubiquitous Aadhaar is required for almost all activities – opening a bank account, obtaining a SIM card, checking into a hotel, travelling or even shopping. Most people are unaware that there exist alternatives so everyone takes the ‘easy path’ and falls into the trap. However, the problem with linking a diverse range of services to a single ID number is that it increases the risks associated with security breaches, a specialized threat about which most educated Indians are completely ignorant since privacy has never, historically, been an issue in our society.

Critics argue that Aadhaar is fostering a digital economy primarily designed to benefit businesses. While unsuspecting individuals are often willing to share their information in exchange for convenience, it is important to recognise that they are also sacrificing their privacy. This leads to surveillance over almost all aspects of their lives. The most vulnerable members of society are particularly affected, as they may lose access to benefits due to issues like fingerprint mismatch or their own name or even their father's name misspelt, leaving them with little recourse for assistance. Those affected are particularly among the uneducated, manual labourers and senior citizens struggling to confirm their fingerprints and retina scans. Add to this the loss of a mobile phone that could put the person concerned to great hardships. And God help if the mobile number linked to a citizen's Aadhaar is somehow deactivated! Then of course there always looms the danger of internet or simply power outages which could throw the lives of millions into a downward spiral. A very recent case was observed on 26 March, 2 April and 12 April when the nation was pushed into a limbo because the UPI system of money transaction dropped dead throughout India.

Concerns over data breaches aren't unfounded. A recent survey by LocalCircles, a leading community social media platform, found that 87 per cent of Indian citizens believe that some of their personal data is already in the public domain or has been compromised in databases. This marks a significant increase from 72 per cent in 2022. Among those who think their personal identification data has been leaked, more than 50 per cent specifically cite their Aadhaar or PAN card details, or both, as being at risk. The survey also indicated that citizens attribute responsibility for this situation to various entities, including government agencies, telecommunications companies, banks, and e-commerce platforms. Earlier, a report published in the Tribune newspaper in 2018, disclosed that an online database containing every Aadhaar number, along with the personal information of more than a billion Indians, could be bought for as little as \$7. A 2022 audit of the UIDAI conducted by the CAG of India highlighted issues related to privacy and data security, as well as problems in the enrolment processes that resulted in duplicate entries and inaccurate biometrics. These are bound to happen in a country like India where everyone works in a lackadaisical manner and with complete disinterest and disdain.

The government asserts that the new app streamlines Aadhaar verification, boosts user privacy, and safeguards against misuse. However, concerns persist regarding the security of citizens' personal data. While Face ID offers convenience, it also poses much greater security risks, including data breaches, serious privacy infringements bordering on life threats, and the possibility of being circumvented by deepfakes or other techniques. These are not fabricated ideas but instead such dangers have already been felt in other countries with much stricter privacy laws.

Unauthorised access to facial recognition data can result in identity theft and widespread surveillance. When facial data is stored on a cloud server, it may be susceptible to unauthorised third-party access. Unlike passwords or credit card details, facial data is challenging to alter, making it a particularly sensitive type of information that requires robust protection, which India is not even attempting to address.

### WISDOM CORNER

If you want something you have never had, you must be willing to do something you have never done

THOMAS JEFFERSON

The greatest pleasure in life is doing what people say you cannot do

WALTER BAGEHOT

Never give up on a dream just because of the time it will take to accomplish it. The time will pass anyway

EARL NIGHTINGALE

### THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- **1471:** The deposed and exiled king of England, Edward IV, defeated King Henry VI's forces at the Battle of Barnet, near London, enabling him to retake the throne.
- **1828:** Noah Webster published An American Dictionary of the English Language; based on the principle that word usage should evolve from the spoken language, the work was hugely influential, though it was initially attacked for its “Americanism.”
- **1865:** On this day in 1865, just after the effective end of the American Civil War, U.S. President Abraham Lincoln was shot by John Wilkes Booth while attending a production at Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C., and died the next morning.
- **1939:** American author John Steinbeck's classic The Grapes of Wrath – which was set during the Great Depression and traces the migration of an Oklahoma Dust Bowl family to California and their subsequent hardships as migrant farmworkers – was published.
- **1952:** American author Ralph Ellison published his debut novel, Invisible Man; a bildungsroman that tells of a naive and idealistic young Black man, it is widely regarded as a classic.
- **1986:** A force of US warplanes based in Britain bombed several sites in Libya, killing or wounding several of Muammar al-Qaddafi's children and narrowly missing Qaddafi himself.

How does a woman in labour walk five kilometers across a hill to reach a clinic at night? What nutrition advice do you give to the family of a severely malnourished young man with silicosis and tuberculosis, who cannot afford to buy milk or eggs? What happens to a sick child when the nearest health facility is 20 km away and there is no transport?

How do you counter malaria, diarrheal diseases, cholera, exacerbated by poor sanitation, flooding and malnutrition in remote and rural areas? These are often seen as situations in rural India, but they are not limited to this country. These stories are from across the globe. Despite the huge differences between developing and developed countries, access is a major issue in rural health around the world. Resources are usually concentrated in the cities. All countries have difficulties with transport and communication, and they all face the challenge of shortages of doctors and other health professionals in rural and remote areas. Doctors from India, Australia, America, New Zealand, Norway, Nepal and Sri Lanka discussed these problems at the three-day World Rural Health Summit in Bangalore that ended on 6 April.

Typical medical conferences are restricted to doctors and do not include nurses and public health professionals unless it relates to their areas. Such conferences definitely do not include midwives. This rural health summit opened with a panel of midwives and nurses. The midwife, a healthcare professional trained to support women throughout pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period, plays a key role in low and middle-income countries (LMICs) where access to skilled healthcare providers is often limited. World Health Organization (WHO) figures for 2024 show that there are an estimated 29 million nurses worldwide and 2.2 million midwives. WHO estimates a shortage of 4.5 million nurses and 0.31 million



**In India, where rural healthcare issues are starker than those of other countries, there are initiatives underway like sensitising young doctors to the problems in villages and remote areas**

midwives by the year 2030. This poses a major problem as nurses and midwives play a pivotal role in rural healthcare.

Worldwide lack of access to healthcare services and coverage is as high as 56% in rural areas as compared to 22% of the population in urban areas. Two thirds of the deficit of 10.3 million healthcare workers in the world is in rural and remote areas, says a report by the International Labour Organization (ILO). The report, “Global evidence on inequities in rural health protection: New data on rural deficits in health coverage for 174 countries,” dated May 2015, reveals major health access disparities between rural and urban areas. The disparity is particularly pronounced in Africa, where a large percentage of the rural population lacks access to healthcare.

The deficit though felt everywhere, is much higher in low-income countries and those with disparate distributions of wealth. For instance, Nigeria's GDP is the largest in Africa, but its per capita income of about \$2,000 is low. It is Africa's most populous country with 206 million people and has a highly inequitable distribution of income making it both wealthy and very poor. About 40% of the country lives in poverty and in social conditions that create ill health which is addressed with devastatingly high health expenditure from out-of-pocket

spending. Nigerian healthcare spending, roughly 80%, is out-of-pocket expenses. This means individuals directly pay for healthcare services, rather than relying on health insurance or government funding. In India, the ministry of health and family welfare says that a steady decline in out-of-pocket expenditure as a percentage of total health expenditure has been observed in five years from 48.8% in 2017-18 to 39.4% in 2021-22.

Developed countries also face problems with health care coverage in rural areas. For example, the Netherlands is a small and a developed country with a higher population density and should not have a problem because of milder access issues in rural areas compared to other countries on account of the relatively shorter distances. But the differences in population densities in urban and rural municipalities are large and with increasing migration by youngsters from rural to urban areas, the problems of the rural greying population are mounting. This is mainly because of the demands of the growing healthcare needs of those left behind, which are not being met.

Since 1992, WONCA, the World Organization of Family Doctors, has developed a specific focus on rural health. This is mainly through the WONCA Working Party on Ru-

ral Practice, which has drawn attention to rural health issues through World Rural Health Conferences and WONCA Rural Policies. The WHO has a Memorandum of Agreement with WONCA which includes the Rural Health Initiative.

Australia and India have their own solutions. In Australia doctors working in rural areas are called “rural generalists,” a protected discipline like a cardiologist. They receive incentives to work in rural areas and have in turn contributed to development and changes in the local economy. In India, where rural healthcare issues are starker than those of other countries, there are initiatives underway like sensitising young doctors to the problems in villages and remote areas. In October this year, a group of young doctors from across India will meet at Iswal, a village 25 km from Udaipur, to participate in a Rural Sensitisation Programme (RSP) organised by Basic Healthcare Services, a Rajasthan-based non-profit that runs primary healthcare centres in the state. RSP is a three-day field programme that hopes to expose this group to well-functioning primary health facilities on the one hand, and day-to-day lives and struggles of rural, tribal communities on the other. RSP emerged in response to the growing disillusionment among many young doctors who graduate into a real world of corporate hospitals, pharma companies and commissions. Which way should they go? Rural India can provide the answers as it struggles to come out of its healthcare problems. We will need health services models based close to the community that practice ethical and high-quality healthcare. Rural sensitising maybe the way forward for the rest of the world.

*Dr. Sanjana Mohan is co-founder of Basic Healthcare Services. Lekha Rattanani is the Managing Editor of The Billion Press.*

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### SPECTRUM SOCIAL SECURITY

## Insurers must embrace prevention

Over the past year and a half, insurers have been pulling out of high-risk areas at an alarming rate. Nowhere has this been more obvious than in California, where wildfires have become more frequent and intense – the Los Angeles conflagration in January being only the latest in a series of devastating blazes. And it's not just wildfires: the Golden State is also prone to large, damaging floods.

This poses an extremely complex and difficult challenge for insurance companies, which have understandably been struggling to cope. In recent months, a number of major insurers have paused new home policies in California.

But the problem is not confined to a few unlucky places. The world is facing a perfect storm of accelerating climate change, economic instability, political unrest, cybercrime, and supply-chain shocks. These interconnected threats are causing natural disasters to become both more frequent

and more costly. Insurers are frantically trying to continue providing coverage to their clients, as the traditional methods of assessing and pricing risk break down and the ‘protection gap’ – the difference between insured and uninsured losses – widens. While there are no easy answers, insurers must evolve or risk becoming obsolete.

According to the European Investment Bank (EIB), every euro spent on prevention saves 5-7 in recovery costs. This points to a strong economic argument for insurers to shift their approach. By becoming active risk managers, rather than passive payers of claims, insurers would go a long way toward closing the protection gap.

The tools to do this already exist. Perhaps the most powerful is geospatial technology, which tracks risks in real time by using AI-powered tools to analyze data from satellite imagery and drones. Instead of relying on outdated models that are often based on

decades-old historical data, insurers can use this technology to pinpoint which properties, businesses, or assets are especially vulnerable to natural disasters.

A significant obstacle to prevention-based insurance is cost. Critics claim that the technology is too expensive, and that its data infrastructure is too complex, to integrate into insurance systems. They are not entirely wrong: such a pivot will require significant investment. But the cost of doing nothing is even greater. If insurers abandon high-risk areas, the protection gap will turn into a yawning chasm. Local businesses might find it impossible to secure financing. Entire regions could suffer economically. Governments may face pressure to step in with public insurance schemes, diverting resources from other priorities.

Insurers that embrace prevention, however, will have a clear advantage that goes beyond the savings projected by the EIB. They will be able

to offer lower premiums to clients who implement risk-mitigation measures, reduce their own claims costs, and help create a more resilient world. After all, insurance is not merely for loss compensation (as important as that is), but for the protection of human lives and livelihoods. By embracing a risk-management approach based on geospatial technology, insurers would be fulfilling their purpose.

The rapidly escalating climate crisis has already upended the insurance industry. Simply retreating from risk is not a viable long-term option – insurers would be condemning themselves to irrelevance. Instead, they must adapt to the new normal by evolving the mindset they need to create a forward-thinking, technologically sophisticated sector that can play a crucial role in building a safer, more stable world.

*The writer is CEO of AXA's Digital Commercial Platform.*

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## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa Post are most welcome to contribute letters (100 words), articles and columns (between 600-1000 words). Contributors are requested to send their contact numbers and full postal address/email ID. They may also send in their valuable comments, opinion and suggestions, preferably by email, to: [edit@orissapost.com](mailto:edit@orissapost.com)

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### Positive development

Sir, This refers to “Iran, US agree on more talks,” Orissa Post, April 13. A successful negotiation between Iran and the US may yield a number of positive outcomes. First, it will put a brake on Iran's uranium enrichment programme. The International Atomic Energy Agency's latest report has confirmed that Iran currently possess uranium enriched to 60% purity, a drastic increase from the threshold limit of 3.67% allowed under the previous agreement. Second, the lifting of US imposed sanctions on Iran will benefit the countries largely dependent on it for their oil imports including India, the third largest buyer of Iranian oil in the world till 2018.

**Tushar Anand, PATNA**

### Lessons for all

Sir, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed deep health inequities, with vulnerable communities experiencing worse outcomes. Often, communities of colour, the elderly, and those with limited resources faced higher infection rates, more severe illness, and greater economic hardship. Five years on since the outbreak of this deadly virus, while the scars of illness and feelings of loss of the dear ones linger, it offers an opportunity for critical reflection - to take stock of what we learned, what worked, and how to better protect public health against future pandemics. The biggest gain, however, is that doctors, nurses, front-line public-health workers, social workers, and staff up and down the hierarchy of our complex health delivery system — all performed their jobs heroically to fight this novel virus, buying critical time until the first vaccines were developed. The lessons learned from COVID-19 should serve as a catalyst for continued improvement in pandemic planning.

**Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI**

### Plastic pollution

Sir, With oceans projected to have more plastic than fish by the year 2050, plastic pollution threatens marine life and human health. Plastic does not biodegrade; it breaks into toxic microplastics, contaminating food and water. To combat this, we must reduce the use of plastic, not just on Earth Day (22 April) but on all the 365 days. This year's theme, “Our Power, Our Planet,” urges action. Ending plastic waste isn't hard -- it saves a lot of money and protects our planet.

**Jubel D'Cruz, MUMBAI**



# Assam gearing up to celebrate Rongali Bihu

From bustling markets selling traditional attire and gamusas to the distant sound of dhol, pepa, and gogona floating on the breeze, all signs indicate that Bihu fervour has gripped Assam



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Guwahati, April 13: Rongali Bihu, the most cherished of the three Bihus, marks the Assamese New Year and the arrival of spring. It is more than just a festival - it's an emotion deeply woven into the cultural soul of the people of Assam.

Assam has been gearing up to celebrate Rongali Bihu Monday. On Sunday night, communities come together around a bonfire (meji) to enjoy traditional feasts, music, and dance, setting the tone for the celebrations to follow.

Rongali Bihu, observed in April, signifies the Assamese New Year and the onset of spring, while Magh Bihu, celebrated in January, marks the conclusion of the harvest season.

From bustling markets selling traditional attire and gamusas to the distant sound of dhol, pepa, and gogona floating on the breeze, all signs indicate that Bihu fervour has gripped Assam. Homes are decorated, courtyards ready for Bihu dances, and kitchens filled with the delicious aroma of pithas and larus.

In every household, preparations are underway in full swing. People are sewing new mekhela chadors, planning get-togethers, and practicing dance steps, which have been passed down

through generations. Across the state, Bihu committees are busy organising grand functions - from traditional dance competitions to musical nights where local artists and cultural icons will take the centrestage. Youth groups are rehearsing tirelessly, ready to set the stage on fire.

In the villages, the celebration remains close to its roots - rustic, warm, and full of life. The sound of laughter mixes with the music as people come together to celebrate nature's bounty, community spirit, and the timeless bond between humans and the land they call home. But even in cities, where modern life races ahead, Bihu brings everyone back to their roots. Offices and schools close for the festivities, and people return to their hometowns, drawn by the irresistible call of tradition, family, and celebration.

This year, the anticipation feels even more special - a chance to reunite, dance freely, sing together under the open sky, and celebrate the very essence of being Assamese. As April unfolds, Assam is not just preparing for a festival - it's preparing for a homecoming of the soul. Bihu is coming, and with it, a season of joy, hope, and harmony.

Assam has been gearing up to celebrate Rongali Bihu Monday

# Nearly 60% women candidates fighting panchayat polls in Assam

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Guwahati, April 13: Nearly 60 per cent of candidates fighting for the upcoming Panchayat polls in Assam are women, said Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma Saturday.

The CM also mentioned that a major section of candidates contesting elections are under 40 years of age. Taking to X handle, CM Sarma wrote, "Nominations for #AssamPanchayat-Polls concluded yesterday. 59% of our candidates are women. A large number are also under 40 and many have already won uncontested. The NDA is head-



ing for a landslide victory." The panchayat elections were due in Assam since December last year, however, the state administra-

tion could not proceed with the notification of polls due to bar from a court.

The government had requested

the court to allow the elections to take place without further legal entanglements, emphasising the need for the polls to proceed in panchayats despite ongoing cases. Following multiple hearings, the Gauhati High Court in January permitted holding panchayat polls.

Reacting to the court's order, CM Sarma had said, "The High Court (Gauhati) has given the permission today to conduct Panchayat elections. However, we have lost the time, as if we start from today, the elections can be held in mid-February. But we have examinations for class 10 and 12 in the next month, and

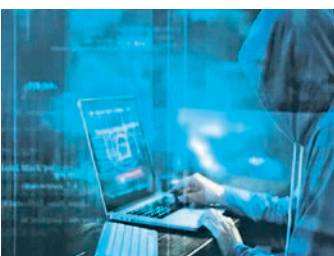
conducting an election at that time will create a lot of trouble for the students in the villages. Moreover, it will be difficult to get halls for counting votes."

Notably, the Gauhati High Court had barred panchayat elections after multiple petitions claimed discrepancies in the constituency redetermination process. These petitions argued that the elections should be postponed until these errors are rectified. For Assam, where panchayats serve as the first line of governance and public service delivery in rural areas, this postponement is more than just an administrative hiccup.

## MUMBAI FIGHTS BACK

# CYBERCRIME HELPLINE COMPLAINTS CROSS 1L

Amid a rise in cyber frauds, including promising high returns on share trading, rewards for tasks, digital arrest as well as phone and email hacking, the Mumbai police has permanently blocked 8,214 mobile phone SIM cards used for such activities, Cyber Wing Deputy Commissioner of Police Datta Nalawade said



grown to 22 lines and an entire posse of constables and officials working round the clock every day to ensure citizens of the metropolis do not fall prey to online fraudsters, he added.

As financial frauds and Cybercrimes increase every passing day, especially in the last two years, Mumbai police is taking the fight to those involved with an array of advanced technology and equipment, the senior official told PTI.

"We also have a strong follow-up team that coordinates with all stakeholders, including banks, financial institutions, Reserve Bank of India, law enforcement agencies of various states etc to tackle Cybercrime. We receive around 1500 complaints on 1930 every day. This Friday, the cumulative figure of complaints crossed one lakh," he said. "As Saturday, the figure stands at 1,01,069. The

amount saved due to timely action is Rs 241,42,11,827," Cyber Wing Deputy Commissioner of Police Datta Nalawade informed. Amid a rise in cyber frauds, including promising high returns on share trading, rewards for tasks, digital arrest as well as phone and email hacking, the Mumbai police has permanently blocked 8,214 mobile phone SIM cards used for such activities, he said.

"Even highly qualified people like senior bank personnel, doctors, engineers, government officials are losing lakhs of rupees in such frauds. We are taking all efforts to sensitise Mumbaikars to not fall prey to such modus operandi. As cases increase, Cybercrime has become the biggest challenge of our times," the DCP asserted.

In the last three years, Mumbaikars have lost Rs 1,922 crore to cyber fraudsters, Nalawade pointed out. However, the silver lining is that the ratio of money of victims being saved is also rising, he said.

Another official said a major tool in the fight against the menace is the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal created by the Union Home Ministry, to which all banks and financial institutions are connected.

## FLUTTERING WINGS AND CHIRPING

# Tadoba tiger reserve attracts rare birds in village-free area

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 13: Grassland bird species are thronging the Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) in Maharashtra's Chandrapur in the natural meadows created due to the relocation of six villages from its core area, an exercise which began 19 years ago, as per officials.

The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) has taken up a conservation breeding project focused on restoring some of the endangered bird species in Maharashtra, including the Lesser Florican that has been sighted in and around TATR in the last three to four years.

The Mumbai-based wildlife research organisation is currently assessing the potential of the tiger reserve, located in the Vidarbha region, for the conservation project, especially post-relocation of villages.

Talking to PTI, BNHS director Kishor Rithe described TATR as one of India's most successful and biologically rich tiger landscapes. Spread

over 1,700 square kilometres, including buffer and 625 sq km core area, the reserve is home to more than 100 individual tigers, making it one of the most important conservation landscapes in central India, he said.

The reserve is characterised by dense bamboo dominated forest, rich prey base and a network of perennial water bodies which offer ideal conditions for the survival of tigers, Rithe said. After the relocation of half-a-dozen villages from the core zone, a process which began in 2006, an area spread across 926 hectares, which once comprised settlements and agriculture fields, has now turned into meadows, where there is no presence of human beings or domestic animals, he said.

According to Rithe, the Lesser Florican inhabits dry grasslands and scrublands. It has also adapted to some agricultural landscapes having short crops. It often lays eggs on ground and feeds on insects, seeds and berries.



A flooded locality of Gandhi Basti after a heavy rainfall in Guwahati, Assam

PTI PHOTO

## MAHA TEMPLE DRESS CODES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 13: Temples across Maharashtra are gradually adopting dress codes for visitors, as trusts managing these places of worship have issued guidelines urging devotees to wear modest, traditional clothing.

While temple trusts have emphasised that dress codes are needed to maintain the sanctity of religious places, visitors have had mixed reactions to the development. Temples managed by the Chinchwad Devasthan Trust, including those at Morgaon and Theur in Pune district, Siddhatek in Ahilyanagar and the Morya Gosavi Sanjivan



in Pimpri Chinchwad and Khar Narangi in Raigad, Friday, issued advisories requesting visitors to wear "appropriate" attire.

The trust clarified that the dress code is not mandatory but is a respectful appeal to maintain decorum in these temples. The latest advisory appears

to be part of a trend gradually emerging across the state.

Aditi Kane, a resident of Pune, said, "These days, people don't plan ahead to visit temples but club them with their holidays to certain destinations. I have visited temples while holidaying and observed that barring a handful of visitors, most people wear decent attires.

There is nothing wrong with temple managements expressing their expectations about dress codes, but they should not enforce it." In January this year, Mumbai-based Shree Siddhivinayak Ganapati Temple Trust announced a dress code for the prominent temple that

sees thousands of visitors, including celebrities. Last year, dress codes were introduced for visitors at 50 temples in Ratnagiri, with signboards at entrances urging people to be fully clothed and avoid garments that exposed body parts.

The Maharashtra Temple Federation held meetings in 11 locations in Ratnagiri, and in these discussions, trustees of the temples decided to enforce a dress code of traditional Indian attires.

At least 16 temples have introduced similar restrictions in Ahilyanagar district and have barred entry to visitors wearing jeans, skirts, shorts, or other "revealing" clothing.

AGENCIES

Guwahati, April 13: The first robotic surgery facility of Northeast India was inaugurated on Sunday at the State Cancer Institute of Gauhati Medical College and Hospital in Assam, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

At an official function here, Sarma dedicated the robotic surgery unit, equipped with all modern functionalities for advancing cancer care in the region.

"Assam is beginning Bohag celebrations by dedicating North East India's first ever onco-robotic surgery facility at the Guwahati Medical College. Our government hospitals will now offer low-cost, highly precise and least invasive oncological surgical procedures through MADE IN INDIA machinery," he said in a post on X after the event. Similar facilities are coming up



in Silchar and Dibrugarh towns also, the CM said.

"At a project cost of Rs 14.99 crore, the system has been procured by the state government under the NPCDCS scheme of the Government of India. Robotic surgery offers enhanced precision, superior control and 3D visualisation, enabling better outcomes in cancer care," an official said. Sarma also announced that to ensure adequate manpower to operate high-end medical technology, the government is in the process of beginning nursing colleges in all cancer hospitals.

School Code:-17567    U-dise Code:-21300603103    Affiliation No:-1520454

**EKLAVYA MODEL RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL**

AT-Mendukuli, PO- Mathili, DIST-MALKANGIRI, ODISHA, PIN-764044  
(National Education Society for Tribal Students)  
(Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Govt. of India)  
Establishments Year 2022-23

EMAIL ID:- emrsmathili@gmail.com & emrsmathili2024@gmail.com

Letter No.72/2025    Date:07.04.2025

## WALK-IN INTERVIEW

A Walk-in-interview is to be held in the office of the principal Eklavya Model Residential School, Mathili at 08:00 AM onward on 26/04/2025 (Saturday) for Preparation of a Panel of Guest Teacher to fill up some vacant post (PGT- Math, Eng, Phys, Hist & TGT- Hindi, Odia, Eng, Math, SST, Science, Music, Art, PET Female, PET Male, Librarian) of EMRS, Mathili. The selected candidate will be Paid as per NESTS (National Education Society for Tribal Students) & OMTES (Odisha Model Tribal Education Society) Guideline per period Basis Maximum per month remuneration Rs 45,000/- for PGT and Rs 42,000/- for TGT. Interested Candidates are instructed to submit by hand/post a set of self-attested Xerox copy of document to the office of the undersigned on or before 25.04.2025 4:00 PM and also interested to reach the venue with all original document on or before 8:00 AM on above said interview date.

The detailed notification & Application form are available in the district website [www.malkangiri.odisha.gov.in](http://www.malkangiri.odisha.gov.in) as well as in the office of the undersigned on any working day from 8:00 am to 2:00 pm up to 25/04/2025.

(By The Order of Collector Malkangiri)  
Sd./- Principal, EMRS, Mathili

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA  
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES  
O/O THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER  
HADUA IRRIGATION DIVISION, NARASINGHPUR

e-Mail Id- hidirrigation@gmail.com

'e'-Procurement Notice No. SE-HID (NSPR)-01/2025-26

No.A-37: The Superintending Engineer, Hadua Irrigation Division, Narasinghpur on behalf of the Governor of Odisha invites online percentage rate basis bid in single cover system through e-procurement for the work mentioned below.

1	Total No. of Works	03 (Three) Civil Work
2	Estimated Cost put to tender	Approximately Rs.9.95 Lakhs to Rs.19.03 Lakhs
3	Tender Paper Cost	Rs.4,000/- and Rs.6000/- (Non-refundable)
4	Class of Contractor	'C' & 'D' equivalent Grade/ Class
5	Availability of Bid documents and receipt of bid through online	From 10.00 A.M. of 15.04.2025 to 5.00 P.M. of 28.04.2025 in the website ( <a href="http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in">www.tendersodisha.gov.in</a> )
6	Date, time & place for opening of online tenders	29.04.2025 at 11.30 A.M. and onwards in the O/o. the SE, Hadua Irrigation Division, Narasinghpur
7	Date, time & Place for finalization of tender through transparent lottery system (if required)	03.05.2025 at 11.30 A.M. in the O/o. the SE, Hadua Irrigation Division, Narasinghpur
8	Name and Address of Officer Inviting Tender (OIT)	Superintending Engineer, Hadua Irrigation Division, Narasinghpur, A/Id/No. Narasinghpur, Dist. Cuttack, Odisha, e-Mail Id- <a href="mailto:hidirrigation@gmail.com">hidirrigation@gmail.com</a>

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal of Government Odisha at [www.tendersodisha.gov.in](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in). The corrigendum/cancellation of the tender, if any will be uploaded and can be seen from the above website only.

Sd./- Superintending Engineer,  
Hadua Irrigation Division, Narasinghpur

OIPR-32243/11/0008/2526

of the day

quote

Amit Shah did not address (Chhatrapati Shivaji) as Shivaji Maharaj. He addressed him on a first-name basis. Is this your language? This is an insult to Shivaji Maharaj. What is Deven-dra Fadnavis doing

SANJAY RAUT | SHIV SENA (UBT) LEADER

For years, the coop-erative movement was moving slowly and turned almost dead. Looking at the cooperative movement nationwide, it was uneven (in the past)

AMIT SHAH | UNION MINISTER

Samajwa-di Party's Akhilesh Yadav is suffering from the disease of telling half-truths. The truth is that if Netaji (Akhilesh's father Mulayam Singh Yadav) helped Kanshi Ram in Etawah in the 1991 Lok Sabha elections, Kanshi Ram also helped Netaji win by not fielding a BSP candidate from Jaswantnagar

KESHAV PRASAD MAURYA | UTTAR PRADESH DEPUTY CM

SHORT TAKES

Girl gangraped in Tripura, 1 arrested

**Agartala:** A 14-year-old girl was gang-raped inside an abandoned madrassa hostel in North Tripura's Kadamtala area, police said Sunday. The incident took place Saturday night when the girl, a resident of Kurti village in Dharmanagar subdivision, was on her way to attend a relative's wedding ceremony in the same locality. "Two persons, including a minor, abducted her and took her to a nearby abandoned madrassa hostel where they took turns to rape her. Later, they fled the spot, leaving her behind," Kadamtala police station officer-in-charge Jayanta Debnath said.

Body found in water tank of vacant house

**Malappuram (Kerala):** A woman's body was found in the water tank of an unoccupied house in this north Kerala district Sunday, police said. The deceased, Fathima, 35, was a native of Athipatta and the incident occurred at Valanchery, they added. The body was found in the water tank located behind the house, which is currently unoccupied except for a security guard.

Ex-SC judge likely to head law panel

**New Delhi:** Former Supreme Court judge Justice (retd) Dinesh Maheshwari is likely to head the law commission, sources said Sunday. A formal notification announcing his appointment as chairperson of the 23rd Law Commission is expected to be issued this week, sources in the know said. The 23rd law panel was set up September 2 last year for a period of three years. Though there is a provision to appoint serving Supreme Court and high court judges as its chairpersons and members, usually retired top court judges and ex-chief justices of high courts are appointed its chairpersons.

52.67 kg crystal meth seized

**New Delhi:** The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) has seized 52.67 kg methamphetamine tablets, valued at ₹52.67 crore in the international drug market, from the outskirts of Aizawl, Mizoram, the finance ministry said Sunday.

जयते

REKHA GUPTA | DELHI CM

We aim to make Delhi a global destination for medical treatment. Promot-ing health tourism will not only enhance medical ser-vices but also strengthen the overall economic ecosystem

INDIA, 9 AFRICAN NATIONS KICK-START NAVAL EXERCISE

India and nine African nations Sunday kick-started a six-day mega naval exercise off Dar-es-Salaam in Tanzania, signalling their long-term vision to work unitedly to confront common challenges in the maritime domain



TN Guv in fresh trouble over Jai Shri Ram slogan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chennai, April 13:** Tamil Nadu Governor R N Ravi's reported remarks asking students of a college to chant "Jai Shri Ram" have triggered a controversy with SPCSS-TN, a body of educationists, alleging he violated his oath of office and secular principles and urged President Droupadi Murmu to remove him from his post.

The State Platform for Common School System-Tamil Nadu (SPCSS-TN), said Ravi failed to abide by the Constitution, re-spect its ideals and institutions. "Ravi should be removed from the office of Governor of Tamil Nadu forthwith for deliberately violating Article 159 (oath by governor) of the Constitution of India," SPCSS-TN General Secretary, PB Prince Gajendra Babu, said in a statement.

Ravi was invited by a govern-ment-aided college in Madurai as chief guest to distribute prizes to the winners in a literary contest. Delivering his address April 12, he had asked the stu-dents to chant the name of a God of particular religion (Jai Shri Ram) thrice.

According to the Constitution, India is a secular country, edu-cation is a secular activity and it shall be the fundamental duty of every citizen to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the national flag and the national anthem and also to develop scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of in-quiry and reform.

However, Ravi failed to pre-serve, defend and protect the Constitution by chanting the name of the God of a particular religion and asking the students to repeat the same thrice, Ga-jendra Babu alleged. Instead of obeying the Governor, had the students protested against him for violating his oath, unneces-sary embarrassment would have been caused to the management and staff of the college. The stu-



■ **The State Platform for Common School System-Tamil Nadu (SPCSS-TN), said Ravi failed to abide by the Constitution, respect its ideals and institutions**

■ **"Ravi should be removed from the office of Governor of Tamil Nadu forthwith for deliberately violating Article 159 (oath by governor) of the Constitution of India," SPCSS-TN General Secretary, PB Prince Gajendra Babu, said**

dents in order to "protect the name of the college," passively submitted themselves to the will of the Governor.

Gajendra Babu alleged: "Ravi is illiterate as far as his knowl-edge of the curriculum and syllabus followed in schools and colleges in Tamil Nadu. Due to his ignorance and arro-gance, he continues to propa-gate wrong ideas that in effect aim to disturb peace and insti-gate a group of people against another."

The SPCSS-TN said it hence appeals to President Murmu to remove Ravi from the office of Governor of Tamil Nadu.

Congress MP (Tiruvallur) Sasikanth Senthil said in a post on 'X': "After being slammed by the Supreme Court and blocked by the State Government, he's now resorting to stunts like making students chant 'Jai Shri Ram' just to irritate the system.

Sibal slams govt over ED notices

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 13:** Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal Sunday accused the government of using probe agencies to "paralyse" the Congress and described the development of the Enforcement Directorate issuing notices to take possession of immovable assets in the National Herald case as an "as-sault on democracy".

"In lip service, we are the mother of democracy but in reality you are the father of dictatorship. They (BJP) want to do their politics on Hindu-Muslim agenda and finish off the Op-position," Sibal said in a press conference.

His remarks come a day after the Enforcement Direc-torate (ED) stated it has served notices to take possession of immovable assets worth ₹661 crore that it had attached as part of a money laundering probe linked to Congress-con-trolled National Herald news-paper and the Associated Jour-nals Limited (AJL).

Simultaneously, the no-tices have been affixed at "conspicuous part of these properties" located at Herald House at ITO (5A, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg) in Delhi, in the Bandra(E) area (Plot No 2, Survey No 341) of Mumbai and the AJL building locat-ed at Bisheshwar Nath Road (Property No.1) in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, Friday.

The notices primarily seek

HERALD CASE



In lip service, we are the mother of democracy but in reality you are the father of dictatorship. They (BJP) want to do their politics on Hindu-Muslim agenda and finish off the Opposition

KAPIL SIBAL | RAJYA SABHA MP

vacation of the premises to be taken over by the ED. Speaking on the issue, Sibal said, "The possession notice is aimed at taking over these properties of the newspaper in which Congress offices are running to paralyse the party."

"What is the offense? Why have you waited for 13 years? Why? Because you want to grab the property. You want to paralyse the Congress party, take possession of all the prop-erties so that they cannot func-tion. The properties are spread across the country and are worth 600 crore that is what they allege, so they take them over, paralyse the Congress so



Artistes perform during the celebration of 'Baisakhi' festival, at Sector-38 area in Noida

PTI PHOTO

Patanjali University hosts international workshop

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Haridwar, April 13:** A two-day international workshop on 'Climate Change, Disaster Man-agement & Disaster Medicine' began at Patanjali University in Haridwar Saturday. Renowned scientists from four countries participated in the grand inau-guration ceremony marking the commencement of the workshop.

Prof Ruben from Spain, Prof Roberto Mugavero—Chairman of the World Bank's Disaster Medicine Group from Italy, Prof B Sitaula from Norway, and Prof B Adhikari from Ne-pal's Disaster Management Center were among the key international speakers to have graced the event.

On the occasion, Patanjali University also launched an International Centre of Excel-

lence on Disaster Medicine, Management and Climate Change, along with the estab-lishment of a Patent Cell with-in the university. Addressing the gathering at the inaugural session, Yoga guru Ramdev, Chancellor of Patanjali Uni-versity, said this Centre will play a pivotal role in tackling disasters and their consequen-ces on a global level.

Baba Ramdev stressed the importance of drawing lessons from Indian and Sanatan tradi-tions in disaster management.

Acharya Balkrishna, Vice Chancellor of Patanjali Uni-ver-sity and a noted Ayurvedacharya, said this Centre of Excel-lence will be a systematic global initiative for disaster manage-ment and public welfare.

He noted Patanjali's pivot-al humanitarian role during

CLIMATE CHANGE & DISASTER MANAGEMENT



the Kedarnath tragedy, Nepal earthquake, and Bihar floods. Highlighting the importance of Sanatan culture, he said India's ancient traditions have always served as guiding lights in di-

saster and welfare initiatives.

Dr. Ashutosh Mohanty, India representative of the World Bank, said Patanjali University is the first institution in South Asia to undertake a serious

and organized initiative in the field of disaster medicine.Prof. Satyendra Mittal, Workshop Convener and Director of Dis-tance Education at Patanjali University, spoke about the goals of the workshop and elaborated on future plans to address disasters arising from climate change.

Sameer Sinha, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Uttarakhand, em-phased the importance of community participation in disaster management to miti-gate the impact of such events. Deepak Kumar Pandey from the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) also shared valuable in-sights, stating that systematic training, quick response, and efficient utilisation of local resources can significantly re-duce the impact of any disaster.

Govt may challenge apex court order on President Bill deadline

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 13:** The government is likely to file a review petition on the Supreme Court judgement setting a timeframe for the President and the governors to decide on giving assent to Bills passed by state legislatures.

Sources aware of the develop-ment said that besides seek-ing a review of the timeline, the government may seek a review of the apex court's or-der that the state governments can directly approach it if the President withholds assent to a Bill sent by a governor for consideration.

There are active consider-ations at the highest echelon of the government on the issue and, in all probability, a review petition will be filed in the Su-preme Court, the sources said.

The grounds on which the review petition will be filed are being considered and will be known once the government approaches the apex court.

If the government approach-es the Supreme Court, the re-view petition will have to be filed before the same bench of Justices J B Pardiwala and R Mahadevan that pronounced the verdict, the sources said.

After the April 8 judgement, the Tamil Nadu government no-tified 10 pending bills as Acts in the government gazette, citing the Supreme Court's ruling that they were "deemed" to have re-ceived assent. In its order, the Supreme Court has prescribed that the President should de-cide on the bills reserved for her consideration by the gov-ernor within three months from the date on which such reference is received.

2 operatives of terror module detained with IED containing RDX

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chandigarh, April 13:** Punjab Police Sunday claimed to have foiled plans of Pakistan-based ISI to disturb peace and harmo-ny in the region following the arrest of two terror operatives with an improvised explosive device (IED) containing RDX.

The two accused, Jagga Singh and Manjinder Singh, both resi-dents of Fatehgarh Sahib dis-trict, have a criminal history and were previously involved in multiple narcotics-related cases, said Director General of Police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav.

He said a 2.8 kg IED contain-ing 1.6 kg of RDX and a remote control have been seized from them during the joint operation involving teams of counter-intel-ligence Ferozepur and state spe-cial operating cell, SAS Nagar.

Sharing operational details, Assistant Inspector General, counter-intelligence, Feroze-pur, Gursevak Singh Brar said police had received information that Jagga Singh and Manjinder Singh were working on the di-rections of Germany-based Goldy Dhillon, a key operative of the Goldy Brar-Lawrence Bishnoi gang. It was informed that the duo had recently re-trieved a consignment of explo-sives for delivery to an associ-ate, the police officer said.

Unseen sacrifice of Agromet workers fighting climate chaos

DUTY AMID DESPAIR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 13:** In Janu-ary last year, the govern-ment decided to shut down 199 District Agrometeorological Units (DAMUs), which pro-vided farmers with crop and location-specific advice, even though these centres were meant to operate until at least 2026 under a pilot project.

Despite this, around 130 em-ployees chose to stay on - un-paid but unwavering - be-cause farmers still depended on them and they had two years of ser-vice left. They went to court, secured a stay and kept work-ing, helping farmers navigate worsening weather and rising climate risks.

On March 31 this year, their salaries were finally released following court intervention. But no paycheck can undo a year lived without medicine, without school fees, without peace of mind. One DAMU employee from Rajasthan, re-questing anonymity, said he could not pay his daughter's school fees and had to fold his hands before school author-ities. "I kept my head down, but inside, I was breaking," he said. His voice quivered as he recalled how his family had to cut back on food.

Another DAMU staffer from Rajasthan, who is soon to be-come a father for a second time, told PTI his family has been surviving on the kindness of



others. "Every month, I tell my landlord the same thing: 'Abhi salary nahi aayi hai'," he said, his tone conveying more than his words.

In Uttar Pradesh, one DA-MU observer allegedly lost his mother to illness. His col-leagues say he could not "ar-range timely care because he

had not been paid in months".

In Maharashtra, another staffer received repeated no-tices from the bank after default-ing on his home loan. Many of these DAMU staff hold ad-vanced degrees in agrometeo-logy, agriculture and climate science. Some have published research papers, taught at col-

leges and even written books. They left academic or private paths to serve on the ground, to help farmers adapt to chang-ing weather and rising climate risks. Most are now in their late thirties or forties. Many say they are too old to restart.

India launched Agromet Ad-visory Services in 1976 to help farmers make informed deci-sions. Since 1993, 130 Agromet Field Units have been set up in partnership with the In-dian Council of Agricultural Research to provide timely, crop-specific advice. Each unit supports farmers across 5-6 districts. In 2012, the govern-ment launched the Gramin Krishi Mausam Sewa to ex-pand the reach of these adviso-

ries. By 2018, plans were made to set up 530 DAMUs as part of a pilot project. But due to the Covid pandemic, only 199 were established. Each DAMU em-ployed two contract workers -- a Subject Matter Specialist (Agrometeorology), earning ₹93,000 to ₹1.04 lakh per month including allowances, and an Agromet Observer, earning ₹25,000 to ₹30,000.

In February 2023, the NITI Aayog raised concerns about the model's sustainability and suggested a centralised data system instead. In January 2024, the IMD ordered all DA-MUs to shut down by March-end, 2024. The move left em-ployees in limbo and farmers worried.



# international

## of the day uote

We must carry out disciplinary measures, perform prayers and acts of worship. We must enter Islam completely. Islam is not just limited to a few rituals; it is a comprehensive system of all divine commands

ZABIHULLAH MUJAHID | CHIEF SPOKESMAN, TALIBAN

India and the US have shared strategic interest in clean energy. Nuclear power should be a unifier and India should naturally take the lead there. For that, India needs to have an exportable technology

KRIS SINGH | CEO, HOLTEC

We don't want Australian students burdened by a lifetime of debt. And we never, ever, ever want an American-style health system in this country

ANTHONY ALBANESE | PM, AUSTRALIA

## SHORT TAKES

### British minister refused entry to HK

**Hong Kong:** A British member of parliament was refused entry to Hong Kong last week, the first to have received such treatment since the former British colony's return to Chinese rule in 1997. Wera Hobhouse, a member of the Liberal Democratic Party representing Bath, wrote on social media platform Bluesky: "Authorities gave me no explanation for this cruel and upsetting blow. I hope the Foreign Secretary will recognise that this is an insult to all parliamentarians and seek answers from the Chinese Ambassador." Hobhouse said she flew to Hong Kong from the United Kingdom with her husband to visit their newly-born grandchild, whom she was unable to see or hold.

### 8 Pak workers killed in Iran by Balochs

**Islamabad:** Eight workers from Pakistan's Punjab province were killed by Baloch militants in Iran's Sistan-Baluchestan province in an incident of target killing, according to a media report Sunday. The tragic incident took place in a village in Mehraristan district Saturday, the Dawn newspaper reported. The Iranian authorities confirmed the killing of the Pakistani nationals, saying that the victims hailed from Bahawalpur and worked at a car repair shop. All the eight Pakistanis who were killed belong to Bahawalpur city of southern Punjab, the Iranian officials said, adding that they were staying at the workshop where they used to dent, polish, paint and repair cars.

### Congo conflict claims 50 civilians

**Goma:** At least 50 people were killed in weekend attacks in Congo's conflict-battered east, authorities said Saturday. The government traded blame with Rwanda-backed rebels over who was responsible for the violence that quickly escalated the conflict in the region. The renewed violence that residents reported in and around the region's largest city of Goma — which the M23 rebels control — was the biggest threat yet to ongoing peace efforts by both the Gulf Arab state of Qatar and African nations in the conflict that has raised fears of regional warfare. The latest fighting has killed some 3,000 people and worsened what was already one of the world's largest humanitarian crises, with around 7 million people displaced.

# MASS EXODUS AS PAK DEPORTS AFGHANS

## Over 8,60,000 Afghans left Pakistan since September 2023

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Islamabad, April 13:** More than 860,000 Afghans have left Pakistan since September 2023, with more than half a million entering Afghanistan through border crossings in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, according to a media report. Pakistan launched the second phase to repatriate the Afghan refugees April 1 after

the deadline ended for the voluntary return of the Afghan Citizen Cards (ACC). Under the phase-wise repatriation of Afghans living in the country, the first phase was started in 2023, when the government announced to send back the Afghans residing illegally in Pakistan. The Dawn newspaper reported that according to the data from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), from Sept 15, 2023, to April 5, 2025, 861,763 Afghans have returned to their country. Official data shows over half a million exited through two



crossings in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province, showing that 4,908 Afghan refugees left Pakistan Friday. Around 2,475 had ACC and were residing legally in Paki-

## Pak launched the second phase to repatriate the Afghan refugees April 1 after the deadline ended for the voluntary return of the Afghan Citizen Cards

stan. Of them, some 2,125 left the country voluntarily, while 350 were deported through the Torkham border in KP. Since the beginning of the

second phase of repatriation of Afghan nationals April 1, 16,242 ACC holders have left Pakistan. The data showed that 9,439 left voluntarily, while 6,803 were deported. Since September 2023, 500,040 Afghan nationals have left Pakistan through the two border crossings in KP. According to officials, Afghan refugees were also transported from Punjab and Islamabad for deportation. They were moved to two transit camps in Peshawar and Landi Kotal and went through a registration process before being sent back to Afghanistan, reported Dawn.

## Six presumed dead after private plane crashes on muddy field in New York

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Copake (US), April 13:** A twin-engine plane that crashed into a muddy field in upstate New York has left all six passengers aboard presumed dead. The plane, a Mitsubishi MU-2B, was reported down at noon Saturday in Copake, New York, around 48 kilometres from its destination at the Columbia County Airport.



All six people who were aboard the plane were presumed dead, according to an official familiar with the crash, who could not discuss details of the investigation publicly and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity. Columbia County Under-sheriff Jacqueline Salvatore Saturday confirmed the crash was fatal but declined to reveal how many people died. "It's in the middle of a field and it's pretty muddy, so accessibility is difficult," Salvatore said during a news conference near the scene, about 80 kilometres south of Albany. The National Transportation Safety Board said it had deployed an investigation team. They were expected to provide additional details about the investigation Sunday afternoon. "We are actively investigating a fatal plane crash on Too Town Road in the town of Copake, New York," Salvatore said. "We do not know what happened at this time." Salvatore estimated that that investigation would take a "couple of days," noting that "accessibility was difficult" because the plane was in the middle of a muddy field.

# Erosion of political liberty in HK

## Hong Kong's biggest pro-democracy party gets mandate to move closer to disbandment as China cracks down on dissent in the southern city

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Hong Kong, April 13:** Hong Kong's biggest pro-democracy party Sunday received its members' mandate to proceed with steps toward a potential disbandment, part of the erosion of political freedoms as China cracks down on dissent in the southern city. Democratic Party Chairman Lo Kin-hei said over 90 per cent of the members who took part in the vote supported the motion to let the central committee take up the procedure toward disbandment. He said he hopes there will be a final vote in the coming months. "Unless there is a big change, I believe this inclination will be maintained in the next general meeting," he said, adding that the party would continue with



its work until then. The process might not finish this year, said vice chair Mok Kin-shing. The party's decision reflects the dwindling semi-autonomy and freedoms promised to the former British colony when it returned to China's rule in 1997. The moderate political party has effectively become a pressure group, members say. Lo earlier said the decision was made based on the current political situation and social climate. Party veterans told The Associated Press that some members were warned of consequences if the party

I hope Hong Kong's political parties will continue to work for the people. We have always hoped to serve the Hong Kong people, and to do things that are good for society

LO KIN-HEI | CHAIRMAN, DEMOCRATIC PARTY

didn't shut down. Massive anti-government protests in 2019 led China to impose a sweeping national security law that was used to prosecute many leading activists. Some of the party's former lawmakers are now in prison, and the party has been absent from elections after authorities overhauled the

## OLDEST PRESIDENT

## Trump 'fully fit' to serve US



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**West Palm Beach, April 13:** Donald Trump's doctor says the oldest man to be elected president is "fully fit" to serve as commander in chief as the White House released the results of Trump's physical exam from Friday. Trump is 78, and his physi-

cian, Navy Captain Sean Barababla, cited what he said is Trump's "active lifestyle" and said it "continues to contribute significantly" to the Republican president's well-being. Trump turns 79 June 14. In a report released Sunday, the doctor said in a summary that Trump is "fully fit to execute the duties of Commander-in-Chief and Head of State." The results showed Trump has dropped 20 pounds since his last physical as president in 2020. He weighed 244 pounds back then and is now down to 224 pounds. The exam summary noted that Trump previously had cataract surgery. A common procedure among aging people, the surgery typically involves removing a cloudy eye lens and replacing it with an artificial lens to help clear up vision.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kyiv, April 13:** Russian missiles struck the heart of the Ukrainian city of Sumy as people gathered to celebrate Palm Sunday, killing at least 34 people, officials said, in the second large-scale attack to claim civilian lives in just over a week. The two ballistic missiles hit around 10:15 am, officials said. Images from the scene showed lines of black body bags on the side of the road, while more bodies were seen wrapped in foil blankets among the debris. Video footage also showed fire crews fighting to extinguish the shells of burned-out cars among the rubble from damaged buildings. The dead included two children, the State Emergency Service of Ukraine said in a statement. A further 117 people were wounded, including 15 children, it said. The head of the Ukrainian president's office, Andriy Yer-



Only filthy scum can act like this — taking the lives of ordinary people

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKYY | PRESIDENT, UKRAINE

mak, said the strike also used cluster munitions in an attempt to kill as many people as possible. The Associated Press was unable to verify the claim. The attack on Sumy followed a deadly missile strike on Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's hometown

of Kryvyi Rih April 4 that killed some 20 people, including nine children. Zelenskyy called for a global response to the attack. "Talks have never stopped ballistic missiles and aerial bombs. What's needed is an attitude toward Russia that a terrorist deserves," he said. Other world leaders also condemned the attack, with French President Emmanuel Macron saying that it undermined Washington-led peace talks between the two sides.

# Osaka Expo opens in Japan offering vision of future

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Osaka, April 13:** The Expo 2025 opened in Osaka Sunday with more than 10,000 people singing Beethoven's Ninth Symphony to celebrate the start of the six-month event that Japan hopes will unite the world divided by tensions and wars.

**What is Expo 2025 Osaka about?** The Osaka Expo is held at Yumeshima, which means "dream island," a reclaimed industrial waste burial site in the Osaka Bay, where participants from more than 160 countries, regions and organizations showcase their futuristic exhibits inside about 80 pavilions of unique architecture. "Creating a future society for

our lives" is the main theme. It is Osaka's second Expo after the hugely successful 1970 event that attracted 64 million visitors, a record until Shanghai in 2010. Organisers expect 28 million visitors through mid-October, though ticket sales have been slow, with about 9 million sold in advance, short of an initial target of 14 million. "It's been 55 years since the last Expo in Osaka. I've been looking forward to it," said Daiki Chiba, who travelled from from Sendai, about 900 kilometers (560 miles) north-east of Osaka. Many visitors carried Myaku-Myaku mascots or wore clothes matching its colours — red, blue and white — to get in the mood.



**What does it mean to hold Expo amid global tensions** The Expo comes only four years after Japan struggled to host the no-audience Tokyo Olympics during the coronavirus pandemic. It opens in the wake of trade wars and fears of a global economic downturn sparked by US President Donald Trump's tariffs, the three-year Russian invasion of Ukraine and Middle East conflicts. Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba compared the global ten-

sions to a "national crisis" and said that Trump's tariffs, especially the 25 per cent duty on automobiles, would be a blow to all industries and Japan's economy. Still, Japan wants to turn the pinch into a chance.

I think the timing is actually quite fitting. Holding the Expo now could eventually help to address the divisions in the world. ... I believe this Expo in Japan might actually lead to stronger international relationships and improvements

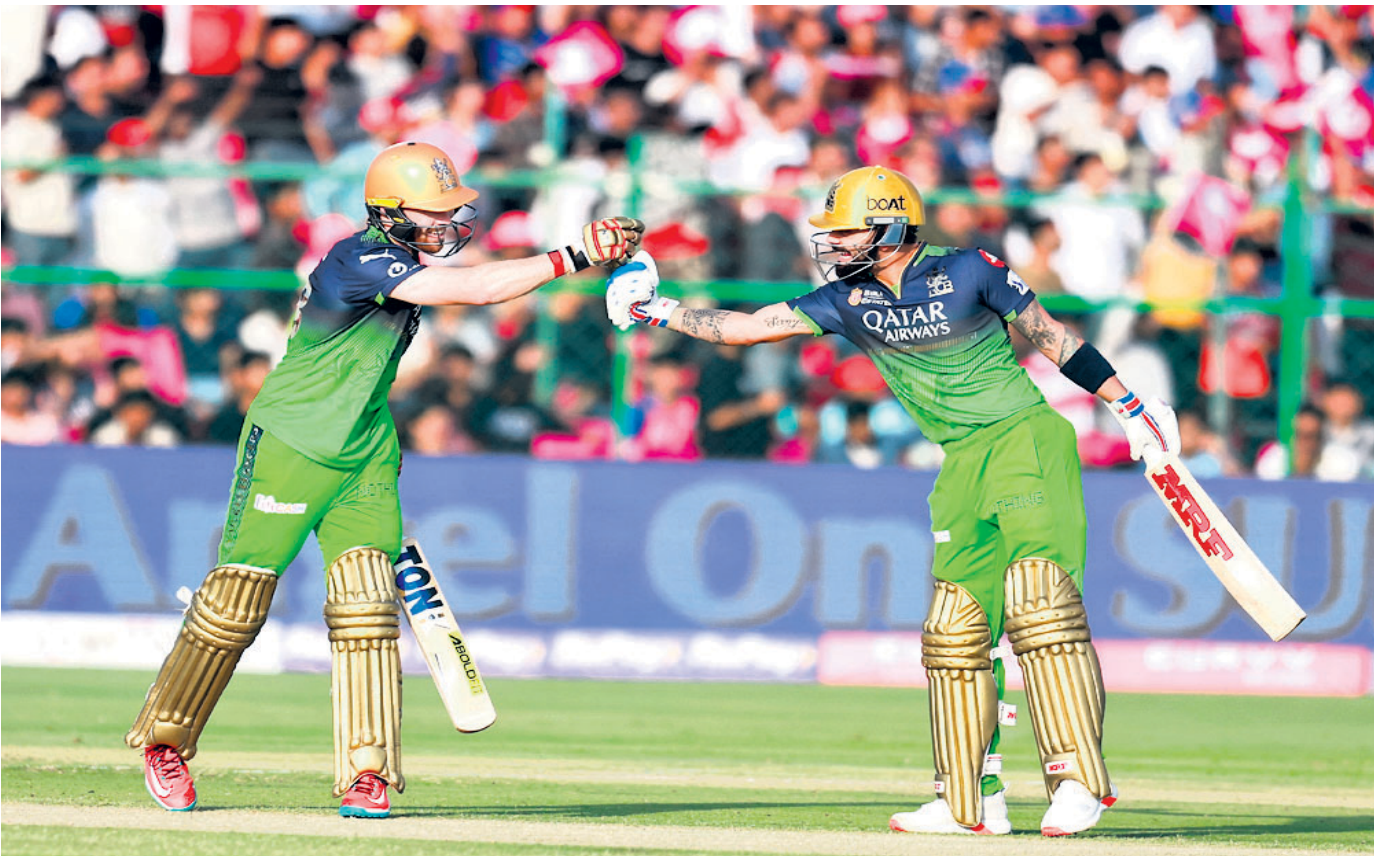
SACHIKO YOSHIMURA | HEAD OF GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS, EXPO 2025

**What is the Grand Ring?** The iconic ring, designed by architect Sou Fujimoto, is a lattice-like structure encircling the venue and recognized by the Guinness World Records as the largest wooden architecture. It is 20 metres (65 feet) high and has a 2-kilometer (1.2-mile) circumference. The costly ring takes up more than 14 per cent of the Expo's total spending of 235 billion yen (\$1.64 billion) and has triggered public criticism. The total cost nearly doubled from the initial estimate largely due to the weaker yen, causing construction delays. Several pavilions, including those of Nepal, India, Vietnam and Chile, were not ready for the opening. The ring is supposed to be partially reusable, reflecting the theme of creating a sustainable future.



# RCB conquer battle of royals

[ SALT, KOHLI POWER ROYAL CHALLENGERS BENGALURU TO NINE-WICKET WIN OVER RAJASTHAN ] ROYALS. THIS WAS RCB'S FOURTH WIN OF THE SEASON -- ALL COMING IN AWAY MATCHES



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jaipur, April 13:** Phil Salt's explosive 33-ball 65 laid the foundation and Virat Kohli's 100th T20 fifty provided the finishing touch as Royal Challengers Bengaluru cruised to a dominant nine-wicket win over Rajasthan Royals in the IPL here Sunday.

RCB's decision to bowl first paid off on a surface that stayed low and offered variable bounce, even as rising India opener Yashasvi Jaiswal's fluent 75 off 47 balls stood out in Rajasthan Royals total of 173/4.

On a slow, tacky Sawai Mansingh Stadium pitch where stroke-making was far from easy, Salt's counterattack stunned the hosts.

He smashed six sixes and five fours in his fiery innings, putting RR's bowlers under pressure from the start.

His assault, followed by Kohli's ice-cool unbeaten 62 not out off 45 balls (4x4, 2x6), helped RCB chase down 174 with ease, finishing the job in just 17.3 overs.

Salt signalled his intent from the outset, top-edging Jofra Archer for a six in the opening over and also survived a close lbw shout.

He constantly shuffled across the stumps to access the leg-side and raced to his second fifty of the season in just 28 balls, bringing the required target under 100 in the eighth over.

He had moments of fortune

**FRESH FEAT: Star batter Virat Kohli added another record to his illustrious career as he became the first Asian batter to complete 100 half-centuries in T20s. He now has 100 fifties and nine centuries from 405 T20 matches**

along the way. On 23, a powerful flick ricocheted off Sandeep Sharma's outstretched hand in a tough return catch attempt.

Later, on 40, Jaiswal dropped a sharp low chance at cover, which also offered a run-out opportunity, but the stumps weren't hit. Salt made the Royals pay dearly for those lapses.

Meanwhile, Kohli was happy to play second fiddle, beginning cautiously with just seven off his first six balls.

He too had an early life -- a miscue off Sandeep's slower ball was put down by Riyan Parag at mid-off, a straight-forward chance. But the RCB's iconic batter regrouped quickly and settled into his anchor role.

Together, the duo stitched a 92-run opening stand, with 65 runs coming in the powerplay alone, a phase that decisively tilted the contest RCB's way.

Salt was eventually dis-

missed for 65, bowled by Kumar Kartikeya, leaving RCB needing just 82 from 68 balls.

From there, Kohli took charge, pacing his innings with 25 singles and picking off the boundaries with surgical precision.

Earlier, 23-year-old Jaiswal struck 10 fours and two sixes, handling the sluggish track with poise while others around him struggled. He reached his

Sanju Samson (13 off 16) endured a scratchy stay, bogged down by seven dot balls and tight bowling. He survived a run-out chance early on but was eventually stumped after misjudging a low delivery from Krunal Pandya.

In the death overs, Dhruv Jurel (35\* off 23) played a useful cameo but took time to get going, consuming several dots early.

IPL STANDINGS						
TEAM	M	W	L	NRR	PTS	
GT	6	4	2	1.081	8	
DC	5	4	1	0.899	8	
RCB	6	4	2	0.672	8	
LSG	6	4	2	0.162	8	
KKR	6	3	3	0.803	6	
PBKS	5	3	2	0.065	6	
MI	6	2	4	0.104	4	
RR	6	2	4	-0.838	4	
SRH	6	2	4	-1.245	4	
CSK	6	1	5	-1.554	2	

# MI break DC's unbeaten streak

Bowlers star as Mumbai Indians come back from behind to beat Delhi Capitals by 12 runs

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, April 13:** Impact player Karn Sharma and Mitchell Santner took five wickets collectively as a superb bowling performance saw Mumbai Indians beat Delhi Capitals by 12 runs and register a superb come-from-behind victory to get their second win of IPL 2025 at the Arun Jaitley Stadium on Sunday.

Karun Nair, playing his first IPL game of the season, played a breathtaking 89 as DC's impact player and clinching a win looked like a cakewalk for DC. But losing five wickets in six overs, including of Karun, after the tenth over got MI back in the match.

Despite Ashutosh Sharma and Vipraj Nigam threatening to pull off another heist for DC, their sub-par batting and MI's excellent fielding plus bowling, along with ball change after the 13th over, ensured the hosts' were all out for 193 in 19 overs. It also meant that DC's

winning juggernaut has been brought to a halt on return to their home turf.

Chasing 206, DC lost Jake Fraser-McGurk on the first ball when he chipped to cover off Deepak Chahar. After Abhishek Porel opened his account with a cracking cover drive off Chahar for four Karun took on Trent Boult by hitting three delightful fours -- a cover drive was followed by a crunchy cut shot and another glorious drive.

MI's move to bring in Jasprit Bumrah didn't give the desired control as Karun lofted him over cover for four, before slashing him between cover and point for another boundary. After Karun slashed Chahar to bring up DC's fifty in just fifth over, Bumrah was again taken to the cleaners as the batter whipped and lofted inside-out with sumptuous ease before a brace got him his fifty in 22 balls.

With 23 runs needed off the last two overs, Ashutosh Sharma reverse-scooped and edged off Bumrah to collect consecutive fours, before he, Kuldeep Yadav and Mohit Sharma were run-out on successive balls to give MI a memorable win.

## BRIEF SCORES

**Mumbai Indians:** 205/5 in 20 overs (Tilak Varma 59, Ryan Rickleton 41; Kuldeep Yadav 2-23, Vipraj Nigam 2-41) beat **Delhi Capitals:** 193 all out in 19 overs (Karun Nair 89, Abhishek Porel 33; Karn Sharma 3-36, Mitchell Santner 2-43) by 12 runs



# Alcaraz claims maiden Monte Carlo Masters title

The Spaniard beats injured Musetti to win in Monte Carlo for his 6th Masters 1000 title

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Monaco, April 13:** Carlos Alcaraz defeated an injury-stricken Lorenzo Musetti 3-6, 6-1, 6-0 to win the Monte Carlo final Sunday and secure his sixth Masters 1000 career title.

Alcaraz cruised to his first Monte Carlo trophy and his 18th tour-level victory.

Musetti started showing signs of a right-leg injury in the third set and received treatment at 0-3. Playing in his first Masters 1000 final, the 23-year-old Italian had trouble moving and keeping up with Alcaraz toward the end of the match.

Alcaraz has struggled at times this year and was coming off an opening-round loss to David Goffin in Miami.

Alcaraz was playing in his 23rd tour-level final. He had needed six match points to put away Spanish compatriot Alejandro Davidovich Fokina 7-6 (2), 6-4 in the semifinal on Saturday.

Musetti, whose only two tour-level titles came in 2022, broke

Just really happy to have won the Monte Carlo for the first time. It's been a really difficult week, with a lot of difficult situations, I'm really proud of myself how I dealt with everything

CARLOS ALCARAZ

Alcaraz's serve twice to win the first set, but Alcaraz came back strong with two breaks of his own in the second to even the match. Musetti was never much in contention in the decider.

Musetti, ranked 13th and a bronze-medalist in Paris last year, defeated Alex de Minaur 1-6, 6-4, 7-6 (4) in their semifinal. The Italian had ousted defending champion Stefanos Tsitsipas in the quarterfinals.

The final was moved forward by three hours because heavy rain was forecast for the evening.

## WINNING SPREE

The 21-year-old will reach No 2 in the world rankings following the triumph in Monaco

It was Alcaraz's third consecutive clay-court final after winning the French Open and finishing with a silver medal at the Paris Olympics last year



## F1: Piastri cruises to victory at Bahrain GP

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Bahrain, April 13:** Oscar Piastri has won his second race of the 2025 Formula 1 season, and cut the gap in the Drivers Championship down to three points behind teammate Lando Norris, after delivering a commanding performance to win the Bahrain Grand Prix.

The 24-year-old Australian not only celebrated victory in his 50th career Grand Prix but also secured McLaren's first-ever triumph at the circuit, continuing his strong start to the season.

Starting from pole position, Piastri held off an aggressive move from George Russell, who locked up into Turn 1, but managed to keep the lead. From there, Piastri demonstrated calm control and consistent pace, gradually pulling away from the pack. Even when a mid-race Safety Car bunched the field back together, the McLaren driver didn't falter, making a clean restart and rebuilding his lead with clinical precision. He eventually crossed the line with a dominant 15.5-second gap over Russell.

While Piastri led from the front, his teammate Lando Norris had a more dramatic evening. After receiving a five-second penalty for being out of position on the grid, Norris mounted a strong recovery drive.

## DOMINANT DISPLAY AT BILLIE JEAN KING CUP

# Indian women make it to World Group playoffs

Shrivalli, Ankita, Prarthana make history after a thrilling 2-1 victory over South Korea

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Pune, April 13:** India secured their playoff berth in the Billie Jean King Cup by finishing second following a 2-1 victory against South Korea in their last Asia-Oceania Group 1 fixture here Saturday.

This is only the second time that India have qualified for the playoffs of the Billie Jean King Cup, with the previous one coming in 2020. New Zealand secured the top spot in the tournament after beating Hong Kong, China 2-1 in their last fixture.

It was a dream debut for Shrivalli Bhamidipaty, who maintained an unblemished record in the tournament. Playing against 248th-ranked Sohyun Park, Shrivalli surrendered a hard-fought first set, before taking charge to stage a comeback.

The youngster from Hyder-



abad registered her fifth consecutive win, sealing the deal with a 5-7, 6-3, 7-6 (7-5) scoreline in 2 hours and 52 minutes.

Heading into the second singles with a one-nil lead for India, Sahaja Yamalapalli took centre court to play against Dayeon Back. The Indian player showed resolve and determination despite suffering an early setback in both sets. Trailing 1-5 in the second set, Sahaja fought till the end but eventually lost 3-6, 4-6.

With everything to play for, and a playoff spot at stake, India's vastly experienced doubles duo of Ankita Raina and Prarthana Thombare stepped up when it mattered the most, helping the team cross the line against Sohyun Park and Dabin Kim.

Indian will now play alongside the best-performing teams from the 2025 Regional Group I events. The Play-offs will be contested as groups of three teams, with the group winners advancing to the 2026 Qualifiers.

# Archers settle for silver in men's recurve team clash

THIS WAS INDIA'S THIRD MEDAL IN THE ARCHERY WORLD CUP STAGE 1

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Auburndale (USA), April 13:** India clinched a silver medal in the men's recurve team event at the Archery World Cup Stage 1 after the trio of Dhiraj Bommadevara, Tarundeep Rai, and Atanu Das went down 1-5 to China in the final, here Sunday.

This was India's third medal of the season-opening event, with a fourth one still in sight as Dhiraj remained in conten-

tion in the men's recurve individual event slated later in the day.

Earlier, India had secured a gold in the compound mixed team event and a bronze in compound men's team.

Abhishek Verma narrowly missed out on a podium, finishing fourth in the compound men's individual section.

In the recurve team gold medal clash, both India and China began evenly, sharing the first



set 1-1 with identical scores of 54. The Indian trio had two 10s

and two 9s, but faltered with a pair of 8s that proved costly.

The Chinese team of Li Zhongyuan, Kao Wenchao, and Wang Yan stepped up in the second set, hitting four 10s to take a 3-1 lead.

India, meanwhile, again slipped into the red ring with another 8, losing the set 55-58.

Needing to win the third set to stay alive, the Indian team once again stumbled, managing only 54 as China edged them out 55-54 to seal the gold. China also bagged the bronze.