



Candid confession

Actor Pooja Hegde says social media metrics like follower count shouldn't be viewed as the ultimate measure of fame

LEISURE | **P2**



Meloni's secret weapon

'Italian' proves a weapon for Meloni as she launches a charm offensive with Trump and Vance

INTERNATIONAL | **P10**



Indices surge

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty surge more than 6 per cent in the last four trading sessions

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Classic comeback

Manchester United seal a spectacular comeback to beat Lyon 5-4 and advance to the semifinals of the Europa League

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STORM FURY: An uprooted tree lies at Fakir Mohan Square in Balasore following a Nor'wester storm Friday afternoon

OP PHOTO

Thunderstorm, rain hit coastal Odisha; 1 dead

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 18: One person was killed as a thunderstorm, accompanied by heavy rains, struck coastal Odisha Friday morning, officials said. State capital Bhubaneswar received 26.2 mm rainfall between 10 and 11.30 am, with strong winds uprooting trees in several areas, they said. Waterlogging was reported from several low-lying areas of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack, they said. More than 100 trees were uprooted in Cuttack's Banki area, blocking the road to Bhubaneswar, they added. Trees were also uprooted in Pokhariput, Old Town, Chintamaniswar, Chandrasekharpur, Gajapati Nagar, Behera Dhaba and Balakati Road in Bhubaneswar. Fifteen teams of the Odisha Fire and Emergency Services were working to clear the roads, officials said. The strong winds uprooted trees and electricity poles in other districts as well, disrupt-

ing power connectivity. Personnel of the Energy Department were working to restore services, they added. A middle-aged farmer was killed in a lightning strike in Puri district's Satyabadi block while he was working in a field. A total of 26 mm of rain was recorded in the district. The unseasonal rain has caused widespread crop damage across coastal districts. The IMD has issued an 'Orange' alert for remaining prepared for thunderstorms with lightning, and hailstorms with heavy rain in Mayurbhanj, Balasore and Bhadrak till 8.30 am Saturday. Thunderstorm activities are likely to persist till April 20, after which a rise in temperature is anticipated, it said. In view of the forecast, Special Relief Commissioner Deoranjana Kumar Singh put all the districts on alert, directing the Collectors to take measures to reduce the impact of the thunderstorm, lightning and rainfall.

NURSE 'BEATEN TO DEATH' OVER DOWRY

AGENCIES

Patnagarh, April 18: In a shocking incident, a 25-year-old woman working as a nurse at a government hospital was allegedly beaten to death by her husband over dowry demands at Nehenabandh village under Patnagarh police limits in Bolangir district, Friday. The police have registered a murder case after the deceased's father lodged an FIR in connection with the death and detained her husband for questioning. The deceased, identified as Krishna Sahu, was working at the Padmapur sub-divisional hospital in Bargarh district. Originally from Semelmunda village under Gaisilet police limits in Bargarh, Krishna had married Alok Sahu of Nehenabandh in 2022 in a socially-recognised ceremony. The couple has a two-year-old son. According to the complaint, Krishna had earlier sent a video to her father, showing her husband assaulting her allegedly at the behest of her mother-in-law over additional dowry demands. Krishna was brought to the Patnagarh sub-divisional hospital after reportedly falling ill Friday morning where doctors declared her dead on arrival. The deceased's father alleged that she was subjected to protracted torture by her husband. Following the complaint, the police have registered a murder case (117/25) and detained her husband. The body has been sent for post-mortem. "The cause of the death will be confirmed after the autopsy report is received," said investigating officer Haribandhu Gadatia.

According to the complaint, Krishna had earlier sent a video to her father, showing her husband assaulting her allegedly at the behest of her mother-in-law over additional dowry demands. Krishna was brought to the Patnagarh sub-divisional hospital after reportedly falling ill Friday morning where doctors declared her dead on arrival. The deceased's father alleged that she was subjected to protracted torture by her husband. Following the complaint, the police have registered a murder case (117/25) and detained her husband. The body has been sent for post-mortem. "The cause of the death will be confirmed after the autopsy report is received," said investigating officer Haribandhu Gadatia.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL

How can courts stick to the Constitution instead of siding with trending hashtags? Isn't that anti-national now?

RUSSIA-UKRAINE PEACE EFFORTS

US failed broker

The US may withdraw from mediating Ukraine-Russia peace talks due to stalled progress. Speaking to reporters at the White House Friday, President Donald Trump said US will 'take a pass' on Ukraine peace deal 'if parties make it difficult'. Despite partial ceasefires and talks in Paris and Saudi Arabia, Russia continues to demand Ukraine abandon NATO ambitions and cede occupied territories—terms Ukraine strongly rejects. Kyiv insists on being directly involved in any deal, and urges continued European participation. Frustrated, Trump had threatened to cut military aid to Ukraine or impose harsher sanctions on Russia. He's also floated the idea of pulling the US from NATO, alarming allies. A recent Russian missile strike on Sumy killed 35 civilians, further straining peace efforts. There was no immediate comment from Paris, London, Berlin or Kyiv on the White House development. Nevertheless, if the US exits mediation, peace efforts could collapse, as no other nation holds comparable influence over both Kyiv and Moscow. While other impacts are unclear, the situation remains fluid, with international stakeholders urging continued dialogue to prevent further escalation.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Paris, April 18: President Donald Trump Friday said negotiations between Ukraine and Russia are 'coming to a head' and insisted that neither side is 'playing' him in his push to end the grinding war. Trump spoke after Secretary of State Marco Rubio warned earlier in the day that the US may 'move on' from trying to secure a Russia-Ukraine peace deal if there is no progress in the coming days, after months of efforts have failed to bring an end to the fighting. "Now, if for some reason, one of the two parties makes it very difficult, we're just going to say you're foolish. You are fools, you horrible people," Trump said. "And we're going to just take a pass. But hopefully, we won't have to do that." Rubio's dour assessment about the state of negotiations came after landmark talks in Paris among US, Ukrainian and European officials produced outlines for steps toward peace and appeared to make some long-awaited progress.

Another meeting is expected next week in London, and Rubio suggested it could be decisive in determining whether the Trump administration continues its involvement. "We are now reaching a point where we need to decide whether this is even possible or not," Rubio told reporters in Paris. "Because if it's not, then I think we're just going to move on. It's not our war. We have other priorities to focus on." He said the US administration wants to decide 'in a matter of days.' The State Department said Rubio issued the same warning in a phone call Friday with NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte, telling him that "if a clear path to peace does not emerge soon, the United States will step back from efforts to broker peace." Trump said 'Marco is right' that the dynamic of the negotiations must change, but stopped short of saying he's ready to walk away from peace negotiations. "Well, I don't want to say that," Trump said. "But we want to see it end." Rubio's comments stepped up pressure on both sides to reach a peace deal, even as the US and Ukraine made progress on a minerals agreement that Trump has sought to recoup billions of dollars in military assistance that Washington has sent Kyiv since Russia's invasion in February 2022.

UNESCO honour for Gita, Natyashastra

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 18: UNESCO has added 74 new documentary heritage collections to its Memory of the World Register, including manuscripts of the Bhagavad Gita and Bharat Muni's Natyashastra from India. Announced on World Heritage Day, the register now includes books, manuscripts, and recordings representing humanity's documentary heritage. The additions, spanning 72 countries and four international organisations, cover scientific revolutions, women's history, and multilateralism milestones. The Natyashastra, preserved at the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute and codified around the 2nd century BC, is a comprehensive guide to performing arts with 36,000 verses. UNESCO's citation highlights its groundbreaking assertion that 'no meaning can blossom without rasa,' shaping Indian theatre, dance, music, and aesthetics. The Bhagavad Gita, embedded in the Mahabharata's Bhismaparva, is a 700-verse dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna. A cornerstone of Indian philosophy, it synthesises Vedic, Buddhist, Jain, and Carvaka thought, gaining global readership through translations. UNESCO's additions, increasing the register to 570 collections, were decided by its executive

board after evaluation by an independent advisory committee. Other notable entries include Egypt's Ithaf Al-Mahbub on Arab astronomy, Charles Darwin's archives (UK), Friedrich Nietzsche's works (Germany), Wilhelm Conrad Roentgen's X-ray photographs (Germany), and Carlos Chagas' disease research (Brazil). Collections on international cooperation, like the Geneva Conventions (Switzerland) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN), were also included. Prime Minister Narendra Modi celebrated the inclusion, stating on X, "The Gita and Natyashastra's recognition in UNESCO's Memory of the World Register reflects global appreciation for India's timeless wisdom and culture. Their insights continue to inspire the world." Union Home Minister Amit Shah also hailed the move and said under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Bharat has made incessant efforts to enshrine its cultural wisdom at the centre of global welfare. "Congratulations to every Indian on the grand occasion of the Gita and Natyashastra being included in the UNESCO's Memory of the World Register," he wrote on 'X'. Union Culture Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat called it a 'historic moment' on X, noting India now has 14 inscriptions in the UNESCO register.

Runway cracks: Flight with PK Mishra on board diverted

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 18: A flight carrying 178 passengers, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Principal Secretary PK Mishra, was diverted to Bhubaneswar airport Friday after the aircraft was unable to land at Jharsuguda due to cracks on the runway, officials said. Mishra, who was on the way to attend the convocation of IIM Sambalpur Saturday, had boarded the Delhi-Jharsuguda flight and was scheduled to reach the western Odisha town around 3.20 pm, they said. "The flight could not make the landing at the Veer Surendra Sai Airport in Jharsuguda as the airport authorities had issued a notice to airmen (NOTAM) for cracks on the runway," an official said. VSS Airport Director Sandeep K Tiwari said, "It is normal during summer as the concrete slab of the runway develops cracks. It is a two-km-long runway, and the cracks were noticed half an hour before the scheduled landing of the Delhi flight. Therefore, we preferred to divert the flight to nearby BPIA in Bhubaneswar." He also said that the same flight landed at the VSS airport with all the passengers, including Mishra, on board around 7.13 pm.

74 killed in US strikes on Yemeni oil port

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dubai, April 18: US airstrikes targeting an oil port held by Yemen's Houthi rebels killed 74 people and wounded 171 others, the group said Friday, marking the single-deadliest known attack under President Donald Trump's new campaign targeting the rebels. Assessing the toll of Trump's campaign, which began March 15, has been incredibly difficult as the US military's Central Command so far has not released any information on the campaign, its specific targets and how many people have been killed. Meanwhile, Yemen's Houthi rebels strictly control access to areas attacked and don't publish complete information on the strikes, many of which likely have targeted military and security sites. **P10**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 18: The crew of India Coast Guard (ICG) ship Vighraha came to the rescue of two endangered Olive Ridley turtles after they were found entangled in nearly 600 kg of ghost nets at sea, officials said Friday. The Olive Ridley turtles turn up in millions for mass nesting along the Odisha coast every year between February and March. A ghost net is a fishing net that has been lost or abandoned in the ocean. "@IndiaCoastGuard Ship Vighraha saved two #OliveRidley turtles an #Endangered species under the #IndianWildlifePro-

tection Act-1972, entangled in nearly 600 kg of ghost nets. Our Maritime guardians are committed towards safeguarding marine biodiversity. #WeProtect #OpOlivia #MarineEnvironment," the ICG wrote in a post on X. The ICG also shared a photograph and a video clip of the rescue process. Every year since 1991, the ICG has been providing continuous assistance under 'Operation Olivia' to the Central and state authorities and agencies to protect endangered species under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. In February this year, the ICG said it had launched the

annual operation to ensure safe mid-sea sojourn of breeding Olive Ridley sea turtles and mass nesting of these delicate marine

species in Odisha. Under 'Operation Olivia', the ongoing season of mass nesting of endangered Olive Ridley tur-

tles at the coast of Odisha has yielded productive results. The nesting data mainly at Rushikulya have come up with 6,126 nests having 5,51,238 eggs, while nesting at Devi River mouth to Astrang is sporadic in nature with 60 nests and 5,400 eggs, officials had earlier said. In another development, an MoU was signed Thursday between the ICG and the Rashtriya Raksha University, Gandhinagar at the ICG headquarters to enhance cooperation in academics and training. It includes ICG-specific courses in law enforcement at sea, coastal and maritime security, and port management, the officials said.

leisure

FORTUNE FORECAST

accuracy • reliability • trust

FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181*

ARIES
Career decisions and money matters will keep you busy today. And after all the work, you will want to spend some leisure time and take it easy. A leisure trip may materialise, which will put you in high spirits. Ganesha says indulging in group projects will help you make new friends.

TAURUS
You will win the heart of your family members today, forecasts Ganesha. Try and delay auction bids or sealed tenders. Job aspirants may look forward to belated success in interviews. Ganesha advises you to take abundant precautions in all critical matters.

GEMINI
Your business rivals may compete with you in sales and deals today, warns Ganesha. Care and concern must be the two watchwords in all your dealings. Hostility may come in the way of love. Those spurned in previous romantic liaisons may get a chance to pen a new love story, says Ganesha.

CANCER
Today, you may have to do a lot of multi-tasking at work, predicts Ganesha. And you are likely to do it with the dexterity of a juggler. You will finish your pending tasks with ease. You will make seemingly impossible tasks look as simple as blinking. You will do it all without even batting an eyelid.

LEO
Get ready to bask in applause. Well, not literally, but Ganesha does foresee you getting that long due recognition today for all the hard work you've put at your workplace. This goes hand-in-hand with the support of your colleagues and the good wishes of your seniors, especially if it is some new project that you are undertaking. Remember, a job well begun is already half done.

VIRGO
A single-headed mission to be the master of your destiny will drive you ahead. Your management skills will be immaculate, and the fire to succeed will get you up and running. Your skill in the managerial post will be accentuated by your quick decision-making and superior analytical ability, says Ganesha.

LIBRA
Ganesha says that you shall be immersed in successfully completing all your remaining work today. Whatever work you undertake today you shall be able to do it to your best capability and successfully and your work ability will be praiseworthy.

SCORPIO
Friends in influential positions will be of much help today. You may plunge into a new business venture without much ado. Appreciation for your abilities and efforts will fly in thick and fast. Your reputation is sky-rocketing among the opposite sex.

SAGITTARIUS
Dressed to kill – this phrase is enough to describe you today, says Ganesha. Decked up from head to toe in chic attire and classy jewellery, you make a bold statement. Like a magnet, you will attract attention at a party. Don't get surprised if your list of admirers becomes longer.

CAPRICORN
If wasteful expenditure has left your bank balance a tad below what you had anticipated, you will have reasons to rejoice today, says Ganesha. Cash inflow – and a substantial amount of it – is likely and will make you feel nice about your finances. Work will go on as usual. The only change may be a discernible change in the work ambience; it may get a little more comfortable.

AQUARIUS
Lady Luck gazes lovingly upon you today! Bosses are pleased, colleagues are happy, and this makes work seem like leisure. You may want to get in touch with old friends who have moved far away. What are you waiting for, asks Ganesha, in this age of communication?

PISCES
A good day for those looking for romantic liaisons, says Ganesha. You will seek the company of your sweetheart to fight feelings of solitude and boredom today. Those who are single ought to strike gold, considering how Lady Luck will be grinning at the efforts you make to win over your love.



AFFLECK SLAMS HORRENDOUS BATSUITS IN BATMAN MOVIES

Actor-filmmaker Ben Affleck talked about the difficulties during his tenure as Batman and said that he absolutely “hated the Batsuit”, which he tagged as “horrendous to wear”. Talking to *GQ*, Affleck detailed the physically draining experience of wearing a Batsuit, reports *variety.com*.

ALBA DEFENDS BLUE ORIGINS SPACE FLIGHT PASSENGERS

Jessica Alba is defending the crew member of the recent all-female Blue Origin flight amid backlash. The actress reshared a post from political strategist Ana Navarro-Cardenas, which encouraged critics to focus their energy on “denouncing” US President Donald Trump rather than the passengers.



Taapsee shines beyond screen

MUMBAI: Taapsee Pannu is celebrated not only for her fearless roles in cinema but also for her deep-rooted sense of social responsibility. This summer, she once again stepped up during Delhi's unforgiving heatwave, collaborating with the Hemkunt Foundation to distribute essential supplies to those in need. Her involvement wasn't a fleeting gesture—Taapsee has been associated with the organisation for over three years, playing an active role in their ongoing relief efforts.

Her commitment to meaningful causes extends far beyond immediate crises. Since 2020, Taapsee has been a passionate supporter of Project *Nanhi Kali*, an initiative dedicated to girls' education. Through her consistent contributions, she has supported the schooling of 100 young girls. Her dedication was especially evident during her intimate wedding with longtime partner Mathias Boe in Udaipur last year. Instead of receiving traditional gifts, the couple invited guests to donate to Nanhi Kali—transforming their celebration into a platform for purpose.

Whether through socially conscious cinema or impactful community efforts, Taapsee continues to prove that true stardom lies in using one's platform for good. With quiet consistency and a clear sense of purpose, she blends talent with compassion—bringing real-world impact to her reel-world fame. From empowering

young girls to supporting the underprivileged, she leads by example, showing that being a star goes beyond the screen.

AGENCIES

CURTAINS ON CHINTA O CHETANA'S 48TH BAISHAKHI FESTIVAL



Artists of Bichitra Barnali Natya Sansada from Ganjam spellbound audience with their captivating doll dance performance Friday, on the fourth and last evening of the event at Rabindra Mandap, Bhubaneswar.

PIC: MANORANJAN MISHRA

MUMBAI: Pooja Hegde's recent speech on social media fame has sparked a conversation across the internet. The actress, who boasts an impressive 26-27 million followers on Instagram, spoke candidly about how these numbers don't equate to real value or success.

While acknowledging her massive online following, Hegde emphasised that social media metrics like follower count shouldn't be viewed as the ultimate measure of fame or worth. “I have 26, 27 million followers online, but that's not even worth the money. That is important,” she remarked, challenging the idea that a high follower count directly correlates with celebrity status.

The *Beast* actress pointed out that many actors, some with fewer than 5 million followers, are still re-

Pooja on social media fame

garded as superstars. She explained that fame doesn't follow a set formula and that success can't be solely defined by virtual numbers. For her, it's about doing quality work, rather than chasing superficial attention.

The actress also emphasised the importance of receiving meaningful feedback, particularly from people she interacts with in real life, rather than relying on impersonal online comments. Her perspective reflects a broader shift in the entertainment industry, where authenticity, hard work, and genuine relationships are increasingly valued over online fame.

AGENCIES



Disha's vintage glamour

MUMBAI: Disha Patani recently turned heads by channeling vintage Bollywood glamour with a modern twist, reviving the iconic orange saree once worn by Madhuri Dixit in the 1992 film *Beta*. Designed by Karan Torani, Disha's ensemble featured a pre-stitched orange silk saree in a dhoti skirt style. While maintaining the traditional silhouette, the look was elevated with structured tailoring and gold beadwork embroidery lining the waist, pleats, and hemline. A straight pallu with intricate thread work added a nostalgic nod to classic Bollywood fashion.

She paired the saree with a full-sleeve blouse boasting a plunging sweetheart neckline, heavily embroidered with gold floral motifs, enhancing the outfit's visual richness. Statement gold earrings completed her accessories, complementing the saree without overpowering it.

Her makeup featured a matte base, contoured cheeks, peachy blush, smudged black eyeliner, and a muted brick-nude lip. A voluminous, side-parted blowout added a soft, elegant finish to the look.

Professionally, Disha is making bold moves with her Hollywood debut—an action web series filming in Durango, Mexico, alongside Tyrese Gibson and Harry Goodwins. Back in India, she stars in *Welcome to the Jungle*, the newest installment of the popular *Welcome* franchise.

AGENCIES



PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD

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Across

- 1 Big talker?
- 5 Notability
- 8 Hospital vehicle
- 9 Tourist's aid
- 10 In shape
- 12 They show up in hair (5,4)
- 13 Type of excuse
- 14 Evil spirits
- 17 Embellish, as a story

Down

- 1 Pier
- 2 Collar
- 3 Small round soft masses
- 19 Congeal
- 21 Swedish shag rug
- 22 Gala affairs
- 24 Theories
- 25 Astronaut's concern

Across

- 4 Docile
- 5 Armada
- 6 Kind of occasion
- 7 Twitches
- 11 Fast sailboats
- 13 Felt hat
- 15 Blight
- 16 Recipe direction
- 18 Gravy type (2,3)
- 20 Delicious
- 23 Young newt

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.

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

SOLUTIONS

I	C	H	P
M	O	R	S
T	U	O	D
M	A	S	S
A	C	R	I
H	T	S	N
O	T	T	E
P	E	A	F
T	S	A	R
U	S	H	A
S	E	R	E
Y	A	S	S

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

Playwright Deepika Dash being felicitated with 'Ratnakar Chaini Smurti Sahitya Puraskar' during an event organised at Sriram Chandra Bhawan in Cuttack, Friday



ILLEGAL MINING

Ministers inspect coal mining sites



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, April 18: Amidst allegations of illegal coal mining and smuggling in Sundargarh district, the state government Friday dispatched two ministers to conduct an on-the-spot inquiry.

Steel and Mines Minister Bibhuti Bhushan Jena and Forest, Environment and Climate Change Minister Ganesh Ram Singhkhuntia inspected the sites of alleged illegal coal mining within Gopalpur forest range under Hemagiri block.

The two ministers visited around a dozen coal mines and held discussions with the district Mines and Forest department officials.

It has been alleged that illegal mining operations are underway in dense forest areas, including Gopalpur, Telendhi, Ratansara, Jamkani, and Bhogra-Kachhar.

“We visited certain coal mining areas. Our government believes in works and words. The government will certainly

take action against the illegal coal mining activities,” the Steel and Mines minister told reporters while Singhkhuntia said they will apprise Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on the ground situation.

Deputy Speaker and Talsara MLA Bhabani Shankar Bhoi earlier this month sought the Chief Minister’s intervention to stop alleged loot of mineral resources in the tribal-dominated Sundargarh district.

Following this, Sundargarh District Collector Manoj Satyawar Mahajan ordered raids on local factories and coal washeries.

A nine-member enforcement team from the Mines department had also seized around 10,000 tonne illegally mined coal.

Western Range IG Brijesh Rai said police have registered three cases in this regard.

“Action will be taken based on the opinion of the experts as the mining activities involve technical aspects also,” he added.

Nikunja Dhal new Union Parliamentary Affairs Secretary

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 18: Senior IAS officer Nikunja Bihari Dhal, who is currently serving as Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister of Odisha, has been appointed as Secretary in Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs as part of a top-level bureaucratic reshuffle effected by the Centre Friday.

Dhal, a 1993-batch Odisha cadre officer, will take over the new responsibilities after the retirement of incumbent Umaning Narula June 30, according to a notification issued by the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions.

Odisha cadre IAS officer Santosh Kumar Sarangi, who is currently the Director General in Directorate General of Foreign Trade, has been appointed as Secretary in Ministry of New and Renewable Energy. Similarly, another Odisha cadre IAS officer Ranjana Chopra, currently serving as Additional Secretary and Financial Advisor in the Culture Ministry, will now be Special Secretary and Financial Advisor in the same ministry.

Senior IAS officer Arvind Shrivastava, who is currently working as Additional Secretary in the PMO, has been appointed as Secretary in Department of Revenue under the Ministry of Finance.

Among others, Samir Kumar Sinha has been appointed as Civil Aviation Secretary in place of Vumlunmang Vualnam. Vualnam has been named as Secretary in Department of Expenditure. He succeeds Manoj Govil, who has been appointed as Secretary (Coordination) in the Cabinet Secretariat.



RAIN PAIN: Commuters negotiate a waterlogged stretch of Chakra Tirtha Road in Puri, a few hours after rains lashed the Pilgrim City, Friday **OP PHOTO**

Forest land clearance review every Tuesday

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 18: In a bid to ensure expeditious clearance of forest land for various development projects, the state government Friday decided to hold weekly review meetings every Tuesday.

This was revealed during a review meeting chaired by Forest, Environment and Climate Change department additional chief secretary Satyabrata Sahu Friday. The purpose of the meeting was to address the bottlenecks in the forest land

The review meet focused on projects spanning across sectors including railways, oil and gas, power transmission, and water resources

clearance processes.

The state government is taking decisive steps to accelerate the clearance of forest land for various development projects by enhancing inter-departmental coordination, said Sahu.

Issues related to 26 major projects, involving stakeholders like Ministry of Railways, Indian Oil Corporation, Ekalabya Model Residential Schools and

of land issues, the state government has decided to hold weekly meetings every Tuesday, where the progress of both ongoing and upcoming projects will be monitored, and hurdles related to forest land clearance will be addressed,” said Sahu.

This proactive approach aims to streamline the approval process for development projects, which often face delays due to complex environmental clearance procedures, and promises to ensure smoother implementation of vital infrastructure initiatives in the state, he added.

DSPL-18



ଶ୍ରୀ ନରେନ୍ଦ୍ର ମୋଦୀ
ପ୍ରଧାନମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ



ରାଜ୍ୟସ୍ତରୀୟ
ପୋଷଣ ପକ୍ଷ- ୨୦୨୫
ପାଳନ ସମାରୋହ



ଶ୍ରୀ ମୋହନ ଚରଣ ମାଝୀ
ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା

ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ

ଶ୍ରୀ ମୋହନ ଚରଣ ମାଝୀଙ୍କ
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ଗରିମାମୟ ଉପସ୍ଥିତି

ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ପ୍ରଭାତୀ ପରିଡ଼ା
ଉପ ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ

ପୋଷଣଯୁକ୍ତ ଖାଦ୍ୟ ପ୍ରଦର୍ଶନୀ
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People from Christian community offer prayers at the Cantonment Road Catholic Church in Cuttack on the occasion of Good Friday, remembering the sacrifice made by Jesus Christ

OP PHOTO

Honour values of sacrifice, says CM on Good Friday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, April 18: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi urged people to honour the values of sacrifice, compassion, and selfless service while observing Good Friday. Good Friday commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus. “Let us honour the values of sacrifice, compassion, and selfless service. May the day inspire us to uphold peace, empathy and humanity,” the CM said in a message on X. Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati and the Leader of

Churches across the state on Good Friday observed the crucifixion of Jesus and his death at Calvary

Opposition Naveen Patnaik also sent messages to the people on Good Friday. “I along with Christian sisters and brothers of the state participate in observance of Good Friday with a resolve to

move forward on the path of love, compassion and sacrifice shown by Lord Jesus,” Kambhampati said in his message. Patnaik in a post on X said, “May the solemn occasion of #GoodFriday fill our lives with love, compassion and forgiveness. May the day of sacrifice guide us in the path of peace, harmony and kindness.” Churches across the state on Good Friday observed the crucifixion of Jesus and his death at Calvary, official sources said. The faithful attended dif-

ferent churches to worship and remember the sacrifice made by Jesus Christ. Various churches held special services and organised sermons on the huge sacrifice made by Jesus, they said. The state has a sizable population of Christians in Kandhamal, Gajapati, Sundargarh, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar and other districts. According to 2011 census, Christian population in the state was estimated to be around 2.77 per cent of the total state population against 1.15 per cent in 1961.

PURI LITERARY FESTIVAL 2025

Crucial to stay connected to cultural roots: Governor

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 18: Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati Friday said that while technology and global influences are changing the world, it is important to stay connected to cultural roots. He was speaking at the inauguration of Puri Literary Festival 2025 held in the Pilgrim City. “It is a great pleasure to be here in Puri—a city full of spiritual and cultural richness. This festival celebrates both our heritage and our future,” said the Governor. He said Puri is more than just a holy place; it represents the soul of India’s long-standing traditions. Referring to the concept of Samavaya, which means harmony and coexistence, he said the festival is a perfect space for discussion on how tradition and modernity can grow side by side. “The Puri Literary Festival does not treat our culture as something of the past. Instead, it brings it to life and shows how it can guide us even today,” the Governor mentioned. Kambhampati lauded the festival for bringing together authors, artists, architects, thinkers, and young people. “This shows that we are not leaving our past behind. We are including it in our journey forward,” he added. He also spoke about India’s growing role in the world and said that progress should not only come from innovation and policies but also from our



Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati lauded the lit fest for bringing together authors, artists, architects, thinkers, and young people

values. “Our strength lies in diversity, respectful dialogue, and dignity,” he said. Stating that the message of the festival is clear, Kambhampati said, “India’s cultural and literary heritage is alive, meaningful, and can shape the future. Ancient wisdom and modern ideas do not need to clash—they can work together.” Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, in a video message, congratulated the organisers and guests for mak-

ing the festival a success. Puri MP Sambit Patra, who also addressed the gathering, said every word spoken at the festival would enrich literature and culture. President of the Puri Literary Festival Om Priyadarshi Chhotray also spoke on the occasion. The Adhyayan Foundation for Policy and Research (AF-PR), in collaboration with Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), Ministry of Culture, Government of Odisha, and the National Book Trust (NBT), organised the first-ever literary festival from April 18 to 20. Held under the theme “Weaving Stories of Tradition, Transformation & Triumph,” the festival aims to bridge India’s rich literary legacy with contemporary thought through engaging sessions, cultural performances, and meaningful dialogues.

Distribution of new ration cards soon

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 18: In a move aimed at strengthening Public Distribution System (PDS), the state government is set to issue new ration cards to eligible beneficiaries under National Food Security Act (NFSA) and the State Food Security Scheme (SFSS). The initiative follows a recent drive to weed out ineligible beneficiaries from food security schemes across the state. According to official sources, Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare department has directed all District Collectors to organise district, block, and urban local body (ULB) level functions for distribution of the newly prepared ration cards. These cards will be handed over to beneficiaries by MPs, MLAs and other dignitaries.

The new ration cards will feature a coloured design, printed on glossy A4-size paper, and laminated for durability. Each card will measure 6 inches in length and 4 inches in width. Officials have been instructed to ensure that the cost of printing and lamination does not exceed ₹10 per card. As per the schedule outlined by the department, block development officers (BDOs), municipal commissioners, and executive officers are to generate the coloured PDF versions of the ration cards by April 20. The cards must be fully prepared and laminated by April 22. The move is expected to benefit thousands of newly identified eligible households and individuals who had either applied for fresh ration cards or requested the inclusion of new family members.

Odisha farmers, officials leave for Malaysia

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 18: A 28-member team comprising 14 farmers and 14 officials from Odisha began a seven-day agricultural study tour to Malaysia Friday. The visit, organised under the Odisha Integrated Irrigation Project for Climate Resilient Agriculture (OIIPCARA) project, was flagged off by Deputy Chief Minister KV Singh Deo. In his address to the team, Singh Deo suggested that they should learn about scientific methods and machinery usage in traditional agriculture, emphasising the importance of recording daily reports and implementing best practices to double farmers’ income. Singh Deo, who also oversees the Ag-



riculture department, said Odisha ranks fourth in supplying rice to the Food Corporation of India (FCI). He further highlighted the state’s growing prominence in

fruit and vegetable exports. Agriculture and Farmers’ Empowerment secretary Arabinda Kumar Padhee praised Odisha’s agricultural progress and pointed to the state’s pro-

Singh Deo highlighted state’s prominent position in fruit and vegetable exports, with striding high in the sector

duction of 14.3 million tonne of food grains and 14.48 million tonne of fruits and vegetables last year. Padhee also mentioned successful exports of agricultural produce to countries in West Asia and Europe. The visit is jointly organised by the Directorate of Horticulture, department of Agriculture and Farmers’ Empowerment, Bankers Institute of Rural Development (BIRD), Lucknow and NABARD.

ODISHA SET TO BECOME NEW HUB FOR ADVENTURE SPORTS

Sports Min explores underwater chess at Mahanadi

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Cuttack, April 18: In a strategic move to boost adventure sports and inspire the youth, Sports and Youth Services Minister Suryabanshi Suraj participated in an extraordinary underwater chess session, alongside renowned scuba diver Sabir Bux here Friday at Mahanadi River, near the Cuttack Boating Club. The minister shared his excitement on his official X account, stating, “Had an incredible time experiencing water sports with renowned scuba diver Mr Sabir Bux. We are committed to promoting adventure sports in the state as a powerful way to inspire and engage the youth. Every step we take is towards building a vibrant and inclusive sports culture in Odisha.” Underwater chess, also known as diving chess, is a hybrid sport that blends the



classic strategy of chess with the thrill of scuba diving. Players submerge underwater and make their moves on a chessboard placed beneath the water’s surface. The combination of aquatic life and strategic game play offers an unparalleled experience, making it a unique attraction for sports enthusiasts.

The minister also expressed his joy, saying, “I got the opportunity to scuba dive in the waters of Mahanadi near Cuttack Boating Club. Playing chess amidst the free movement of aquatic life underwater was no less than a dream experience.” The event was part of a larger effort to identify and nur-



ture talent in water sports, a growing sector in the state. In line with the initiative, the state government is also preparing to introduce the Odisha Adventure Tourism Guidelines-2025 to support the tourism potential in this sector. Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida, who also holds the tourism portfolio, recently

emphasised the state’s natural landscapes, including its beaches, forests, hills, and waterfalls, as prime destinations for adventure sports enthusiasts. “Odisha stands as a premier destination for adventure sports, offering an array of breathtaking locations. We are committed to developing these sites, not just for today, but for future generations. Our policies will ensure Odisha remains a top destination for adventure and exploration,” said Parida. The government’s push for adventure sports and tourism comes as part of a broader vision to establish Odisha as a vibrant, inclusive hub for outdoor activities. Whether it’s underwater chess or trekking through dense forests, the state is setting the stage for a new wave of tourism and youth engagement, providing an ideal blend of thrill and nature.

Govt rolls up sleeves for smooth Rath Yatra

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 18: The state government has geared up measures to ensure smooth conduct of Rath Yatra beginning June 27. Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja chaired a high-level meet at Lok Seva Bhawan here Friday to review the preparations for the mega event in Puri. During the meeting, Ahuja emphasised the importance of seamless coordination among departments and instructed officials to ensure that every aspect of the preparations is taken care of. Highlighting that there should be no room for error, Ahuja directed the police and administrative machinery to work in close synchronisation to maintain order and safety throughout the festival. Installation of CCTVs at key locations for traffic management, deployment of adequate police personnel for crowd control, and setting up an Integrated Command centre for real-time monitoring were among the core areas reviewed.

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Crackdowns fail to rein in Koida mineral smuggling



POST NEWS NETWORK

Tensa, April 18: For the past 21 years, illegal mining and smuggling of manganese and iron ore have reportedly continued unchecked in the Koida mining sector of Sundargarh district.

Despite multiple enforcement crackdowns and even probes by the Justice MB Shah Commission, no let-up has been achieved in the mineral theft since 2004.

Recently, another enforcement team arrived in the Koida mining region to conduct inspections, supposedly to clamp down on the continuing mineral theft in the area Monday with people terming it as a symbolic gesture. This move follows complaints made by locals to Deputy Speaker Bhawani Shankar Bhoi during his recent visit to Koida, where

residents alleged ongoing illegal extraction and smuggling of manganese and iron ore.

In response, the Deputy Speaker reportedly wrote to Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, urging him to order a formal investigation. Subsequently, enforcement squads comprising Deputy Director, Mines and officials from multiple departments including Mines and Forest along with police began surprise inspections in an effort to curb the rampant mineral theft.

Despite such high-profile action, residents question why the local officials have failed to arrest those responsible for the mineral theft. Sources said that the responsibility to check mineral smuggling rests upon Koida mining and forest departments. Open theft continues with organised groups using loaders and machines

deep inside forested areas to extract and smuggle minerals to outside markets.

Enforcement teams have made repeated visits to Koida area, but the illegal activity continues unabated, especially in key locations of Koida mining circle like Mutukudar, Vijayee, Gidei, Ganua, Malda, Kalamang, Panposia, Kenabhetta, and Patamunda. These areas have been repeatedly flagged for illegal mining operations.

The enforcement teams have inspected unauthorised mines, seized illegally extracted iron and manganese ore, and confiscated heavy equipment. Yet, the culprits are rarely caught and continue to remain at large.

When contacted, Deputy Director, Koida mining circle Ashit Behera said that no theft has occurred within lease-holding areas; instead, the activity is concentrated in forest and protected zones, which fall under the jurisdiction of the Forest department. Although officials have seized illegal ore worth over Rs 15 crore, the department lacks the authority to arrest those involved, he said.

Koida forest ranger Prasanna Kumar Pradhan claimed that while theft was prevalent earlier, it has stopped due to regular patrolling. He suggested that if mining and forest officials conduct joint patrolling, the miscreants involved in mineral theft could be apprehended with success.

River, canal embankments unsafe in Kendrapara

Locals demand repairs before monsoon

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, April 18: Embankments along seven rivers and 27 branch canals in Kendrapara have been found to be unsafe during a survey of various river embankments in the district conducted by the Water Resources department, last week.

Moreover, the survey - which was carried out to access the present situation and identify vulnerable areas ahead of monsoon - also found that stone packing on several parts of the saltwater embankments has collapsed.

The findings in the survey have prompted locals to demanded immediate repairs before the monsoon.

According to farmer leader Bidhu Bhushan Mahapatra, rivers such as Kani, Kharasrota, and Brahmani surround 10 panchayats in Aul block, including Gobindpur, Dimiripal, Petapada, Sansidha, Eradang, Desahi, Palami, and Ketuapal. The villages of Balakati, Kola-diha, and Mahu are facing severe erosion by the Kharasrota



river, he said.

Despite stone packing being carried out along various embankments, such as - from Chunabandha to Sanaanko, Patrapur to Gopalpur, and Tungga to Baulajodi - their condition remains vulnerable.

The problem is not confined to Aul block alone. Canal embankments across the district are in poor condition, causing anxiety among local residents and damaging crops. Annual flooding in these rivers disrupts the lives of residents in 55 panchayats in the district's coastal areas.

The crumbling stone packing on the saltwater embankments has heightened fears of sea intrusion. Residents are demanding that all river and

canal embankment repairs be completed by May.

Local intellectual Prashant Kumar Nayak stated that Kendrapara district has two divisions of the Water Resources department, along with the Aul Embankment Office that are responsible for managing the district's rivers and canals. "Additionally, the office is accountable for safeguarding the district's 48-km-long coastline," he said.

However, despite the existence of these departments, water management for agriculture remains a major concern. Every year, the fear of floods haunts the 55 panchayats in the district

"Embankment reinforcement works could be carried

state



NECK AND NECK: A still from the Basketball tournament being held as part of the Inter-University Sports Meet, held at Shankarpur stadium in Keonjhar district, Friday

Class IX student killed after being struck by tractor

Sambalpur: A 14-year-old student died Friday after being struck by a tractor while returning home from school in Sambalpur town, authorities said.

The victim, identified as Ayushman Behera, was a Class IX student at Saraswati Sishu Vidya Mandir in Dhanupali. The incident occurred around 10.45am, shortly after school hours. According to eyewitnesses, the tractor hit Ayushman while he was walking back home, leaving him critically injured at the scene. Local residents rushed him to the Sambalpur District Headquarters Hospital (DHH), where doctors declared him dead on arrival. The incident has left the local community in shock and raised concerns about the lack of adequate road safety measures in school zones.

Aadhaar KYC drive starts in Kotia amid dispute with AP

Pottangi, April 18: A new round of tensions has surfaced in the disputed Kotia panchayat area of Koraput district as the Pottangi block administration launched an Aadhaar-based Know Your Customer (KYC) update drive, just weeks after a similar initiative by neighbouring Andhra Pradesh.

The KYC drive, which began Thursday and will continue through Saturday, is targeting women in the border villages of Fatucinari, Upara Sembi and Anganwadi centres, holding Aadhaar cards for verification.

Interestingly, officials have limited the drive to women beneficiaries, with no men included in the process. This selective approach has sparked local debate, especially as it closely follows a similar KYC update initiative by officials from Salur block in Andhra Pradesh in the village of Ner ed ibalsa, targeting women residents in areas with mobile network access March 31.

That event drew attention from the Odisha state government and district administrations in Koraput and Pottangi.

The current effort by Odisha appears to be part of its Subhadra Yojana rollout, with 618 women identified for Aadhaar KYC updates, according to Pottangi Block Development Officer Ramakrushna Nayak. He said 324 updates were completed on the first day.

The overlapping drives by both state governments have intensified focus on the long-standing territorial dispute in the Kotia region, raising questions about administrative authority and the political motivations behind citizen outreach programmes in the area.



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2 workers killed, 3 injured in Rungta plant mishap

Dhenkanal, April 18: Two workers were killed and three others injured in an industrial accident that occurred Friday afternoon at the Rungta Steel Plant premises, located under Balimi police limits in Dhenkanal district.

Police identified the deceased as Jitendra Behera and Purandar Pradhan, both residents of Kantamila village under Balimi police jurisdiction. The injured workers were admitted to a private hospital by the company for treatment.

According to initial reports, the incident took place near Kiln No. 9 during mechanical work being carried out by a contracted agency. While the exact cause of the accident remains under investigation, sources said the mishap triggered protests, with workers staging a sit-in demonstration on the plant premises.

Efforts are ongoing by local police and company officials to pacify the protesting workers and restore normalcy at the site.

3 Keonjhar students meet watery graves

Champua: In two separate incidents in Keonjhar district, three students drowned while bathing in local water bodies, officials said Friday.

In the first incident, Ashik Munda, a student residing at his maternal uncle's house in Raghuasahi village under the jurisdiction of Champua police station, drowned in a pond while bathing in the morning. In the other incident, two Class X students of Kerala School – Nitish Podar and his friend Pritam Mahant – drowned while bathing at Kesari Kund in the Baitarani River, near the border of Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj districts. The incident occurred around 2pm when the boys were bathing along with six other friends.

Ganjam labourer dies in Andhra road accident

Digapahandi: Rudra Sethi, a 24-year-old labourer from Chudangapur village under Digapahandi police limits in Ganjam district, died in a road accident on National Highway 16 near Sompeta town in Andhra Pradesh. Rudra was riding pillion on a motorcycle with his elder brother Babul Sethi, 27, when a speeding truck coming from the opposite direction hit them and fled the scene. The brothers, employed as labourers at a private granite company in Andhra Pradesh's Anguluru, were returning to their village Thursday morning to attend a relative's wedding. Both brothers were critically injured and immediately taken to a nearby government hospital with the help of fire service personnel. Rudra was declared dead on arrival by the attending doctors. Babul, who sustained serious injuries, received initial treatment and was later referred to MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur for advanced care, where he remains under treatment. Upon receiving the news, family members rushed to the hospital in Sompeta. Police handed over the body to the family after completing necessary formalities.

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Auction Catalogue No. SDCM-KUR-PKNG

E-AUCTION OF PARKING STAND

Station & Location: BHUBANESWAR

NEW-2 WHEELER (In circulating Area)

Auction start Date & Time : 29.04.2025 at 1100 hrs.

Auction end Date & Time : 29.04.2025 at 1130 hrs.

NOTE: Prospective bidders are advised to visit the <http://ereps.gov.in> and check the upcoming e-auctions leasing tab to get all required information regarding this e-auction.

Senior Divisional Commercial Manager

PR-47/Q/25-26 Khurda Road

EAST COAST RAILWAY

E'-PROCUREMENT SYSTEMS

Tender Notice No. SDMM/KUR/EP/2024-25/

E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE-01,

Dated: 15.04.2025

SL. No. 01: TENDER No. 81255338. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF MATERIALS: I) CAST IRON STAMPED TEST WEIGHT 50KG AS PER IS:1056:2004 OR LATEST. QUANTITY: 4656 NOS

Tender start Date & Time : 13.05.2025 at 1500hrs.

The Tender documents & complete details are available at www.ereps.gov.in

Senior Divisional Materials Manager

PR-50/Q/25-26 Khurda Road

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to the public at large that we investigated the Title of the Non Agriculture land bearing Plot No. 369/488, Area-Ac 0.13 res, Plot No. 369/487, Area-Ac 0.15 res, Plot No. 369, Area-Ac 0.17 res (total area-Ac 0.45 res), under Khata No – 102/94 of Mouza- Balpur, Tehsil- Maneswar, PS- Dhama, Dist.- Sambalpur.

The aforesaid lands are part of Khata No. 102/94 (earlier Sabik Khata No 35) devolved in favour of Late Shri Santosh Kumar Panda vide Registered will No. 31621303963 dated 21.10.2013 registered in the office of District Sub-Registrar, Sambalpur.

That after death of Shri Santosh Kumar Panda, the said land devolved in favour of his legal heirs namely Shri Sangram Kumar Panda, Shri Soumya Sankalpa Panda both sons of Late Shri Santosh Kumar Panda and Kalpana Panda, W/o- Late Shri Santosh Lumar Panda.

That in terms of order dated 17.03.2025 passed in Misc Case No 19/2025 arising out of Mutation Case No 276/2021 passed by Tahasildar, Maneswar, ROR has been issued for Khata No 102/94 in favour of Shri Sangram Kumar Panda, Soumya Sankalpa Panda and Smt. Kalpana Panda, since then our client is absolute owner and possessor of the said land.

That since no registered deed or document is existing in favour of present owners being Shri Sangram Kumar Panda, Soumya Sankalpa Panda and Smt Kalpana Panda, therefore through the way of this Notice we hereby announced to public at large that the land which is described in the schedule is absolutely unencumbered and there are no charges registered in favour of any third party.

Further, the present owners have decided to create charge/ mortgage of Plot No 369/488, Area-Ac 0.13 res, Plot No 369/487, Area-Ac 0.15 res, Plot No 369, Area-Ac 0.17 res (total area- Ac 0.45 res), located at Khata No – 102/94, Mouza- Balpur, Tehsil- Maneswar, PS- Dhama, Dist.- Sambalpur, as security for the loan being availed by Hydrogen Foods & Beverages Pvt Ltd from Small Industries Development Bank of India, Sambalpur Branch Office. Therefore, any person having or claiming any interest in the said land in any manner by way of sale, gift, lease, leave and license, lien, exchange, adverse claim, mortgage trust, possession, inheritance, succession, assignment, easement, hypothecation, attachment, agreement to sell, sale deed, or otherwise howsoever and or having any objection to the proposed transfer/mortgage in any manner/nature whatsoever, shall come forward and submit their claims/objections if any, to us at the address stated below, within 15 days from this day with certified documentary evidence relied upon in support of the objections. In case no claims or objections are received as aforesaid, the said transaction will be completed by my client without taking into consideration such alleged claim or interest and the same shall be deemed to have been waived, forfeited and/or relinquished and shall no longer be binding on my client.

Date: 17.04.2025

Sd/- R.P. Pattnaik (Advocate)
Rourkela, Mob-9437245645

Man gets life term for murder of wife

Dhenkanal: A court here sentenced a man to life imprisonment after convicting him for the 2021 murder of his wife, Rekha Senth, in the Chaulia Khamar area under Sadar police limits.

Pronouncing the verdict, Additional District and Sessions Judge-cum-Special Vigilance Judge Pranati Sahoo convicted Rekha's husband Pradeep Pradhan, and awarded him life imprisonment along with a fine of Rs 10,000. In case of non-payment of the fine amount, the convict will have to undergo an additional six months rigorous imprisonment (RI).

According to case records, Rekha, daughter of Tobi Senth from Chaulia Khamar, had married Pradeep Pradhan, son of Praful Pradhan of the same village, after being in a romantic relationship. However, the relationship soured shortly after the wedding, with frequent disputes and alleged threats made by Pradeep to kill Rekha. Rekha's father received information that his daughter had been beaten to death with a wooden plank by her husband December 10, 2021. He arrived at the scene only to find his daughter dead in the bedroom. Following his complaint, police registered a case (585/22) under Sections 498(A), 304(B), and 302 of the IPC at Sadar police station and arrested Pradeep. He was later forwarded to court and remained in judicial custody throughout the trial. The case, registered as City Sessions Case No. 49/22, was prosecuted on behalf of the government by Additional Public Prosecutors Bimalendu Mohapatra, Akshaya Kumar Bhoi, and Ganeshwar Sahu.

Released after 25 yrs, Hembram vows to serve Sanatan Dharma and society

Keonjhar, April 18: Mahendra Hembram, 48, who spent 25 years in prison for the 1999 killing of Australian missionary Graham Staines and his two sons in Manoharpur village, was released this week and says he will now dedicate his life to social service and the protection of Sanatan Dharma.

Hembram, a graduate of Bhadrak College, was arrested in connection with the high-profile case despite claiming no involvement. He said he was near the site as a judge at a cultural program during the incident and believes he was wrongly implicated. "I did not get justice. My life and future were ruined," he said.

During his time in jail, Hembram said he followed prison rules, fought for inmate rights, and advocated for better conditions. He helped secure access to essentials like toothpaste and soap and was tasked with maintaining discipline. "There was



no system for human rights. We fought and won basic dignity for prisoners," he said.

He added that while in jail, he submitted a demand letter to the President requesting a steel plant and college in border areas of Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar districts.

Hembram expressed his frustration at not receiving compensation or justice post-release. He accused authorities of

Hembram, a graduate of Bhadrak College, was arrested in connection with the high-profile Graham Staines murder case

ignoring key witnesses during the investigation and called the trial flawed. "I was framed. The system failed me," he said.

He also alleged that his homestead land was illegally acquired during his imprisonment and said he is currently living under a tree.

Vowing to continue working like a "soldier" for Sanatan Dharma, Hembram said he plans to establish a voluntary organization focused on religious and social issues, including opposition to cow slaughter and religious conversion. "I will go to the people's court and serve society for the rest of my life," he said.

GAP IN GOVERNANCE



The Sarkaria Commission had recommended that a politician from the ruling party at the Centre should ideally not be appointed as governor of a state which is governed by an Opposition party or combination of parties

for the clash with governors is in this realm, as states always prefer to control universities and have their chosen individuals in pivotal positions. Obviously, this will not improve the quality of education in the country, and the governor should be given a free hand to appoint eminent academic scholars to head universities. Though one cannot go against the principles laid out in the Constitution, it must be stated that the governor should be bestowed with more powers. For example, in states like West Bengal, which has a notorious reputation for pre- and post-poll violence, the governor should be given some powers. There is a need to form an expert committee at the national level to evolve guidelines on what type of intervention the governor can undertake when there is widespread violence and an increase in crimes across the state. As for governance, which in most states is deplorable, the question arises: if an elected government fails to run the state properly, being enmeshed with corruption and nepotism, what role should the governor play? Can the governor make recommendations that the states have to follow? While most states are severely stressed due to financial constraints, for which they frequently blame the Centre, the governance of these states is poor due to a lack of transparency and a judicious outlook. If governors have no role in ensuring good governance and guiding the state, what is the use of having these titular heads? There is a need to re-examine the role of governors by an expert committee and, if necessary, give them adequate powers to play an effective role in ensuring good governance. This is not to belittle elected governments but to give governors their due share in the administrative machinery for effective functioning, provided they are neutral and not tilting towards the Centre.

INFA

states at a disadvantage. The conflict between the governors and the state governments is nothing new but has intensified in recent years. The reasons behind this are twofold: centralization of authority in the hands of the chief minister and increasing politicization and corruption in the administration. All this has raised questions about whether the governor has any role in the state and whether the position should be abolished. The Sarkaria Commission had recommended that a politician from the ruling party at the Centre should ideally not be appointed as governor of a state governed by an Opposition party or combination of parties. However, in 2021, the BJP appointed the Tamil Nadu party chief as the Telangana Governor, resulting in frequent conflicts with the BRS government. The delay in signing bills has also been evident in the cases of the governors of Tamil Nadu and Punjab, leading to much confusion in the respective states. There has not been any clear guideline on the appointment of governors; the Centre's choice remains the only criterion. In the past, persons of eminence and retired bureaucrats, who were somewhat neutral, were appointed to the

The recent judgment of the Supreme Court, which categorically states that the constitutional head of a state should be guided by the values of the Constitution and “not by political expediency,” is significant and much needed. The landmark ruling that the governor must respect the will of the people, as reflected by decisions taken by elected representatives in the Assembly, and must refrain from creating roadblocks, is expected to end the stalemate over the powers of governors in various states. Justice Pardiwala, who penned the judgment, observed that, as per Article 200 of the Constitution, the governor has only three options when a bill is placed before him: grant assent, withhold it and send it back for reconsideration, or reserve it for the President. It was clarified that a bill could be reserved for the President only at the first instance. The impartiality of the governor's role has come under attack, as they have been found to disturb elected governments. Political analysts have alleged that governors have not acted with the necessary objectivity in the exercise of their powers or in their role as a vital link between the Centre and the states. Notably, states are also not playing a judicious role, as they tend to ignore the governor in various ways. This is especially evident in West Bengal, where the governor was not allowed to choose his nominee as the Vice Chancellor of the universities of which he is the head. However, the well-established dictum of the governor playing the role of a philosopher and guide to the Council of Ministers is no longer valid today. It has been alleged that, in recent years, the appointment of governors has been done with the clear intent of keeping Opposition-led



Dhurjati Mukherjee

THE IMPARTIALITY OF THE GOVERNOR'S ROLE HAS RECENTLY COME UNDER ATTACK, AS THEY HAVE BEEN FOUND TO DISTURB ELECTED GOVERNMENTS



SRI AUROBINDO

Bengal's Power Play

West Bengal's decision to form its own selection committee to appoint the Director General of Police (DGP) is more than just another bureaucratic tweak—it's a subtle political power play. By sidestepping the Centre's approval (and the UPSC shortlist), Bengal joins Punjab and Uttar Pradesh in asserting that states can pick their police chiefs without Delhi's permission. That's three states across three political spectrums — AAP, BJP, and TMC — all singing a surprisingly similar federalist tune. This didn't happen overnight. Bengal has had an acting DGP for months, and with little movement from Delhi, the Mamata Banerjee government has decided to take matters into its own hands. The new process will involve a state-constituted panel, likely with the Chief Secretary and Home Secretary at the helm. However, the move potentially clashes with the 2006 Supreme Court judgment in Prakash Singh vs. Union of India, which sought to insulate police appointments from political meddling by involving the UPSC. The states now argue that the meddling is happening from Delhi, not within. Is this the beginning of true cooperative federalism or a slow drift into Centre-state turf wars? Either way, it's a fascinating test case in state autonomy — and could reshape how India balances power between Raisina Hill and the state capitals. This isn't just about a DGP. It's about who gets to do the appointing — and who gets to push back.

Babu drama: same script, new government

An old turf war is bubbling over in Delhi's babu circles, and this time, it's personal. The quiet frustration of Delhi Administrative Subordinate Services (DASS) officers has now reached full volume. They've taken their long-standing grievance straight to the top — the Union Home Secretary — hoping someone will finally read the fine print on 217 long-awaited posts that should've been theirs after a Delhi High Court greenlight last year. Enter Delhi, Andaman and Nicobar Islands Civil Services (DANICS). They've challenged the order in the Central Administrative Tribunal, claiming those posts are meant for them. And just like that, the administrative food chain's pecking order is back in the spotlight. Sources have noted that DASS officers, who've been running the daily administration of Delhi since 1967, are tired. Over five decades of stagnation will do that to you. No restructuring, no promotions, no real roadmap. Around 100 officers are reportedly walking away each year — not out of joy, but sheer professional despair. It's not just about posts — it's about dignity, progression, and a system that seems fine watching its backbone buckle. The blame game? DASS blames a few DANICS officers for “deliberate obstruction” — from stalling service rules to blocking post notifications. With a new government in Delhi and the matter now parked at North Block's doorstep, this intra-cadre cold war is finally getting national attention. It should be easier to handle for a supposedly “double engine” sarkar.



BABUDOM BYTES
Dilip Cherian

Cadre chaos

More than a decade after Andhra Pradesh and Telangana went their separate ways, the Centre still can't seem to split the IAS and IPS cadres without turning it into a tragicomedy. Officers like Siva Sankar Lotheti have become case studies in administrative limbo — tossed between states by duelling CAT orders and an indecisive DoPT. The Central Administrative Tribunal recently reversed the Centre's October 2024 decision to shift Lotheti to Telangana, ordering his reallocation to Andhra. But weeks later, no action. He's not the only one stuck. Several officers are playing musical chairs — posted in one state, officially belonging to another, and litigating in the meantime. This isn't just a personnel issue — it's a governance gap. When bureaucrats don't know where they belong, how do they focus on public service delivery? The courts have tried to untangle the mess, but they're working with flawed raw material: a post-bifurcation allocation policy that was ad hoc then and is unworkable now. The Centre's dithering doesn't help. Officers can't plan careers — or lives — when they're subject to the whims of vague orders and multiple revisions. Telangana and Andhra Pradesh have moved on politically, but the bureaucracy is still stuck in 2014. A lasting solution demands more than CAT orders and DoPT tweaks. It calls for a political reset — one that recognizes officers as people, not pawns. Until then, the post-bifurcation hangover will continue.

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

WISDOM CORNER

- Every child comes with the message that God is not yet discouraged of man.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE
- An arrogant person considers himself perfect. This is the chief harm of arrogance. It interferes with a person's main task in life - becoming a better person.

LEO TOLSTOY
- The whole problem with the world is that fools and fanatics are always so certain of themselves, and wiser people so full of doubts.

BERTRAND RUSSELL

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1775:** Battles of Lexington and Concord or American Revolution, an effort by 13 British colonies in North America (with help from France, Spain, and the Netherlands), was launched to win their independence.
- 1927:** American actress Mae West was sentenced to 10 days in jail, convicted of obscenity and “corrupting the morals of youth” with her portrayal of a prostitute in the Broadway play Sex, which she also wrote; the publicity made her nationally known.
- 1943:** The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, an act of resistance by Polish Jews under Nazi occupation, began this day and was quelled four weeks later, on May 16.
- 1975:** Aryabhata, the first uncrewed Earth satellite built by India, was launched from the Soviet Union by a Russian-made rocket.

SPECTRUM ECONOMY

Development finance needs an entrepreneurial mindset

The fourth United Nations International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in Seville, Spain, from June 30 to July 3, will consider a hotly debated topic: how development-finance institutions (DFIs) can mobilize more socially beneficial private investment in the countries where they operate. Many have pointed to the shortage of “bankable projects” as the main barrier to mobilizing private-sector capital. They are not wrong: under the traditional demand-led business model, DFIs can invest only in companies that want to raise capital and meet certain financial and impact criteria. But a new report by ODI Global shows that some DFIs are taking a more proactive approach when a development need is not being met by a suitable business that seeks capital. They are starting commercial ventures of their own. While some observers lament that blended finance has not scaled as rapidly as hoped, others are concerned that it has sacrificed development impact to mobilize private capital. But impact and scale are not in opposition.



Leslie Maasdorp and Hans Peter Lankes

THE POTENTIAL FOR ACHIEVING DEVELOPMENT GOALS THROUGH DFI-SPONSORED VENTURES DOES NOT RECEIVE ENOUGH ATTENTION

The huge investments needed to decarbonize middle-income economies are certainly effective. And the 12 ventures featured in ODI Global's report have already achieved significant scale, deploying more than \$4 billion of capital from DFIs and raising \$3 billion from private investors. That said, sponsoring new commercial enterprises is more about impact than mobilizing as much private capital as possible with the fewest public dollars, partly because it is riskier than the standard DFI model. The absence of businesses in a market segment implies that the returns on offer are relatively unappealing. But these investments may only require a longer timeframe. In such cases, DFIs and other development institutions often have the patience to wait for a business to prove itself. The ventures that ODI Global studied are on the path to profitability, but it is admittedly a long, narrow road for some. DFIs should therefore take this route only when they identify an urgent unmet development need and have exhausted other possibilities. The potential for achieving

development goals through DFI-sponsored ventures does not receive enough attention—especially from government shareholders, whose support is integral to developing the new mandates and tools that such efforts would require. Tellingly, the organizations responsible for the ventures in ODI Global's report—BII and Norfund (the Norwegian DFI)—are exceptionally flexible and can support long time horizons for risk-taking. BII also has the ability to take a controlling stake in companies, whereas most DFIs can take only a minority stake. To be sure, the leaders of DFIs are often uncomfortable with this idea, arguing that they know how to choose management teams to support, not how to run companies. But they must not undersell themselves. DFIs employ investment professionals who can identify a market opportunity and evaluate a business plan. After deciding to create a new venture, they can hire talent with complementary skills—as BII and Norfund have done. Despite internal concerns about staffing, it is the organizational constraints pre-

venting DFIs from becoming entrepreneurial that are the more pressing problem. Shareholders must change the rules under which DFIs and development banks operate to allow them to establish companies. They would surely have the support of foundations and other impact investors who want to use catalytic, risk-tolerant financing to promote social good. One of the best ways for DFIs to advance countries' development aspirations is to create investment opportunities in critical sectors that have been, and will likely continue to be, unattractive to private investors. Moving beyond the traditional demand-led model would significantly increase their potential for impact, especially following many governments' massive cuts to foreign aid. Those governments, in particular, should do all they can to support this change. **Leslie Maasdorp is CEO of British International Investment. Hans Peter Lankes is Managing Director of ODI Global.**

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Letters

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](#)

OrissaPOST
B-15, Rasulgari Industrial Estate,
Bhubaneswar-751010

India's ethanol move

Sir, India has already achieved a 20% ethanol blending in petrol and is now gearing up to set a new target of 30% ethanol blending in petrol by 2030. Increased blending of ethanol offers many benefits, including reduced dependence on fossil fuels, environmental protection, and economic advantages. While some argue that ethanol-blended petrol reduces emissions and is more affordable, others contend that ethanol is corrosive and could damage various parts of vehicles. The central government needs to evaluate the pros and cons of shifting to 30% ethanol blending in petrol before it is implemented. **Venu GS, KOLLAM**

Justice for the rich

Sir, India has already achieved a 20% ethanol blending in petrol and is now gearing up to set a new target of 30% ethanol blending in petrol by 2030. Increased blending of ethanol offers many benefits, including reduced dependence on fossil fuels, environmental protection, and economic advantages. While some argue that ethanol-blended petrol reduces emissions and is more affordable, others contend that ethanol is corrosive and could damage various parts of vehicles. The central government needs to evaluate the pros and cons of shifting to 30% ethanol blending in petrol before it is implemented. **Avinash Godbole, DEWAS (MP)**

Animals in human cloak

Sir, Mahendra Hembram, along with Dara Singh, was involved in setting fire to the van in which Australian missionary Graham Staines and his two innocent children were sleeping. This act shocked the conscience of humanity across the world. Hembram, who was sentenced to life imprisonment for these gruesome and heartless murders, has now been released by the BJP-led government in Odisha. It is shocking that this hardcore religious fanatic turned murderer was released from jail on the grounds of “good behavior.” What is even more shocking is that the convict was received on release by VHP supporters, who garlanded him and shouted “Jai Shri Ram” in great jubilation. What an exhibition of hatred and religious fanaticism, without any remorse for the torching of Staines and his two innocent children by these goons! Are we becoming crueler than wild animals? One really wonders where India, once a land of values, is headed. **Tharcius S Fernando, CHENNAI**



Delhi to launch anti-pollution drive



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 18: Delhi Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa Friday said the government will roll out a comprehensive framework to tackle the rising pollution levels which will include deploying 1,000 water tankers with sprinklers, installing anti-smog guns in high-rise buildings and setting up CCTV cameras and LED screens at the city borders to prevent the entry of old vehicles.

He said the roadmap will outline the city's strategy to fight pollution from 2025 to 2026. Sirsa said one of the key goals is to bring PM2.5 levels down.

We are installing water mist systems at various hotspots to clean the air and help particulate matter settle. This initiative has already shown success over a five-kilometre stretch in Dwarka

MANJINDER SINGH SIRSA | DELHI ENVIRONMENT MINISTER

"We are installing water mist systems at various hotspots to clean the air and help particulate matter settle. This initiative has already shown success over a five-kilometre stretch in Dwarka," he said.

The government is now ex-

panding the project to 13 identified hotspots across the city.

To intensify dust suppression, over 1,000 GPS-enabled water tankers with sprinklers will be deployed.

"These tankers will move to areas with high pollution levels. Their routes and performance will be monitored in real time. Wherever AQI (Air Quality Index) rises, tankers will be sent immediately," he said.

The minister added that monitoring will be enhanced at all entry points to Delhi to curb the entry of end-of-life vehicles. Cameras and LED screens will be installed at these borders, displaying vehicle details.

Delhi readies plan to prevent waterlogging at 194 spots

The Delhi government is making every effort, including deploying automatic pumps and personnel at vulnerable spots, to ensure that the national capital remains free from waterlogging during monsoon, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said Friday. Accompanied by Public Works Department (PWD) Minister Parvesh Verma, the chief minister inspected the waterlogging-prone Minto Bridge underpass to take stock of the preparations for monsoon. "Automatic pumps have been deployed here that will flush out water during heavy rain and a 2.5-kilometre-long pipeline has been laid to carry the accumulated water out. Operators will also be on round-the-clock duty" Gupta said. Vulnerable spots have been identified and corrective measures are being taken. The Delhi government will take every step in a time-bound manner to ensure there is no waterlogging this year, she told reporters. "Last year, 194 waterlogging locations were identified across the city by traffic police. Most of these are on PWD roads. At these points, we are taking several measures such as desilting of drains, installation of more pumps, and deploying pump operators where required," Verma said. Gupta also inspected monsoon preparedness at other major waterlogging points, including Ring Road near the WHO building -- among the top 10 waterlogging hotspots for the past several years.

"Data is being collected and based on it, vehicle owners will be sent automated messages informing them not to enter Delhi if their vehicle is deemed illegal," he said.

Sirsa also said high-rise buildings will soon be required to instal air water guns. AQI meters will be mandatory at all construction sites, he said.

"Everything will be automated and AI-driven. We are building a monitoring station at the Secretariat so that pollution data can be accessed and tracked live," he said.

The government also plans

to replace all diesel-operated mechanical road sweepers with CNG ones to ensure cleaner road cleaning.

"We are moving towards 100 per cent pollution-free sweeping machines," he said.

Cloud seeding to induce rain is also being considered as part of the action plan to combat pollution, Sirsa said, adding that the government is preparing for the upcoming challenges.

The minister said Chief Minister Rekha Gupta is monitoring the pollution control efforts daily, ensuring coordinated action across departments.

Go vegan to save the planet: PETA

PRESS TRSUT OF INDIA

Kochi, April 18: People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India organised a campaign Friday, ahead of Earth Day April 22, to urge residents of the port city to "go vegan by eliminating foods derived from animals".

The NGO, in a statement issued Friday, said its supporters dressed in inflatable dinosaur costumes and held signs that read, "Eat Like It's the 21st Century! Please Go Vegan!" and "Happy Earth Day!" to encourage Kochi residents to replace animal-derived foods with plant-based options.

The NGO argued that "raising animals for food is a leading cause of environmental degradation, requiring massive amounts of land, energy, and water while emitting enormous quantities of greenhouse gases".

"PETA India urges the public to help the planet, animals, and themselves by choosing vegan foods," it said in the statement.

It further claimed that meat,



egg, and dairy production contribute significantly to pollution, ocean dead zones, habitat destruction due to land use, and species extinction. According to PETA, animal husbandry uses one-third of the world's freshwater resources and, by some estimates, generates more greenhouse gas emissions than all of the world's transportation systems combined.

Researchers at the University of Oxford found that every person who goes vegan reduces their food-related carbon footprint by up to 73 per cent, making it conceivably the single biggest way to reduce one's negative impact on the planet, the statement added.

Froth re-surfaces in Yamuna

Experts said that the froth on the river surface was a recurring issue due to the toxic chemicals present in the sewage and industrial wastewater flowing unchecked into it

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 18: A layer of froth was seen covering the Yamuna River surface near Kalindi Kunj Friday, bringing back the focus on heavy pollution in the river.

Experts said that the froth on the river surface was a recurring issue due to the toxic chemicals present in the sewage and industrial wastewater flowing unchecked into it.

The frothing happens due to pollutants in the water getting accumulated with the dissolved organic matter like water hyacinth, leaves and other such wild grass, a Delhi Jal Board (DJB) official in the quality control wing, informed PTI.

"Currently, we do not have any direction to carry out anti-frothing measures at Kalindi Kunj,"



At many places including Kalindi Kunj and ITO, water hyacinths have appeared in the Yamuna water.

Experts stated that the cause of the white foam over the river stretch is a combination of several factors and more concrete efforts towards stopping waste from entering the river and cleaning it have to be taken.

"The frothing problem in the Yamuna appears to have become a perennial issue, largely due to the deficit monsoon in the river's upper basin last year and the lack of rainfall during the winter and pre-monsoon seasons this year," said an environmental activist Bhim Singh Rawat.

"Untreated effluents continue to enter the Yamuna, not just from drains in Delhi but also from major discharge points in Haryana like the Dhanaura escape in Karnal, Drain No 2 in Panipat, and the Najafgarh drain," he said.

Rekha Gupta government in Delhi Thursday sanctioned over Rs 3,000 crore for the laying of sewer lines and construction of 27 decentralised sewage treatment plants (STPs) under the ongoing efforts to rejuvenate the Yamuna.

The problem of froth in the river is more aggravated during the winters when the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) uses defoaming agents to remove it.

DELHI'S TOURISM PUSH

Shades, food trucks at monuments, cultural events in focus

With an eye on transforming visitor experience and boosting tourist footfall, these efforts aim to reimagine Delhi as a more inviting and tourist-friendly destination

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 18: From placing food trucks and installing shades around monuments to organising film festivals and digital campaigns -- the Delhi government is rolling out a host of initiatives to boost tourist footfall at the city's many heritage sites.

With an eye on transforming visitor experience and boosting tourist footfall, these efforts aim to reimagine Delhi as a more inviting and tourist-friendly destination, Kapil Mishra, the minister in charge of art, culture, language and tourism, said.



"We are planning to install shaded areas around the monuments and historical sites so that tourists can take a break from the sun. Currently, there aren't many places for them to sit and relax," Mishra told PTI.

Emphasising that enhancing on-site amenities is key to improving tourist satisfaction, the minister said, "Tourists are more likely to stay longer if they have options for food and beverages. Food trucks will soon be placed at several mon-

ument sites to offer a diverse culinary experience."

In addition to these on-ground efforts, the government will also launch a digital promotion campaign to highlight Delhi's various tourist hotspots.

Citing the popular 'Khushboo Gujarat Ki' campaign as an example, Mishra said a similar branding effort is expected to rolled out in Delhi in the coming months.

To complement the market-

ing push, a series of events such as concerts and film festivals are being planned as part of a broader cultural engagement initiative, the minister said.

"We are not only focusing on promoting the city's attractions but also preserving our heritage and improving transport connectivity. This will help tourists avoid long queues for tickets and navigate easily between destinations," Mishra said.

Asked about the gradual "disappearance" of the Urdu

language from the Urdu Bazar area near Jama Masjid, Mishra said plans are in place to open libraries dedicated to books in Urdu as part of efforts to preserve the language.

In another major cultural move, the Delhi government in collaboration with Samskrita Bharati, an NGO, will hold a large-scale campaign to promote Sanskrit, Mishra said.

Beginning April 23, free 10-day classes will be offered at over 1,000 locations across the capital, including schools, colleges and temples. Each camp will offer two-hour daily sessions focused on the basics of Sanskrit language.

"This will be the first such extensive programme to promote Sanskrit in Delhi, with 1,008 camps planned across the city," Mishra said.

Delhi is home to around 174 monuments and tourist spots, including three UNESCO World Heritage Sites, nine popular attractions, 14 lesser-known locations, and eight historic 'Baolis' (stepwells), all of which the government hopes to bring into greater focus through this renewed tourism push.

Good Friday observances highlight social issues in Kerala

Munambam, protesting ASHA workers find mention in Good Friday prayers in churches



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, April 18: The Munambam issue, the ASHA workers protesting for higher honorarium and menace posed by drug mafias found mention in the special prayers on the occasion of 'Good Friday' at various Catholic Churches in Kerala.

Latin Catholic metropolitan Archbishop Thomas J Netto, in his prayers at the St Joseph's Metropolitan Cathedral in Thiruvananthapuram said the challenge before the believers on this Good Friday was whether they can join the cause of those agitating on various issues -- like Munambam land rights, increased honorarium or protection from wild animal attacks -- and work for them.

Cardinal Cleemis Bava -- the Major Archbishop-catholics of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church -- in his prayers at the St Mary's Cathedral here, referred to the menace posed by the drug mafias who were selling drugs at every nook and corner in the state.

He said that when confronted with such a situation, people should look to the 'cross' for support and blessings to face the drug menace.

Archbishop of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Calicut Varghese Chakkalakkal also referred to the Munambam issue and said that both the central and state governments as well as all the political parties were duty bound to resolve the matter.

He said that he was not accusing anyone of delaying resolution of the issue, but the government which solves the Munambam people's problems will get "more mileage".

The Munambam residents, majority of them Christians, have been agitating for the past several months against the Waqf Board's allegedly unlawful claim on their land and properties, despite them having

The Christian community in Kerala observed 'Good Friday' in accordance with traditional customs and beliefs by shunning all luxuries and physical comforts and attending special prayers in churches

registered deeds and land tax payment receipts.

The Christian community in Kerala observed 'Good Friday' in accordance with traditional customs and beliefs by shunning all luxuries and physical comforts and attending special prayers in churches.

Devotees congregated in large numbers in churches since morning to take part in various rituals to remember the sufferings undergone by Jesus Christ 2000 years ago and his crucifixion.

Bearing symbolic wooden crosses, thousands of devotees walked several kilometres commemorating the final moments of Christ.

Such 'Way of Cross' processions were held under the aegis of various churches across the state.

At the Malayattoor hills in Ernakulam district, atop which the famed St Thomas church is located, there was a massive rush of devotees of all ages and from other states since the wee hours with many of them carrying wooden crosses of various sizes, according to visuals shown on TV channels.

Some devotees carried huge wooden crosses as a group, while others, including children, were seen carrying smaller crosses as they trudged up the hill which is believed to have been visited by Apostle St Thomas in AD 52.

DETAIL TENDER CALL NOTICE NO.04/DT. 17.04.2025

No.i-28:Sealed Percentage Rate Bids are invited from C and D Class Contractors registered with the State Government and Contractors equivalent Grade / Class registered with the Central Government / MES / Railways for execution of Civil Workers in production of definite proof from the appropriate authority in prescribed form to be eventually draw in PWD Form P-I for the following works for the projects mentioned in the DTCN.

Sl. No.	Name of the Project	Amount in Rs. Put to Tender	Class of Contractors
01	Construction of ACR in Govt. U.P School, Bhounra, Bhimjore G.P	Rs.18,17,621.00 (Including GST)	C
02	Construction of ACR in Govt. High School, Kadobahal, G. Panpali G.P	Rs.20,07,170.00 (Including GST)	C
03	Construction of Office Building and 50 MT Godown at Jharmunda PACS.	Rs.27,95,226.00 (Including GST)	C
04	Construction of Office Building and 50 MT Godown at Kirmira PACS.	Rs.27,95,226.00 (Including GST)	C
05	Construction of Office Building and 50 MT Godown at Arda PACS.	Rs.27,95,226.00 (Including GST)	C
06	Construction of Office Building at Sulehi PACS	Rs.11,33,432.00 (Including GST)	C & D

For details log into <https://jharsuguda.odisha.gov.in>
Sd./- Block Development Officer, Kirmira
OIPR-19037/11/0003/2526

Never ever has the city (Mumbai) witnessed a water crisis in March and April which is being experienced this year. Temperatures are rising across the state, crossing over 40 degrees Celsius in March and April

AADITYA THACKERAY | SENA (UBT) LEADER

As per reports received so far, the NDA has already secured 37 Zila Parishad (35 BJP and 2 AGP) and 288 Anchalik Panchayat (259 BJP and 29 AGP) seats unopposed

HIMANTA BISWA SARMA | ASSAM CM

Everyone knows that the Lok Sabha Speaker's chair is in between. He or she is the Speaker of the House, not the speaker of one party. They also don't vote, they only vote when there is a tie. The same is with the upper house. You are equidistant between the opposition and the ruling party

KAPIL SIBAL | RS MEMBER

SHORT TAKES

AP student killed in hit-and-run in US

Guntur (Andhra Pradesh): A girl student from Guntur, who was pursuing her master's degree in the USA, died after a hit-and-run incident in Denton City, Texas, while returning home with a friend, her family members said Friday. V Deepthi was walking near the 2300 block of Carril Al Lago Drive on April 12 when a speeding vehicle struck her and her friend Snigdha, also from the Guntur district. Deepthi sustained severe head injuries and succumbed April 15, while Snigdha is undergoing surgery and is said to be in stable condition, the family members said.

Violence mars JNUSU polls

New Delhi: The Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU) elections were indefinitely suspended on Friday following back-to-back incidents of violence and vandalism at the Election Committee (EC) office in the last two days over multiple extension of deadline for withdrawal of nominations.

Woman lawyer thrashed in Beed

Mumbai: A woman lawyer was beaten up allegedly by a sarpanch and his supporters in Maharashtra's Beed district Friday after she complained to police about noise pollution. Opposition parties slammed the Devendra Fadnavis government for failing to ensure the safety of women. Photos of her severely bruised back shared by the victim went viral on social media.

CLIMATE CHANGE CRISIS

New Delhi, April 18: Climate change could be resulting in higher levels of arsenic in rice, potentially increasing lifetime cancer and health risks for people in Asian countries by 2050, according to a new study published in The Lancet Planetary Health journal.

Researchers from Columbia University, US, explained that an increase in temperatures above 2 degrees Celsius and rising levels of carbon dioxide could be causing changes in soil chemistry, favouring arsenic, which gets more easily

Wanted Punjab terrorist held in US

Passia alias Jora, who had illegally entered the US, was arrested by the FBI and US Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Enforcement and Removal Operations in Sacramento

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New York/Chandigarh, April 18: Gangster-turned-terrorist Harpreet Singh alias Happy Passia, wanted in connection with multiple terror attacks across Punjab and who is alleged to have collaborated with Pakistan's ISI and Khalistani group BKI, has been arrested in the US, officials said Friday.

Passia alias Jora, who had illegally entered the US, was arrested by the FBI and US Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Enforcement and Removal Operations in Sacramento, the US federal law enforcement agency said.

Punjab Police chief Gaurav Yadav said the arrest is a "major milestone in the success of war against terror", adding the matter has been taken up with

the central government and efforts are on to extradite Passia.

He said between 2023-2025, Passia played a "central role in orchestrating targeted killings, grenade attacks on police establishments, and extortion across Punjab and other states".

"Today, Harpreet Singh, an alleged terrorist responsible for terror attacks in Punjab, India, was arrested by the #FBI & #ERO in Sacramento. Linked to two international terrorist groups, he entered the US illegally and used burner phones to evade capture," FBI Sacramento said in a statement on X.

Agents from the FBI's Legal Attache office in New Delhi informed Sacramento that Passi was wanted in connection with multiple terror attacks across Punjab, FBI Sacramento said.

"He had been evading capture by using untraceable burner phones and encrypted applications. This case reinforces the importance of international cooperation in apprehending those who threaten global security," it said. Official sources in Punjab said Passia is wanted for orchestrating 16 terror attacks, including 14 grenade strikes in the state and is also suspected to have collaborated with Khalistani terrorist group Babbar Khalsa International (BKI).



Punjab Police investigation had found that Passia provided the accused with explosives, weapons and logistical support through his local associates

The September 2024 attack was intended to target a retired Punjab Police officer, who the assailants believed to be the occupant of the house in Sector 10, Chandigarh

In January, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) had announced a cash reward of ₹5 lakh on Passia in connection with a hand grenade attack on a house in Chandigarh in September last year. Passia and Pakistan-based designated BKI terrorist Harwinder Singh Sandhu alias Rinda were among the four accused named in a charge sheet in the

case by the NIA.

Punjab Police investigation had found that Passia provided the accused with explosives, weapons and logistical support through his local associates. The September 2024 attack was intended to target a retired Punjab Police officer, who the assailants believed to be the occupant of the house in Sector 10, Chandigarh.

Seelampur murder: AAP, BJP trade barbs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 18: The fatal stabbing of a 17-year-old boy in northeast Delhi's Seelampur has triggered a war of words between the ruling BJP and opposition AAP Friday.

Both the sides blamed each other for the "deteriorating" law and order situation in the city. The boy was stabbed Thursday at J Block in New Seelampur.

Senior AAP leader and Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Atishi accused the BJP-led Central government and Delhi Police of failing to ensure the safety of citizens. "The murder of a 17-year-old youth in Seelampur is another example of the deteriorating law and order situation in Delhi," Atishi posted on X.

"What is Delhi Police doing? What is Home Minister Amit Shah doing? What is the double-engine government doing?" she asked, referring to the BJP government at the Centre which controls Delhi Police. Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said the family of the youth

will get justice. "I have talked to the Commissioner of Police. The police is making all efforts and I hope the accused will be arrested soon. It will be ensured that the family of the youth gets justice," she said. BJP MP from north-east Delhi, Manoj Tiwari, condemned the killing. He said the matter was being taken seriously by law enforcers and promised swift action.

"The anger among the people of the area is quite natural," Tiwari said in an X post, adding, "I have been in touch with senior police officers from the district since last night. Most of the criminals have been identified and a thorough investigation is underway." Tiwari also appealed for calm. "Efforts should be made to ensure that police action is not hindered," he said.

Meanwhile, Delhi Police has arrested a woman, who worked as a bouncer for jailed gangster Hashim Baba's wife, and detained three others in connection with the fatal stabbing of a 17-year-old boy in north-east Delhi's Seelampur area, an official said Friday.



Relatives grieve after a 17-year-old boy was stabbed to death, in Delhi's Seelampur area. The murder sparked protests in the area as police beefed up security following the incident



Children play in water on a hot summer day, in Beawar, Rajasthan

Balkrishna: Patanjali to establish agriculture-based model in MP

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rewa, April 18: The barren land of Mauganj district is set to transform, opening a new chapter for the developed Vindhya region and contributing to the prosperity of local farmers.

For this significant initiative, the Honourable Deputy Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Shri Rajendra Shukla, along with other department officials, transferred the registry documents of the land to Patanjali Yogpeeth through



General Secretary Acharya Balakrishna.

Following this, Acharya Balkrishna inspected the local land alongside Mauganj District Magistrate Shri Sanjay Kumar Jain and engaged in detailed discussions regarding future plans. During this occasion, Acharya Ji expressed that

Patanjali's vision for the prosperity of farmers, under the guidance of the revered Swamiji, will soon become a reality through Patanjali's service project. As part of this scheme, Patanjali intends to establish an industrial park in the village of Ghuretha, located in the Mauganj district of the Rewa region in Madhya Pradesh. Present at the event were UK Tiwari, Executive Director of ROMPIDC Limited, Rewa; Navendu Shukla, General Manager; and KK Garg, Executive Engineer, among others.

Man kills mother after she denies him ₹200 to buy dog

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Raipur, April 18: A man allegedly bludgeoned his 70-year-old mother to death after she refused to give him ₹200 to purchase a dog in Chhattisgarh's Raipur Friday, police said.

The accused, Pradeep Dewangan (45), also allegedly injured his wife during the attack that occurred in Nageshwar Nagar under the Urla police station limits around 8 am, station house officer B L Chandrakar said.

He said Dewangan was eager to purchase a puppy for ₹800 and was falling short of ₹200, which he sought from his mother, Ganeshi.

The official said the accused, an e-rickshaw driver, has two sons and a daughter. Chandrakar said Dewangan bludgeoned the victim to death with a hammer after she refused to give him money, and he also assaulted his wife, Rameshwari.

The accused managed to escape from the spot when his 15-year-old son intervened and alerted the neighbours about the attack, he said.

The police reached the spot and rushed the two women to a hospital, where Ganeshi succumbed to injuries during treatment, he said. The official said efforts were on to nab the accused, and a case of murder has been registered against him.

INDIAN ASTRONAUT SHUKLA SET FOR SPACE TRAVEL NEXT MONTH

Indian astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla is set to travel to the International Space Station next month as part of an Axiom-4 mission, four decades after Rakesh Sharma's iconic space-flight onboard Russia's Soyuz spacecraft, Union Minister Jitendra Singh said Friday



DGCA orders probe into death of AI Express pilot

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 18: Aviation watchdog DGCA has ordered a detailed investigation into the circumstances that led to the recent death of an Air India Express pilot, including checking the medical history of the deceased crew member and examining the existing guidelines to deal with such emergencies.

The Air India Express pilot, who was the first officer, died due to a sudden cardiac arrest while operating the flight IX1153 from Srinagar to Delhi April 9.

Ordering the probe, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) investigation team will check whether the crew reported the sickness to the Air Traffic Controller (ATC) while in air and if so, whether the ATC initiated action appropriately.

Apart from checking the medical history of the deceased crew member, the team will probe.

Among other aspects, the regulator will investigate whether any specific medical checks are required for such pilots to undergo before undertaking flights and whether the remaining onboard crew took action when the crew member reported feeling unwell.

of the day


quote

Chhatra-pati Shivaji Maharaj drew inspiration from Maharana Pratap, especially for guerilla warfare tactics



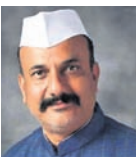
RAINATH SINGH | DEFENCE MINISTER

During the Congress time (rule) police would threaten Shiv Sainiks to join Congress or else they will be booked under TADA (Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act). Same thing is happening now. Police are being used to break parties or unearth old cases and destroy rival parties. What will be the end of this?



UDDHAV THACKERAY | SHIV SENA (UBT) CHIEF

Making Hindi compulsory from Class 1 is a wrong decision and should be rolled back immediately. How can the government have double standards? On the one hand, it accords classical language status to Marathi, while on the other hand it keeps people away from it



HARSHVARDHAN SAPKAL | MAHA CONG PREZ

X

POST OF THE DAY

And here, journalists propagate Pro-BJP narrative. Neither was Terrorist Ajmal Kasab given Biryani in Old India. It was a fabricated story which was propagated by Ujjwal Nikam, the public prosecutor of the 26/11 trial.

zoo_bear

SHORT TAKES

Two cheetahs to be shifted from Kuno


Bhopal: Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav Friday said two cheetahs will be shifted from Kuno National Park in the state's Sheepur district to Gandhi Sagar Sanctuary in Mandsaur April 20. At present, 17 cheetahs are roaming in the wild at KNP, while nine are in enclosures. In a statement on X, Yadav said the cheetah project will be expanded to Gandhi Sagar Sanctuary April 20.

Dilip Ghosh ties knot at 60

Kolkata: Former West Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh tied the knot with party colleague Rinku Majumdar in an intimate ceremony Friday. Dressed in traditional Bengali wedding attire with a 'topor' on his head, Ghosh, along with his wife, appeared before the press following the rituals and sought people's blessings. "I thank everyone for their good wishes. I also thank Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who has wished me. My personal life will have no bearing on my political career," he told reporters waiting outside his residence in New Town near Kolkata.

Rain brings relief from heat in Delhi

New Delhi: Rain, accompanied by gusty winds, lashed parts of Delhi Friday evening, bringing relief from the heat. Parts of the city, including central, south and west Delhi, witnessed rainfall in the evening. In its latest nowcast, the weather department said light to moderate rainfall, accompanied by thunderstorms, lightning and gusty winds (30-40 kmph), is very likely in several areas.

In the last three years, the Uttarakhand government has provided jobs to more than 22,000 youth and the unemployment rate in the state has been reduced by 4.4 per cent

PUSHKAR SINGH DHAMI | UTTARAKHAND CM

GOVT: NO GST ON UPI TRANSACTIONS OVER ₹2K

The government Friday clarified that it is not mulling to levy GST on UPI transactions above Rs 2,000. Clarifying on reports, which said that the government is considering levying Goods and Services Tax (GST) on UPI transactions over Rs 2,000, the finance ministry said they are completely false, misleading, and without any basis



Guv defies Mamata, meets riot victims

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Malda/Kolkata, April 18: Teams from the NHRC and NCW Friday visited Malda relief camps to meet Murshidabad riot victims, even as West Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose defied Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's appeal to defer his visit and interacted with the displaced, prompting the TMC to allege political provocation.

During the Governor's visit, inmates of the Parlalpur High School relief camp in Baishnabnagar, Malda — where few hundreds have taken shelter since the April 11-12 clashes — staged protests alleging "police-imposed censorship, denial of access to visitors and inhumane living conditions". "This camp feels worse than a prison. Police are not allowing us to meet anyone and narrate our ordeal," a camp resident told reporters.

Bose, who left for Malda this morning despite a request from the CM to postpone his trip "in the interest of maintaining calm," said he wanted to independently verify ground reports. "I am going to the field," Bose told reporters before boarding a train from Kolkata.

"I will meet the victims and verify the reports we have received. I will visit hospitals, residences of victims and the relief camps. Central forces and state police are working together to restore normalcy. After meeting the victims, I will submit my recommendations." At the camp, the Governor was seen interacting with children and patiently listening to the grievances of displaced families. "The women said miscreants came and attacked their hous-



es, looted their property and were forcible evicted," he said after the meeting. Asked about the complaints about inhumane living conditions, he said he will seek a detailed report and talk to the administration.

Raj Bhawan officials accompanying him took note of the complaints. Tensions escalated briefly when angry camp residents broke barricades and surrounded district officials, accusing police of not letting them speak to the media or meet visiting relatives.

Several women alleged harassment by police personnel and said they were being threatened at night to not talk to outsiders. In its suo motu cognisance of the violence, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) dispatched a fact-finding team to the area and has sought a detailed report from the state government within three weeks.

The NHRC members took note after talking to members of the affected families staying at the camp at the Parlalpur

■ A delegation from the National Commission for Women led by chairperson Vijaya Rahatkar also visited the camp to assess the condition of women displaced by the violence, which erupted during protests against the Centre's amendments to the Waqf (Amendment) Act

■ NCW member Archana Majumdar, accompanying Rahatkar, alleged that women were molested and driven out of their homes

■ The NCW delegation is expected to spend the night in Malda before heading to Murshidabad Saturday

High School. The Commission Tuesday had said that it had decided to send a team to conduct an on-the-spot inquiry into the incidents, considering the seriousness of the situation.

A delegation from the National Commission for Women (NCW) led by chairperson Vijaya Rahatkar also visited the camp to assess the condition of women displaced by the violence, which erupted during

Stalin challenges Shah on NEET, delimitation



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Tiruvallur (Tamil Nadu), April 18: Chief Minister M K Stalin Friday slammed Union Home Minister Amit Shah for accusing the DMK regime of using issues such as NEET and delimitation as diversionary tactic and challenged him to give "clear answers" to prove his point.

Stalin, addressing a government event at Ponneri near here, detailed a string of welfare schemes of the state government including the Rs 1,000 monthly assistance for women. He referred to the introduction of two Bills by him days ago in the state assembly to nominate persons with disabilities as members in all local bodies. He said the voices of more than 15,000 differently-abled persons would soon echo in the civic bodies across Tamil Nadu.

In view of many such initiatives, the chief minister said, under the DMK regime, self-confidence has grown and the state has also got developed. "Some are unable to tolerate this. They could not find any fault with the government and

hence, they are spreading defamatory allegations," he said adding, be it law and order, governance or any other indices, the state is a top performer. However, some opposition parties, rather than functioning as responsible opposition, behaved like parties opposed to Tamil Nadu state itself.

"What is their idea? They intend mortgaging Tamil Nadu by associating with a crowd that betrays Tamil Nadu and the Tamil people and this is the only thought of those opportunists," the chief minister said apparently targeting the BJP and AIADMK, without naming them. Be it opposition to the NEET, 3-language policy, the Waqf amendment and mobilising states over delimitation, it is the DMK that continued to be staunch at the national level and his party is the "all India face of championing states' rights."

Shah, during his recent Chennai visit, remarked that the DMK regime is engaged in discussions over issues including NEET merely to divert attention, and the union minister alleged that it was a distraction tactic.

FIR LODGED AGAINST SUNNY DEOL, HOODA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jalandhar, April 18: An FIR has been lodged against actors Sunny Deol, Randeep Hooda and three others following a complaint that a scene in the movie 'Jaat' has "hurt sentiments" of the Christian community, police said Friday.

The complaint filed by a Christian community leader has alleged the movie, which was released April 10, contains scenes that disrespect Jesus Christ and Christian religious practices, they said.

Viklav Gold, the complainant, has also questioned the timing of the film's release around Good Friday which is being observed April 18 this year.

Sanjeev Kumar, SHO of Jalandhar Cantt police station where the FIR was lodged Wednesday evening, said actors Sunny Deol, Randeep Hooda and Vineet Kumar, director Gopichand and producer Naveen have been named in the case. "The FIR was registered under Section 299 (deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs) of the BNS," the SHO said.

cLeod said the Trump administration was rigorously enforcing immigration laws, including the Immigration and Nationality Act and the Alien Registration Act.

During his weekly press briefing Thursday, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said, "We are aware that several Indian students have received communication from the US government regarding their F-1 visa status, which happens to be the student visa. We are looking into the matter. Our embassy and consulates, they are in touch with the students to provide support."

Jaiswal was responding to a question on several Indian students receiving communications from US authorities under the Trump administration on possible revocation of their visas.



Foreign tourists sit on the bank of Yamuna river near the Taj Mahal during sunset, in Agra

PTI PHOTO

MODI SPEAKS TO ELON MUSK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 18: Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to Elon Musk, world's richest person with a strong influence in the US administration, Friday as they discussed the immense potential for collaboration in areas of technology and innovation.

Modi said on X after speaking

to Musk, whose business empire includes Tesla and SpaceX, that they discussed various issues. "Spoke to @elonmusk and talked about various issues, including the topics we covered during our meeting in Washington DC earlier this year. We discussed the immense potential for collaboration in the areas of technology and innovation," he said.

Modi added, "India remains committed to advancing our partnerships with the US in these domains." Musk is considered one of the most influential persons in the Donald Trump administration and is spearheading the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) aimed at cutting government expenditure and reducing federal workforce.

Cong flags American visa revocation of Indian students

Indian students in the US are grappling with a growing threat of deportation as authorities cancel F-1 visas over a range of issues -- from participation in pro-Palestinian protests to minor legal infractions

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 18: The Congress Friday expressed concern over the American Immigration Lawyers Association's claim that out of the 327 visa revocation cases of international students collected by it so far, 50% are Indians, and asked whether External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will take up the issue with his US counterpart.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh shared on X a

press statement issued Thursday by the American Immigration Lawyers Association, and said it is "cause for concern to us in India".

"Out of the 327 visa revocation cases of international students collected by the organisation so far, 50% are Indians. The reasons for revocation are random and unclear. There is growing fear and apprehension," Ramesh said.

"Will the External Affairs Minister take note and raise the concern with his US counterpart? Ramesh said and tagged



Jaishankar. The Department of State (DOS) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) are aggressively targeting international students, including those without a history of protest, for visa revocation, termination of their status, and removal," the American Immigration Lawyers Association statement said.

AILA collected 327 reports of visa revocations and Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) terminations from attorneys, students, and university employees, it said.

"Of these reports - 50 percent of these students were from India, followed by 14 percent from China. Other significant

countries represented in this data include South Korea, Nepal, and Bangladesh," the statement said.

"Based on these reports, it is clear that transparency, oversight, and accountability are needed to prevent further arbitrary visa revocations and SEVIS record terminations. Finally, there should be a way for students to appeal SEVIS terminations that are inaccurate without facing a gap in their employment or requiring the university to be involved, given the sheer numbers of those impacted," it said.


Meanwhile, students attempting to go against US laws will face the consequences, including deportation, the country's state department has warned.

In a virtual interview with PTI, US Department of State spokesperson Margaret Ma-

of the day


quote

It must be ensured that every child under five years of age is administered the polio vaccine during the anti-polio campaign starting from April 21




SHEHBAZ SHARIF | PRIME MINISTER, PAKISTAN

We are not reaching a point where we need to decide whether this is even possible or not



MARCO RUBIO | SECRETARY OF STATE, US

We have a history of nation-building and unity. We are committed to handing over a prosperous, undivided Nepal to the next generation. We will not allow our borders to shrink and our national pride to be harmed. Our goal is to move forward while preserving our civilised and cultured society



KP SHARMA OLI | PRIME MINISTER, NEPAL

SHORT TAKES

Singapore defence minister resigns

Singapore: Singapore's Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen announced Friday that he is stepping down from politics, making him the first minister confirmed to be not in the running for the general election scheduled for May 3. Ng, 66, said that leadership succession is a cardinal strength of the ruling People's Action Party (PAP), which is why he's stepping aside for new blood, just as his predecessors had done. "For any government, there's always tension between renewal and experience, not sure what the best balance is," Channel News Asia quoted him as saying.

China's leader ends Southeast Asia tour

Phnom Penh (Cambodia): Chinese President Xi Jinping Friday completed a two-day state visit to Cambodia, capping a three-nation tour that included stops in Vietnam and Malaysia at a time when all three Southeast Asian countries are facing economic challenges from US President Donald Trump's tariff proposals. China has been strongly increasing its influence in the region over the past decade, largely by exercising its substantial economic leverage.

Students, journalists stand trial in Turkey

Istanbul: Dozens of people including journalists appeared before a court in Istanbul Friday, accused of attending banned demonstrations and disobeying police orders to disperse during anti-government protests that were triggered by the jailing of the city's opposition mayor, Ekrem Imamoglu. Imamoglu, seen as the main challenger to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's 22-year rule, was arrested March 19 and jailed days later on corruption charges. His imprisonment has been widely viewed as politically motivated and sparked nationwide protests.

Heatwave warning issued for Karachi

Karachi: The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) Friday issued a heatwave warning for Karachi, as temperatures continue to soar across southern Sindh province. The PMD said a severe heatwave has gripped much of Sindh, and Karachi is also expected to experience a significant rise in temperatures in the coming week.



Historic injustice was imposed on Haiti when it was forced to pay a colossal indemnity to France in exchange for its independence 200 years ago

EMMANUEL MACRON | PRESIDENT, FRANCE

SACRED BUDDHA TOOTH RELIC DISPLAYED IN SL AFTER 16 YEARS

A rare exposition of the sacred tooth relic of Lord Buddha began Friday in Sri Lanka's central town of Kandy after a gap of 16 years, according to an official statement. The event will continue for 10 days until April 27, and the relics will be available to the public for viewing from noon till 5 pm local time



Deadliest US strike in Yemen kills 74



REUTERS

Aden/Washington, April 18: US strikes on Yemen's Ras Isa fuel terminal on the Red Sea coast have killed at least 74 people in the deadliest attack since the US started its bombing campaign against the Houthis last year, according to the Houthi-run health ministry.

US President Donald Trump ordered the intensification of strikes last month in the biggest US military operation in the Middle East since he took office in January. Washington has vowed to keep attacking the Iran-aligned Houthis until the group halts attacks on Red Sea shipping.

Health ministry spokesperson Anees al-Asbahi said 171 people were injured in Thursday's strikes, according to preliminary figures, with rescue teams continuing efforts to search for victims.

- DEADLIEST STRIKE SINCE US CAMPAIGN BEGAN
- STRIKES AGAINST HOUTHIS IN RESPONSE TO RED SEA ATTACKS
- US MILITARY SAYS TARGET WAS FUEL SOURCE
- RESCUE TEAMS CONTINUING SEARCH SITE, SAYS HOUTHIRUN MINISTRY

The US military said the strikes aimed to cut off a source of fuel for the Houthi militant group. The port has a heavy military presence in addition to being a primary hub for fuel imports, Yemeni sources said. Among the dead were employees of Safer Oil Company, which operates the port, and the Yemen Petroleum Company, responsible for overseeing imported fuel shipments and their distribution, the sources added.

MELONI STRENGTHENS US TIES

REUTERS

Rome, April 18: The Italian language proved a secret weapon for Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni as she launched a charm offensive with US President Donald Trump and his deputy JD Vance in back-to-back transatlantic meetings.

Meloni met both Trump and Vance at the White House Thursday before heading straight home to Italy. Vance also left Washington after the talks to spend the Easter holidays in Rome.

During a crowded joint press conference in the Oval Office, Trump gushed about Italian when Meloni addressed travelling journalists in her native language.

"That was so beautiful! What the hell did you say?" Trump said after she had answered a question on the war in Ukraine, notably contradicting the US leader, who has suggested Ukraine's president was to blame for the Russian invasion.

Following his arrival in Rome



with his family, Vance had lunch with Meloni and listened on as she released a message in Italian, hailing Thursday's talks as "fantastic" and saying there was a "privileged relationship" between their two nations.

"Prime Minister Meloni, it's wonderful to see you again, and I hope that's exactly what you said. Of course she could have called me a jerk and I wouldn't

know, but it would be in the most beautiful language imaginable, so I wouldn't even get offended," he said to laughter.

Trump has repeatedly criticised the European Union, saying the bloc was created to "screw" the United States. But he has a warm relationship with the national conservative Meloni, who was the only EU leader he invited to his inau-



Penitents take part in the Procession of Souls during Holy Week in Goias, Brazil, Thursday

PTI PHOTO

ISRAELI STRIKES KILL AT LEAST 43 IN GAZA

REUTERS

Jerusalem, April 18: Israeli airstrikes hit about 40 targets across the Gaza Strip over the past day, the military said Friday, hours after Hamas rejected an Israeli ceasefire offer that it said fell short of its demand to agree a full end to the war. Last month the Israeli military broke off a two-month truce that had largely halted fighting in Gaza and has since pushed in from the north and south, seizing almost a third of the enclave as it seeks to pressure Hamas into agreeing to release hostages and disarm.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said he would make a special statement Saturday evening but gave no detail on what it would be about.

- MELONI MEETS US LEADERS IN BACK-TO-BACK VISITS
- ITALIAN LEADER LOOKS TO BE PRIVILEGED PARTNER
- TRUMP, VANCE SHOWER MELONI WITH PRAISE

guration in January. Looking to cement her position as a favoured partner, Meloni told reporters in the Oval Office that she supported Trump's fight against diversity and inclusion and woke "ideology".

She also promised to buy more US gas and said she wanted Italian companies to invest more in the United States, hoping that this might help convince the US president to reduce, or even eliminate threatened tariffs on Italian and EU imports.

In addition, she invited Trump to visit Rome, saying this could be an opportunity for him to meet other European leaders who he has so far shunned. He accepted the offer, but no date was set.

GAZA WAR PROTESTS

170 held for attacks on Pak KFC outlets

REUTERS

Karachi/Lahore, April 18: Police have arrested scores of people in Pakistan in recent weeks after more than 10 mob attacks on outlets of US fast-food chain KFC, sparked by anti-United States sentiment and opposition to its ally Israel's war in Gaza, officials said.

Police in major cities in the Islamic nation, including the southern port city of Karachi, the eastern city of Lahore and the capital Islamabad, confirmed at least 11 incidents in which KFC outlets were attacked by protesters armed with sticks and vandalised. At least 178 people were arrested, the officials said this week.

KFC and its parent Yum Brands both US-based, did not respond to requests for comment.

A police official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said one KFC employee was shot and killed this week in a store on the outskirts of Lahore by unknown gunmen. The official added there was no protest at the time and they were investigating whether the killing was



Portrait of armless Palestinian boy wins World Press Photo of the yr

The photo, taken by Qatar-based Palestinian photographer Samar Abu Elouf for The New York Times shows 9-year-old Mahmoud Ajjour with his arms missing just below each shoulder

ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Hague, April 18: A portrait of a young Palestinian boy who lost both arms as a result of an Israeli attack in Gaza was honoured Thursday as World Press Photo of the year.

The photo, taken by Qatar-based Palestinian photographer Samar Abu Elouf for The New York Times shows 9-year-old Mahmoud Ajjour with his arms missing just below each shoulder.

"One of the most difficult things Mahmoud's mother explained to me was how when Mahmoud first came to the realisation that his arms were amputated, the first sentence he said

to her was, 'How will I be able to hug you?'" Abu Elouf said in a statement released by the World Press Photo organisation.

The winner of the 68th edition of the prestigious photojournalism contest was selected from 59,320 entries submitted by 3,778 photographers from 141 countries.

"This is a quiet photo that speaks loudly. It tells the story of one boy, but also of a wider war that will have an impact for generations," said World Press Photo Executive Director Joumana El Zein Khoury.

In a statement, the organisation said that Ajjour was injured while fleeing an Israeli attack in March 2024.



"After he turned back to urge his family onward, an explosion severed one of his arms and mutilated the other," according to the World Press Photo citation.

"This young boy's life deserves to be understood, and this picture does what great photojournalism can do: provide a layered entry point into a complex story, and the incentive to prolong one's encounter with that story," said jury chair Lucy Conticello, who is Director of Photography for French newspaper Le Monde's weekend magazine.

Winning photographer Abu Elouf was evacuated from Gaza in December 2023 and she now lives in the same apartment complex as Ajjour in Qatar's capital, Doha.

Israel launched its devastating attack on Gaza after Hamas' October 7, 2023 attack, in which thousands of militants stormed into southern Israel from Gaza, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting 251.

The Palestinian Health Ministry in Gaza says over 51,000 Palestinians have been killed in the Israeli offensive. It does not differentiate between civilians and militants, but says that over half of the dead were women and children, including at least 876 infants under 1. It says over 116,000 people have been wounded.

Israel blames Hamas for the heavy civilian toll because the group carries out attacks and other military activities from residential areas and civilian buildings. Competition organisers also named two World Press Photo finalists that highlighted the issues of migration and climate change.

A dark photo by John Moore for Getty Images shows Chinese migrants warming themselves after crossing the US-Mexico border, and a picture by Musuk Nolte for Panos Pictures, Bertha Foundation, of a young man carrying food across a dried up river bed in Brazil's Amazon basin region.

of the day

Quote

The broader software industry has been quite inefficient, both in products and services. These inefficiencies have accumulated over decades of a prolonged asset bubble

SRIDHAR VEMBU | CEO, ZOHO

In the last four years, imports from China and ASEAN have more than doubled. Now, with the US and EU imposing restrictive tariffs and other trade remedial measures to protect their own markets, India is at risk of becoming a dumping ground for excess inventory from export-driven Asian economies

PAWAN AGARWAL | PRESIDENT, IPMA

Construction industry is a major contributor to global carbon emissions, accounting for nearly 40 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions. The real estate sector stands at crossroads of transformation, where sustainability is no longer an option but a necessity

BADAL YAGNIK | CEO, COLLIERS INDIA

SHORT TAKES

No relief for Byju's

New Delhi: The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) has set aside the appeals filed by BCCI and Riju Raveendran seeking withdrawal of insolvency proceedings against Byju's and consider the settlement between the debt-ridden edtech firm and the apex cricket body. They had challenged the order passed by the Bengaluru bench of the National Company Law Tribunal, which had on February 10, 2025 directed to place their settlement offer before the new Committee of Creditors (CoC), in which US-based Glas Trust, the trustee for lenders to which Byju's owes \$1.2 billion, is a member.

Oilmeals export dip

New Delhi: India's oilmeals export fell 21 per cent to ₹12.171 crore last fiscal mainly due to decline in sales volumes by 11 per cent, according to data compiled by Solvent Extractors' Association of India (SEA). In a statement Friday, edible oil industry body SEA said the total export of oilmeals in 2024-25 fiscal fell 11 per cent to 43,42,498 tonnes compared to 48,85,437 tonnes in the preceding year. This was mainly due to reduction in export of rapeseed meal & castorseed meal, it added. In terms of value, the exports decreased 21 per cent to ₹12,171 crore in 2024-25 from ₹15,368 crore in the preceding year.



In global market, Indian products, given their reliability and respect for IP (intellectual property) rights, have an advantage, and it is being recognised globally

ASHWINI VAISHNAW | UNION MINISTER

CAPITAL INDIA FINANCE LISTS ON NSE

Non-banking financial company Capital India Finance Ltd has announced its listing on the National Stock Exchange of India (NSE) with a view to enhancing long-term shareholder value and increasing accessibility for a broader investor base. It got listed effective April 17, 2025, the NBFC said



Stocks on climbing path

Market benchmarks surge over 6% in past four days; investors' wealth rallies by ₹25.77 lakh crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 18: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty surged more than 6 per cent in the last four trading sessions, as a temporary pause on tariffs by the US, return of foreign investors to the domestic market, and prediction of an above-normal rainfall in the upcoming southwest monsoon season lifted investors' sentiments.

Moreover, retail inflation dipping to a nearly six-year low also raised hopes for a third rate cut by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), according to market experts.

In the last four trading days, the BSE benchmark index jumped 4,706.05 points or 6.37 per cent, and the NSE Nifty surged 1,452.5 points or 6.48 per cent. Accordingly, investors' wealth rallied by ₹25.77 lakh crore to ₹4,19,60,046.14 crore (\$4.90 trillion) in the past four days.

Stock markets are closed Friday for 'Good Friday'.

According to Vishnu Kant Upadhyay, AVP, Research & Advisory, Master Capital Services, several factors like foreign fund inflows, temporary pause on tariffs by the US and further monetary easing by the RBI have converged to drive the recent sharp rally in the Indian markets despite



In the last three trading sessions, foreign portfolio investors purchased over \$1 billion worth of Indian equities after a prolonged selling streak. Further, the announcement of a temporary pause on tariffs by the US and potential negotiations with countries also led to the relief rally

VISHNU KANT UPADHYAY | AVP (RESEARCH & ADVISORY), MASTER CAPITAL SERVICES

global trade uncertainty.

Moreover, the RBI's 25 bps rate cut April 9, and its shift of stance from "neutral" to "accommodative" added fresh momentum to the equity market, as investors priced in further monetary easing, he noted.

On April 9, the RBI cut interest rates for a second consecutive time. The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), consisting of three central bank members and an equal number of external members, voted unanimously to cut the repurchase or repo rate by 25 basis points to 6 per cent.

RBI changed its policy stance to "accommodative" from "neutral", indicating the possibility of more rate cuts in future, Governor Sanjay Malhotra said, while announcing the MPC decisions.

Marketmen are also betting big on upcoming southwest monsoon as according to the India Meteorological Department, India is expected to get above-normal rainfall in the upcoming southwest monsoon season, which raised hopes for a bountiful harvest for the largely agri-based economy.

Echoing similar sentiments,

Khimji unveils grand 'Akshay Tritiya Sale'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 18: Celebrating the true spirit of Akshay Tritiya, Khimji Jewellers, Odisha's oldest and most trusted jeweller announced the launch of the eagerly awaited "Akshay Tritiya Sale" with flat 50% discount on making charges for gold and diamond jewellery, and free insurance on diamonds.

Also, Khimji Jewellers is providing a bouquet of attractive benefits for its valued customers. This special offer is available at Khimji Jewellers' stores in Bhubaneswar, Berhampur, Cuttack, Puri, Jharsuguda, and Rourkela, providing an excellent opportunity for the custom-



ers to purchase exquisite jewellery on an auspicious occasion of Akshay Tritiya.

Mitesh Khimji, managing director of Khimji Jewellers, expressed the sentiment behind this exclusive offer, stating, "This is one of the biggest sale we have ever offered in the Odisha market with a flat 50%

discount on the complete range of gold and diamond jewellery making charges. As we celebrate Akshay Tritiya, we are thrilled to extend this exclusive deal to our valued customers. Additionally, we are happy to offer a lifetime buy back guarantee. Khimji Jewellers has carved a place for those soulful hearts for its commitment in delivering unmatched quality and service, which has cemented its status as the most trusted jeweller in Odisha."

With a legacy of 89 years, and as Odisha's most trusted jewellery brand, Khimji Jewellers is known for its exquisite designs that have been meticulously crafted for generations.

Kruti Coffee launches fifth outlet in City

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 18: Kruti Coffee, one of India's leading award winning specialty coffee brands that has taken coffee from Odisha to the global stage, opened its 11th outlet and 5th in Bhubaneswar at IRC Village. This is Kruti Coffee's largest single floor outlet in Bhubaneswar and themed around global minimalistic aesthetics that characterise a true specialty coffee experience.

As customary with the opening of all its previous outlets, Kruti Coffee's Co Founder and SCA Certified roaster Dr Kamakhya Das conducted a specialty coffee brewing 101 session for all guests. Kruti

Coffee's Head of Roasting & Brewing Pabitra Kumar Sahoo brewed Kindiriguda Naturals in a Chemex, the coffee that was awarded India's No 1 Arabica Naturals at 5th World Coffee Conference.

Highlight of the evening was Kalinga Gold brewed on a Belgian Balancing Siphon that was a visual delight for all participants. Kruti Coffee's Business Head Tapan Kumar Barisal took the guests through Kruti Coffee's journey so far and the road ahead. He thanked coffee enthusiasts from Mumbai, Jamshedpur and Raipur for the love they have shown towards this home grown specialty coffee brand from Odisha. Barisal also thanked all franchise partners



of Kruti Coffee for their faith, without whom this phenomenal growth would have been impossible for Kruti Coffee.

Aurobindo Panda, Head of Operations at Kruti Coffee, emphasised the value that Kruti Coffee attributes to-

Gold imports rise 192% to \$4.47bn



On April 17, the gold prices rose by ₹70 to hit yet another record high of ₹98,170 per 10 grams in the national capital

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 18: After registering negative growth, the country's gold imports, which impact Current Account Deficit (CAD), jumped by 192.13 per cent to \$4.47 billion in March, on account of significant increase in the prices of the yellow metal according to commerce ministry data.

Gold imports stood at \$1.53 billion in January 2024.

Cumulatively, during April-March 2024-25, the inbound shipments rose 27.27 per cent to \$58 billion against \$45.54 billion in 2023-24.

The increase in imports also indicates strong investor confidence in the precious metal as a safe asset. The other reasons include asset diversification towards gold due to global uncertainties, increasing demand from banks, and jump in prices.

On April 17, the gold prices rose by ₹70 to hit yet another record high of ₹98,170 per 10 grams in the national capital. The prices soared to record highs due a weaker dollar, escalating trade war tensions, and growing concerns over global economic growth following US President Donald Trump's tariff announcements.

However, silver prices plunged by ₹1,400 to ₹98,000 per kg. The white metal had settled at ₹99,400 per kg in the

previous market close.

Silver imports in March contracted by 85.4 per cent to \$119.3 million. It was down 11.24 per cent year-on-year in 2024-25 to \$4.82 billion.

Switzerland is the largest source of gold imports, with about 40 per cent share, followed by the UAE (over 16 per cent) and South Africa (about 10 per cent).

The precious metal accounts for 8 per cent of the country's total imports.

In volume terms, the imports dipped to 757.15 tonnes in 2024-25 against 795.32 tonnes in 2023-24.

The gold imports in February were down by about 62 per cent, while it rose by 40.8 per cent in January and 55.39 per cent in December 2024.

The jump in gold imports pushed the country's trade deficit (difference between imports and exports) to \$21.54 billion in March. It touched an all-time high of \$282.82 billion in the last fiscal.

India is the world's second-biggest gold consumer after China. The imports mainly take care of the demand by the jewellery industry.

Gems and jewellery exports during the month rose by 10.62 per cent year-on-year to about \$3 billion. It was however dipped by 8.84 per cent to \$29.82 billion in 2024-25 from \$32.7 billion in 2023-24.

India's CAD inched up to \$11.5 billion, or 1.1 per cent of GDP, in the December quarter from \$10.4 billion (1.1 per cent of GDP) in the year-ago period, mainly due to higher trade deficit. It widened to \$37.0 billion (1.3 per cent of GDP) during April-December 2024 from \$30.6 billion (1.1 per cent of GDP) during the corresponding period of last year.

Union Bank opens branch at Padmapur

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, April 18: Union Bank of India, one of the largest Public Sector Bank in India has opened new branch at Padmapur, Bargarh with excellent infrastructure and modern banking facilities.

This is the 21st branch of Union bank of India in the district with all the modern facilities for the banking needs of customers in and around Padmapur with a special focus to cater the needs of Retail, Agri & MSME Clientele.



Simultaneously, the branch will cater to the needs of depositors and senior citizens of the area with a focus on financial inclusion and implementation of various government schemes.

The branch was inaugurated by Mukesh Mahaling, Minister of Health & Family Welfare, Parliamentary Affairs, Electronics & Information Technology, Govt of Odisha in presence of senior executives of Union Bank of India, HK Das Zonal Head Bhubaneswar and Dharmendra Rajoriya, Regional Head Sambalpur. On the occasion, Mahaling appreciated the contribution of the bank and its wide presence as second largest banking network in the state.

Govt tweaks city gas policy, moves to advance quarterly allocations

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 18: The government will now allocate natural gas to CNG and piped cooking gas retailers two quarters in advance to give city gas companies greater clarity, the Oil Ministry said Friday.

With city gas retailers like Indraprastha Gas Ltd, Mahanagar Gas Ltd and Adani-Total Gas Ltd reporting pressures on margins after the allocation of cheaper administered price or APM gas to them was cut without giving enough advance notice, the ministry decided to tweak the allocation policy.

"From Q1 (first quarter) of FY 2025-26 (April 2025 to March 2026 financial year), domestic

natural gas allocations for CNG (Transport) and piped natural gas (domestic household cooking gas) segments will be done on a two-quarter advance basis," the ministry said in a statement.

Besides the lower-priced APM gas produced from old fields given on a nomination basis, the allocation will also now include gas from new wells drilled on the nomination fields of state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and Oil India Ltd (OIL), it added.

The gas from new wells is slightly more expensive than the APM gas.

While APM gas currently is priced at \$6.75 per million British thermal units, the new



well gas comes to close to \$8 per MMBtu.

"Estimations by GAIL and ONGC will help ensure supply

visibility to CGD entities in advance, enhancing planning and delivery efficiency," it said.

GAIL is the state-owned mar-

keter of gas. The ministry said new well gas allocation will be done on a pro-rata basis.

"Auction-based allocation for new well gas has been replaced with a quarterly pro-rata allocation to ensure timely and reliable supply. GAIL will allocate new well gas to city gas distribution (CGD) entities in proportion to their requirements, in accordance with prevailing Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas guidelines," the statement said.

The move comes within days of GAIL intimating the city gas retailers of up to 20 per cent cut in APM gas supplies effective April 16 because of a fall in production at ONGC end. The lost volumes were made good by the

supply of new well gas.

"The government has introduced key policy measures aimed at strengthening the allocation framework for domestic natural gas, in alignment with its vision of promoting cleaner energy access, enhancing urban air quality, and bolstering domestic energy security," the ministry said, adding that with a focus on ensuring the sustained availability and affordability of natural gas for key public-facing segments - Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) used in transport and Piped Natural Gas (PNG) used in domestic households for cooking - the ministry has introduced the important enhancements to the Domestic Gas Allocation Policy.

The comeback kings

Manchester United seal spectacular comeback to beat Lyon 5-4 and advance to Europa League semifinals



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Manchester, April 18: Manchester United's season isn't done yet.

On a night of high drama at Old Trafford, the troubled Premier League club put its domestic problems to one side by sealing a spectacular comeback to beat Lyon 5-4 and advance to the semifinals of the Europa League.

United blew a two-goal lead and then had to come back from 4-2 down against 10 men in extra time to produce one of its most memorable victories in its famous stadium.

Harry Maguire's dramatic winner in added time of extra time sparked scenes of jubilation and kept alive hopes that United could yet salvage a desperate campaign that has left the 20-time English champions languishing in the bottom half of the Premier League.

United has been famed for its comebacks over the years — none more famous than victory against Bayern Munich to win the Champions League final in 1999 when late goals by Teddy Sheringham and Ole Gunnar Solskjaer sealed a 2-1 win

“We still have time to make something special of this season, so we have to think like that and be positive,” United head coach Ruben Amorim said.

United will play Athletic Bilbao in the semifinals after the Spanish club beat Rangers 2-0.

Tottenham also overcame its domestic problems by sealing a place in the last four with a 1-0 win against Eintracht Frankfurt and a 2-1 aggregate victory.

Bodo/Glimt became the first Norwegian team to reach the semifinals of a European competition by beating Lazio 3-2 on penalties. Lazio sent the game to

a shootout after 3-1 win in extra time meant the tie ended 3-3 on aggregate.

United has been famed for its comebacks over the years — none more famous than victory against Bayern Munich to win the Champions League final in 1999 when late goals by Teddy Sheringham and Ole Gunnar Solskjaer sealed a 2-1 win.

Such moments feel a long way away for a team that is languishing 14th in England's top flight and is guaranteed to end the campaign with a club-record-low points total in the Premier League era.

The Europa League is Amorim's last chance of success this season, while victory would also secure a place in the lucrative Champions League next campaign.

United had led 2-0 at half-time through goals from Manuel Ugarte and Diogo Dalot and could have been further ahead with Bruno Fernandes hitting the bar and Alejandro Garnacho failing to score when through on goal. But it let a command-

We still have time to make something special of this season, so we have to think like that and be positive
RUBEN AMORIM | HEAD COACH, MANCHESTER UNITED

ing position slip by conceding twice in six minutes in the second half, with Corentin Tolisso and Nicolas Tagliafico stunning the home crowd.

Despite Tolisso being sent off in the 89th, Lyon led 4-2 in extra time through Rayan Cherki and an Alexandre Lacazette penalty.

As some fans started to leave the stadium, United mounted a comeback with three goals in seven minutes. Fernandes scored from the penalty spot and then Kobbie Mainoo leveled with a curling shot inside the box.

The stage was set for Maguire — playing as a makeshift striker — to head the winner.

It was fun,” said Amorim. “If you see the goals from Kobbie and Harry Maguire, the sound of the stadium was the best sound I ever (heard). You want to keep that. People want to keep a lot of things, shirts, I just want to keep that sound, it's the best sound in the world.”

Table-toppers DC, GT collide for supremacy



The Delhi Capitals sit pretty at the top with 10 points from six games, while the Gujarat Titans trail close behind with eight from as many outings

RESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, April 18: Mitchell Starc's mastery of death overs will be up against Mohammed Siraj's artistry when the high-flying Delhi Capitals take on an equally well-placed Gujarat Titans in a high-voltage top-of-the-table IPL clash here Saturday.

Confidence in the Delhi camp would be soaring after their dramatic Super Over win over Rajasthan Royals, another heist scripted under pressure with Starc at the heart of it.

The Australian left-arm

Having skipped the Champions Trophy to freshen up after the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, Starc has returned to the IPL recharged and razor sharp.

With 10 wickets at an economy just over 10, he's led the DC pace unit featuring Mukesh Kumar and Mohit Sharma. If Starc can conjure another match-defining spell, it could be the edge that Delhi needs.

His battle with Gujarat Titans' top order, led by skipper Shubman Gill, the consistent Sai Sudharsan, and Ashes rival Jos Buttler, could prove pivotal.

So far, the trio has carried the bulk of the batting load, with at least one of them notching a half-century in every match.

The GT middle order, largely untested, faltered when finally called upon against Lucknow Super Giants, resulting in a defeat. If Delhi can crack that top-order code early, the ripple effect could tilt the contest in their favour.

RR desperately need win against LSG

An inconsistent Rajasthan Royals will be desperate to plug the holes across departments and halt a three-match losing streak when they host Lucknow Super Giants in the Indian Premier League here Saturday. With just two wins from



seven games, the Royals are languishing at eighth on the table and come into the contest on the back of a gut-wrenching Super Over defeat to Delhi Capitals. As the league hits the halfway mark, they'll need to shake off the heartbreak quickly if they hope to upstage Rishabh Pant's men and climb out of the bottom half. Plagued by inconsistency in both batting and bowling, RR's campaign has struggled to find momentum. To make matters worse, skipper Sanju Samson suffered a side strain in the previous match and had to retire hurt, though he later said he was feeling "alright." The Royals' batting, built around Indian mainstays, has mis-fired far too often, leaving the middle order exposed and under pressure. Opener Yashasvi Jaiswal, however, seems to have shaken off his rustiness with back-to-back half centuries against Royal Challengers Bengaluru and DC. But it will have to be seen if he carries the momentum in Saturday's match.

ASIAN U-18 ATHLETICS C'SHIP

Shot putter Nishchay clinches silver for his second medal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 17: Haryana's 16-year-old Nishchay grabbed his second medal of the meet as he won a silver with a personal best effort of 19.59m in the boys shot put event on the third day of the Asian Under-18 Athletics Championship in Dammam, Saudi Arabia Thursday.

Nishchay, who had won a bronze Wednesday, sent the iron ball to more than 19m four times out of his six attempts. His best came in the fifth attempt. The fourth throw was a foul.

His earlier personal best was 18.93m which he achieved last month. Han Qigeng of China won the gold with a throw of 20.23m while Singapore's Anson Loh (18.59m) took the bronze.

Earlier in the day, India picked up a bronze medal each through discus thrower Lakshita Mahlawat and 100m hurdler Shourya Ambure.



Athletes shine in Vietnam Pickleball Open Cup 2025, claim seven medals



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, April 18: Indian athletes came up with an outstanding performance to bring home seven medals — two gold, three silver, and two bronze — in the Vietnam Pickleball Open Cup being played in Ho Chi Minh City, the All India Pickleball Association (AIPA) informed Friday.

The Indian squad bagged all its medals in the open category of the event Thursday. The event will continue till Sunday with competitions at intermediate and beginner levels.

Competing against top-tier international talent, the Indian players showcased exceptional skills and sportsmanship, securing and reaffirming India's rising dominance in the global pickle-

ball circuit.

The tournament witnessed stellar performances from India's top pickleball talent. Vrushali Thakare emerged as the standout performer, winning gold in Open Women's Doubles alongside Tyak Karina, and secured a silver and bronze in the Open Mixed Doubles Pro category with Vanshik Kapadia.

Mayur Patil delivered an equally impressive performance, securing gold in Men's Open Doubles and Silver in Mixed Open Doubles. Vanshik Kapadia also bagged a silver medal in Open Men's Doubles Pro, in addition to his podium finishes with Vrushali. Rounding off India's medal tally, Kuldip Mahajan earned a bronze medal in the Open Men's Doubles, contributing to India's remarkable seven-medal haul in the championship.

Arvind Prabhoo, President of AIPA said, "AIPA is immensely proud of the achievements of our athletes at the Vietnam Pickleball Open Cup 2025. With every international event, our players continue to raise the bar and demonstrate the true spirit of Indian Pickleball.

"Their dedication, discipline, and competitive spirit are a reflection of the tireless efforts being made to nurture and elevate the sport across the country. At AIPA, we remain steadfast in our commitment to developing talent and creating opportunities that enable our players to make India proud on the world stage," he added.

Rohit Sharma Stand unveiled at Wankhede

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, April 18: After Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) approved the decision to rename Divecha Pavilion Level 3 as the 'Rohit Sharma Stand', the Indian skipper said he had ever dreamt of an honour of this level. Rohit has been a stalwart of Mumbai cricket and has successfully captained India to successive ICC trophies with the T20 World Cup 2024 and Champions Trophy 2025 triumphs.

Rohit was named the brand ambassador of the T20 Mumbai League, which was launched Friday. The 2025 edition of the Mumbai Premier League is scheduled to begin May 26.

While speaking at a press conference at which he was announced as the brand ambassador of MPL, Rohit said, "Never dreamt something like this when I was starting out play-



So many memorable games played there, and now to sit back and think of a stand in my name is unreal. Cannot imagine. It will be an emotional moment. Grateful for such an honour. When you start, you don't know how long you'll be playing. From now being able to enter the stadium and now having a stand in my name is emotional
ROHIT SHARMA | ODI CAPTAIN, INDIA

ing cricket. I remember those days when I wanted to enter and watch the Mumbai Ranji team players. In 2003-04, after U-16 training at Azad Maidan, we would travel across the track to watch Mumbai Ranji players. Those were the days. When I played my first game, and now to experience that is a different experience. Since then, I have so many

memories at the stadium.”

Rohit has represented India since as early as 2007 and was a part of the side that won the 2007 T20 World Cup in World Cup. He has gone on to represent the nation in 159 T20I matches, 273 ODIs, and 67 Test matches. Last year, he pulled the curtains on his T20 career after the World Cup victory in Barbados.

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