



Tamannaah's observation

Actor Tamannaah Bhatia says that any change in cinema always starts on an individual level

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Iran, US hold N-talks

Iran and US launch new nuclear talks in Rome, aiming to resolve tensions amid Trump's threat of military action if the talks fail

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Indo-US trade talks

Indian and US officials to hold three-day talks from April 23 in Washington for a proposed trade pact

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Titans on top

Jos Buttler's unbeaten 97 guides Gujarat Titans as they beat Delhi Capitals and move to the top of the IPL points table

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Maharashtra: Next anti-Hindi stir

A row is simmering in Maharashtra over the state government's decision to make Hindi a mandatory third language for students of Classes I to V in Marathi and English medium schools across the state, in a departure from the practice of studying two languages. Terming the move as an effort to undermine Marathi, the Opposition Shiv Sena (UBT) and the NCP (SP) have vowed to vehemently oppose the three-language policy. The controversy also seems to have brought closer warring cousins Uddhav and Raj Thackeray nearly two decades after their bitter fallout. The estranged first cousins have indicated their willingness to join forces in the larger interest of the Marathi community. If things go this way, it may spell trouble for the BJP-led ruling Mahayuti government in the state at a time when Tamil Nadu is already engaged in a battle with the Centre over the alleged imposition of Hindi in the southern state.

Mumbai, April 19: Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray Saturday asserted that his party will not al-

(SP) leader Supriya Sule said that undermining Marathi in the forceful implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 in Maharashtra would not be tolerated. The controversy also appears to have brought together estranged first cousins Uddhav and Raj Thackeray, nearly two decades after their split. In a podcast with filmmaker Mahesh Manjrekar, Raj, the chief of the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS), expressed his readiness to put aside minor disagreements in order to safeguard the interests of Maharashtra and uphold the Marathi language.

Thackeray claimed it is the ruling BJP's mission not to let people unite and to keep them under constant pressure so that they are occupied with their worries. "We will not allow making Hindi compulsory in Maharashtra," he said. He said, "We will do everything if you ask (us) with affection, but if you impose anything, we will oppose it. Why this force for (learning) Hindi?" The former chief minister pointed out that it was his government that decided to make learning Marathi in the state compulsory. "You have to say Jai Maharashtra if you want to live in the state," Thacker-

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Subhadra Yojana instalment April 24

Bhubaneswar, April 19: The state government is set to provide financial assistance to more than 1,70,000 women under the Subhadra Yojana on the occasion of Panchayati Raj Diwas April 24, Deputy Chief Minister Pravatī Parida announced Saturday. The financial assistance will be disbursed at a programme in Puri. The Deputy CM noted that women who have applied for assistance under the scheme by March 31, 2025 will qualify for financial support in this next phase. The government will launch a survey to streamline the scheme, Parida said.

Putin announces surprise Easter ceasefire in Ukraine

Moscow, April 19: Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a temporary Easter ceasefire in Ukraine, the Kremlin said Saturday. The ceasefire will last from 6 pm Moscow time (1500 GMT) Saturday to midnight (2100 GMT) following Easter Sunday. "Guided by humanitarian considerations, today from 18:00 to 00:00 from Sunday to Monday, the Russian side declares an Easter truce. I order that all military actions be stopped for this period," Putin said at a meeting with Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov, the Kremlin's Press Service quoted him as saying. "We assume that the Ukrainian side will follow our example. At the same time, our troops must be ready to repel possible violations of the truce and provocations from the enemy, any of its aggressive actions," Putin said.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Now a governor can delay a bill by 3 months. No worries—we'll just appoint a new one every 3 months

IRE ON STREET: Members of Odisha Pradesh Youth Congress scuffle with the police during a protest in the wake of the ED chargesheet against Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi in the National Herald case, in front of the ED office in Bhubaneswar, Saturday

11 dead in Delhi building collapse

New Delhi, April 19: Eleven people, including three children, were killed after a four-storey building collapsed in north-east Delhi's Shakti Vihar in the early hours of Saturday. The incident also left 11 persons injured. A CCTV camera installed at a nearby building captured the moment the building came down crashing, showing a thick cloud of dust filling the narrow alley. Teams from the National Disaster Response Force, Delhi Fire Services, police along with locals carried out the rescue operation for more than 12 hours at the site of the 20-year-old building in the Mustafabad area that collapsed around 3 am Saturday. There were 22 people inside the building at the time of the incident, most of them families. The owner of the building, Tehseen (60), and six members of his family were among the deceased. "We have lost an entire generation of our family in

JEE Main: Om Prakash scores a perfect 100

Bhubaneswar, April 19: In a moment of pride for Odisha, Om Prakash Behera has made history by achieving a perfect 100 percentile score in JEE Main, results of which were out Saturday. Hailing from Bhubaneswar, Om Prakash credits his success to the encouragement and unwavering support of his parents. Om Prakash emphasised that he minimised distractions by staying away from mobile phones. "I chose to stay away from phones and kept myself focused on specific chapters that are top-scoring. My parents always asked me to keep a plan 'B' so that I did not get stressed with the curriculum load," Behera said.

Protester crushed under bulldozer

Rourkela, April 19: Violence broke out in Bondhamunda area under Bisra block in Sundargarh district Saturday when a 35-year-old man died after being hit by an earthmover during the start of construction of a rail project from Dumerta station to Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP). The deceased was identified as Eto Ekka of Barkani village. The project is part of the RSP's plan to expand its transport infrastructure. Outraged locals pelted stones at the police and administrative officials, leaving Additional Tehsildar Purusottam Nayak and six police officers, including an Assistant Sub-Inspector, as well as the earthmover driver injured. All the injured were admitted to the Rourkela Government Hospital (RGH). "Eto Ekka died after being hit by an earthmover that was clearing the encroachment in the Bondhamunda area. The slum dwellers who had encroached upon the railway track started attacking the police, who were there to assist with the removal of encroachments. The police came under a bow and arrow attack by the slum dwellers, resulting in injuries to the additional tehsildar and six policemen, including an assistant sub-inspector," a police official said. The locals, who were protesting Friday as well,

written assurance on fulfilment of their demands. They have also given a 12-hour bandh call at Bondhamunda protesting against the death of Ekka. The agitators relented after DIG (West) Brijesh Rai, SP Nitesh Wadhwani, ASP Rajkishore Mishra, Panposh Sub-Collector Bijay Kumar Nayak reached the spot with other officials and held discussions with them. Six platoons of police were deployed at the spot.

In a first, robots race with humans in China marathon

Beijing, April 19: China Saturday held the world's first marathon of humanoid robots running together with human runners, showcasing progress in AI technologies amid Beijing's deepening rivalry with the US in robotics. Twenty-one humanoid robots, accompanied by their tech handlers from top universities and firms ran over a 21-km race through Beijing's Economic-Technological Development Area. The robots in different shapes and sizes running along with humans created a spectacle, drawing greetings from large crowds gathered on the sidewalks. The robots were launched sequentially

at intervals exceeding one metre, confined to dedicated tracks where battery swaps mirror Formula 1's pit stops. In the end, awards were distributed not just for speed but for categories like Best Endurance, Best Gait Design, and Most Innovative Form - celebrating both athletic performance and engineering ability. State-run Xinhua news agency, which described it as the world's first such race, also released a video footage in which several robots including one wearing a black sun hat and white gloves ran in along with the competitors. However, videos posted on social media showed that it was not a smooth race as some robots experienced technical hitches at the start

and even crashed. Among 20 competing teams, Tiangong Ultra from the Tiangong Team won the race among the robots with a timing of two hours 40 minutes, slower than over an hour and two minutes clocked by Elias Desta of Ethiopia who was declared the winner of the men's race. The marathon for the robots was regarded as a test of their core algorithms as they had to navigate com-

plex terrains like slopes and turns which demanded exceptional stability, reliability, and battery life, Xiong Youjun, CEO of the Beijing Humanoid Robot Innovation Centre told Xinhua. The China Electronics Society forecasts that China's humanoid robot market could reach approximately 870 billion yuan (about USD 119 billion) by 2030. "Robots completing the race isn't the finish line. It's the starting point for industrial growth and cross-disciplinary learning," said Liang Liang, Deputy Director of Yizhuang's Administrative Committee. "Their small steps today will become giant leaps for human technological progress tomorrow," Liang added.

Given that the humanoid robots on the track differ in height and weight, they are intended for future deployment in designated fields, including manufacturing, healthcare, and education, said Zhao Fuming, director of the Beijing Marathon Association. "Robots highlighted the race indeed. More cities may learn from such experience to integrate new concepts into marathon. However, robots may not necessarily participate as runners. They can also give a hand in security checking or other operation tasks," Zhao said. China's robot race was seen as an attempt to showcase its progress in AI tools amid its intensifying race with the US in the new emerging technologies.

leisure

FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
There are chances that there will be some disappointing moments today, foretells Ganesha. Your own recklessness may well be the cause. Ganesha says it's good to take inspiration from seniors once in a while.

TAURUS
Love will come knocking at your door today, predicts Ganesha. Your wits are likely to remain very lively in the afternoon. A romantic mood will ignite your evening, as you please yourself by showering attention on near and dear ones, says Ganesha.

GEMINI
You will realise that to stay strong and focused, you need the aid of all your loved ones and close relatives. You need to take time out and nurture these special relationships. Your emotions towards these people will become more concrete and strong. However, this could also lead to clashes due to differences of opinion during the course of a conversation, in the later half of the day, says Ganesha.

CANCER
You will tour a world of fantasy and accomplish beautiful creations in literary and artistic arena. Religious acts or visit to religious spots is likely. You will feel closeness to God. Spiritualism will impact your mind. Ganesha sees it as a fruitful and profitable day.

LEO
You are facing turbulent times, inspite of your hard work. Obstacles to progress are commonplace and should not tie you down. You need to keep working hard and sooner rather than later, the fruits of your labour will fall into your lap, says Ganesha.

VIRGO
You will gain a lot by way of goodwill by helping your mates at work. Besides, your work will make your seniors supremely happy. Your interaction with colleagues and friends will hold a special value for you. And, Ganesha says, you will enjoy your association with people you love.

LIBRA
Ganesha says those of you in the field of art will find immense success. You will be able to please your beloved with your presence and also shower them with gifts. You may buy something expensive as a gift today.

SCORPIO
At work, you will be able to solve many jigsaw puzzles that are pending since a long time. Also, you feel the love in the air; passionate about your soul mate, you try to express your intense feelings today. Prospective candidates may consider marriage proposals, predicts Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS
You seem to be impressed by the handicrafts and plan to take it up as your business. You are a family person and give much attention to your loved ones. You may be smitten by love-bug as passion and intimacy give rise to romance.

CAPRICORN
The first half of the day is not a favourable time to launch anything. If you have already planned a launch, try to postpone it to the second half of the day, feels Ganesha. If you are adamant to launch the product as per the schedule, be ready to face the consequences. The results may not be as per your expectations. Nevertheless, you will be ahead of your competitors.

AQUARIUS
Not everyday is the same day, and today will be one of those unfavourable days, feels Ganesha. Don't get disheartened if things don't turn out as per your expectations, as times will change. Be optimistic and enjoy life to deal with difficult times.

PISCES
Today there will be some turbulence on the personal front. Due to outside interference you will not be able to concentrate on work or find the time to think and make the necessary decisions. In such situations it might be better to express your candid opinion rather than keep quiet and suffer. Stand firm and keep your faith as your problems will be solved in the coming days, portends Ganesha.



TECHNICAL ISSUES PLAY SPOILSPORT ON GAGA'S SET

Singer-actress Lady Gaga faced major technical issues during her recent headlining performance at the ongoing Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival in California. With her microphone malfunctioning early, the 39-year-old was left helpless as the problem threatened to undermine her performance.

CARLOS SANTANA REVEALS BEST EVER CONCERT HE ATTENDED

Legendary guitarist Carlos Santana is sharing the details of the best concert he ever attended. Carlos revealed that the best experience for him was watching another legendary guitarist Jimi Hendrix.



Utkal, a tribute to state's heritage, unveiled

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

BHUBANESWAR: A breathtaking 17ft by 26ft artwork, titled 'Utkal,' by celebrated artist Guruvinyak Singh Budhwar, was recently unveiled at the opulent Rambha Palace, nestled serenely on the banks of Chilika Lake, in Ganjam.

The unveiling marked a momentous celebration of Odisha's vibrant and layered heritage through the lens of contemporary artistry. Commissioned exclusively for Rambha Palace under Hunch Ventures' cultural initiative 'Where Art Meets Purpose,' the mural offers a sweeping visual odyssey spanning over 5,000 years of Odisha's history.

From the Kalinga kingdom described in the legendary Indian text Mahabharata, to the stories of the Lord Jagannath and Konark Sun Temple, echoes of the Kalinga War and the spread of Buddhism under Emperor Ashoka, to the fervor of the Paika Rebellion, the imprint of the Mughal Empire, and the British Raj—the mural stands as a living chronicle of the land's past.

"It took one and a half years—13 hours every single day—to complete



Utkal, an artwork by nationally acclaimed artist Guruvinyak Singh Budhwar at Rambha Palace, Ganjam

Commissioned exclusively for Rambha Palace under Hunch Ventures' cultural initiative 'Where Art Meets Purpose,' the mural offers a sweeping visual odyssey spanning over 5,000 years of Odisha's history

this piece," said 23-year-old Budhwar, a self-taught artist and polyglot who speaks multiple languages, including Spanish, Japanese, and Latin.

"The research phase was incredibly eye-opening. I collaborated with an Odia historian based in the USA, and that journey

transformed my perspective entirely," added the artist. Sharing the broader vision behind the initiative, Himangini Singh, co-founder of Hunch Ventures, said: "There is so much of Odisha that remains unexplored. Our goal is to showcase the state in a grand, dignified way—and this palace, this art, are our first steps."

She continued, "The design and decor of the palace are deeply embedded in the essence of Odisha. It's a place where tradition breathes and heritage is felt."

Rambha Palace reopened its doors in 2024 after a painstaking six-year restoration, helmed by world-renowned Sri Lankan architect Channa Daswatte—protégé and friend of the legendary Geoffrey Bawa.

Originally commissioned in 1791 by British Governor Thomas Snodgrass, the palace had long lain dormant before being lovingly revived by Hunch Ventures.

Odia artists shine in Punjab

CHANDIGARH: The artworks of four Odia artists were highly appreciated at the ongoing National Group Art Exhibition at Shobha Singh Art Gallery in Punjab. The event, organised by Punjab Lalit Kala Akademi (PLKA) and curated by Vishwa Sahani, saw the artists being felicitated by the PLKA.

The works of Panchanan Samal, principal of Dhauli College of Art and Crafts in Bhubaneswar, two national award-winning sculptors—Chandan Kumar Samal and Narottam Das—and state award-winning painter Sofaiya Yasmeen struck a chord with the audience. A total of 65 paintings and 12 sculptures by 15 artists from different states of India were displayed.

Four abstract paintings by Panchanan Samal were also included in the exhibition. "The paintings show how we are destroying nature in the name of modernity," said Samal. Contemporary sculptures made of marble and granite by Chandan Samal mesmerized the audience, showcasing how people are losing patience in modern times and are desperate to achieve everything quickly.

Two ceramic sculptures titled 'Milk Cart' and 'Rasa Keli' by sculptor Das were a hit with the art lovers of Punjab. Similarly, Sofaiya's series, 'Turbulent' and 'Cheering a Dream,' based on plastic pollution, was appreciated by the audience.

The event will conclude April 22.

'Change in cinema will start on individual level'

Mumbai: Actress Tamannaah Bhatia, who is currently receiving a lot of positive response to her work in the recently released film *Odela 2*, has said that any change in cinema always starts on an individual level.

The actress recently spoke with this agency, and shared that any effort to bail cinema out of testing times at the box-office will come from an individual artist, who would make a brave choice, and others will follow suit.

She told *IANS*, "I think any effort in terms of change or impact when it comes to cinema, will always come from an individual, it's never going to be collective. We as creative people have to con-

stantly try to push the envelope in whatever capacity we have. And it's going to be a continuous pursuit. We have to hold our thoughts and not blame the audiences for not liking what exists. But we need to actually take responsibility of trying to make films that people like and feel entertained by".

The actress also spoke about *Odela 2*, and shared that the second part of the franchise flips the genre entirely. *IANS*



Rashami's advice to Urvashi

Mumbai: Popular television actress Rashami Desai has asked Urvashi Rautela to not play games in the name of religion after her controversial statement on the 'Urvashi Temple'.

Upset about Urvashi's remark, Rashami wrote on her Instagram stories, "It's sad that ppl don't even take action against such nonsense...Bharat main Hinduism is becoming joke. BTW, she politically correct when she kept repeating her answer. Representing India and talking senseless on purpose.... it's sad. Don't play game on the name of religion," with a broken

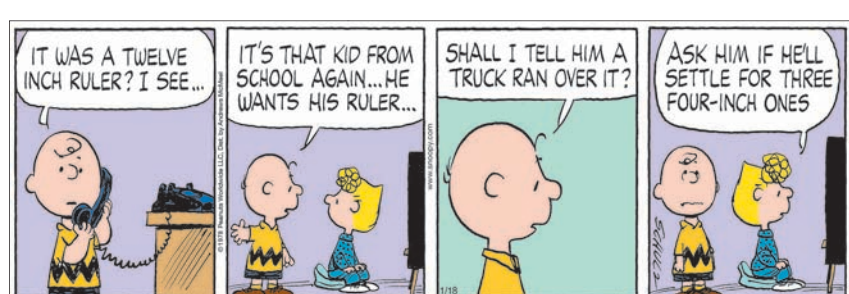


heart and folded hard emojis. Urvashi reportedly claimed that there is a temple named after her, Urvashi Temple near Badrinath Dham. Not just that, she further expressed her desire to have something similar in South India as well.

The priests and locals, who consider the temple sacred, are unhappy with Urvashi's comments. They have even asked the government to take action against her for hurting religious senti-

ments. Later, Urvashi's team issued a statement asking everyone to 'Listen to this video properly and then speak'. The statement read, "Urvashi Rautela said that there is a temple in my name in Uttarakhand, not Urvashi Rautela's temple. Now people don't even listen to things properly; just hearing 'Urvashi' or 'temple,' they assume that people worship Urvashi Rautela."

PEANUTS



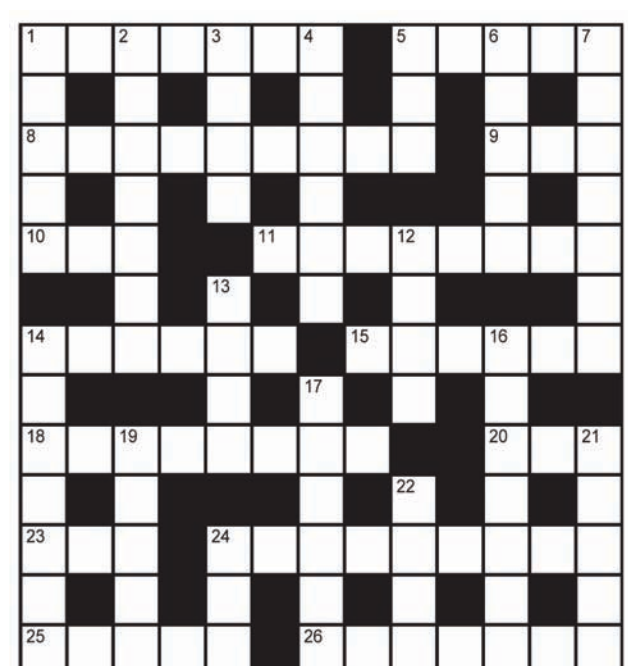
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Idiotic
 - 5 Free-for-all
 - 8 Crumbled
 - 9 Quarry
 - 10 Took the gold
 - 11 Military action
 - 14 Guru's forte
 - 15 Ill-tempered
 - 18 Small celestial body
 - 20 River inlet
 - 23 Possess
- Down**
- 24 Steep cliff
 - 25 Kitchen appliance
 - 26 Opposed to
 - 7 Numbers game
 - 12 Stopper
 - 13 Tusked animal
 - 14 Munitions
 - 16 UFO inhabitant?
 - 17 Movie theatre
 - 19 Ballroom dance
 - 21 Argus-eyed
 - 22 Tower site
 - 24 Bakery offering

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.

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

SOLUTIONS

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

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

SC to hear plea on uniform hate crime compensation



New Delhi, April 19: The Supreme Court of India is scheduled to hear April 23 a petition seeking uniform compensation for victims of hate crimes and mob lynching across the country. The plea has been filed by the organisation 'Indian Muslim for Progress and Reforms' (IMPARG), which argues that the current approach adopted by various states in granting compensation is arbitrary and lacks uniformity.

The petition highlights that despite the Supreme Court's 2018 ruling in the Tehseen Poonawalla case—which directed the Centre and states to formulate schemes for providing relief to victims of mob lynching—many states have either not complied or have implemented schemes with

Petition highlights arbitrary and unequal compensation practices across states, calls for court-mandated guidelines to ensure fair treatment for all victims of mob lynching and hate crimes

media attention, political influence, and the religious identity of the victim often determine the compensation, rather than the actual gravity of the incident or the suffering caused.

In many instances, the plea claims, victims from minority communities have received far lower compensation than others in similar circumstances.

The petitioner has urged the court to direct all states and UTs to establish fair, reasonable, and constitutionally compliant compensation mechanisms under Articles 14, 15, and 21.

By standardising compensation practices, the petitioner hopes to ensure justice and equal treatment for all victims of hate crimes and mob violence, regardless of their background or the region where the incident occurs.

RCM to host annual fest Brahmastra 2025

Bhubaneswar, April 19: The Regional College of Management (RCM) is all set to host its flagship annual fest, Brahmastra 2025, from April 25 to April 29. With 37 exciting events lined up, this mega B-fest promises to be one of the grandest celebrations in the institute's history.

Designed as a unifying platform, Brahmastra aims to bring together the academic community not just from Odisha, but from across India. The goal is to create a vibrant educational ecosystem where students — the professionals of tomorrow — come together to channel their passion, creativity, and drive into practical learning experiences.

Routed in the philosophy that “Learning happens through Doing,” Brahmastra provides a unique opportunity for students to gain hands-on exposure in areas such as leadership, teamwork, event planning, and strategic thinking.

Entirely student-led, and guided by a highly experienced and dynamic faculty, Brahmastra has consistently witnessed overwhelming participation and success in its past editions. This year, the fest has been scaled up with multiple verticals including management and IT competitions, sports, cultural showcases, food fiestas, and 'Drona' — a distinctive competition that celebrates faculty excellence and their role in nation-building.

Speaking about the event, RCM director Pritam Pal remarked, “Changing times demand a change in perspective. We need a 360-degree shift in how we educate the next generation — a mission too vast for one institution alone.”

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	36.8°	35.2°
Min Temp	21.8°	19.2°
Humidity	72%	81%
Rainfall	27.0	18.0

FORECAST

Partly cloudy sky with possibility of rain or thunderstorm.

CLASSIFIED LOST

I, Suraj Kumar Sahoo, age 35 years, S/o - Dhruva Charan Sahoo, Vill-Paikapada Patana, PO/PS-Narasimghpur, Dist.-Cuttack, State-Odisha declare that my Bachelor of Science (Mathematics) Provisional Pass Certificate has been lost on dt. 10.04.2025 issued by Shobhit University, Merut India by road, bearing SL No.-2K15SDEM31724 and Enrollment No.-UMH936AB130001.

ORERA 2.0 unveiled in key stakeholder meet

Bhubaneswar, April 19: A landmark interactive session was recently held in Bhubaneswar with members of the RERA Bar, introducing the enhanced Odisha Real Estate Regulatory Authority (ORERA) Version 2.0.

The session commenced with a welcome address by Dipak Kumar Beshra, joint secretary of the Finance department, who extended warm greetings to the distinguished panel and members of the Bar. He underscored the transformative potential of ORERA 2.0 in reshaping Odisha's real estate regulatory landscape.

Pradeep Kumar Biswal, Member (Administration), ORERA, hailed the upgraded platform as a game-changer in ensuring transparency, accountability, and efficiency in real estate governance.

Further elaborating on its benefits, Manas Kumar Mishra, adjudicating officer, ORERA, highlighted the role of digitisation in simplifying compliance and empowering legal professionals in a rapidly evolving, tech-driven regulatory environment.



In his address, Gopal Chandra Patnaik, member (Judicial) and chairperson-in-charge, ORERA, expressed gratitude to the Bar Association for their continued support and encouraged constructive feedback for the platform's successful rollout.

The session's highlight was a live demonstration of ORERA 2.0, developed by CSM Tech, showcasing its improved features, streamlined workflows, and user-friendly interface designed to enhance user experience.

The event concluded with a lively Q&A session, during which members of the Bar shared valuable feedback and suggestions. A vote of thanks was delivered by Mousumi Mishra, Under Secretary & Officer on Special Duty (Land Matters), who appreciated the attendees' engagement and support.

With ORERA 2.0 nearing its rollout, Odisha is poised to set a benchmark in transparent and technology-enabled real estate governance.



TAKING STOCK: Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati reviews developmental projects and governance at Special Circuit House in Puri, Saturday OP PHOTO

CHARGESHEET AGAINST RAHUL, SONIA

Youth Congress activists gherao ED office

Bhubaneswar, April 19: State Youth Congress activists Saturday staged a protest and attempted to gherao the Enforcement Directorate (ED) office at Nayapalli here over the chargesheet filed against party senior leaders Rahul Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi in connection with the National Herald case.

The protest was led by state Youth Congress president Ranjit Kumar Patra, and senior



Congress leader and Jeypore MLA Tara Prasad Bahinipati. Holding placards and banners, the Youth Congress activists raised slogans against the Union government.

The youth activists marched to the ED office by breaking through the police barricades in front of the Central agency premises. They were however, stopped from entering the ED office by police. They then staged a sit-in demonstration in front of the ED office.

Speaking to reporters, Patra said, “The ED has turned into a puppet in the hands of the BJP. The Modi government is using the agency as a political weapon to quell Opposition leaders who have been vocal both inside and

outside Parliament on issues such as corruption, price hike, crimes against women, farmer distress, unemployment, and deteriorating law and order.”

He said that the chargesheet filed by the ED against party leader Rahul Gandhi, former party president Sonia Gandhi, and others were politically motivated and reflected vendetta. “The National Herald and Young India cases are part of a larger conspiracy by the BJP to tarnish the reputation of Rahul Gandhi,” he asserted.

Manipal Hospitals raises liver health awareness

Bhubaneswar, April 19: To mark World Liver Day, Manipal Hospitals, Bhubaneswar organised a mega liver health screening camp and health talk session at the Maha Budha Society of India here Saturday. The initiative saw participation from over 250 attendees, reflecting strong community interest in preventive healthcare.

The event was graced by senior journalist and former Orissa bureau chief of The Times of India Rajaram Satapathy, and hospital director Saktimaya Mohapatra, alongside the hospital's gastroenterology team — senior consultant Pratap Behera, consultant Gyana Ranjan Rout, and consultant, GI & HPB Surgery Jyotirmay Jena.

Satapathy applauded the hospital's efforts, stating, “In an age of rising lifestyle ailments, awareness is the first step toward prevention. Manipal Hospitals has brought expert care directly to the community — a commendable initiative.” The camp, held from 10am to 2pm, included free liver function screenings and three expert-led sessions focused on liver health. Doctors emphasised the silent nature of liver diseases and the importance of early detection, particularly for high-risk individuals such as those with obesity, diabetes, alcohol consumption, or a family history of liver conditions.

Mohapatra said, “This reflects our commitment to not just treating but also educating the community. Liver diseases are silent killers — awareness is key.”



Spanish Ambassador Pujol meets CM Majhi

Bhubaneswar: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Saturday met Spanish Ambassador Juan Antonio March Pujol, and said the cooperation between his state and the European country will soon reach a new height. At the meeting, Pujol expressed his country's keen interest in building long-term technology-led partnerships, a statement issued by the Chief Minister's Office said. The discussions focused on deepening bilateral relations in sectors such as metallurgy and refractory solutions, it said. Majhi noted the recent investment by TIMAB Magnesium India, a subsidiary of Groupe Roullier, which is setting up a ₹90-crore refractory unit in Khurda. He also showcased the state's new renewable energy policy, urging Spanish firms like Siemens Gamesa, Acciona, and Iberdrola to explore investment opportunities in setting up solar parks, offshore wind, and green hydrogen projects in the state, the statement said.

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9 months pregnant woman murdered over dowry; 2 held



POST NEWS NETWORK

Rajnagar, April 19: A nine months pregnant woman was allegedly murdered over dowry by her in-laws in Balisahipatna village under Rajnagar police limits in Kendrapara district. Two individuals — the victim's husband and his uncle — have been arrested in connection with the incident, police said Friday.

The deceased, Kalpana Parida, had married Deepak Das of Balisahipatna last year. Kalpana, daughter of Jayaram Parida, hailed from Nalapahi village under Aul police limits. Her family had reportedly fulfilled the dowry demands including gold jewellery and household articles at the time of the wedding.

However, Kalpana's family alleged that soon after the marriage, her in-laws began demanding more dowry and subjected her to physical and

mental torture. Even after she became pregnant, she was denied medical care, claimed the family. Jayaram had repeatedly visited her marital home in an effort to resolve the issues amicably.

The family members alleged that Deepak, along with his mother, father and elder brother murdered Kalpana Thursday night. The family rushed to the house upon receiving information and found her body. Kalpana was reportedly in the ninth month of pregnancy at the time of her death.

Upon receiving the complaint, Rajnagar police arrived at the scene but found that the victim's in-laws had fled. Following raids at various locations, police arrested Deepak Das, the accused husband of the victim, and his uncle Ajay Das. A case (130/2025) has been registered at Rajnagar police station, with charges under Sections 85, 80(2), 351/4, and 103 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

Rajnagar IIC Naresh Kumar Sahu stated that a scientific team has been deployed to assist in the investigation. The body has been seized and sent for post-mortem. The exact cause of death will be confirmed upon receipt of the autopsy report. The shocking incident has triggered widespread outrage in the Rajnagar area.

Youth attempts suicide after losing ₹5lakh in online game

Balasore/Jaleswar: Sourajit Ray, 44, a resident of Teghari village in Chamaragaon panchayat under Raibania police limits and Jaleswar block, attempted suicide Saturday after reportedly losing nearly ₹5 lakh to online gaming. Ray, a former software engineer who had been working in Chennai, returned to his village a few months ago after quitting his job. He began giving private tuition to support his family. During this period, he became addicted to a mobile game known as Zupee Online Ludo. Initially, Ray lost small amounts of money in the game, but driven by the hope of recovering his losses, he continued to play. Eventually, he resorted to borrowing money from friends, selling rice and paddy from the household stock, and even using his elderly mother's pension to fund his addiction. Despite his efforts, he continued to lose money in the game. The financial strain and stress led to a state of mental despair. Overwhelmed by his situation, Ray attempted to take his life by slashing his hands and neck with a knife Saturday morning. Family members discovered him bleeding in an unconscious state. He was immediately rushed to the GK Bhattar Hospital in Jaleswar. Due to the critical nature of his injuries, he was later referred to the Balasore District Headquarters Hospital (DHH) for further treatment.

Tribals stage demonstration outside Nuapada Collectorate over land rights



POST NEWS NETWORK

Nuapada, April 19: Hundreds of tribal residents from eight hamlets under Gangadigad village in Chulabhata panchayat of Nuapada block staged a protest in front of the District Collector's office Saturday, demanding official recognition of their settlements and correction of forest land pattas.

Led by labour leader Bhaktabandhu Dharua, men and women gathered and staged a two-hour-long sit-in demonstration. Additional District Collector Subash Chandra Raita

met the protesters and assured that their demands would be examined and addressed, following which the demonstrators relented. A memorandum was also submitted during the protest.

Gangadigad village, located within the Sunabeda Wildlife Sanctuary close to the Chhattisgarh border, was established in 1956. The seven associated hamlets — Bhalupani, Baunsadongri, Gondalabahara, Mahulpada, Khaliapada, Santoshpada, and Banjipanipada — have long awaited recognition as revenue villages. Although a government notifica-

tion (No. 2183/2020) issued September 21, 2020 proposed village recognition, no concrete action followed. Many villagers have received forest land titles, but the pattas mention only land area — lacking details like plot and khata numbers — rendering them legally ineffective.

Due to this administrative gap, residents are unable to access caste and residence certificates, preventing their children from enrolling in schools and barring them from government schemes like PM-Kisan, CM-Kisan, and housing programmes. Without registration, farmers also cannot sell paddy to government mandis, often selling at lower rates to middlemen. Protesters demanded updated pattas, formal recognition of all hamlets, groundwater restoration, and action against timber mafias and negligent forest officials. Key community leaders, including committee president Ghasiram Majhi and others were present during the protest.

Ancient Jain statue found in Fakirpur

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar/Keonjhar, April 19: A statue of Lord Mahavir, the founder and last Tirthankara of the Jainism, was discovered during pond excavation on the land of Ranjan Kumar Raut in Balipada of Fakirpur village under Anandapur Municipality, sparking interest among historians and cultural enthusiasts.

The statue, estimated to be 1,500 years old, stands approximately 3



feet tall and 1.5 feet wide. Weighing over a quintal, the figure has been carved in the 'Kayotsarga' posture — a meditative standing pose often associated with Jain iconography. Deities are depicted on both sides of the statue, which resembles the Bahubali statue in the Gomateshwara Temple at Shravanabelagola, Karnataka.

Trilochan Sahoo, a local social worker and Sanskrit scholar, informed officials from the State Museum, along with histori-

ans and university professors, who confirmed the statue's cultural and historical value.

Given the rarity and significance of the artifact, the Fakirpur Sanskritika Parishada — led by President Saroj Kumar Sahu and Secretary Trilochan Sahoo — has requested the Keonjhar district collector, Anandapur sub-district collector, and the state's Department of Culture to take immediate steps to preserve the statue at the State Museum.

Sahoo emphasised the need for further research, noting that a deeper study could reveal valuable insights into the statue's origin and the region's ancient Jain heritage.



NATURE'S FURY: Fire fighters cut and clear trees which were uprooted during nor'wester thunderstorm razing the houses of two families to the ground at Gadgadahi Sahi under Baunsagada panchayat and Anandapur block in Keonjhar district, Saturday

OP PHOTO

HONOUR KILLING OF PREGNANT MINOR

Parents sentenced to life imprisonment

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur Town, April 19: In a widely discussed honour killing case from Binjharpur area in Jajpur district, a fast-track court here Saturday sentenced a couple to life imprisonment for the brutal murder of their 15-year-old pregnant daughter. The court also imposed a fine of ₹10,000 on each of the convicts, with an additional six months of rigorous imprisonment in default of payment.

The incident occurred in Laxminarayan Sahi under Binjharpur police limits February 14, 2016. The victim, a three months pregnant minor, was allegedly beaten to death by her father Nakula Jena, 50, and mother Sanju Jena, 48. According to reports, the couple,

with the help of some villagers, attempted to destroy evidence by cremating the body and disposing of the remains in the Kharasrota river.

A key eyewitness, Matajee Jena, wife of a local resident Bira Jena, had heard the girl's cries while passing by the couple's residence. The victim was reportedly screaming, "Don't kill me, I'm going to die." When Matajee returned along the same path an hour later, all was silent.

It later emerged that the girl's parents had cremated her body behind their house with the help of a few villagers. Some burnt bones and ashes were collected in a plastic sack and dumped into the Kharasrota river to erase evidence.

After hearing rumours about



the cremation, Matajee Jena filed a formal complaint with Binjharpur police February 16, 2016. Based on her com-

plaint, the police registered a case (45/2016) and launched an investigation. A plastic sack containing charred remains

Kesari Kund declared prohibited zone after 2 students' drowning

POST NEWS NETWORK

Champua, April 19: A day after two students drowned at Kesari Kund of Baitarani river on the fringes of Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj districts, the Keonjhar district administration has declared the spot located at Sarei village under Champua police limits as a prohibited zone Saturday.

Authorities have reportedly begun fencing the area to prevent public access to the site.

Due to repeated drowning accidents at the site, Sub-Collector Umakant Parida declared the area as a prohibited zone and instructed officials to install warning signage during his visit to the place Saturday.

The Sub-Collector directed Karanjia Revenue Inspector Chinmaya Mohanta to use a loudspeaker system to spread awareness and inform the public on the development.

According to reports, Parida visited the mishap site with Champua police IIC Debaki Nayak, tehsildar Sajat Marke, Assistant Collector Samarendra Das, and Champua RI Sampad Pradhan.

Local resident Dasharu Nayak, who helped recover the bodies, was commended for his efforts. Officials interacted with him to understand how the incident unfolded.

UCO BANK

Zonal Office, UCO Bank Building,
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POSSESSION NOTICE
For Immovable Property

(Under Section 13(4) of the Securitization & Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act., 2002 read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 for Immovable Property)

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the **UCO Bank, College Square Branch** under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (No. 54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued Demand Notices under section 13(2) of the said Act calling upon the Borrower/Guarantor to repay the amount with interest at the contractual rate together with incidental expenses and costs within **60 days** from the date of receipt of the said Notice. The Borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower/Guarantor and the public in general that the undersigned has taken **POSSESSION** of the property described here-in below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13 (4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said Rules. The Borrower/Guarantor in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the **UCO Bank, College Square Branch** for an amount plus interest, incidental expenses & charges thereon.

COLLEGE SQUARE BRANCH / Name and Address of the Borrower / Guarantor	Amount Outstanding as on Specified Date	Date of Demand / Possession Notice	Description of the Immovable Property
Borrower: Pluto Pet Shop, Prop: Mr. Sangram Senapati , S/o.: Mr. Yudhistir Senapati, At: Ring Road, Khan Nagar, Dist.: Cuttack-753012 / Guarantor: Mr. Sujit Senapati , S/o.: Mr. Yudhistir Senapati, At: Gopeswar Vihar, Kalyani Nagar, Darghapatna, Dist.: Cuttack-753013	₹22,85,845.86 + further interest & other charges thereon	08.01.2025 / 16.04.2025	All that part and parcel of Land and Building standing in the name of Mr. Sujit Senapati , S/o.: Mr. Yudhistir Senapati Situated at Mouza: Nuapada, Thana: Cuttack Sadar, Tahasil: Cuttack Sadar, Dist.: Cuttack, Plot No.: 73/6200, under Khata No.: 614/2693, measuring an Area: Ac. 0.018 Dec., Bounded by North: Laxmi Narayan Singh, East: Plot No.: 235, South: Abadhuta Mishra, West: Ismail Road

Place: Bhubaneswar, Date: 19.04.2025**Authorised Officer, UCO Bank**

Bank of India

Zonal Office : Star House, 1/1D, Jayadev Vihar, Nayapalli, Bhubaneswar-751015

POSSESSION NOTICE
[Rule-8(1)] of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules-2002

Whereas, the undersigned being the **Authorised Officer of the Bank of India, Tamando Branch** under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice calling upon the Borrower/Legal Heirs/Guarantor in the loan account given below to repay the amount mentioned in the Notice plus interest & expenses thereon within **60 days** from the date of receipt of the said Notice. The Borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower/Legal Heirs/Guarantor and the public in general that the undersigned has taken **POSSESSION** of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under Sub-Section (4) of Section 13 of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules. The Borrower/Legal Heirs/Guarantor in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the **Bank of India, Tamando Branch** for an amount mentioned below with interest & expenses thereon. **Amount paid if any after issuance of Demand Notice under SARFAESI Act, would be reckoned for ascertaining the dues payable at the time of realization/settlement. The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of Sub-Section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets.**

TAMANDO BRANCH / Name & Address of Borrower/ Legal Heirs/Guarantor	Liabilities due as per Notice	Date of Demand Notice / Date of Possession	Description of the Immovable Property
Borrower: M/s. Mamata Variety Store, Prop: Mr. Krupasindhu Pradhan , S/o.: Late Karunakar Pradhan / Guarantor: Late Karunakar Pradhan , Both are At: Plot No.: L-1156, Phase-II, Dumduma Housing Board Colony, Bhubaneswar - 751019 / Legal Heirs: 1) Mr. Krupasindhu Pradhan (Borrower and Legal Heir of the Deceased Karunakar Pradhan), S/o: Late Karunakar Pradhan, 2) Dhani Pradhan (Legal Heir of the Deceased Karunakar Pradhan), W/o: Late Karunakar Pradhan, 3) Soudamini Pradhan (Legal Heir of the Deceased Dinabandhu Pradhan and the Legal Heir of the Deceased Karunakar Pradhan), W/o: Late Dinabandhu Pradhan, 4) Soudamini Pradhan (On behalf of Shri Satyajit Pradhan, Minor son of the Deceased Dinabandhu Pradhan and the Legal Heir of the Deceased Karunakar Pradhan), W/o: Late Dinabandhu Pradhan, All are At: Plot No.: L-1156, Phase-II, Dumduma Housing Board Colony, Bhubaneswar - 751019, 5) Mrs. Mamata Patra (Legal Heir of the Deceased Karunakar Pradhan), W/o.: Gadadhar Patra, At/PO: Dumduma, Bhubaneswar-751019.	₹ 8,89,295/- + interest & expenses thereon	15.02.2025 / 19.04.2025	All that Part and Parcel of the property consisting of Land and Building situated over House No.: L-1156, Khata No.: 517, Plot No.: LIG-1110(P), Area : Ac.0.026 Dec i.e. 1125 Sqft, KISSAM: Gharabari at Mouza: Dumduma, P.S.: Khandagiri, SRO: Khandagiri, Tahasil: Bhubaneswar, Dist.: Khurda, Standing in the name of Late Karunakar Pradhan , Bounded by North: 30 ft wide CC Road, South: L-1157, East: 30 ft wide CC Road, West: L-1155.

Place: Bhubaneswar
Date: 20.04.2025**Authorised Officer**
Bank of India



FOCUS

COMMERCE

ASEAN SHOULD EXPAND

When US President Donald Trump finally unleashed his long-threatened tariff blitz, the scale and scope were far worse than most governments expected. It came as no surprise that China would be the hardest hit, but the punishing duties imposed on most Asian countries were a profound shock. Fortunately, with financial markets reeling, Trump announced a 90-day pause on most of these ‘reciprocal’ tariffs just hours after they took effect. Asian governments benefiting from this reprieve must now use the time they have gained to forge a more unified response and take bold initiatives that give them more leverage with the United States.



RM Manivannan

VIETNAM'S ATTEMPT TO APPEASE TRUMP WILL YIELD FEW, IF ANY, BENEFITS FOR THE COUNTRY, BECAUSE TRUMP NEVER NEGOTIATES IN GOOD FAITH

Consider that the tariff rate initially imposed on my country, Sri Lanka, which is only a few years removed from a political and economic crisis that forced our president to flee and pushed the economy to the brink of collapse, was a whopping 44%. Given that the US is Sri Lanka's largest export market by far, Trump's ‘Liberation Day’ tariffs would deliver a massive blow to the country's recovery when (I hesitate to say “if”) they are imposed.

Other Asian countries fared little better, and a few were hit even harder, with rates of 49% for Cambodia, 48% for Laos, and 46% for Vietnam. So onerous were these proposed duties that one might wonder whether Trump is compensating for his avoidance of military service in the Vietnam War by waging economic warfare on the countries of Indochina that were involved in that conflict. Now that the Vietnamese government—which swiftly raised the white flag by offering to eliminate all tariffs on US imports—has agreed to start trade talks during the pause, Trump must already



In Trump's Oval Office meeting with Ukrainian President, he repeatedly told his guest, ‘You don't have the cards.’ ASEAN, for its part, does have cards to play when dealing with the US, so long as it sticks together

think that he has won.

Vietnam's attempt to appease Trump will yield few, if any, benefits for the country, because Trump never negotiates in good faith. Worse, the country's actions are setting a high bar—at least in the eyes of the US administration's trade negotiators—for what its partners in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) will now be expected to deliver.

But the current ASEAN chair, Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, can still marshal the full power of the bloc to present a unified front and develop policy initiatives that can help shield members from the economic disruption caused by Trump's tariffs. This would be consistent with Anwar's efforts as ASEAN chair to deepen economic integration within the bloc and forge closer commercial links with the Gulf Cooperation Council and with other Asian economies.

The ASEAN Summit that Anwar is hosting in May will provide a venue for advancing this agenda. The assembled leaders will likely talk about diversifying trade partner-

ships—one of the best things any country or bloc can do when facing the kind of pressure that the US is applying. But they should also look for other ways to advance regional cooperation and enhance their economies' resilience.

Here, ASEAN can take a page out of the European Union's playbook, despite not pursuing the same goal of an ‘ever closer union’: expansion as a way to enhance stability along its borders. Perhaps the clearest example is the EU's ‘big bang’ enlargement of 2004, when it admitted ten countries, mainly in Central and Eastern Europe. The bloc's continued outreach to the Balkan countries and Ukraine, as well as its efforts to stimulate economic development in North Africa, are of a piece with this strategy.

ASEAN has already embarked on accession negotiations with Timor-Leste, which, if admitted (as many expect), would be the bloc's poorest member by far. But membership would help Timor-Leste diversify its economy and allow it to work with new partners. It would also diminish

lingering antagonism with Indonesia, which occupied Timor-Leste for more than 20 years following independence from Portugal.

Anwar and his diplomats have already made impressive headway on accession talks with Timor-Leste, and a breakthrough during Anwar's chairmanship would boost ASEAN's international prestige at a pivotal moment and help strengthen regional stability and security. But if Anwar wants to be even bolder, he should look outside the bloc's immediate vicinity for a new member: Sri Lanka.

True, Sri Lanka's GDP per capita would rank it in the bottom half of ASEAN members. But its location in the Indian Ocean would provide ASEAN businesses with access to the region's burgeoning economy. With the Indo-Pacific destined to become the world's economic center of gravity in the twenty-first century, Sri Lanka's strategic position can be a powerful fillip to trade and investment. And Sri Lanka itself offers plentiful investment opportunities for ASEAN construction, logistics, and tech companies.

Standing up to Trump—or any other superpower bully that may come along—requires engaging from a position of power. ASEAN enlargement—quickly accepting Timor-Leste and opening talks with Sri Lanka—would advance this goal. In Trump's notorious Oval Office meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, he repeatedly told his guest, ‘You don't have the cards.’ ASEAN, for its part, does have cards to play when dealing with the US administration, so long as it sticks together. Expanding the bloc would only strengthen its hand.

The writer is Chairman of Supreme Global Holdings.

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SPECTRUM

GEOPOLITICS

Growth in EU-Central Asia partnership

Samarkand hosted the first-ever high-level meeting between the European Union and five countries of Central Asia, on April 3-4, opening a new chapter in relations between the regions. It highlighted the strong interest of both sides in developing cooperation and strengthening partnership.

The intensification of cooperation between both sides in recent years has been acquiring a sustainable, systemic, and mutually beneficial character.

Since the emergence of new independent states in Central Asia, the EU began to establish bilateral partnership. From 1991, EU's strategy has gone through several important stages, which are conditioned by the dynamics of European integration, and role of Central Asia in world politics.

The first large-scale cooperation programme was “Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States”, 1991-2006, which provided support to countries in the region in conducting political and economic reforms, transitioning to a market economy, and strengthening the rule of law. Over 3,000 projects were implemented

totaling over 7 billion euros.

In the 90s, the EU policy in Central Asia had a pronounced resource-oriented character, with the former viewing the region primarily as a source of energy resources, actively promoting transport and logistics projects aimed at ensuring hydrocarbon supplies to Europe.

After 2001, the focus shifted towards security cooperation: combating terrorism and drug trafficking from Afghanistan and launching of programmes such as Border Management and Drug Precursor Control in Central Asia. The next important stage was adoption of first EU Strategy for Central Asia, 2007 and the beginning of perceiving Central Asia as a single region.

Central Asia is no longer just a bridge between East and West, as was traditionally perceived, but an independent actor in international ties.

Today, countries are interested in attracting European investments, technologies, and innovations to address priority tasks of ensuring stability and sustainable development in areas such as economy, industry, energy, transport, human capital, and climate change.

Strengthening political di-

alogue opens new opportunities for expanding trade and economic ties and developing industrial cooperation.

Implementing the “Global Gateway” strategy in transport and logistics sphere is also gaining importance. The region is transforming into a key transit node of Eurasian communications, where the Trans-Caspian International Route plays a special role. Among infrastructure projects aimed at developing the region's logistics potential, the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway construction project is vital.

A new impetus was provided by the first investment and transport forum of Central Asian and EU countries, in January 2024 in Brussels, wherein 10 billion euros were announced for modernising the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route connecting Asia with Europe.

Another vital partnership has been digital integration into the global economy. In March 2025, the TEI Digital Connectivity project was launched, focusing on developing satellite communications, expanding broadband internet access, supporting digital innovations, and enhancing cybersecurity.

Climate change is another area. Key initiatives, such as “Team Europe” strategy, “Green Central Asia” are aimed at effective water resource management, developing environmentally friendly energy, and adapting to climate changes.

The EU-Central Asia summit in Samarkand, chaired by Uzbekistan President, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, brought together leaders of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan, alongside President of European Council, Antonio Costa, and President of European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen.

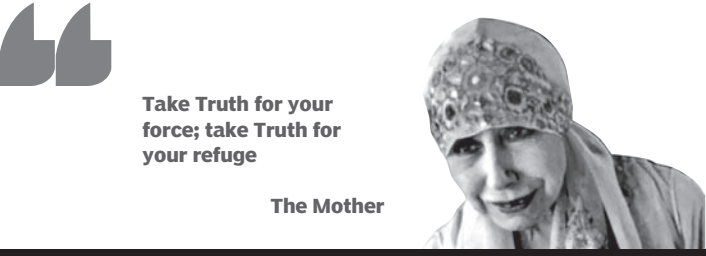
“The EU is taking Central Asia particularly seriously in the context of current geopolitical turbulence” - declared Margaritis Schinas, Vice President of European Commission before the summit “At a time when the world is becoming increasingly unstable and insecure, Central Asia remains a region of positive changes. Our cooperation with Central Asia is not a one-time event; we are focused on a long-term perspective”.

The author is Dy Director, Institute for Strategic & Regional Studies, Uzbekistan INFA



Bakhtiyor Mustafayev

SINCE THE EMERGENCE OF NEW INDEPENDENT STATES IN CENTRAL ASIA, THE EU BEGAN TO ESTABLISH BILATERAL PARTNERSHIP



Take Truth for your force; take Truth for your refuge

The Mother

China's Ascent

China's crime is that in the next few years, perhaps as soon as 2035, it will be the world's largest economy. Its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) will be larger at that point than that of the United States, if the average growth rates of both nations over the last 15 years hold.

This is unacceptable to the US, because it has been the dominant global power for the last century. This power has come mostly because of its economy, which is poised to go from number one to number two. That is China's offence and that is the reason for the tariff tantrum President Donald Trump is throwing.

What is called ‘the West,’ meaning Europe and its settler colonies in North America, Australia, and Israel, has no memory of a world where it has not been the ruler and the rest of us the ruled. What they refer to as the ‘international rules-based order’ is the manner in which what was once direct rule through colonialism and its forms has been replaced by institutions such as the UN Security Council, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank. Informal groupings such as the G7 are used to further coordinate action.

In the 18th century, the two largest global economies were China and India. This was a function of a world without many machines, in which national productivity and output depended on population and most people were occupied in agriculture. The more people a nation had, the larger its economy. The Industrial Revolution changed that, and productivity began to separate itself from physical human input. From the 1800s to the present, ‘the West’ has been at the forefront of this technological change. China has caught up. China will soon surpass. Citigroup published a paper in January 2023 titled ‘When Will China's GDP Surpass the US? And What Will It Mean?’ which concluded:

“Across a range of parameters, catch-up is likely to occur sometime during the 2030s, probably during the middle of the decade. When it eventually does occur, it will be widely noted in the press and, likely, in political discourse. It may be largely symbolic, but there may also be some geopolitical heft and prestige that accrues to the largest country in terms of GDP. For example, an economy's overall size enters the IMF's quota formula and helps determine voting shares. Also, certain activities—Olympic teams, space programs, and (most important) the military—are funded at the national level, and a larger economy means increased resources. In each of these endeavors, the world's largest economy may reap non-linear influence, strength, and other benefits.”

Much of this has already happened. The Chinese navy has more ships than the US navy. China built and operates an independent space station that rivals the International Space Station led by the US and Russia. China, including Hong Kong, won more gold medals (42) than the US (40) in the Paris Olympics last year. Even before its ascension as the largest economy, China has, for the last decade, rolled out the biggest infrastructure project in the world, the Belt and Road Initiative, and it is the largest trading partner for 120 nations, as opposed to 70 for the US.

A series of internal reports resembling Citigroup's have crossed the desks of Presidents Obama, Trump in his first term, and then Biden. Their response has been to try and handicap China, first by restricting its access to Taiwanese-made semiconductor chips designed in the US. The aim was to preserve the US lead in artificial intelligence, seen by many as a technology that will be as transformational as electricity.

This has not worked, as DeepSeek, the elegant AI produced by an obscure Chinese firm, showed. For good measure, the Chinese firm made DeepSeek open-source, meaning free, stymieing US efforts to monopolize the technology.

Huawei was banned by the West in 2019, denied access to markets and hardware, but it went into manufacturing and is, by some estimates, only a few years behind the two leaders in the semiconductor field, Taiwan's TSMC and Dutch firm ASML, in making the most advanced chips. What is required here is industrial design and manufacturing, and these are the two things Chinese companies have shown themselves to be superior at, so we should not be surprised if they catch up soon.

The tariff war, trying to totally decouple the West and its economies from China, is the latest and perhaps last attempt to try and stop the East. If this fails, the only option will be to use military power, and many in Washington are talking about this casually.

Chinese ships have begun to turn away from US ports after the raising of tariffs to an absurd 145 percent. In less than two weeks' time, on May 2, the duty-free exemption granted to packages from China under \$800 ends. At that point, with trade at a standstill, the impact of few intermediate and finished goods arriving from China will be felt throughout the US economy. Yes, China will be hurt by this, but not much: exports to the US are 2% of its GDP. The US will be hurt more. Say's Law of Markets tells us that supply creates its own demand. Meaning that an economy focused on producing goods will ultimately find some market for sale, including an internal market, because the workers producing the goods can buy them. That is China, the world's largest producer of goods and the sole manufacturing superpower. The US is a consumer. It has the hard task of now beginning to produce what it wants to consume, and going through economic pain and uncertainty in doing so, all because it cannot bear to see someone else as number one.

WISDOM CORNER

I am not afraid of an army of lions led by a sheep; I am afraid of an army of sheep led by a lion.

ALEXANDER THE GREAT

The battlefield is a scene of constant chaos. The winner will be the one who controls that chaos, both his own and the enemies.

NAPOLEON BONAPARTE

No society can prosper if it aims at making things easier-instead it should aim at making people stronger.

ASHOKA THE GREAT

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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



Congress crawling

Sir, It seems that Congress is moving away from its legacy and seeking to rediscover itself. It hopes that the road to justice will convince Muslims that Congress offers them respect and material well-being, and that this same road will enable it to mobilise the backward and the poor as one bloc. On paper, this new approach seems attractive and potent. After all, India needs a new social contract that is different from the immediate post-Independence utopia of development and distinct from the current dystopia of Hindu India. But can Congress shape this new social contract as a political imagination? Its trouble is that it has taken too long to even begin formulating a new ideological position. Two decades ago, unease about older positions, as well as about the bland hopes of a turnaround due to new economic policies, pushed the party's intellectuals to search for new formulations. When it regained power for a decade (2004-14), the party neither attempted to build an organization nor evolved any cogent ideological position. Once thrown out of power, it had all the time in the world to engage in both, but still failed to do either..

AR Jayanthi, CHENNAI


Mid-Day Meal funding

Sir, Can a paltry sum of Rs 10.17 be sufficient to provide a proper noon lunch for a 14-year-old school-going kid, that would contain twenty grams of protein, thirty grams of pulses, seventy-five grams of grains, the necessary oil, salt, spices, and the cost of cooking gas? This may sound ludicrous, but this is the undeniable fact for our government, which considers the meager sum of money enough to cover all costs at a time when the prices of all essential commodities are skyrocketing. The funding allocation for the PM-Poshan (Mid-Day Meal) plan is increasingly slow. The Centre recently boosted the budget for elementary students by 59 paise per capita and for upper primary pupils by 88 paise per capita, in addition to the allocation for December 2024. This year, the Central government budget allocates only 0.26 percent more to the current PM-Poshan plan. If this trend continues, the country will have to pay the price for children's long-term malnutrition.

Abhijit Roy, JAMSHEDPUR

I convey my heartiest greetings to Christians of Kerala and across the world on the blessed occasion of Easter, which celebrates the resurrection of Lord Jesus Christ

HERE, NOW



RAJENDRA VISHWANATH ARLEKAR

KERALA GOVERNOR

With the coming of the double engine government, UP has been mafia-free, goons-free and riot-free for eight years. UP is now discussed only for development

YOGI ADITYANATH

UP CM

Especially the issue of 'Waqf by user' has been deliberately brought up by the government to put Waqf properties into dispute

MALLIKARJUN KHARGE

CONGRESS PRESIDENT

SHORT TAKES

Juvenile held for raping 4-yr-old

Amethi (UP): Police have apprehended a juvenile for allegedly raping a four-year-old girl at a village in Uttar Pradesh's Amethi district, officials said Saturday. According to the complaint lodged by the victim's father, his daughter went to attend a 'tilak' ceremony in the village April 16. "It was there that a 14-year-old boy from the same village allegedly raped her. The father reported the incident to the police on the evening of April 18 when he brought the victim to the police station," SHO of Gauriganj police station Shyam Narain Pandey said.

Karni Sena activist held

Aligarh (UP): Police in Aligarh have arrested a Karni Sena activist, who announced a bounty on the head of Samajwadi Party MP Ramji Lal Suman last week, after he allegedly used objectionable and provocative language against Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav. Police arrested Mohan Chauhan, whose remarks were circulating on social media, Friday night from his residence under the Jawan police station limits in view of the "threat" to peace posed by his "inflammatory" comments.

Three dead as two cars collide

Rajkot: Three persons were charred to death after a car with eight occupants burst into flames following a collision with another four-wheeler in Gujarat's Rajkot district Saturday evening, a police official said. Three persons are severely injured, while a three-year-old girl is missing, the official added. The incident took place near Sardhar village along the state highway connecting Rajkot to Bhavnagar, the Aji Dham police station official said, adding both cars involved in the head-on collision were damaged in the fire.

4 Naxals held

Gadchiroli: Four hardcore Naxalites, including two women, involved in the killing of a C-60 commando during an encounter in February and carrying a cumulative reward of ₹40 lakh on their heads were arrested in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district Saturday, a police official said. Sailu Muddela alias Raghu (55), his wife Jaini Kharatam alias Akhila (41) as well as Zansi Talandi alias Gangu and Manila Gawade alias Sarita (21) were held by personnel from Tadgaon police station and 9 battalion of the CRPF, he said.


A shocking issue came before the country. Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi conspired to grab wealth worth ₹2,000 crore through the National Herald property. Today, the property is worth ₹5,000 crore

PIYUSH GOYAL

UNION MINISTER

SHINE TOM CHACKO ARRESTED IN DRUG CASE

Malayalam actor Shine Tom Chacko was arrested Saturday in connection with alleged drug use but was released on station bail the same day. He was granted bail after a medical examination and other formalities



Dubey: Close down Parl if SC has to make law

Nishikant Dubey, an MP from Godda in Jharkhand, is often in the vanguard of the BJP's political attacks on its rivals in the Lok Sabha and in articulating the ruling party's stand on various issues

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 19: Fourth-term BJP MP Nishikant Dubey, one of the more vocal party members in the Lok Sabha, launched a broadside against the Supreme Court Saturday, saying Parliament and state assemblies should be closed down if the apex court has to make the laws.

He first made a terse post in Hindi on X and later, in remarks to PTI, accused the court of arrogating to itself Parliament's legislative powers by striking down laws passed by the legislature and even giving directions to the President who, Dubey noted, is the appointing authority of Supreme Court judges.

"Kanoon yadi Supreme Court hi banayega to Sansad Bhavan bandh kar dena chahiye," the BJP MP said on X. His comment came following the Centre's assurance to the court that it would not be implementing some of the contentious provisions of the Waqf (Amendment) Act till the next day of hearing after the court raised questions over them. It is hearing several pleas challenging the constitutionality of the Act, which was passed by Parliament in the

Two major terror modules busted

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, April 19: Punjab Police has nabbed 13 alleged members of two major ISI-backed Khalistani terror modules that were being run from abroad and seized two rocket-propelled grenades, two hand grenades, IEDs and RDX along with other munitions, a senior officer said Saturday.

These modules were being controlled by proscribed terrorist outfit Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) from abroad through France-based Satnam Singh alias Satta and Greece-based Jaswinder alias Mannu Agwan, Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav said. Officials said more arrests are likely in the coming days.

With the busting of these modules, Punjab Police has foiled a conspiracy masterminded by Pakistan's spy agency Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) to disturb peace and harmony in the border state, the DGP said.

Counter Intelligence (CI) Jalandhar and District Police Batala dismantled the modules in two separate operations and 13 accused including a minor were held, the officials said.



BJP distances itself from Dubey's remarks

The BJP Saturday disassociated itself with the sharp criticism of the Supreme Court and Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna by its MPs Nishikant Dubey and Dinesh Sharma, with party president J P Nadda rejecting the comments as their personal views. "The BJP has nothing to do with the comments of MPs Nishikant Dubey and Dinesh Sharma on the judiciary and the chief justice. This is their personal comments, but the BJP neither agrees with them nor does it ever support such remarks. The BJP absolutely rejects them," Nadda said in a post on X. He said the BJP has always respected the judiciary and has accepted its suggestions and orders gladly because it believes as a party all the courts, including the apex court, are an inseparable part of our democracy.

first week of this month.

Dubey appeared to question the court's critical observations on the Act's dilution of the "Waqf by use" provision, saying it has sought documentary proof in cases involving temples, including Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, but has chosen to ignore the similar need in the ongoing case.

Citing Article 368 of the Constitution, he said that law-making is the job of Parliament, and the Supreme Court is meant to interpret the laws. The court can order the government but not Parliament, he asserted.

Dubey cited the court's earlier decisions to decriminalise

consensual homosexuality, which was covered under Section 377 of the erstwhile Indian Penal Code, and to strike down Section 66(A) of the IT Act to target its alleged overreach. He claimed that the court decriminalised homosexuality despite all religions considering it wrong and that Section 66(A) was required to curb the increasing misuse of online platforms to send objectionable contents.

Dubey, an MP from Godda in Jharkhand, is often in the vanguard of the BJP's political attacks on its rivals in the Lok Sabha and in articulating the ruling party's stand on various issues.

ED chargesheet a lie-sheet: Cong

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 19: The Congress Saturday denounced the Enforcement Directorate's chargesheet against its leaders in the National Heald case as a "lie-sheet" and asserted that it is not a legal but a political battle which it will fight in the coming days, as the party's top leaders discussed the issue and evolved its strategy.

The Opposition party also expressed confidence that it would win the battle against the central government on the Waqf (Amendment) Act and alleged that the BJP was deliberately targeting the Supreme Court "which was only telling the ruling party not to frame laws that went against the basic structure of the Constitution".

Congress general secretaries and in-charges in various states met here to chalk out strategy in the wake of the Enforcement Directorate naming former party chiefs Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi in its chargesheet in the National Herald case of alleged money laundering.

Asserting that no crime has been committed by the Congress leadership in the case,



the party said it would hold press conferences across the country from April 21 to 24 to counter the "misinformation" being spread by the BJP.

"No matter whose name they put (in the chargesheet), we are not going to be afraid," Congress chief Mallkarjun Kharge said at the meeting, with the party insisting that political vendetta was behind the ED action.

Slamming the Centre, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh claimed that people holding constitutional positions, ministers and BJP MPs were speaking against the Supreme Court in their bid to weaken the institution.

"They (BJP) are busy weakening the Supreme Court...



A labourer winnows wheat grain on a hot summer day, at Sohna Anaj Mandi in Gurugram

PTI PHOTO

Major rail tragedy averted in Begusarai

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Patna, April 19: A major train accident was averted in Bihar's Begusarai district Saturday evening when a fire broke out in the engine of a DEMU train running from Tilrath to Jamalpur.

The incident occurred near Danauli-Phulwaria station on the Barauni-Katihar rail section under the Sonpur Railway Division.

Eyewitnesses said that the situation turned chaotic after smoke and flames began emanating from the train's engine. Panic gripped the passengers, many of whom jumped from the moving train to escape the burning train. The visuals from the scene surfaced on the social media platforms show a terrifying scramble as passengers rushed to save their lives, creating an atmosphere of utter commotion.

Malegaon trial ends 17 years after blast, judgement May 8

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 19: Almost 17 years after a blast killed six people and left over 100 injured in Maharashtra's communally sensitive Malegaon town, the trial in the case got over Saturday with the special NIA court adjourning the matter to May 8 for judgement.

The National Investigation Agency, which probed the case, sought "commensurate punishment" for the accused who include former MP and BJP leader Pragya Thakur.

On Saturday, the prosecution filed its final written arguments, marking the end of the trial, presided over by A K Lahoti, special judge for NIA cases. The prosecution submitted that the blast in Malegaon -- a town with a sizable Muslim population -- was orchestrated by the conspirators to terrorize a section of Muslim community, disrupt essential services, create communal tensions, and threaten the state's internal security.

Six people were killed and over 100 injured when an explosive device strapped to a motorcycle went off near a mosque in the town, about 200 km from Mumbai, September 29, 2008.



The impact of this initiative extends far beyond troop welfare

It is a significant nation-building endeavour that is transforming the socio-economic fabric of remote border villages

tive extends far beyond troop welfare. It is a significant nation-building endeavour that is transforming the socio-economic fabric of remote border villages. By integrating 'First Villages' into the national digital network, this effort is bridging the digital divide, boosting local economies, promoting border tourism, enhancing medical aid and emergency services, and enabling educational access.

ber 29, 2008. Besides Pragya Thakur, Lt Col Prasad Purohit, Major (retired) Ramesh Upadhyay, Ajay Rahirkar, Sudhakar Dwivedi, Sudhakar Chaturvedi and Sameer Kulkarni are the accused in the case, charged under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and Indian Penal Code.

The NIA said in its final submission that based on "relevant, admissible, cogent, trustworthy, wholly reliable and proved evidence" it "conclusively and cogently"

Six people were killed and over 100 injured when an explosive device strapped to a motorcycle went off near a mosque in the town, about 200 km from Mumbai, September 29, 2008

established the crucial circumstances to form a complete chain of events. It was established that the accused were "directly involved in the part of larger conspiracy hatched amongst themselves and (were) instrumental in causing a bomb explosion," the document said. The blast took place during the holy month of Ramzan, just before the Navratri festival, the NIA pointed out, adding that the intention of the accused was to strike terror in a section of the Muslim community. The act was part of "their larger conspiracy" to "establish 'Aryawrat (Hindu Rashtra)', the prosecution contended.

Army facilitates mobile connectivity across Ladakh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, April 19: Troops deployed in some of the world's most inhospitable terrains including Galwan and Siachen Glacier can now stay connected with their loved ones as the Army has facilitated reliable high-speed mobile connectivity across the Ladakh region, officials said Saturday.

In a transformative stride towards bridging the digital divide and empowering remote communities, the Indian Army has facilitated unprecedented mobile connectivity across the remote and high-altitude areas of Ladakh, including forward locations in eastern Ladakh, western Ladakh and

the Siachen Glacier, Army officials said.

They said for the first time ever, troops deployed in some of the world's most inhospitable terrains -- such as DBO, Galwan, Demchok, Chumar, Batalik, Dras and the Siachen Glacier -- now have access to reliable 4G and 5G mobile connectivity. This initiative has proved to be a major morale-booster for soldiers serving in isolated winter cut-off posts at altitudes above 18,000 feet, allowing them to stay connected with their families and loved ones, the officials said.

The pioneering effort has been made possible through a collaborative approach under the Whole-of-Government framework, wherein the Indian Army



-- leveraging its robust optical fibre cable infrastructure -- has partnered with Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) and the UT administration of Ladakh, they added.

The Fire and Fury Corps has played a leading role in

enabling this synergy, resulting in the installation of multiple mobile towers on Army infrastructure, including four key towers in Ladakh and Kargil districts alone, the Army officials said.

The impact of this initia-

A particularly historic milestone was the successful installation of a 5G mobile tower on the Siachen Glacier -- the highest battlefield in the world -- showcasing India's technological prowess and resolve, they said.

The officials said local populations have welcomed this initiative with overwhelming gratitude. Mobile connectivity is not just a communication tool, it is now a lifeline for remote communities, fostering inclusion, opportunity and dignity. This visionary initiative by the Indian Army stands as a testament to its enduring commitment to national integration and development, echoing the spirit of 'Viksit Bharat' - India@2047, the officials added.

international

SHORT TAKES

5.9 magnitude quake jolts Pakistan

Islamabad: Pakistan was jolted by a 5.9 magnitude earthquake Saturday but no loss of life and property has been reported so far. According to the National Seismic Monitoring Centre, the epicentre was located near the Afghanistan-Tajikistan border region, with a depth of 94 kilometres. The quake was recorded at 11:47 am. Tremors were felt across a wide region of Pakistan, including Islamabad, Lahore, Peshawar, Rawalpindi, and various parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

US military to slash troops in Syria

Washington: The US military will consolidate its presence in Syria over the coming weeks and months in a move that could reduce the number of troops it has in the country by half, chief Pentagon spokesperson Sean Parnell said Friday. The US military has about 2,000 US troops in Syria across a number of bases, mostly in the northeast.

Christian appeals blasphemy sentence

Lahore: A Christian man accused of blasphemy in the eastern Pakistani town of Jaranwala will appeal against a death sentence handed down by an anti-terrorism court, his lawyer said Saturday. The 36-year old man was convicted of blasphemy over allegations he had desecrated the Muslim holy book, the Koran, claims that fuelled attacks on a Christian neighbourhood in 2023 in which hundreds of houses and churches were torched and thousands of people forced to flee their homes.

3 dead after small plane crashes into river

Fremont (US): Three people died when a small airplane crashed into a river in eastern Nebraska Friday night, authorities said. The plane was travelling along the Platte River and crashed into the water south of Fremont at 8.15 pm, Sgt. Brie Frank of the Dodge County Sheriff's Office said during a news conference.

Iran, US hold N-talks

REUTERS

Dubai, April 19: Iran and the United States agreed Saturday to task experts to start drawing up a framework for a potential nuclear deal, Iran's foreign minister said, after a second round of talks following President Donald Trump's threat of military action.

At their second indirect meeting in a week, Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi negotiated for almost four hours in Rome with Trump's Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff, through an Omani official who shuttled messages between them.

Trump, who abandoned a 2015 nuclear pact between Tehran and world powers during his first term in 2018, has threatened to attack Iran unless it reaches a new deal swiftly that would prevent it from developing a nuclear weapon.

Iran, which says its nuclear programme is peaceful, says it is willing to discuss limited curbs to its atomic work in return for lifting international sanctions.

Speaking on state TV after the talks, Araqchi described them as useful and conducted in a constructive atmosphere.

"We were able to make some progress on a number of principles and goals, and ultimately reached a better understanding," he said.

"It was agreed that negotiations will continue and move into the next phase, in which expert-level meetings will begin



Talks in Rome over Tehran's disputed nuclear programme ended

Iran, US to hold another round of talks next week

Trump abandoned earlier nuclear deal during first term

Wednesday in Oman. The experts will have the opportunity to start designing a framework for an agreement."

The top negotiators would meet again in Oman next Saturday to "review the experts' work and assess how closely it aligns with the principles of a potential agreement," he added.

Echoing cautious comments last week from Supreme Leader

Ali Khamenei, he added, "We cannot say for certain that we are optimistic. We are acting very cautiously. There is no

reason either to be overly pessimistic."

Washington's ally Israel, which opposed the 2015 agreement with Iran that Trump abandoned in 2018, has not ruled out an attack on Iran's nuclear facilities in the coming months, according to an Israeli official and two other people familiar with the matter.

Since 2019, Iran has breached and far surpassed the 2015 deal's limits on its uranium enrichment, producing stocks far above what the West says is necessary for a civilian energy programme.

A senior Iranian official, who described Iran's negotiating position on condition of anonymity Friday, listed its red lines as never agreeing to dismantle its uranium enriching centrifuges, halt enrichment altogether or reduce its enriched uranium stockpile below levels agreed in the 2015 deal.



I and President Donald Trump held "productive" talks on the ongoing discussions towards a trade agreement with the US to address the hefty import tariffs imposed by the American administration on countries around the world

KEIR STARMER | PRIME MINISTER, UK

MUSK SAYS HE LOOKS FORWARD TO VISITING INDIA LATER THIS YEAR

Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk Saturday said he is looking forward to visiting India later this year. The tech billionaire's remarks came a day after he and Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke and discussed the immense potential for collaboration in technology and innovation



US SC temporarily halts deportations of Venezuelan migrants under wartime law



REUTERS

Washington, April 19: The US Supreme Court early Saturday temporarily barred President Donald Trump's administration from deporting Venezuelan men in immigration custody after their lawyers said they were at imminent risk of removal without the judicial review previously mandated by the justices.

"The Government is directed not to remove any member of the putative class of detainees from the United States until further order of this Court," the justices said in a brief, unsigned decision.

The White House Saturday did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Conservative Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito publicly dissented from the decision, issued around 12:55 am.

Lawyers for the American Civil Liberties Union filed urgent requests Friday in multiple courts, including the Supreme Court, urging immediate action after reporting that some of the men had already been loaded onto buses and were told they were to be deported.

The ACLU said the rapid developments meant the administration was poised to deport the men using a 1798 law that historically has been employed on-

ly in wartime without affording them a realistic opportunity to contest their removal - as the Supreme Court had required.

"These men were in imminent danger of spending their lives in a horrific foreign prison without ever having had a chance to go to court. We are relieved that the Supreme Court has not permitted the administration to whisk them away the way others were just last month," said Lee Gelernt, the ACLU's lead attorney in the case, said in a statement Saturday.

The case raises questions about the Trump administration's adherence to limits set by the Supreme Court. It carries the risk of a significant clash between the two coequal branches of government and potentially a full-blown constitutional crisis.

Elected last year on a promise to crack down on migrants, Trump invoked the 1798 Alien Enemies Act in an attempt to swiftly deport accused members of Tren de Aragua, a criminal gang originating from Venezuelan prisons that his administration labels a terrorist group.

The president and his senior aides have asserted their executive power grants them wide authority on immigration matters, testing the balance of power between branches of government.

SNIPPETS

Anti-Israel protest: 20 attacks on American fast food outlets in Pak

Lahore: Pakistan government Saturday disclosed that at least 20 outlets of American fast-food chains across the country were attacked by religious extremists this month during the anti-Israel protests. One employee of the KFC (Kentucky Fried Chicken) outlet was killed and almost 170 suspects arrested. In most attacks, the activists of radical Islamist party -- Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) -- were involved. Pakistan's Interior State Minister Tallal Chaudhry told a press conference Saturday near here that the government would protect the lives and properties, whether they are of Pakistani businesses or foreigners investing here. "Anyone who would attack such outlets would be dealt with strictly," he said. He, however, appeared to be giving a clean chit to the TLP as he said all political parties, especially religio-political parties, have distanced themselves from such incidents. "Some party's workers might have been present in their personal capacity, but no party is connected to this crime. In fact, religious and other political parties have distanced themselves," he claimed.

Israeli strikes on Gaza kill more than 90 in last 48 hours

Deir Al-Balah (Gaza Strip): Israeli strikes in Gaza have killed more than 90 people in the last 48 hours, Gaza's Health Ministry said Saturday, as Israeli troops ramp up attacks to pressure Hamas to release its hostages and disarm. The dead include 15 people who were killed overnight, among them women and children, some of who were sheltering in a designated humanitarian zone, according to hospital staff. At least 11 people were killed in the southern city of Khan Younis, several of them in a tent in the Mwasi area where hundreds of thousands of displaced people are living, hospital worker said. Israel has designated it as a humanitarian zone. Four other people were killed in separate strikes in Rafah city, including a mother and her daughter, according to the European Hospital, where the bodies were brought. Israel has vowed to intensify attacks across Gaza and occupy large "security zones" inside the strip. For six weeks Israel also has blockaded Gaza, barring the entry of food and other goods.

WEEK'S BEST PICS



People pick buttercup flowers in a field near the Israel-Gaza border, in southern Israel, April 14

REUTERS



African elephant Pupy is seen in her enclosure at the Buenos Aires Ecopark, a few days before her transfer to the Brazilian Elephant Sanctuary, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, April 11

REUTERS



A view of the damage inside the residence of Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro following an act of arson, in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, April 13

REUTERS



This image provided by World Press Photo and taken by John Moore, Getty Images, was one of two runners-up for the World Press Photo Award of the Year and shows Chinese migrants warm themselves under a cold rain after crossing the US-Mexico border, Campo, California, March 7

PTI



Yazidis gather to celebrate the Yazidi New Year in Amuda, Syria, April 16

REUTERS

Business

Quote of the day

Currently, the Indian economy is the fifth largest in the world. End of next year, we will be the fourth largest. Year after that will be the third largest

BVR SUBRAHMANYAM | CEO, NITI AAYOG

Scheme Discovery is a game-changer - helping MSMEs identify the right schemes, understand their eligibility, and unlock critical incentives. By integrating these tools into the Tide platform, we're making it easier for small businesses to formalise, grow, and succeed in today's dynamic economy

GURJODHPAL SINGH | CEO, TIDE

Data centres are under intense scrutiny -- not only because they support modern AI workloads, but because they are becoming one of the most energy-intensive sectors of the digital economy

JASON FEIST | SENIOR VP, SEAGATE

Q4 RESULTS

Yes Bank profit zooms

Mumbai: Private sector lender Yes Bank Saturday reported a 63 per cent jump in the March quarter net profit to ₹738 crore, helped by a decline in provisions. The city-headquartered lender reported a 92.3 per cent increase in net profit to ₹2,406 crore in fiscal year 2024-25. The core net interest income was up 5.7 per cent at ₹2,276 crore for the quarter, on the back of a 8.1 per cent in advances and a 0.1 per cent expansion in the net interest margin at 2.5 per cent. Standalone total income increased to ₹9,355.39 crore in January-March quarter from ₹9,015.77 crore in the year-ago period, according to an exchange filing. Amid the wide ranging concerns on deposit growth, the bank reported a 6.8 per cent expansion on this front.

ICICI Bank profit up

Mumbai: ICICI Bank Saturday reported a 15.7 per cent jump in March quarter consolidated net profit at ₹13,502 crore. On a standalone basis, the second largest private sector lender's net profit for the January-March quarter came at ₹12,630 crore, up 18 per cent, as against ₹10,708 crore in the year-ago period. The core net interest income moved up 11 per cent to ₹21,193 crore, from the year-ago period's ₹19,093 crore. Provisions came at ₹891 crore in the March quarter, as against ₹718 crore in the year-ago period. The gross non-performing assets ratio improved to 1.67 per cent at the end of March 2025, from 1.96 per cent in December 2024.

HDFC Bank net rises

New Delhi: HDFC Bank Saturday posted a 6.6 per cent increase in standalone profit at ₹17,616 crore in the fourth quarter of 2024-25. The country's biggest private sector lender had earned a net profit of ₹16,512 crore in the same quarter a year ago. Total income increased to ₹89,488 crore during the quarter under review, as against ₹89,639 crore in the same period of last year, HDFC Bank said in a regulatory filing. The bank reported interest income of ₹77,460 crore during the January-March quarter of 2024-25, compared to ₹71,473 crore in the same period a year ago. The board of the bank recommended a dividend of ₹22 per equity share of Re 1 each for the year ended March 31, 2025.



Empowering the workforce with industry-relevant skills is paramount to enhancing productivity, improving quality and maintaining global standards

SHEKHAR G PATEL | PRESIDENT, CREDAI

INDIA EXPORTS FIRST POMEGRANATE CONSIGNMENT TO US VIA SEA ROUTE

India has exported 14 tonnes of pomegranate, for the first time through sea route to the US, the commerce ministry said Saturday. Traditionally the exports were done by air route. Now the industry is embracing the cost-effective and sustainable sea-freight mode. India shipped pomegranates comprising 4,620 boxes, around 14 tonnes, which reached the US East Coast last month



DEBT SURGES

MTNL defaults on over ₹8,300 crore loan repayments

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, April 19: Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL) Saturday said it has defaulted on loan repayments of over ₹8,300 crore to multiple banks.

According to its stock exchange filing, the telecom firm failed to repay dues to several public sector banks, including Union Bank of India, Bank of India, Punjab National Bank, State Bank of India, UCO Bank, Punjab and Sind Bank, and Indian Overseas Bank.

As per the filing, MTNL defaulted on both principal and interest payments in March 2025. The total outstanding principal amount is ₹7,794.34 crore, while the interest overdue stands at ₹551.90 crore. Including penal charges, the overall default amount touches ₹8,346.24 crore. The total outstanding principal amount stands at ₹7,794.34 crore, while the interest due is ₹482.97 crore.

The filing included a detailed breakdown of defaults with each lender. Union Bank of India is the largest creditor, with MTNL owing it over ₹3,633 crore, followed by Indian Overseas Bank (Rs 2,374 crore), and Bank of India (Rs 1,077 crore).

MTNL's accounts with these banks have been classified as Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) as early as August and September 2024, with the most recent default reported in February 2025 for Indian Overseas Bank.

"The total financial indebtedness of the company -- including both short- and long-term liabilities -- has reached ₹33,568 crore. This includes ₹8,346 crore of bank loans, ₹24,071 crore worth of Sovereign Guarantee (SG) Bonds, and ₹1,151 crore borrowed from the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) to pay interest on those bonds," the telecom operator added in its filing.

On the stock market front, MTNL shares closed at ₹43.80 Thursday, slipping 0.41 per cent on the National Stock Exchange (NSE). While the stock has gained nearly 25 per cent over the past 12 months, it has declined by about 13 per cent so far in 2025.

10K drivers stranded, demand instant payment



on their employment status.

The association claimed that many drivers are still awaiting their pending payments and weekly incentives of ₹8,000 that were promised by the company.

"This unexpected halt has left thousands of drivers without income or clarity about their employment status," GigWA said in a statement.

The group is demanding immediate payment of all pending dues, along with compensation worth three months' income for each affected driver to help

them deal with the sudden loss of work.

The situation follows serious allegations against BluSmart's co-founder, Anmol Jaggi, who has been accused by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) of misusing funds meant for electric vehicle procurement.

SEBI has launched a forensic investigation into Gensol, a company linked to BluSmart, in connection with the matter.

Driver partners say they have been left completely in the dark. Many of them do not own the cars they drive and are now worried about their future.

GigWA has also urged the

The pact's terms of reference include about 19 chapters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 19: Indian and US officials will hold three-day talks from April 23 in Washington for a proposed trade pact with terms of references (ToRs) covering around 19 chapters such as tariffs, non-tariff barriers, and customs facilitation, official sources said.

The Indian official team is visiting the US to give further impetus to the negotiations in the 90-day tariff pause window and discuss these ToRs to iron out differences on certain issues before formally launching talks for the bilateral trade agreement (BTA).

India's chief negotiator, Additional Secretary in the Department of Commerce Rajesh Agrawal, will lead the team for the first in-person talks between the two countries. Agrawal was appointed as the next commerce secretary April 18. He will assume office from October 1.

"Both sides will discuss the level of ambition. The ToRs will be further developed and discussed. What will be the pathway for talks? The ToRs



will include issues like tariffs, non-tariff barriers, rules of origin, goods, services, custom facilitation and regulatory issues," the official said, adding general contours of the pact will be discussed, besides scheduling, so that things can be finalised in 90 days.

The three-day deliberations assume significance, as a senior government official had recently stated that an interim trade agreement between the two countries could be finalised in the 90-day tariff pause announced by the Trump administration if it is a "win-win" for both sides.

In international trade parlance, the level of ambition refers to the extent to which two

countries are willing to commit to specific trade liberalisation measures.

The visit also follows senior official-level talks held between the two countries last month here.

Brendan Lynch, the Assistant US Trade Representative for South and Central Asia, was in India from March 25 to 29 for crucial trade discussions with Indian officials.

The two sides are keen to utilise the 90-day tariff pause, announced by US President Donald Trump April 9, to push the talks.

On April 15, Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal had stated that India will try to close the negotiations as quickly as possible with the US.

India and the US have been engaged in negotiating a bilateral trade agreement since March. Both sides have targeted to conclude the first phase of the pact by the fall (September-October) of this year, with an aim to more than double the bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030, from about \$191 billion, currently.

In a trade pact, two countries either significantly reduce or

‘Gold may hit ₹1L soon’



per ounce if trade tensions escalate further.

If this happens, domestic gold prices on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX) could climb to ₹1 lakh or even ₹1.25 lakh per 10 grams, market experts said.

Gold has already delivered strong returns to investors. In

the last five years, gold prices have jumped more than 110 per cent -- from ₹44,906 per 10 grams on April 17, 2020, to ₹95,239 per 10 grams on April 17.

Anuj Gupta, Head of Commodity and Currency at HDFC Securities, said gold prices are currently rallying due to trade war fears and recession concerns in the US. "The safe-haven demand has spiked as investors worry about the economic impact of Trump's tariffs. According to US Fed Chair Jerome Powell, a one per cent hike in tariffs could reduce US economic growth by 0.10 per cent," Gupta said.

Review meet of PSBs held



Bhubaneswar: A review meeting of ACP, CD ratio, social security schemes and other flagship schemes of government was held April 19 at Hotel Mayfair, Bhubaneswar by M Nagaraju, Secretary, Department of Financial Services. In the meeting, the Principal Secretary, Finance Dept, Govt of Odisha, Regional Director, RBI, Bhubaneswar, CMD of SIDBI, MD & CEO of UCO Bank, MD of State Bank of India, Bank of Baroda, Punjab National Bank, Indian Bank, Bank of India, Executive Directors of Canara Bank, Indian Overseas Bank, Bank of Maharashtra and Punjab & Sind Bank were present. Nagaraju appreciated the performance of SLBC, Odisha under Social Security Schemes, CSP Plus initiative and support of state government for implementation of various schemes. He advised banks to improve performance under education and housing loans. He also appreciated the increased volume of credit flow by banks in Odisha during last few years. The CMD, SIDBI Manoj Mittal informed about PRAYAS model of Udyam Assist portal and CGTME coverage of loans. The Principal Secretary, Finance Department Saswat Mishra informed that in every SLBC meetings of Odisha serious discussions are taking place on ACP achievement, CD ratio, Social Security and government schemes. The MD & CEO of UCO Bank and Chairman SLBC, Odisha Ashwani Kumar highlighted the performance of banks in Odisha in Social Security Schemes, ACP, CD ratio and Govt. sponsored schemes. The General Manager UCO Bank and Convenor, SLBC Odisha Goutam Patra presented the performance of PSBs through a power point presentation. The MD & CEOs, EDs of banks also assured to improve the performance of their banks in desired sectors.

BLUSMART SHUTDOWN

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 19: Over 10,000 driver partners of BluSmart have been left confused and without income after the electric ride-hailing company abruptly suspended its services.

The unexpected shutdown has not only affected daily commuters but has also sparked outrage among the platform's drivers, who say they were not informed in advance.

The Gig Workers Association (GigWA) raised strong concerns about the sudden suspension and said that drivers have been left without clarity

Equity MF inflows double in FY25, AUM jumps 23% on SIP rise

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, April 19: Active equity mutual fund (MF) schemes closed the financial year 2024-25 (FY25) with record-breaking inflows -- more than twice the amount seen in the previous year -- as fund houses capitalised on strong market sentiment, particularly in the first half of the year.

Despite market volatility, investor confidence remained strong, pushing overall assets under management (AUM) up by a remarkable 23 per cent for the year.

While existing equity schemes continued to see robust investor interest during the market rally, new fund launches added significant momentum.

Fresh offerings alone brought in ₹85,000 crore to the overall equity MF kitty for FY25, according to the reports.

In total, 70 new active equity schemes were rolled out during the year, with most of the action concentrated in the sectoral and thematic categories.

In March alone, SIP inflows hit ₹25,926 crore, contributing to the mutual fund industry's AUM rising to a historic high of ₹65.74 lakh crore -- a jump from ₹64.53 lakh crore in February.

Equity AUM alone expanded 7.6 per cent month-on-month, climbing from ₹27.4 lakh crore to ₹29.5 lakh crore.

TRUMP TARIFFS, RECESSION FEARS

In the year-to-date period alone, the yellow metal prices have risen by nearly 25%

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 19: The gold prices in India could soon touch ₹1 lakh per 10 grams, as global uncertainties continue to push investors towards safe-haven assets, experts said Saturday.

According to estimates by global brokerage Goldman Sachs, gold prices could reach \$3,700 per ounce in the near term, and possibly touch \$4,500

Big Tech in trouble: Google loses online ad monopoly case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sydney, April 19: Tech giant Google has just suffered another legal blow in the United States, losing a landmark antitrust case. This follows on from the company's loss in a similar case last year.

Social media giant Meta is also currently embroiled in a landmark legal battle in the US that could change not only how it operates, but how millions of people around the world communicate.

Hearings in the Meta case commenced earlier this week in a court in Washington DC, after Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg failed to settle the case for \$450 million.

Brought by the US Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the suit alleges Meta broke antitrust laws and illegally secured a monopoly over social media

platforms.

Along with Google and Meta, Amazon and Apple are also currently facing significant antitrust challenges in the US.

All of these actions are continuing despite major changes in both the FTC and the US Department of Justice as a result of the election of Donald Trump.

Collectively, these cases represent a substantial regulatory push to examine and potentially curb the market power of big tech. So what are all of these cases about exactly? What are the next steps in each of them? And what might they mean for consumers?

The cases against Google

The case Google just lost was related to online advertising.

The US Department of Justice alleged Google had behaved anti-competitively to monopolise the complex digital advertising technology market. This market

facilitates the buying and selling of online ads.

The US district judge, Leonie Brinkema, agreed Google has a monopoly over the tools used by online publishers to host ad space, and the software that facilitates transactions between online publishers and advertisers.

In her ruling, Judge Brinkema said Google had "wilfully engaged in a series of anticompetitive acts" which ultimately resulted in it obtaining "monopoly power in the open-web display publisher ad server market".

Google has said it will appeal the decision. The Department of Justice will ask the court to

require Google to divest parts of its ad tech business when the remedies phase of this trial starts later this month.

The second case involving Google is related to internet search.

The Department of Justice argued Google used exclusionary agreements, such as paying Apple billions annually to be the default search engine on iPhones, to lock out competitors.

In August 2024, a federal judge ruled Google acted illegally to maintain its search monopoly.

The case has now moved to the remedies phase. A crucial

remedies trial is scheduled to begin next week.

During this, the court will hear arguments on what actions should be taken against Google.

Potential remedies could be significant, with regulators previously suggesting measures such as restrictions on Google's Android operating system or even forcing the sale of its Chrome browser.

Google has stated its intention to appeal this ruling as well.

Major changes loading

Taken together, these lawsuits represent the most significant antitrust enforcement push against major technology firms in the US in decades. They signal a fundamental re-examination of how competition laws apply to fast-evolving digital platforms and ecosystems.

The outcomes could potentially lead to major structural

changes. These changes could include the forced breakup of companies such as Meta, or significant behavioural remedies restricting how these firms operate.

Regardless of the specific results, the decisions in these cases will likely set crucial legal precedents. In turn, these will profoundly shape the future competitive landscape for technology. They will also likely influence regulation globally, and impact innovation and investment across the digital economy.

What the cases do not reflect is the change in independence of regulatory bodies in the US, where consistency with White House policy is now paramount. The outcomes will surely test the relationship between Trump and the "tech bros" who've, quite literally, been at his side recently.

Auto sales in Odisha skid despite festive tailwinds and EV subsidies, revealing a stark urban-rural divide. As four-wheelers stagnate and two-wheelers falter, the electric push shows signs of early fatigue



FROM FESTIVE HOPES TO FALTERING SALES

ODISHA'S AUTO SECTOR HITS A SPEED BUMP

DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

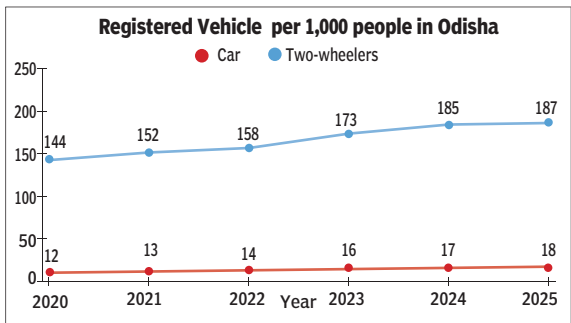
In a setback to the sales target set by the Federation of Automobile Dealers' Associations (FADA)—the apex body of the automobile retail industry in India—for the first quarter of 2025, Odisha recorded a 2.87 per cent year-on-year dip in total vehicle sales. The decline came despite a festive-packed quarter that included Holi, Mahashivaratri, and Vasant Panchami, which typically drives up demand.

The slump has impacted thousands of automobile dealers across the state, with the two-wheeler segment bearing the brunt. In March alone, motorcycle and scooter sales dropped by over 4,000 units compared to the same month in 2024. February had already shown signs of distress, with many dealers struggling to meet last year's sales figures. Meanwhile, the three-wheeler (passenger) category continued to stagnate, with just 78 more vehicles sold in Q1, in comparison to 2024.

Commenting on the trend, Mansur Baksh, Managing Director of MSB Bajaj—which operates over 20 showrooms in Odisha—described the decline as “unprecedented,” especially during what should have been a high-demand marriage season. “Western Odisha was the worst hit in terms of two-wheeler sales,” Baksh said. “For Bajaj, our entry-level models—110 cc, 125 cc, and 150 cc—took the biggest hit. However, our premium offerings like Dominar and Triumph managed to stay afloat.”

The commercial vehicle segment also mirrored this subdued trend. In March, just 606 three-wheeler (goods) units were sold, a marginal drop from 616 units the previous year. February saw 482 units sold, down from 495 in 2024. The only minor reprieve came in January, with a modest uptick of 85 units over the previous year.

VEHICLE OWNERSHIP LANDSCAPE IN STATE



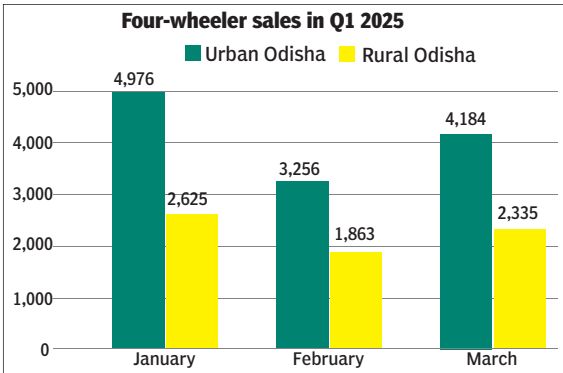
According to data available in Vahan portal, around 87.97 lakh two-wheelers and 8.47 lakh cars ply on Odisha roads. Similarly, the state has 187 two-wheelers and 18 cars per 1,000 population. While Odisha outpaces the national average of 185 two-wheelers per 1,000 population, the eastern state struggles to catch the pace of four-wheeler ownership at national level. India has 34 cars for every 1,000 population – nearly double than that of the state.

RURAL-URBAN DIVIDE IN FOUR-WHEELER SALES

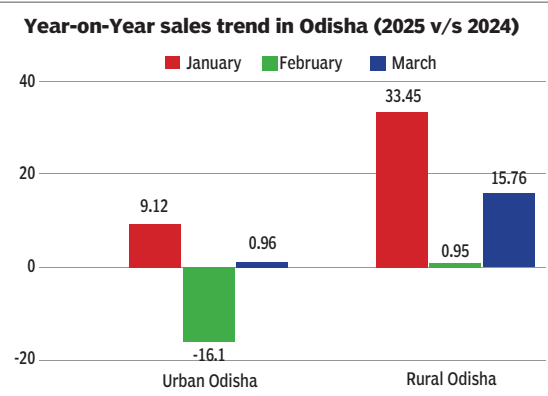
To decode the shifting sales dynamics between urban and rural Odisha, **Orissa POST** analyzed vehicle registration data from 38 Regional Transport Offices (RTOs) for Q1 of 2025. The data revealed a stark disparity in four-wheeler registration patterns.

Seven RTOs across urban centres like Bhubaneswar, Khurda, Cuttack, Puri, Rourkela, and Sambalpur accounted for 64 per cent of all four-wheeler registrations—totaling 12,411 units. Among rural and semi-urban districts, Balasore, Bargarh, and Ganjam led the charts with 766, 564, and 452 units respectively.

Surprisingly, urban hubs witnessed stagnation in four-wheeler sales. Bhubaneswar (Ekamra and Central), Rourkela, Khurda, and Puri reported lower sales than in 2024. Specifically, Bhubaneswar RTO-1 (primarily covering Bhubaneswar North) reported 5,593 four-wheeler registrations in 2025 Q1, down from 6,252 in 2024.



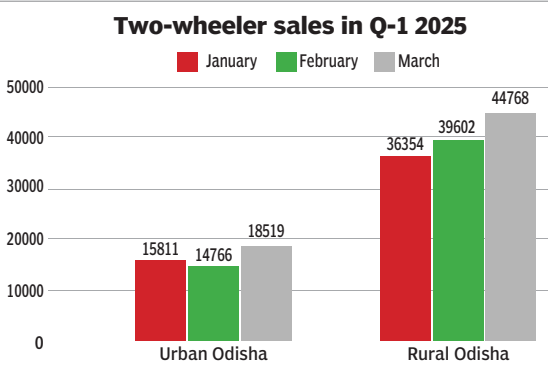
Shedding light on this shift, Aditya Patra, Managing Director of Aditya Group—authorised dealer for Hyundai and Mahindra—said, “Despite seemingly strong consumer sentiment, high inflation, volatile fuel prices, and tighter financing in Tier 2 and Tier 3 towns have curbed conversions. Customers are also waiting for upcoming model launches, which has created a temporary lull in purchases.”



However, the year-on-year percentage (2025 v/s 2024) change tells a different story, with several rural districts recording double-digit growth rates and urban centers face declining numbers. Rural areas like Balasore, Bargarh, and Ganjam have seen growth rates exceeding 15%, while traditional urban centers are experiencing negative growth ranging from 2% to over 10%. This reversal challenges long-held assumptions about vehicle ownership patterns in the state. The trend indicates improving rural infrastructure and rising disposable incomes in agricultural regions, potentially reshaping Odisha's economic landscape if the pattern continues through 2025.

Rural Odisha saw a 33.45% surge in January 2025 sales compared to 2024, and a 15.76% rise in March, signaling growing rural demand. Urban Odisha, conversely, showed volatility, with a modest 9.12% increase in January, a sharp 16.1% decline in February, and a near-flat 0.96% rise in March. This disparity underscores uneven economic growth, with rural areas catching up despite lower baseline ownership. Policymakers and automakers must address this gap to balance mobility access across Odisha.

TWO-WHEELER MARKET: MIXED SIGNALS



While two-wheeler sales mirrored the overall slowdown—dropping from 1.73 lakh units in Q1

2024 to 1.69 lakh in 2025—their distribution remained more balanced across rural, semi-urban, and urban Odisha.

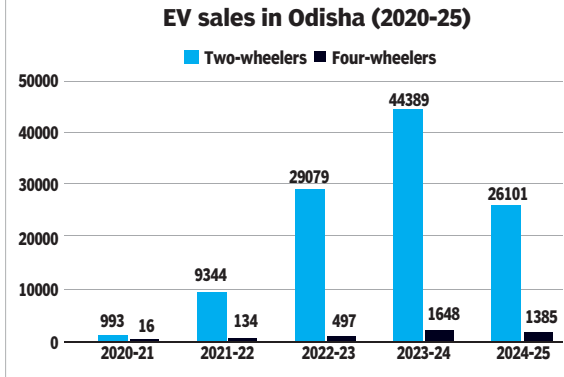
In contrast to low four-wheeler ownership, several districts displayed a robust uptake of two-wheelers registration. Kalahandi reported 8,320 units of two-wheelers, compared to just 419 four-wheelers; Balangir followed closely with 8,422 two-wheelers and 491 cars. Similar patterns emerged in Balasore (10,104 and 766), Koraput (6,602 and 435), and Sambalpur (5,768 and 860).

Unlike four-wheelers—where urban RTOs accounted for 64 per cent of sales—the urban share for two-wheelers stood at just 28 per cent. Bhubaneswar led the charts with 20,330 two-wheelers registered in Q1 2025, followed by Cuttack (12,071) and Sambalpur (5,768).

ODISHA'S TRYST WITH EV

Aiming for adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) by 20 per cent in 2025 end, Odisha government, September 1, 2021, announced ‘Odisha Electric Vehicle Policy, 2021’. The move was aimed at creating a conducive-environment for electric vehicle sales in the state. Accordingly, it declared a 15 per cent subsidy on two-wheelers, extending to a maximum of ₹5,000. The subsidy remained same at 15 per cent for three-wheelers and four-wheelers, with maximum discount benefit of ₹10,000 and ₹15,000, respectively.

Nineteen months later, the state government observed stagnant EV sales. It observed just 4.48 per cent electric vehicles got registered by the end of 2022. Following this, the state government in April 26, 2023 made the formal amendment to the ‘Electric Vehicle Policy’, thereby hiking the subsidy provided on two-wheelers purchase from ₹5,000 to ₹20,000. The subsidy for three-wheelers and four-wheelers was also raised to ₹30,000 and ₹1.5 lakh, respectively.



Significantly, the amendment ushered in a wave of EV purchases in Odisha before taking a dip in FY 2024-25. Data sourced from 38 RTOs stated that 29,079 two-wheelers, 2,643 three-wheelers, and 497 four-wheelers were registered in FY 2022-23. The vehicle registration numbers saw a whopping rise in FY 2023-24, recording registration of 44,389 two-wheelers, 5,447 three-wheelers, and 1,648 four-wheelers.

The numbers dipped in FY 2024-25, clocking registration of 26,101 two-wheelers, 5,884 three-wheelers, and 1,385 four-wheelers.

SUBSIDIES TO EV OWNERS

In response to a question on subsidies lent to EV owners in Odisha, Commerce and Transport Minister Bibhuti Bhusan Jena informed the Assembly in September 2024 that the highest amount of ₹54.83 crore was provided to two-wheeler owners in 2024. This was followed by ₹35.50 crore in FY 2023-24 and ₹6.46 crore in FY 2022-23.

Minister Jena said in the three-wheeler segment, the highest ₹10.45 crore was given to owners in 2024. This was trailed by ₹9.03 crore in FY 2023-24 and ₹96.45 lakh in FY 2022-23.

Similarly, in four-wheelers, he said the state government distributed the highest of ₹22.94 crore to owners in 2024, followed by ₹12.76 crore in FY 2023-24, and ₹1.40 crore in FY 2022-23.

HERE'S WHAT MARKET LEADERS SAY

The current global uncertainty—driven by geopolitical tensions, rapid AI integration, and volatile markets—is making consumers more cautious, especially with big-ticket purchases like cars. Many are hesitant to commit to EMI, opting instead to wait for better electric vehicle options or postponing capital expenses altogether. Job security concerns and fluctuating stock markets are also playing a role. Until there's more clarity and stability, this watchful spending behavior is expected to persist, reflecting a broader hesitation in both personal and investment decisions.

AKHIL PODDAR | FADA Odisha Chairperson

Compact SUVs now account for over 50% of vehicle sales nationally—a trend echoed in Odisha—driven by demand for higher seating, better ground clearance, and versatility. Sedans are in sharp decline, with OEMs offering just 3-4 models and minimal inventory. Overall PV inventory stands at 50-55 days, well above FADA's 21-day norm. Meanwhile, Bhubaneswar is seeing steady EV adoption, aided by infrastructure and incentives. Dealers remain cautiously optimistic, with FADA projecting modest growth across two-wheelers and passenger vehicles in 2025.

PRADEEP AGARWAL, FADA National Treasurer

Electric vehicle sales in Bhubaneswar have gained notable momentum over the past year, particularly in the two-wheeler and compact four-wheeler segments. The combination of government incentives and the gradual expansion of charging infrastructure across the city has bolstered consumer confidence. Although overall volumes remain modest in comparison to internal combustion engine vehicles, we are observing steady month-on-month growth, especially within urban and semi-urban clusters. Models such as the Hyundai Creta EV, Mahindra XUV9e, and BE.6 are witnessing increasing traction among city commuters.

ADITYA PATRA | MD, Aditya Group

The slowdown in Odisha's commercial vehicle segment was largely due to the election transition, which delayed project execution and affected the mining sector amid lease renewals. Retail buyers, especially first-timers, held back due to weak market sentiment, even as fleet operators continued purchases. In contrast, the tractor market saw nearly 9% growth, driven by strong government subsidies and favorable MSPs. Passenger vehicle growth was modest at 1.5%, with hatchbacks and sedans declining, offset by over 8% growth in utility vehicles. With the new government now settled, I'm optimistic about a strong rebound in FY'26.

TEJINDER S. BHUMBER | Director, Paramount Automotives

Typically, corporate and individual buyers boost purchases before fiscal year-end to leverage depreciation benefits and preempt price hikes. However, in March FY'25, higher discounting, inventory pressure, weak rural sentiment, and a lack of major ICE launches led to only mild growth. Demand remains strong for SUVs, especially hybrids like the Toyota Hyryder. Going forward, hybrid incentives, lower interest rates, good monsoons, and new launches will drive a shift from volume-led to value-driven, premium-focused growth.

SIDDHARTH GARG | Director, Gargson Group

The Indian auto sector's slowdown stems from high ownership costs, regulatory shifts, poor EV infrastructure, and weak rural demand. To revive growth, we need targeted policy support, affordable financing, and a faster EV ecosystem rollout. Strengthening rural outreach, supporting MSMEs, and skilling the workforce are crucial. Additionally, encouraging foreign OEMs like BYD, Citroën, and Vinfast to thrive in India will boost consumer choice, employment, and GDP, helping position India as a global auto manufacturing hub.

ADARSH DHAWAN DIRECTOR | Central MG and Central BYD

To the best of my understanding, the growth in transport vehicle sales may be witnessing a slowdown due to a market shift from lower tonnage vehicles to higher tonnage options. This trend is primarily driven by improved road infrastructure, lower operational costs, and the increased availability of high-volume cargo. Additionally, restricted financing options for first-time buyers by financial institutions are further contributing to the decline.

BIMALENDU MOHANTY | Manging Director, Trupti Tata

The Indian auto sector isn't failing—it's undergoing a complex transition. Economic stress, regulatory shifts, and the EV push without full ecosystem readiness have slowed growth. Rising costs, supply disruptions, and changing urban mobility trends add to the challenge. Revival needs parallel support for ICE and EVs, robust charging infrastructure, GST relief on entry-level vehicles, localized manufacturing, and rural financing. With targeted policy, skilling, and Make-in-India incentives, the sector can rebound and emerge as a global mobility leader.

MANORANJAN DAS | Managing Director, PMG Motors

The Indian automobile industry is at a critical juncture, navigating the shift from traditional ICE vehicles to an emerging EV landscape amid ongoing macroeconomic challenges. FY'25 has shown signs of recovery, with the two-wheeler and passenger vehicle segments registering healthy growth. Yet, electric vehicle adoption—especially in the 2W segment—remains moderate, held back by infrastructure gaps, pricing, and range anxiety. Odisha reflects this broader trend, showing resilience in personal mobility but a notable dip in commercial vehicle sales due to freight and financing constraints. EV penetration across all segments has improved modestly, signaling a growing consumer shift. However, dealer concerns over aggressive OEM targets highlight the need for more collaborative planning. Moving forward, the industry must focus on boosting rural demand, expanding charging infrastructure, and fostering OEM-dealer synergy. While the recovery is underway, sustained transformation will require policy support, strategic investment, and a customer-first approach to ensure the sector's long-term resilience and growth.

SHAMSHER SINGH HURA | CEO and Founder, Jas Motors

The Indian automobile sector is lagging in innovation and needs a stronger focus on research and development, especially when compared to Western countries. To revive growth, it's essential to encourage greater investment in R&D and technological advancement. Additionally, rationalising taxation can significantly boost the industry's prospects. Offering better scrappage incentives for end-of-life vehicles would also help stimulate demand and modernise the vehicle fleet.

PAWAN KUMAR SULTANIA | Managing Director, Infinity Hyundai



Titans topple Capitals

Buttler's 97, Prasadh's four-for lead GT to 7-wicket win over DC, top of the table



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, April 19: Jos Buttler braved cramps to rustle up a tempestuous unbeaten 97 to guide Gujarat Titans to a wonderful seven-wicket win over Delhi Capitals here Saturday.

After the impressive Prasadh Krishna-led (4/41) Gujarat pacers limited Delhi to 203/8, the home side paced their chase impeccably to reach 204/3 in 19.2 overs as Buttler played the protagonist role during his 54-ball innings.

There were mini-hiccups for the Titans in the form of early dismissals of skipper Shubham Gill and B Sai Sudharsan (36), who helped Buttler add 60 runs for the second wicket.

But Buttler batted around them with collectedness in the company of Rutherford (43) until the left-hander was dis-

missed in the penultimate over.

The English-West Indian pair milked 119 runs for the third wicket that pushed GT closer to the shore.

Buttler's batting is aesthetically violent as he exploited a pitch on which the ball came fluently on to the bat. The Somerset man has all the shots in the book but plays them in the calmest of ways.

Instead of moving around the crease like modern T20 batters, Buttler often relies on a strong body core and quick hands to unfurl his shots.

There was a telltale example of his methods when he biffed Mitchell Starc for five boundaries in a row in the 15th over.

Buttler did not move towards the ball but reached out with a feet firmly rooted on the ground as the ball sped to the ropes between covers and point regions.

On the other hand, Ruth-

erford's batting was all about brute power, as he showed while pulling pacer Mohit Sharma for two consecutive sixes as GT motored on.

There was not a popular Buttler hundred as Rahul Tewatia finished off the match with a six and four off Starc with four balls to spare.

The result also helped the Titans to move to the top of the table with 10 points, same as Delhi but the former has a better net run rate of 0.98 against their opponent's 0.58.

Earlier, Gujarat bowlers led by Prasadh, produced a disciplined effort to stifle the Delhi batting unit.

It started from the top-order. Abhishek Porel (23) started well, hammering pacer Mohammed Siraj for 16 runs in the first over.

The barrage included two fours and a six and he looked

IPL STANDINGS					
TEAM	M	W	L	NRR	PTS
GT	7	5	2	0.984	10
DC	7	5	2	0.589	10
PBKS	7	5	2	0.308	10
LSG	8	5	3	0.088	10
RCB	7	4	3	0.446	8
KKR	7	3	4	0.547	6
MI	7	3	4	0.239	6
RR	8	2	6	-0.633	4
SRH	7	2	5	-1.217	4
CSK	7	2	5	-1.276	4

set for a bigger score. But he perished in the next over to Arshad Khan, clubbing his over-pitched delivery straight to Siraj at mid-on.

KL Rahul (28, 14b) and Karun Nair (31, 18b) added 35 runs for the second wicket and played some delectable shots.

Rahul's six over long-on off Siraj and Karun's pick-up flick for a six off Arshad were simply wonderful. But Prasadh trapped his Karnataka teammate Rahul with a searing yorker that pinged his back foot to break the promising alliance.

The visitors then weaved another good stand of 53 runs through Tristan Stubbs (31) and Axar Patel (39) for the fifth wicket.

Stubbs's cover drives off Prasadh that raced to the fence testified his grace and power.

Just as the South African, who was dropped on 30 by Rashid Khan off his own bowling, was gaining in confidence, he chose to play a reverse paddle off Siraj only to be caught by Prasadh at short third man.

The Karnataka pacer returned to get rid of Axar as he continued to dig the ball into the pitch to get some bounce and grip to keep the batters guessing.Ashutosh Sharma (37, 19b) played some beefy shots as they crossed the 200-run mark.

Brief Scores:
Delhi Capitals: 203 for 8 in 20 overs. (Acar Patel 39, Tristan Stubbs 31; Prasadh Krishna 4/41) lost to **Gujarat Titans:** 204 for 3 in 19.2 overs (Sai Sudharsan 36, Jos Buttler 97 not out, Sherfane Rutherford 43).

LSG PULL OFF A HEIST

Avesh Khan picks 3-37 as Lucknow Super Giants beat Rajasthan Royals by two runs

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jaipur, April 19: Pacer Avesh Khan picked 3-37, including defending nine runs off the final over, as Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) defended 180 with aplomb and beat Rajasthan Royals by two runs at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium here Saturday.

At 156/2 in 17 overs, RR were very much in the hunt to complete the chase, as the equation read 25 runs off 18 balls. But Avesh, with his pinpoint yorkers, removed set batters Yashasvi Jaiswal and Riyan Parag, before taking out Shimron Hetmyer in the final over and completing a memorable win for LSG, leaving RR's home crowd stunned.

For RR, it was despair yet again as twice in a row, they have failed to close out straightforward chases. The defeat in Jaipur also meant that Sandeep Sharma leaking 27 runs in the final over, including giving away four sixes to Abdul Samad, did come back to pinch them hard, as RR slumped to their fourth consecutive defeat.

Chasing 181, after Jaiswal began by whipping Shardul Thakur for four, the 14-year-old Vaibhav Suryavanshi announced himself on the big stage by backing away to carve an off-drive off Shardul Thakur over extra-cover for six on his first ball. He then cleared his front leg to clobber Avesh Khan down the ground for another six.

Jaiswal and Suryavanshi continued to march forward by taking boundaries off Digvesh Rathi and Ravi Bishnoi before the former got his second straight fifty off 31 balls. But LSG broke RR's 85-run opening stand when Suryavanshi was beaten in flight by Markram and lost his balance, with Rishabh Pant quick to dislodge the bails. One brought two for LSG as Nitish Rana pulled straight to deep backward square leg off Avesh.

Jaiswal, who scythed balls through the backward point region for fun, found an able partner in stand-in captain Riyan Parag to ensure RR aced their chase. Parag flicked and thumped Prince for six and four respectively, before getting a glove edge off Digvesh for four



and tonking Avesh for six.

Avesh, though, flattened Jaiswal's middle stump with a perfect yorker, before trapping Parag lbw with another yorker on off-stump. With the equation reading 19 runs off 11 balls, Shimron Hetmyer took two fours off Prince via a drive and flick, before flicking to short fine leg off Avesh in the final over.

After David Miller dropped a sitter off Shubham Dubey, a boundary was needed off the last

ball, and Avesh conceded only one run to help LSG pick crucial two points and move back to the top four in the points table.

Brief scores:
Lucknow Super Giants 180/5 in 20 overs (Aiden Markram 66, Ayush Badoni 50; Wanindu Hasaranga 2-31, Tushar Deshpande 1-26) beat **Rajasthan Royals** 178/5 in 20 overs (Yashasvi Jaiswal 74, Riyan Parag 39; Avesh Khan 3-37, Aiden Markram 1-18) by two runs

Suryavanshi: Youngest cricketer to play in IPL

Vaibhav Suryavanshi, a 14-year-old baby-faced cricketer with oodles of confidence and determination, on Saturday became the youngest player to feature in the Indian Premier League as he turned out for Rajasthan Royals against Lucknow Super Giants here. At just 14 years and 23 days, Suryavanshi was the darling of the crowd the moment he walked alongside Yashasvi Jaiswal to open the Rajasthan Royals innings. With determination writ large on his face, the left-handed batter sent the Sawai Mansingh Stadium crowd into a tizzy when he smacked the first ball he faced -- fourth delivery of the first over from LSG pacer Shardul Thakur -- for a huge six. Suryavanshi, born March 27, 2011 -- the year when India won the Cricket World Cup under MS Dhoni -- has played just five First-Class games for Bihar in the 2024-25 season. He had made history in the IPL 2025 auction when, as a 13-year-old, became the youngest to get an IPL contract, being bought by the Royals for Rs 1.1 crore. Before Suryavanshi, Prayas Ray Barman was the youngest cricketer to play in the IPL at 16 years and 157 days. Barman had played for RCB against SRH in 2019. By hitting a first-ball six, Suryavanshi joined an elite club that has the likes of Rob Quiney (RR), Kevon Cooper (RR), Andre Russell (KKR), Carlos Brathwaite (DD, now Delhi Capitals), Aniket Choudhary (RCB), Javon Searles (KKR), Siddesh Lad (MI), Mahesh Theekshana (CSK) and Sameer Rizvi (CSK).



SHORT TAKES

Nayar back in KKR camp

Kolkata: Days after his removal as India's assistant coach, Abhishek Nayar Saturday returned to Kolkata Knight Riders fold but his exact role and position has not been specified by the IPL side. Nayar was part of the KKR set up as an assistant coach and mentor when they lifted their third IPL title last year, a decade after their previous triumph in 2014. He also played a pivotal role in player development at the KKR Academy. "Welcome back home, Abhishek Nayar," KKR posted on X, confirming his re-entry into the team setup. In an earlier post KKR revealed that he was back as assistant coach but soon deleted it from X. BCCI had sacked support staff members Nayar, fielding coach T Dilip, and the conditioning coach Soham Desai following a performance review in the wake of India's dismal run in Test cricket. Nayar had joined the national team in July 2024. His exit from the Indian team setup comes in the wake of a performance review by the BCCI, following India's dismal run in Test cricket late last year.

Former Croatia midfielder Nikola dies in car accident

Zagreb: Nikola Pokrivac, a former Croatia national team midfielder who played at the 2008 European Championship, has died in a car accident, his country's soccer federation said. He was 39. The federation announced that Pokrivac died Friday night in a car accident in the city of Karlovac. Pokrivac played for Dinamo Zagreb, Monaco and Salzburg before being diagnosed with Hodgkin lymphoma in 2015. Pokrivac made 15 appearances for Croatia's national team. Marijan Kustic, president of the Croatian Football Federation, called Pokrivac a "great football player" who "showed great courage in life by overcoming a terrible disease." He offered condolences to Pokrivac's family. Dinamo said in a statement that Pokrivac was a talented midfielder who played 69 times for the team and participated in four championship titles.

ICC WOMEN'S ODI WORLD CUP Pak won't travel to India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lahore, April 19: Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Mohsin Naqvi Saturday announced that their women's team will not travel to India for the ICC ODI World Cup later this year and play their matches at a neutral venue, following the hybrid model accepted earlier this year.

When Pakistan hosted ICC Champions Trophy recently, BCCI had refused to send Indian team across the border due to diplomatic tension between the two nations and their matches were held in Dubai. A hybrid model was agreed upon that allowed both India and Pakistan to play their matches at neutral venues if one of the two coun-



tries was to host an ICC event. "Just like India didn't play in Pakistan in the Champions Trophy and were allowed to play at a neutral venue, whatever venue is decided, we will play. When there is an agreement it has to be adhered to," he said.

The PCB chief said India and ICC being the hosts of the tournament would decide on the neutral venue.

India will host the tournament from September 29 to October 26 with Australia being the defending champions.

Indians qualify for worlds after dream run

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 19: India won three gold medals and a silver in the Bridge Federation of Asia and Middle East tournament in Dubai with the medal-winning teams qualifying for the next world championships.

The Indian men, women and seniors teams clinched gold while the mixed team won silver in the tournament held between April 10-18 under the auspices of the World Bridge Federation.

All four Indian teams qualified for the 47th world bridge championships to be held in Herning, Denmark from August 20-31.

The 2025 world bridge championships will include the Bermuda Bowl, Venice Cup, D'Orsi Trophy, and Wuhan Cup.



India will be among 66 teams from 35 nations taking part in the championships.

The Indian men's team that won gold included Sumit Mukherjee and Rajeshwar Tewari; Sagnik Roy and Kaustabh Nandi; Kaustubh Milind Bendre and Sayantan Kushari. The coach and non-playing captain was Arvind Vaidya.

The members of the seniors' team that won the gold were Ramaratnam Krishnan and B Prabhakar; Bachiraju Satyanarayana and Jaggy B Shivdasani; Subhash Gupta and Ravi Goenka. The coach and non-playing captain was Gir-

ma; Bindiya Kohli and Priya Balasubramanian; Bharati Dey and Alka M Kshirsagar. The coach and non-playing captain was Arvind Vaidya.

The members of the seniors' team that won the gold were Ramaratnam Krishnan and B Prabhakar; Bachiraju Satyanarayana and Jaggy B Shivdasani; Subhash Gupta and Ravi Goenka. The coach and non-playing captain was Gir-

ish Bijoor.

The members of the silver medal-winning mixed team were Rajeev Khandelwal and Himani Khandelwal; Rana Roy and Sheetal Bansal; Priya Ranjan Sinha and Bindiya Naidoo.

The coach and non-playing captain was Vinay Desai.

The sports ministry has been supporting the Bridge Federation of India since 2017. The ministry's Annual Calendar for Training and Competition (ACTC) covers expenses for training camps, overseas competition, coaches' expenses and equipment among others.

BRIDGE
FEDERATION
OF ASIA AND
MIDDLE
EAST

Kalinga Super Cup 2025: 15 teams eye lone Asian slot

East Bengal face Kerala Blasters in Super Cup opener Sunday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, April 19: Defending champions East Bengal face Kerala Blasters FC in the opening match of the Kalinga Super Cup here Sunday, with 15 teams vying for the trophy and a lone slot available for next season's AFC Champions League 2.

Unlike the last two years, when the tournament witnessed a group stage followed by semi-finals, this season will be played in a knockout format like in 2018 and 2019, meaning every game is a do-or-die affair.

Last year, East Bengal FC snatched the silverware, defeating Odisha FC 3-2 after a thrilling period of extra-time

in the final.

The Red and Gold brigade ended their 12-year wait for a national trophy, and are out to defend their crown on the same pitch.

East Bengal are no strangers to defending cup titles, having won back-to-back Federation Cups in 2009-10 and 2010, while Kerala Blasters are seeking their first-ever trophy at the national level.

Both sides had un-

derwhelming Indian Super League campaigns, ending in ninth and eighth place respectively, and this tournament presents them with a shot at glory. The winner of this clash will face Mohun Bagan Super Giant, who received a bye after I-League side Churchill Brothers' withdrawal, in the first quarter-final on April 26.

On April 21, another ISL side FC Goa, champions from 2019, will take

on Gokulam Kerala FC in an inter-league showdown.

The Gaurs couldn't make it past the group stage in the last two editions and will be eager to not only win the trophy again, but also mark a return to the continental stage for the second time after the 2021 AFC Champions League.

Gokulam Kerala



The quarter-finals will take place April 26 and 27, the semi-finals April 30, and the final May 3