

**Alaya's reflection**  
Actor Alaya F admits to a privileged struggle amid the industry nepotism debate  
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**Fighting rages**  
Military strikes kill dozens of Palestinians across the Gaza Strip as Egypt hosts an Israeli delegation for a new round of truce talks  
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**Titans beat Sunrisers**  
Gujarat Titans ride on the performances by Mohit Sharma and David Miller to register a clinical victory over Sunrisers Hyderabad  
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## INDIA's show of strength

Top INDIA bloc leaders participated in a rally at the Ramliila ground Sunday in what is seen as a show of strength and Opposition unity in the backdrop of arrest of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal just before Lok Sabha polls. Kejriwal's wife Sunita Kejriwal and JMM leader Hemant Soren's wife Kalpana Soren were also present. The leaders urged people to vote out the BJP in the Lok Sabha polls to save democracy and the Constitution.



Coming together at the 'Loktantra Bachao' (Save Democracy) rally at Ramliila Maidan in the national capital, the first such show of strength by the Opposition after the announcement of Lok Sabha polls, the leaders of 18 major parties gave a fervent call for unity among the alliance partners in national interest.

'changes' the Constitution, then the whole country would be 'finished'. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge described the RSS-BJP combine as 'poison' that has 'destroyed' the country. RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav also accused PM Modi of 'match-fixing' and urged people to vote out the BJP. The other leaders who attended the rally included Sonia Gandhi, Bhagwant Mann, Sharad Pawar, Akhilesh Yadav, Uddhav Thackeray, Farooq Abdullah, Sitaram Yechury, D Raja, Dipankar Bhattacharya and TMC's Derek O'Brien. The opposition leaders demanded the setting up of a special investigative team, supervised by the Supreme Court, to investigate allegations of 'quid pro quo, extortion and money laundering' by the BJP using the electoral bonds.

**New Delhi, March 31:** Top leaders of the INDIA bloc Sunday exhorted the people to defeat the BJP to save democracy and the Constitution and alleged that the Opposition has been deprived of a level playing field in the Lok Sabha elections due to the government's 'dictatorial' actions.

**President Murmu confers Bharat Ratna on Advani**  
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 31:** President Droupadi Murmu conferred Bharat Ratna, the country's highest civilian honour, on BJP stalwart and former Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani at his residence here Sunday. The ceremony was attended by Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Home Minister Amit Shah and the family members of Advani, the Rashtrapati Bhavan said in a post on X. Prime Minister Modi sat next to Advani as the President honoured the veteran leader with Bharat Ratna. Modi said on X that it was very special to witness the conferring of the Bharat Ratna on Advani and this honour is recognition of his enduring contributions to the nation's progress.

## Sukanta, Chiranjib join BJD

**Bhubaneswar, March 31:** BJP MLA Sukanta Nayak of Nilagiri in Balasore district joined the ruling BJD Sunday. A number of state Congress leaders, including its former working president Chiranjib Biswal, also joined the BJD. Nayak, who quit the BJP Friday, joined the BJD along with his supporters at its headquarters,

Sankha Bhawan. Apart from Biswal, the other Congress leaders who joined the BJD are former state general secretary Ajay Ketan Samal and ex-secretary Jogendra Bahubalendra. Former Kuchinda MLA Brundaban Majhi, who had quit the BJD ahead of the 2019 elections, also returned to the party. He was in the BJP. Meanwhile, former BJD MLA from Korei, Akash Das Nayak joined the BJD.

## CUET-UG deadline extended

**New Delhi, March 31:** The application deadline for Common University Entrance Test (CUET)-UG has been further extended till April 5, the National Testing Agency announced Sunday. The first deadline was March 26, which was initially extended to March 31. "The deadline for online submission of the application form for the CUET-UG - 2024 has been extended up to 9:50 pm on April 5, 2024 based on the request received from candidates and other stakeholders," said Sadhana Parashar, Senior Director (Exams), NTA.

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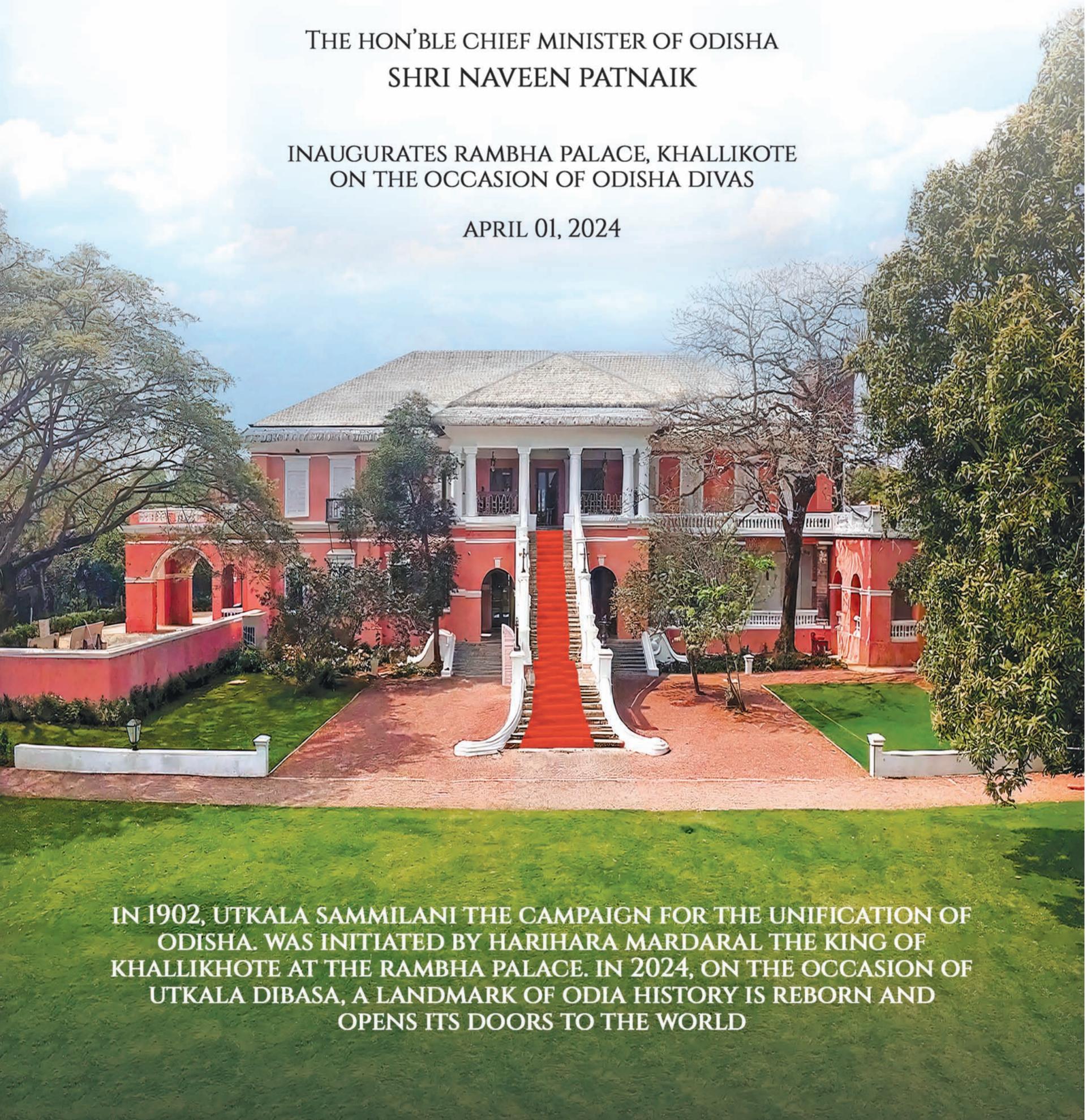


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APRIL 01, 2024



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# ₹1.04cr fraud busted; 3 held



The fraud came to fore when some customers of the bank's Dhenkanal branch complained to the bank authorities about some suspicious unauthorised transactions from their ICICI bank accounts

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, March 31:** The Cyber Crime Unit of Odisha Crime Branch busted a racket allegedly involved in misappropriation of money to the tune of more than ₹1.04 crore deposited in the ICICI Bank, Dhenkanal Branch during 2021-22, said a CB official Sunday. The Crime Branch (CB) has so far arrested three persons including a couple. The accused were identified as Swagatika Swain (28), her husband Manoj Kumar Sahoo (29), and their associate, Prasant Kumar Sahoo. Swagatika was posted at the Dhenkanal branch of the private bank as the relationship manager while accused Prasant, works as the Deputy Bank Manager.

The fraud came to fore when some customers of the bank's Dhenkanal branch complained to the bank authorities about some suspicious unauthorised transactions from their ICICI bank accounts. "The bank had got an internal enquiry done and it was ascertained that fraudulent transactions were carried out in the form of unauthorised overdraft against fixed deposits. Such over-drafts were availed through i-Mobile application, fake investments in mutual funds, pre-closure of FD and misappropriation of premium amounts related to ICICI prudential policy. Swagatika had carried out the alleged disputed transactions for personal gain. All the alleged transactions were done from February 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022,"

stated the CB official. Later, the Regional Head of the ICICI Bank's Financial Crime Prevention Group lodged a complaint with the Crime Branch in December last year. The CB launched an investigation registering a case (33/23) in this regard. The sleuths found, during the course of the investigation, that the accused Swagatika, the then Relationship Manager, was entrusted to provide door-step service to the elite customers of the branch. "The accused couple targeted mostly the senior citizens who were less aware about the use of electronic gadgets and online banking and in the veil of maintaining good relationships with such customers; the couple used to access their personal details and gradually started misusing the trust. As a banker, Swagatika had access to the banking system. She could even change the registered phone numbers of targeted accounts violating the rules, without the knowledge of the Account Holder and keeping them in the dark about the fraudulent transactions," added the CB official. The accused couple used to invest the ill-gotten money with a money lender. The cops also suspect the involvement of the Deputy Branch Manager and Manager of the said branch through their silent approval of such acts. The back has so far reimbursed misappropriated money to the tune of ₹87.54, 047 belonging to 11 defrauded account holders. All three accused were produced before the SDJM court here, Sunday.



**BURNING BRIGHT:** The Commissionerate Police building is all decked up on the eve of Utkal Divas celebrations in Capital city, Sunday OP PHOTO

# BEADS holds event on climate change & art

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

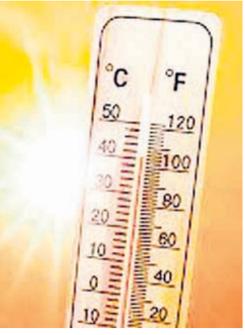
**Bhubaneswar, March 31:** Bhubaneswar Experimental Art and Design Studio (BEADS), under its initiative, 'ADC - Art, Design & Conversations' organised an event titled 'Climate Change & Art - A Green Perspective' at the Utsha Foundation for contemporary art here recently. The event was centered around a key panel discussion between three sustainability advocates, including Ravi Agarwal, a renowned artist, photographer, and environmental campaigner; Aditya Panda, an eminent wildlife con-



servationist and Jagannath Panda, a global artist and sculptor. Shedding light on the current issues surrounding the environment, the experts examined the potential of art to catalyze real change in the face of the climate crisis. Expressing his views, Ravi Agarwal said, "Art is not merely a mirror reflecting the world around us; it's a potent tool to shape it. Through this initiative, we are trying to illuminate the powerful intersection of art and activism." Jagannath Panda, artist and

mentor, BEADS said, "The discussion at the event was motivated towards inspiring future course of action. By bringing together artists, environmental advocates and the community, we can foster a creative conversation that tackles the climate crisis from a fresh perspective." Elaborating on the topic, wildlife conservationist Aditya Panda said, "Climate change is a complex issue, and fostering a collective understanding necessitates creative exploration from various disciplines." BEADS Co-Founder and Managing Director Sandeep Hota moderated the discussion.

# Temperature likely to rise from April 2



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 31:** The India Meteorological Department (IMD), Bhubaneswar Sunday said that the maximum (day) temperature and minimum (night) temperature are very likely to increase in several districts of the state from April 2 onwards as the cyclonic circulation over north Chhattisgarh and neighbourhood at 0.9 km above mean sea level has become less marked. Due to anticipated rise in maximum temperature, presence of high humidity in the atmosphere, hot and humid weather conditions

are very likely to prevail across the State from April 2 to April 6. People have been advised to take precautionary measures for hot and humid weather conditions while going outside in peak hours of the day between 11am and 3pm during the period. In its mid-day bulletin, the IMD mentioned, "Maximum temperatures observed appreciable rise at one or two places over the districts of South Interior Odisha and no large change at elsewhere over the districts of Odisha. They were above normal at a few places over the districts of Odisha and normal at elsewhere over the districts of Odisha. Minimum temperatures observed appreciable fall at one or two places over the districts of South Coastal Odisha and North Interior Odisha and no large change at elsewhere over the districts of Odisha. They were markedly below normal at one or two places over the districts of Interior Odisha, appreciably above normal at a few places over the districts of Interior Odisha, above normal at many places over the districts of Coastal Odisha and at one or two places over the districts of Interior Odisha and normal at elsewhere over the districts of Odisha."

## POLITICKLE by MANJUL



### BHUBANESWAR BAR ASSOCIATION POLL

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 31:** Advocates Kundan Rath and Dipak Kumar Dash have been elected as president and secretary, respectively in the Bhubaneswar Bar Association election that was held Saturday.

### Kundan president, Dipak secretary

Durga Prasad Sahu has been elected as the vice-president and Antaryami Biswal as joint secretary of the Bar Association while Kuldeep Routray was elected as assistant secretary. Similarly, Jagdish Routray has become the treasurer. Two women advocates Anupama Mohanty and Diptimayee Panda have been elected to the working committee. Earlier, eight advocates were elected unopposed as members of the working committee. Of the eligible 4,140 advocates, 2831 had cast their ballot in the election for which voting took place from 8am to 3pm. The counting of the votes began from 4pm, informed chief election officer of the association Jitendra Kumar Nayak.

# Review meeting held for Ashokastami fest



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, March 31:** A review meeting with different department officials was held under the supervision of the District Collector Chanchal Rana for the upcoming Ashokastami Car festival of Lord Lingaraj from April 16-20, here. The collector sought everyone's cooperation for the auspicious occasion. The festival is celebrated in the month of April. Lord Lingaraj is carried on a chariot to the Mausima temple. Many devotees attend the occasion singing and dancing along the way. After four days' stay, the idol of Lord Lingaraj then returns to the main temple. A tight security arrangement will be put in place to prevent any untoward incident and ensure smooth conduct of the festival. The schedule and timeline of

rituals was also decided at the review meeting. As per the decision, the Mangala Alati will be performed at 5am on the day of Ashokastami, followed by Abakasha Niti and other rituals. The Lord will be escorted in a grand procession and board the chariot around 3:30pm in the afternoon. Thereafter, the Lord's chariot will be pulled by the devotees. Different rituals will be performed after the chariot arrives at Mausima temple in the evening. While the Rath Yatra will be organised April 16, the Bahuda Yatra will be held April 20. Adequate security arrangements will be made as thousands of devotees are expected to attend the occasion. Drinking water facilities along with sheds will be put in place by the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation and WATCO.

## Photo expo on Utkal Divas

**Bhubaneswar:** As the state celebrates its 89th foundation day Monday, which is also observed as Utkal Divas (or Odisha Dibasa), a two-day photo exhibition will be held at Soochana Bhawan here to mark the occasion. The exhibition under the theme 'Swatantra Utkal Pradesh' will be attended by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik as the chief guest while I&PR Minister Pradip Kumar Amat and Chief Secretary PK Jena will be among other attendees.

**WEATHER**

	BBSR	CTC
<b>Max Temp</b>	35.2°C	35.6°C
<b>Min Temp</b>	25.8°C	25.6°C
<b>Humidity</b>	82%	72%
<b>Rainfall</b>	Nil	Nil

**FORECAST**  
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# Leftovers are safe to consume if stored inside freezer

**E**ating leftovers can be a great way to save money, diversify your cooking repertoire and reduce food waste. But eating leftover food can also be risky as these foods have already been exposed to bacteria in the environment. If you haven't stored and re-heated leftovers correctly, you could be putting yourself at risk of potentially life-threatening food poisoning. That doesn't mean you should start avoiding leftovers. By following the correct food safety practices, you can ensure a healthy diet. How quickly should leftovers be refrigerated or frozen? Bacteria exist everywhere in the world, including kitchen. The bacteria that cause food to spoil can grow rapidly with the right nutrients, moisture and temperatures. Some double in numbers within 20 minutes. It's important that leftovers are



put into the fridge or freezer as quickly as possible, within maximum two hours. This advice is based on how quickly bacteria can grow in food at non-refrigerated temperatures which means leftover food become less safe to consume the longer it is left at more than 5 degree Celsius. One should also make sure that leftovers are covered. Clingfilm and airtight lids help prevent air from getting inside the container. This is im-

portant, as most pathogens require oxygen to grow. How long are refrigerated leftovers safe to eat? The fridge should be kept at a temperature between 0 and 5 degree Celsius, as this inhibits the growth of food poisoning bacteria on leftovers. Leftovers must be eaten within two days. Keeping it longer gives harmful bacteria more time to spread. Indeed, pathogens such as Listeria, which

can cause flu-like symptoms, can even grow in refrigerated temperature beyond two days. If you don't think you'll eat your leftovers within that timeframe, consider freezing them. Leftovers can be kept for up to three months if frozen at -18 degree Celsius. What is the safest way to re-heat your leftovers? When you reheat leftovers, you must ensure the food is piping hot all the way through. Leftover foods should be reheated to an internal temperature of at least 165 degree Fahrenheit (74 degree Celsius). For sauces, stews, soups and gravy, it's best to bring them to a full boil, stirring for at least three minutes. These practices will kill most active bacteria and any heat-sensitive bacterial toxins that are present. If reheating leftovers in the oven set the oven temperature to at least 325 degree Fahrenheit (163 degree

Celsius) and bake long enough to completely heat the food through to at least 74 degree Celsius. If reheating leftovers in the microwave, you should also make sure they reach an internal temperature of 74 degree Celsius before eating. Reheating food using a slow cooker is not a good idea because if foods stay at a temperature less than 165 degree Fahrenheit for several hours, this can permit bacterial growth - increasing risk of food poisoning. Can you reheat leftovers more than once? You really should not reheat leftovers more than once. Each time a food warms and cools, it provides the right temperature and amount of time needed for any harmful bacteria to start to re-grow. This then makes it harder for heat to kill all the pathogens present. PTI

## BJD writes to EC over code violation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, March 31:** The ruling BJD in Odisha has approached the Election Commission, alleging that three railway officials violated the model code of conduct by attending a BJP poll meeting March 29. A delegation of the BJD led by Rajya Sabha member Sasmit Patra submitted a memorandum to the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), Odisha, in this regard Sunday. In the memorandum, the party alleged that the three railway officials of Khurda division attended a BJP electoral meeting at Badapokharia village in the district March 29. "This is a gross violation of the model code of conduct (MCC) laid down by the Election Commission for the general elections and the Odisha assembly polls," the BJD said.

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# KALINGA'S KAUNDINYA, SOMA AND THE BIRTH OF CAMBODIA

PRATYUSH DASH, OP

Cambodia's first king was an Indian merchant! In fact, he was a sea-faring Brahmin of ancient Kalinga, who married Naga princess Soma, called as Liuyè in Chinese and Neang Neak in Khmer parlance. She ruled the indigenous kingdom and later established her consort, Kaundinyavarmandeva or Kaundinya I as the king of the Nokor Phnom or Funan kingdom. Hence, Kaundinya I was the founder and second monarch of the Funan Kingdom.

According to records by two Chinese envoys, Kang Tai and Zhu Ying, Kaundinya was a Brahmin, the captain of a merchant ship, who was shipwrecked on the coast of Cambodia. Naga princess Soma went to fight off the crew as she thought they were invaders, but fell in love with Kaundinya and proposed marriage. Then they set out to the Naga palace under the sea to seek the permission of her father to get married.

The union led to the foundation of the House of Kaundinya, which would rule Funan for many generations through matrilineal succession. Together, the royal couple established a Hindu kingdom which represents the amalgamation of two great cultures on the Mekong river delta in 1st century CE. Kaundinya later built a capital, Vyadhapura and the state came to be known as Kambojadesa (Campuchea) or present day Cambodia.

Their love led them to establish a peaceful and organised kingdom that lasted until the 6th century and even now, Cambodians or Khmers consider themselves the descendants of the pair.

The love story of Kaundinya and Soma is so intrinsic to Cambodian culture that their iconic union has shaped the Khmer wedding traditions and they are still remembered through folklores and legends.

The couple represents the ultimate symbol of a happy married life, and till this date the couples getting married in Cambodia are dressed like Kaundinya and Soma. Grandmothers tell their stories and pass on the ancient legend to every child at a young age.

Like the Indian epic Ramayana, Cambodians also have various versions of the story that have been retold for ages turning into mythical legends. Different accounts tell differently how they met and fell for each other.



**Kaundinya is more than just a man. He symbolises over 1,000 years of Indian influence in southeast Asia, a connection that would change the face of the region forever**

However, a common instance in almost all versions is that the Indian prince carries the tail of his future wife to the depths of the ocean to the palace of Soma's father, the chieftain of the Naga clan.

It is such a deep-rooted part of the Cambodian ethos that it has been incorporated into Cambodian wedding rituals. While entering the honeymoon room, a Cambodian groom is required to carry the end of the long train of the bride's dress.

This gesture also signifies that the woman is the head of the family as per

their culture. Cambodians consider Neang Neak or Naga Queen Soma as their matriarch.

The 21-metre-tall Preah Thong Neang Neak statue on a 6-metre-high pedestal in the south western coastal province of Preah Sihanouk is Cambodia's largest statue made with copper. As the myths go, the couple's statue faces the sea featuring their journey to the depth of the ocean. Unveiling

the monument in 2022, PM Samdech Techo Hun Sen had said that it represents Cambodia's identity.

Most Hindu-Buddhist empires of south-east Asia trace their lineage to Kaundinya. Since Kaundinya was a Shaivite, as the faith was prevalent among the Kalingan kingdoms back then, the royal religion of the Funan Empire was also Shaivism.

German historian and Indologist Hermann Kulke was the first to suggest that the Indian king was a Brahmin and that Kaundinya was actually the name of his 'gotra'. In his book 'The Ocean of Churn: How the Indian Ocean Shaped Human History', Sanjeev Sanyal mentions that Kaundinya probably was from northern Andhra Pradesh or southern Odisha.

Brahmins of Kaundinya lineage had settled extensively in Kalinga, especially in the 'Mahendra Parvata' or Mahendragiri mountain of present day Ganjam in Odisha, which repeatedly appears in the history of Funan dynasty. Funan or Phnom also translates to mountain in the local language called Khmer.

Cambodian statesman Norodom Sihanouk, who was first king then prime minister of the country after Cambodia broke free of colonial shackles, made it a priority to popularise the couple's story around the world.

The Royal Ballet of Cambodia performed the opera in several countries under the patronage of Sihanouk's wife Norodom Monineath.

A rendition of the love story of Preah Thong and Neang Neak that is performed by the Royal Ballet of Cambodia, 'The Preah Thong Boung Soung', is one of the most beautiful theatrical spectacles that one can relish while in Cambodia. Sihanouk, on a 12-day visit to India in 1955, spoke of both the influence of Sanskrit on the Khmer language as well as the

link the story of Preah Thong and Neang Neak created between the countries. "We (India and Cambodia) are cousins," he said during the visit. "Khmer civilisation is the child of India's civilisation, and we are proud of it," he added.

Kaundinya is more than just a man. He symbolises over 1,000 years of Indian influence in the region, a connection that would change the face of south-east Asia forever. He is the harbinger of the long process of Indianisation in south-east Asia.

He was King Kaundinyavarmandeva or Kaundinya I who founded the Varman Dynasty of the great Khmer Empire of Funan Kingdom, the forefather of all Cambodians, and a son of the land of Kalinga.

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# Tug of war over Gajapati village

Ganjam district and the Andhra government also claim that the village comes under their jurisdictions



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Paralakhemundi, March 31:** Two districts of Odisha and the Andhra Pradesh government are engaged in a tug of war over a remote village, which as per records, lies in Gajapati district. The residents of 'Gudikhudi' village still are not aware regarding the district and state the hamlet belongs to. As per location, Gudikhudi village lies under Gangabada panchayat in Raygad block of Gajapati district with about 50 families residing in it.

However, the village located along the borders of Andhra and Ganjam with Gajapati district, has become a bone of contention. In fact, the Ganjam district administration calls it 'Abandia' village while Andhra officials



will they approach in case of any official necessity. Sources pointed out that the apathetic attitude of the officials of Gajapati district has led to such a situation. They also pointed out that officials of the Andhra Pradesh government visit the 'Gudikhudi' village regularly to inquire about the welfare of the people, something that their counterparts of Gajapati district rarely do.

The Andhra Pradesh government has introduced a number of welfare programmes in the village so that in future it can include the village within its boundaries.

In fact houses built under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) also create a lot of confusion. The house built for Sabita

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Sabar has plaque claiming that it is in 'Abandia' village of Ganjam district. Similarly several other houses depict they belong to Andhra Pradesh and that they have been built by the neighbouring state. However, the address mentioned at the Anganwadi centre in the village shows that it is located in Gajapati district. Locals have alleged that unless the Gajapati district administration acts fast, then in the near future, Andhra will grab the village.

Such is the situation that many residents of the village possess two Aadhaar cards, the same number of ration and voter identity cards, one each from Odisha and Andhra Pradesh. They are deriving the benefits from both the state governments like drawing rations twice and may even vote twice in the upcoming elections. However, the real problem lies elsewhere. If the issuance of these dual cards is probed, there is every possibility that they will lose their identities.

Local intelligentsias have demanded that the Revenue department should conduct a fresh survey and demarcate the fringe village and provide service to the villagers from the Odisha government. They feel that it is the only option to prevent the Andhra Pradesh government from laying claim on the fringe village as its own.



**SEASON'S FLAVOUR:** Children enjoying their catch of raw mangoes on a push cart parked under a tree near Jail Square in Sambalpur, Sunday  
 OP PHOTO

## High alert after gas tanker overturns

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Khallikote, March 31:** The district administration sounded high alert after a gas tanker overturned at Bada Ghati road on National Highway-16 about 200 metres from the Khallikote police station here in Ganjam district, Sunday. The alert was sounded for all the areas in close vicinity to the place the heavy vehicle turned turtle.

However, no casualties were reported. The mishap occurred when the LPG tanker of Bharat Petroleum was on its way to Khurda from Berhampur. There



was a slope on the portion of the road and the driver tried to cross it at high speed resulting in the accident. Onlookers said that had the driver slowed down the accident wouldn't have occurred.

The driver sustained critical injuries in the accident. He was initially taken to the Khallikote hospital and later shifted to MKCG Medical College and Hospital in

Berhampur after his condition deteriorated.

Khallikote police station IIC Naresh Kumar Sahu, Chhatrapur SDPO Gourahari Sahu and fire personnel from Khallikote, Tambha and Chhatrapur rushed to the spot as gas was leaking rapidly from the tanker.

Fire personnel sprayed water on the tanker every 10 minutes while power supply was cut off to the nearby Kathagada village. Police have also asked people living close by to the spot of the accident not to light any inflammable materials in the next 24 hours.

## Youth dies by suicide

**Purusottampur:** A youth died by suicide Sunday by hanging himself from a tree near Saraswati Sishu Vidya Mandir in this city of Ganjam district. The deceased was identified as Ashok Pradhan, 35, a resident of Chandanpur village under Beguniapada police limits.

On being informed, cops from the Purusottampur police station reached the spot, brought the body down from the tree and sent it to the community health centre here for post-mortem which will be done Monday.

Police have informed the family members of the deceased about the incident. A case (No-2/24) of unnatural death has been registered at Purusottampur police station and a probe has been launched.

Sources said that the youth may have taken the drastic step due to financial reasons. He had been looking for a job for some time now, but not getting the break he was seeking.



**DANCING FEET:** Tribals perform a traditional dance routine during the 'Disham Jahera Bahabanga' festival in a sal jungle near Dukura village under Khunta block in Mayurbhanj district, Sunday  
 OP PHOTO

## Ailing tusker dies in Ganjam forest

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhanjanagar, March 31:** An ailing tusker died Sunday afternoon at around 2.00pm in Chandragiri forest under Tilisingi section of Ghumusar (north) division range in Ganjam district. Forest department officials said that the age of the deceased tusker will be approximately 30 years. They added that the tusker had arrived at the forest range in Ganjam either from Kandhamal or Nayagarh.

Officials informed that from the situation it appears that the elephant was sick for the last few days and had been roaming around inside the Chandragiri forest. Sunday morning it came out in the open and started walking

towards Samarbandh village.

However, after some time, it wanted to return to the forest, but could not move properly. Getting information about the development, DFO, Himasu Sekhar Mohanty, ranger, Ashalata Digal and forester Shubhasmita Patra reached the spot. They managed to shepherd the elephant back into the forest.

Soon after, a veterinary team arrived and preparations were on to treat the animal when it suddenly collapsed and breathed its last. As it fell one of its tusks pierced its trunk. "The post-mortem of the elephant will be done Monday after which we can ascertain the cause behind its death," informed a forest official.



## NIT gets ₹20 lakh boost for renewable energy research



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rourkela, March 31:** The renewable energy research programme at NIT Rourkela got a shot in the arm after its Alumni Association (NITRAA) contributed ₹20 lakh recently. In fact, NITRAA is a very active body of former NIT students spread all over the world. They regularly contribute to various research initiatives. An event was held recently here at the campus where the contribution was announced.

The donation is aimed at supporting renewable energy initiatives, recognising entrepreneurial ventures and celebrating student accomplishments. The event was graced by Atanu Bhowmick, DIC, RSP-SAIL with additional charge of Bokaro Steel Plant, Prof Umamaheswar Rao, director, NIT Rourkela, Ashok Kumar Basa, president, NITRAA and a large number of members of the association.

The amount of ₹20 lakh will be used to bolster research work in various renewable energy initiatives, officials said. The funding aligns with the 'Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations' and underscores the institution's commitment to pro-

moting sustainability and fostering technological innovations.

Bhowmick, who is also an alumnus of NIT Rourkela, in his short speech, emphasised the critical role of renewable energy in addressing climate change and environmental sustainability. "There is no alternative. We have to do path-breaking research and achieve goals in the renewable energy sector for the safety and security of mother earth," he said. Bhowmick also praised the initiatives taken by NITRAA. "I am also part of it and I really appreciate what it has done so far. I expect the association to continue their good work in future also," Bhowmick said.

Professor Rao meanwhile thanked NITRAA for its support. "Members of our Alumni are the brand ambassadors of the mother institute all across the world. They have always come forward for the development of the institute. I am thankful to all the members of NITRAA for their support," Rao said.

During the function, a number of entrepreneurial initiatives like 'Coratral Technology', 'Black Mamba' (a car racing initiative of team BAJA), was also honoured by the guests.

## Rushikulya going dry sparks concern

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Dharakote, March 31:** Even before summer is yet to fully set in, the Rushikulya river which is known as the lifeline of Ganjam district, is drying up rapidly. This has sparked concern in the district with people involved in farming wondering what the future holds in store for them. Scanty rainfall in the last few months and the rapidly increasing temperatures are the reasons behind the river drying up.

The issue assumes significance with the 'Baruni Snan' ceremony scheduled for April 6. Residents of Aska, Purusottampur and Pratappur and even people from outside the district come in large num-

bers to take a dip in the river on the auspicious occasion. However, people are wondering how will they take a dip when even the knees are not getting fully submerged in the river.

However, with the river going dry, it will not just be the festival which will be affected. Already the riparian villages are facing drinking water crisis. The problem will increase if some measures are not taken for supply of water to the river, locals said.

The river is considered holy and is intrinsically linked to the religious and spirituality of the people. People use its water for drinking and also for irrigating their farmlands. The river water is used in various religious ceremonies like temple consecration,

'Baruni Snan', 'Sankranti Snan' and 'fire rituals'.

The river originates from the Rushimal hill in Kandhamal district and flows through Ganjam district before merging with Bay of Bengal. An anicut built by the British in 1891 at Janbil near this town is the main source of water for hundreds of hectares of farmlands in the district. Lakhs of residents residing in Berhampur town and adjoining areas depend on the river for drinking water. Moreover, scores of industrial firms use the river water to run their plants.

With the water crisis escalating, the residents of this district have asked the authorities to intervene and take urgent steps to mitigate the situation.

## CALLS TO SAVE KENDRAPARA JACKALS GROW

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Mahakalapara, March 31:** Lack of food and deforestation are driving jackals in this block of Kendrapara district towards human habitats. These animals are now leaving the forests and turning into a threat for domesticated animals like hens and goats.

Jackals and foxes depend mostly on carcasses of animals, crabs and fish. However, destruction of forests and the drying up of water bodies have affected them severely. Also, their breeding place, the Kewda flower bushes are rapidly diminishing along with forests. Hence the jackal population in the district is shrinking rapidly.

A severe cyclonic storm struck Paradip and its neighbouring areas in 1971 causing more than 10,000 fatalities. Many animals also perished in the natural



calamity. The areas of Jambu and Suniti were also severely affected. Bodies of human beings and animals were strewn all over and the rotten carcasses created

severe hygienic problems. To clean the areas, a decision was taken by the then Biju Patnaik-led government, to release 1,000 jackals in the af-

fects places. It was done and the jackals feasted on whatever they could lay their mouths on. In the process, they also cleaned the areas of the rot-

ten carcasses that were creating hygiene issues.

Initially, the jackals had plenty of food and nothing much to worry about. However, the last decade or so has been bad for them with rapid deforestation. Food has become a scarcity for which they are entering human habitations to fill their hungry stomachs.

Environmentalist Samarendra Mahali pointed out that the number of jackals in this block has decreased drastically due to loss of habitat and unavailability of food. "Jackals here are an endangered tribe now and so something must be done to protect them," Mahali said. "There is a need to create large-scale Kewda flower bushes so that the jackals can breed," he added.

Social worker Subas Swain meanwhile said that jackals must be protected as they help in balancing the environment.

# Football follows footsteps of hockey



After the resounding success of hockey, focus has now shifted to football as Odisha makes fast strides in another team sport having aid from FIFA as well as AIFF

SHAMBHU DATTA MISHRA, OP



hub of India. And now, under the visionary leadership of the gritty leader, the state has developed a robust sports ecosystem which includes world-class sports infrastructure. After making Odisha the 'home of hockey', Patnaik

turned his focus towards other sports disciplines, including football.

In November 2023, the All India Football Federation (AIFF) and Odisha government, in the presence of Arsene Wenger, FIFA's Chief of Global Football Development and the former Arsenal manager, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to set up the AIFF-FIFA Talent Academy at the Odisha Football Academy in Bhubaneswar.

The objective of the academy is to identify talents, to educate children to get them as good as they can be and provide good level of competition to make great players. The target is to put India on global football map.

Indian Super League side Odisha FC, formerly known as Delhi Dynamos FC, is leaving up to the faith of the state government. It's been close to five years since the team changed their base from the national capital to Bhubaneswar.

The team that didn't have an impressive run in any competition until 2019, have already won the Kalinga Super Cup in 2023 before finishing runners-up earlier this year. They also emerged Zonal champions in AFC Cup this year. They are currently third in the 12-team standings of the ongoing ISL.

With the men's team giving their all, how the women's side be left behind. The Odisha FC eves decimated three-time reigning champions Gokulam Kerala to claim their maiden Indian Women's League title. They became the second team from the state to win the competition after Rising Student Club's triumphant run in 2017-18.

It wouldn't be wrong that Odisha FC is setting an example for the kids who want to take up football as a career path can succeed, although their hard work and dedication is a must.

To help the sport get more reach, the 'Football for Schools' (F4S) initiative was launched under the larger project 'FIFA Football for Schools'. The initiative is designed to significantly enhance the accessibility of football to students within the school setting, fostering a love for the game and promoting a healthier lifestyle.

Under the leadership of Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya in Cuttack, which is serving as the Nodal organisation for the F4S programme, this initiative aims to contribute to the education, development as well as the empowerment of approximately 700 million children globally.

The programme seeks to make football more accessible to both boys and girls by integrating football activities into the education system in collaboration with relevant authorities and stakeholders.

The Union ministry of Education, in collaboration with the All India Football Federation (AIFF) and international football body FIFA, has distributed 6,848 footballs in 1,260 schools of Odisha under the ambitious Football for Schools (F4S) programme.

By fostering partnerships at different levels, the programme wishes to instill a sense of enthusiasm for the sport, laying the foundation for a lasting sports culture that goes beyond individual schools.

# THE LORD'S SENTINEL



KUMAR GOUTAM DAS, OP

In the land of Lord Jagannath is situated one of the most revered shrines dedicated to Lord Hanuman. The Siruli Mahavir temple near Puri is one of the most prominent seats of Hanuman worship in the state along with the Siddha Mahavir temple in the pilgrimage town, and the Panchamukhi Hanuman temple at Cuttack.

Locals say that the temple was built around 1235 AD during the reign of Eastern Ganga dynasty ruler Anangabhima Deva-III.

Legend has it that while Lord Hanuman was standing guard at the Jagannath temple in Puri, his snore disturbed Goddess Lakshmi's slumber. The Goddess took up the matter with Lord Jagannath who, in turn, asked Hanuman to move two-and-a-half steps away from his position. Hanuman obliged and moved to the place where the temple dedicated to Him stands today.

Ratnakar Mohapatra, a Singhara Puspalaka (servitor) at the shrine, says, "The temple is a one of its kind in the world for many reasons."

To begin with, he says, the



made from a single rock is unique for its features. The standing posture idol looks eastwards by one eye, while the other eye is directed towards south. This makes the face look squint. "The idea behind such a unique idol has its roots in a legend according to which the deity through one eye, looks at the Nilachakra of the Srimandir and the other stares at Lanka, the erstwhile kingdom of Ravana," says Mohapatra.

Another distinct feature of the temple is Hanuman's unique iconographic presentation. The deity carries a Katari (sharp-edged weapon) in the left hand with which he killed Ravana's youngest son Akhsaykumar, while the other lifts the medicinal mountain of

Gandhamardan. The right thigh of the deity bears a sign of Lord Rama's ring, while the Mathamani of Goddess Sita is etched on the left.

Mohapatra says, "As per another legend, when Hanuman was asked to move two-and-a-half steps away from Puri, he made a request to Lord Jagannath that he shall be served with Mahaprasad every day." The tradition has been kept alive to this day, and the daily rituals of the deity begin only after the offering of Mahaprasad, the servitor adds.

The shrine is built in the four step Deula style architecture - Vimana, Jagamohana, Natamandapa and Bhogamandapa. The main entrance is guarded by two huge lions on either side, while the figurines of Hanuman, Ganesha, Durga, Shiva and Nandi are carved on the outer walls of the temple. The eastern entrance of the temple has figures of Navagrahas (nine planets) carved on a single stone.

Situated in a picturesque village backdrop, the shrine attracts devotees in large numbers during Pana Sankranti (Hanuman Jayanti), Ramanavami and other days of the religious calendar.

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## Savour the taste of Bombay

DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

As one steps into the Bombay café, an upscale restaurant near Nalco Square, one travels down the memory lanes of Bombay (now Mumbai) of the 1990s. And adding flavor to the ambience is a unique rule of the restaurant which prohibits playing any background music other than retro Bollywood classics. The themed walls adorning images of iconic cricketers and Bollywood



divas of yesteryears, like Mandakini and Hema Malini, spices up the atmosphere. The waiters pass on a metal plate resembling a vehicle number plate with a Maharashtra number etched on it. At the back of the plate are scribbled an array of dishes with quirky names imitating Mumbaiya Boli (Mumbai street lingo), like - Koliwada Chana, Mogambo's Chicken 65, Bhidu's Baingan Varta, Matunga Fish Curry, Shami Kebab, Borivali Chili Chicken and Apun Ka Hot Chocolate, among the many.

The eatery also offers a wide variety of Mumbai's street food like Misal Pav, Pao Bhaji and Vada Pav. Among the hot picks, the chef, who happens to be a Maharashtrian, says Berry Pulao

and White Biryani are the connoisseurs' favorites.

The owner of the restaurant, Suma Devi, says the purpose behind starting the eatery was to introduce a vast range of Mumbai's food in old Bombay backdrop to the residents of Bhubaneswar. "The restaurant offers a slice of the Bombay of the past through the metropolis' food and life. Our menu is in sync with our ambience," Suma adds.

Suma says that a lot of thought went behind selecting the items. For instance, KhalNayak Chicken, an improvisation on Bollywood actor Sanjay Dutt's invention Chicken Sanjubaba has a balanced flavor of cream and spices, she adds.

"Similarly, Bhidu's baingan Varta, which is one of Jackie Shroff's quick fix on a busy day of shoot, does not get extra masala or oil, to add a flavor to it", she says.

The café is catching up fast with youngsters, families and office goers, she claims.

Asish Nayak, a final year B.Tech student at KIIT says the restaurant's set up is a perfect break-away destination for long hours of chat and delectable dishes. "Taste is not everything that matters in a dish. Ambience also plays a huge role. And this restaurant binds both well," he says.

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FOCUS ECONOMY

# MARKET FAILS JOBS



**Ambitious government projections of \$3 to 5 trillion economy and other figures apparently are not in sync. A rise in the stock market is not supported by strong indicators, else FDI cannot fall so drastically at a critical political juncture**

As the country gears up for one of its most interesting elections, the economy requires significant improvement to address the challenges, as highlighted by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and official indicators, which reveal a deteriorating situation concerning jobs and official statistics of a 31 per cent decline in foreign direct investments (FDI). Ambitious government projections of \$3 to 5 trillion economy and other figures apparently are not in sync. A rise in the stock market is not supported by strong indicators else FDI cannot fall so drastically at a critical political juncture.

The country is receiving short-term fly-by-night foreign portfolio investments in stock markets. The FDI indicates the investor confidence in the system. It is promised but is not actually flowing in. There are UNCTAD studies that show interest in India, but the actual flow has usually been weak. India's inequality is attracting the attention of world powers.

The Inequality Report 2022 brought out by Institute of Competitiveness on the basis of Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2019-20 finds that monthly salary of Rs 25,000 puts a person among the top wages earned. It is interpreted as a challenge to securing development with dignity to all and actual growth. The ILO report is vocal about the employment challenge that cannot be left to the markets alone. Production in manufacturing is becoming capital intensive. Without high manufacturing growth, employment generation might continue to disappoint. Is it for that reason the government investing in construction and real estate? It is internationally accepted that about two-thirds of infra investments are frittered away in various kinds of cuts. Be it Southeast Asia or any other region, infra investments have resulted in severe meltdowns.

India's youth employment profile suggests the country passing through a difficult phase. The share of youth who are not in employment, education or training has averaged 29.2 per cent between 2010 and 2019, the highest in the subcontinent. There is high proportion of unemployed educated youth even as industry complains of a shortage of skilled jobs. The report emphasises on the broken link between education and employment. "A large proportion of highly educated young men and women, including the technically educated, are overqualified for the job they have." It is a reflection on the education system and the New Education Policy (NEP) that stress on an extended four-year undergraduate degree course and high qualifications of PhD. This is a common phenomenon across the country as youth with such unusually high qualifications pine for blue-collar public sector jobs in the hope of job security. About 3700 PhDs applied for the post of a peon in Uttar Pradesh police where class 5 was the eligibility criterion.

It's an unsavoury comment on the education system and the private sector, which have thrown even the basic labour laws to the wind. The ILO report stresses on 1) promoting job creation; 2) improving employment quality; 3) addressing labour market inequalities; 4) strengthening skills and active labour market policies; and 5) bridging the knowledge deficits on labour market patterns and youth employment. The NEP does not answer these questions. It flags the challenges of addressing inequalities, improving quality of jobs and fixing asymmetries in the labour market. A State Bank of India study on women's collectives brings out the gains through aspiring "lakhpatididis." However, on income, employment and human capital there is still a distance to cover.

The ILO report calls for giving primacy to labour intensive manufacturing employment to absorb the unskilled labour. A comparison with China's short-fall in infrastructure funding promises to SE Asia on Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) may be a lesson for India, as per a study of Sydney's Lowy Institute. It is a pointer to the huge gap in funding and long gestation period. The Lowy report is a caution for India for desisting from investing in infra projects. Poor quality of construction of bridges and other infra, including too many roads in Maharashtra, Gujarat of Bihar are testimony to failures.

Women are often not preferred for jobs as these entail maternity and child care benefits. About 53.3 per cent of the female workforce was self-employed in 2019. It rose to 62 per cent in 2022. Many of them are employed but paid low or no wages.

The weak consumption data

in the GDP numbers indicate that over the past decade inflation-adjusted earnings of regular salaried and self-employed persons declined. Perhaps, it is the post-demonetisation syndrome that devastated the small and medium entrepreneurs.

An issue that the reports have not discussed is the marginalisation of the public sector companies and gradual disinvestment. A fall out is testified by the electoral bond donations. The Rs 12000 plus crore donations are grim pointers that the private sector functions on the principles of giving donations and in return getting back expensive projects.

These are dependent on the government doles at the cost of PSUs. A real private sector has not yet emerged in this country. This has been the pattern in the licence-permit raj as well and continues in the era of liberalisation. Why should a country foster such unethical business model? Much of the failings underlined by the ILO or PLFS are grim reminders of poor consumption and a failing business system.

The nation needs to ponder why it should dip into high debt which has annual repayment of over Rs 10 lakh crore exponentially squeezing the actual budgetary allocation to around Rs 37 lakh crore, far away of from \$3 trillion target. A policy review is called for the entire financial system, manufacturing, employment and NEP.

The country is on experimentation spree and has yet to stabilise its policies. The high prices are obstructions. Parliament is unnecessarily busy in making laws or re-drafting the old ones. No wonder the chief economic advisor, the highest think tank, says the government can't solve the problem of unemployment. Post poll all national and regional parties and institutions must come together to redraft the sustainable growth path and manufacturing policies, including revival of PSUs for proper quality job creation, a strong ILO suggestion.

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Shivaji Sarkar

**THERE IS HIGH PROPORTION OF UNEMPLOYED EDUCATED YOUTH EVEN AS INDUSTRY COMPLAINS OF SHORTAGE OF SKILLED JOBS**

## Misogyny Thrives

The great are strongest when they stand alone. A God-given might of being is their force.

SRI AUROBINDO



It certainly sounds hypocritical that Saudi Arabia with its abysmal record of subjecting its women population to worst forms of gender discrimination has been chosen as the chair of the UN commission that is supposed to promote gender equality and empower women around the world. The selection followed an unopposed bid for leadership which has been condemned by human rights groups for the country's gross abuse of women's rights. The Saudi ambassador to the UN, Abdulaziz Alwasil, was elected as chair of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) at the CSW's recent annual meeting in New York.

The selection immediately sparked international condemnation. Among the critics was Sherine Tadros, the head of the New York office of Amnesty International. She rightly asserted that the decision means Saudi Arabia will be in the chair next year, on the 30th anniversary of the Beijing declaration known as a landmark blueprint for advocating women's rights globally. The objection stems from the fact that the chairperson will be in a key position to influence the planning, the decisions, the stocktaking and future roadmap. As such Saudi Arabia's own record on women's rights runs counter to the mandate of the commission. For example, Saudi Arabia's "personal status" law established in 2022 stipulates that a woman has to obtain a male guardian's permission to marry. Under the law, a wife has to obey her husband in a "reasonable manner," while her husband's financial support is dependent on the wife's "obedience." These provisions are not only despicable, but an insult to womanhood. What is even worse is that refusal of the wife to have sex with her husband, live in the marital home or travel with him without a "legitimate excuse" can also justify the withdrawal of financial support under the law. Amnesty International claims to have laid its hand on a leaked draft of a forthcoming new penal code of Saudi Arabia that fails to protect women and girls from all forms of gender-based violence.

No wonder Louis Charbonneau, UN director at the Human Rights Watch (HRW) dismissed the decision outright calling it a shocking disregard for women's rights everywhere. It is only natural that there would be fierce criticism as Saudi Arabia jails women simply because they clamour for their rights. Charbonneau tried hard to lobby other countries among the current 45 CSW members such as Netherlands, Japan, Portugal and Switzerland which have better records for protecting human rights. But, unfortunately, as he said, they were all quiet and the proposal to make Saudi Arabia the chair was accepted unopposed.

However, the fate of women striving for equality and justice the world over is precarious indeed. The situation is so depressing that another UN agency - UN Women - has concluded it would take at least 300 years for ensuring gender equality. Countries such as China, Afghanistan, the USA and Gambia cannot boast of an enviable record of treating their women. China, for example, has rolled back women's rights, asked its women to "uphold family values" and cracked down on feminist campaigners. In the US, the overturning of Roe v Wade after nearly half a century removed women's constitutional right to abortion. In Afghanistan the Taliban has just announced that it will resume publicly stoning women to death for adultery. It has already restricted access of women and girls to education, employment and public spaces. In Gambia political leaders are planning to overturn a ban on female genital mutilation.

The inescapable fact is that women have been hard hit by the global hunger crisis which has exacerbated the problems of sexual violence, exploitation and child marriage.

The rise of misogynistic and authoritarian leaders, who are to be found in great numbers in India too, is one of the main reasons for the delay in women emancipation and empowerment. It is a pity that too many governments pay lip service to the message that emanated from the Beijing conference in 1995 that women's needs are a fundamental component of human rights.

## Polish Alarm

On 24 March Poland sought an explanation from Moscow after a Russian cruise missile intended for Ukraine entered its airspace. This incident was a repeat of what happened in November 2022 when a "Russian-made" missile struck Poland killing two people. The latest violation of Polish airspace prompted Prime Minister Donald Tusk to raise an alarm that Europe is in a "pre-war era" but still has a "long way to go" before its ready to face the threat posed by Russia. "War is no longer a concept from the past. It is real, and it started over two years ago. The most worrying thing at the moment is that literally any scenario is possible. We haven't seen a situation like this since 1945," Tusk said in a recent interview to the German newspaper Die Welt. "I know it sounds devastating, especially for the younger generation, but we have to get used to the fact that a new era has begun: the pre-war era. I'm not exaggerating; it's becoming clearer every day."

In the wake of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, European leaders and military officials have expressed growing apprehension that the conflict may spill over to neighbouring countries. Despite Russian President Vladimir Putin's repeated assurances that Russia harbours no intention of attacking NATO nations, concerns persist. The war initiated by Russia has disrupted the post-Cold War geopolitical landscape, compelling Europe to prioritise its defence following years of depleting military expenditures. This has prompted bordering countries to take proactive measures. Sweden and Finland's recent decision to join NATO, a move previously unimaginable for the traditionally neutral Scandinavian nations, serves as a notable example. Likewise, in the Baltic region, Estonia and Lithuania have significantly increased their defence budgets, surpassing NATO's mandated minimum of 2 per cent of GDP. Additionally, Moldova, situated adjacent to Ukraine and susceptible to Russian interference, is swiftly progressing towards EU membership.

Tusk regained power following the previous year's election and has been working diligently to guide Poland back into the European mainstream after nearly ten years of authoritarian rule under the populist Law and Justice Party. Situated between Germany and Russia, Poland has always understood the significance of a robust defence. This year, Poland's military budget exceeded 4 per cent of its GDP - twice the recommended amount by NATO. Additionally, Poland has provided refuge to millions of Ukrainians escaping Russia's brutal invasion.

Despite efforts by Europe to strengthen its defence, Tusk believes that the continent still has a considerable distance to cover. He emphasised the need for Europe to be self-reliant and self-sufficient in defence, while also maintaining a strong alliance with the United States.

Tusk's concerns, though alarmist, may not be entirely unfounded since we are already witnessing two devastating wars with a combined death toll running into tens of thousands. Besides war clouds are hovering over the Taiwan Strait and the Korean Peninsula. At this juncture, a polarised US is constantly losing its influence over other countries while the Russia-China "no limits" partnership is threatening to destabilise the world order. We are indeed living in dangerous times.

### WISDOM CORNER

The cleverest of all, in my opinion, is the man who calls himself a fool at least once a month. FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY

Never give a sword to a man who can't dance. CONFUCIUS

To the mind that is still, the whole universe surrenders. LAO TZU

### SPECTRUM MARKETING

## The influence of influencers

In the realm of modern marketing, influencers have emerged as the game-changers, wielding immense power to shape consumer perceptions and drive purchasing decisions. From celebrities to domain experts, these influential personalities have become the "reliable face" of several brands across diverse industries, from TMT bars to on-line fantasy Team XI. But behind the glitz and glamour lies a complex web of relationships and consequences that can make or break brands.



Shivaji Mohinta

**IN THE FAST-PACED WORLD OF INFLUENCER MARKETING, SUCCESS LIES NOT IN THE GLITTER OF STARDOM BUT IN THE AUTHENTICITY OF HUMAN CONNECTION**

Take the case of Adidas, the global sportswear giant, which embarked on a high-profile collaboration with none other than the enigmatic Kanye West, now legally known as "Ye." In 2013, the maverick American rapper-turned-fashion icon brought his unparalleled star power to Adidas' Yeezy line of footwear, making it the most lucrative sneaker deal after Air Jordans. Sales of Yeezy exceeded \$1bn every year, lifting Adidas's pull & profits. With over 160 million records sold & 24 Grammy Awards under his belt, Ye seemed like the perfect partner, until

controversy struck.

In 2022, Adidas decided to cut ties due to Ye's controversial remarks, including anti-Semitic (anti-Jewish) comments and public admiration for Adolf Hitler, triggering a huge public outcry. Inventory pileups, low traffic & dwindling demand led to a staggering \$82 billion loss for Adidas in 2023, a first time in 3 decades. Meanwhile, Ye's net worth plummeted from \$2 billion to a mere \$400 million, as several brands called off their association with the former husband of Kim Kardashian.

This cautionary tale underscores the high-stakes nature of influencer-driven marketing and raises the question: How do brands navigate this complex terrain and manage a web of relationships while keeping intact the core objectives of demand and profits?

Navigating the influencer landscape: A roadmap for success

Authenticity over stardom: While star power may dazzle, authenticity reigns supreme. Brands must prioritise influencers whose values align closely with their own, fostering gen-

uine connections that resonate with consumers on a deeper level.

Action and performance both matter: A stellar track record of achievements isn't just a prerequisite for the influencers; their conduct and actions in the public domain are important too. Brands must scrutinise an influencer's performance beyond the spotlight, ensuring consistency and alignment of values with the brand's purpose.

Due diligence is key: Before sealing the deal, both brands and influencers must conduct thorough due diligence. From scrutinising past partnerships to assessing the narratives, point of views, political or religious affiliations, must be meticulously examined to mitigate potential risks.

Trust should never be misused: In an era of cult following, the brand endorser is the currency of trust. Due to such hero-worship, consumers often believe in the products and brand narrative to engage with them. Instances of customers facing financial hardships after investing in real estate endorsed by prominent cricketers under-

score this point.

Measure beyond metrics: While metrics like engagement rates and popularity quotient are essential, brands must look beyond numbers to measure the true impact of influencer campaigns. Qualitative factors such as mutual values, target audience sentiment, personal story and relatability play a vital part to resonate with the prospects.

In the fast-paced world of influencer marketing, success lies not in the glitter of stardom but in the authenticity of human connection. Both the brand and the influencer can weave a genuine relationship with the consumers when there is a congruence of image, values and aspirations. The promise and trust they lend to the brand leaves a lasting impression in the hearts and minds of audiences. This deep impact of the influence of the influencers on the gullible consumers, begs for responsible actions, due diligence and respecting the consumers sentiments.

The writer is a business consultant & a certified NLP Coach.

### Same old story

Sir, From January 2024, 39 tiger deaths have been reported in India out of which 22 occurred in tiger reserves and the rest in unprotected areas. The same old story of tiger habitat destruction due to urbanisation continues although some of the latest tiger casualties are attributed to territorial fight as 22 tigers succumbed inside reserves. It is important to remember, however, any tiger death is attributed to poaching unless proved otherwise. The tiger also needs large space to overcome peer competition. Diseases also lead to their deaths. Tigers have lost lives when they have ventured out of their way in search of water or habitat. The need for over-bridges and underpasses on highways is more pronounced now. Increased patrolling, camera traps and conviction rates to pin the poachers are vital. Safeguarding ecologically sensitive areas, forest, water and grasslands cannot be overlooked. Tiger relocation also has to be prioritised.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA (MAHARASHTRA)

### Right to protest

Sir, Democratic protests are now a thing of the past. The ruling government which is at the peak of autocracy is putting all these protests in a shredder and pretending that it did not happen. Sonam Wangchuk fasted for 21 days to safeguard the rights of the indigenous people and the natural resources of Ladakh and the Prime Minister of India who earlier promised Ladakh security under the 6th schedule did not feel the need to offer a word of comfort and assurance to Wangchuk. The tribals of Surajpur district of Chhattisgarh have been working out their jugular veins for more than two years now against the government's move to greenlight the Hasdeo forest for coal mining which was already declared a barred area by the Ministry of Coal and Ministry of Forest and Environment way back in 2010. Manipur's peace is still battling through ethnic clashes for almost a year now but the ruling government has not budged the finger from its lips. When the government is misusing its power for the betterment of the "fat cats," we should exercise the only power we got for the betterment of India.

Noopur Baruah, TEZPUR (ASSAM)

## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa POST are most welcome to contribute letters (200 words), articles and columns (between 750-1250 words). Contributors are requested to send their contact numbers and full postal address/email ID. They may also send in their valuable comments, opinion and suggestions, preferably by email, to: [edit@orissapost.com](mailto:edit@orissapost.com)

OrissaPOST

B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

PAWAR VS PAWAR

# A fight for supremacy in Baramati

SHARAD PAWAR'S DAUGHTER AND A THREE-TERM MP SUPRIYA SULE HAS BEEN PITTED AGAINST AJIT PAWAR'S WIFE SUNETRA PAWAR WHO WAS UNTIL RECENTLY ASSOCIATED WITH SOCIAL WORK

SAGENCIES

**Mumbai, March 31:** Baramati has emerged as the development model at the national level but during the present Lok Sabha elections, it has become a battleground between Sharad Pawar and his estranged nephew Ajit Pawar.

Incidentally, Pawar's daughter and a three-term MP Supriya Sule has been pitted against Ajit Pawar's wife Sunetra Pawar who was until recently associated with social work.

With the fight between sisters-in-law, Baramati has gained prominence across the country as both Pawar factions have made the elections a prestige issue. Incidentally, both Pawar senior and Ajit Pawar and also Supriya and Sunetra are constantly projecting the electoral fight as an ideological one and for the cause of development by charting different paths.

Ironically, the division in the Pawar family is out in the open as a large number of family members including Ajit Pawar's real brothers and nephews apart from Pawar senior's sisters are



openly campaigning for Supriya's victory. This has forced Ajit Pawar to make a statement that he, his wife and two sons are isolated and they are left to take on the other family members in the present fight.

Pawar senior in particular has refrained from making an emotional appeal citing his age though he has sent a stern signal that the fight is real with a remote chance of a patch-up with his estranged nephew.

Supriya, who is the winner of the best parliamentarian awards, is seeking votes on her performance during three terms apart from her father's goodwill and stellar contribution to Baramati and the country during his political life spanning over six decades. On the other hand, Sunetra is heavily banking on her husband Ajit Pawar's charisma and his 'no nonsense' attitude in actively taking up the development agenda.

Supriya has been quite categorical in appealing to the voters that the Lok Sabha election is crucial as it will decide the fate of policies to be framed for further strengthening the democratic set-up and

protecting the Constitution. Besides, she is flagging off falling unemployment, rising inflation, a burgeoning divide between the rich and poor, abuse of central probe agencies and a decade of scams and cover-ups. The recent controversy over Electoral Bonds is prominently highlighted by Supriya as one of the biggest scams during PM Modi's 10-year rule. As far as Baramati is concerned, Supriya is taking up issues pertaining to water scarcity, the development of other Assembly segments on the lines of Baramati.

On the other hand, Sunetra's appeal is for continuity, stability and pursuing the development of the country by making Narendra Modi the Prime Minister for the third time in succession. She echoes her husband's theory that a double-engine government, one represented by the BJP-led government at the Centre and the MahaYuti government comprising BJP, Shiv Sena and NCP in the state, is the need of hour for inclusive and sustainable growth.

Sunetra and her husband Ajit Pawar are riding on PM Modi's wave and Modi's guarantee while

singing the Viksit Bharat tune. Sunetra may not be active in politics till her nomination but she is certainly hopeful to seek votes on her social work, especially in the field of environment protection.

Even though the campaigning is yet to gather momentum, a divide among the voters is visible for now. The old guards, farming community and working class are siding with Pawar senior while the youth are showing their faith and confidence in Ajit Pawar's leadership. However, the picture will be clear once both factions speed up their house-to-house outreach to voters.

Over the years, Baramati has witnessed fights between Pawar and the rest and later between Shiv Sena-Congress and BJP-Shiv Sena. However, since the 2014 and 2019 elections, the BJP has made sufficient inroads in Baramati. This is for the first time in the recent period, the Baramati constituency will witness a fight within the family and observers say BJP has succeeded in putting uncle and nephew against each other.

Of the six assembly constituencies, Baramati and Indapur are held by Ajit Pawar faction, Daund and Khandakwasala by BJP and Bhore and Purandar by Congress. After the July 2023 split in NCP, a faction led by Sharad Pawar does not have representation in any of these constituencies but it is confident to make up the gap with the support of Congress legislators and the party's following. Ajit Pawar's faction is confident in getting support from the BJP apart from its cadres.

# Counter-terror training for cops



*The integrated training programme -- a first of its kind in the Union Territory grappling with over three decades of Pakistan-sponsored terrorism -- commenced March 19*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jammu, March 31:** Over 1,000 probationary police officers, including 62 deputy superintendents of police, are undergoing a six-week long training at the Army's counter-terror White Knight Corps battle school in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district, officials said.

The integrated training programme -- a first of its kind in the Union Territory grappling with over three decades of Pakistan-sponsored terrorism -- commenced March 19.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, in a recent interview, said the government has plans to pull back troops from Jammu and Kashmir and leave law and order to the Union Territory's police

alone.

"We have plans to pull back troops and leave law and order to the Jammu and Kashmir Police alone. Earlier, the Jammu and Kashmir Police was not trusted but today they are leading the operations," he had said.

According to police, the integrated training programme was aimed at enhancing the coordination and combined operational capabilities of both forces, which for over three decades have combated terrorism side by side. "The training is focussed on operational tactics, intelligence sharing, and counter-terrorism strategies, drawing on the Indian Army's extensive experience in these fields. This joint training marks a continued commitment to security and the well-being of the region's residents," a police official said.

He said it is a stride towards a future where the alignment of the Army and local police play a pivotal role in maintaining peace and safety in Jammu and Kashmir.

"The valour and sacrifices of both forces in the face of adversity have been instrumental in maintaining national secu-

urity. The synergy achieved during training will pave the way for the restoration of peace and normalcy in Jammu and Kashmir. This will also facilitate the police in emerging as a more potent and well-trained force," the official said.

Referring to successful counter-terrorism operations in south Kashmir's Pulwama and the strategic containment in north Kashmir's Sopore, considered a transit for infiltrating terrorists, he said these operations have not only disrupted terror activities but also restored law and order; paving the way for peace and stability.

The operations are also testaments to the collaborative excellence of the Army and police. The integrated training programme is expected to solidify this partnership, leading to even more effective counter-terrorism operations, the official said.

Director General of Police R R Swain, who is said to be the brain behind the initiative, and General Officer Commanding (GOC) of White Knight Corps Lt Gen Navin Sachdeva separately visited the battle school on March 23 and 27, respectively, and reviewed the training of the officers that included 989 newly inducted sub-inspectors.

Of those undergoing training, 128 are female officers, including 19 DSPs and 109 sub-inspectors.

Lt Gen Sachdeva mentioned that he was sure that the training would result in enhanced jointness between the two organisations through sharing and understanding each other's strengths, ethos, culture, values and best practices.

# Uddhav calls BJP corrupt



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, March 31:** Maharashtra Bharatiya Janata Party president Chandrashekhar Bawankule Sunday attacked Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Uddhav Thackeray and warned that several instances of corruption under the latter's regime are ready to be unearthed.

Thackeray had called the BJP as "Bhrashta Janata Party" and said it was continuously inducting tainted persons for political gains.

"If Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis makes movies on corrupt practices of

taking commission to award contracts.

"Instead of making sarcastic remarks, Thackeray should think about how he functioned from home when he was Chief Minister for two-and-half years. No matter how many sarcastic comments you make, the people of Maharashtra will give you a befitting reply," Bawankule said.

On Thackeray's charge that BJP leaders were ignoring strife torn Manipur, the ruling party's Mumbai unit chief Ashish Shelar said, "Uddhav Thackeray talks about Manipur. I am ready to pay the transportation cost for Thackeray if he is prepared to visit Malvani area in Mumbai and raise his voice against atrocities on some of our brothers."

Thackeray is the only leader in Maharashtra who never stood on his feet in politics, Shelar claimed. Hitting back at the Shiv Sena (UBT) chief's corruption charge, Shelar said Thackeray's statement was a classic case of double standards.

"When people were with him, they were clean. But the moment those people switched to the B.J.P, Thackeray started calling them corrupt. It seems he is changing the bar or parameters to decide who is corrupt and who is not."

**Thackeray had called the BJP as "Bhrashta Janata Party" and said it was continuously inducting tainted persons for political gains**

the previous Uddhav Thackeray government, then they would be called Khichdi Files, COVID Body Bag Files, Waze or Laden Files. The script for ₹100 crore Recovery Files is ready," Bawankule said.

The BJP accuses the Shiv Sena (UBT) of involvement in alleged irregularities in the distribution of 'khichdi' during the pandemic, purchase of body bags for COVID victims as well as



Strawberries being collected at Dakoo Chak on the outskirts of Jammu

PTI

# Jammu-Srinagar NH reopens for traffic

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Banihal/Jammu, March 31:** Traffic on the Jammu-Srinagar national highway (NH) was suspended for over 15 hours Sunday due to landslides triggered by overnight rains at a few places in Jammu and Kashmir's Ramban district, officials said.

Hundreds of stranded vehicles were allowed to move towards their respective destinations after the route was cleared around 4 pm, the traffic department officials said.

The 270-km-long highway is the only all-weather road linking Kashmir with the rest of the country.

A truck was damaged after it was hit by a rock that rolled down a hillock at Panthiyal in Ramban late Saturday evening. The truck driver and his helper escaped unhurt, they said.

The traffic department has said that no heavy motor vehicles (HMs) will be allowed on the highway from 4 am Monday to 7 am Tuesday in view of "urgent repairs and upgradation of the airstrip stretch" near Bijbehara in south Kashmir's Anantnag district.

"Light motor vehicles (LMV) shall be diverted to the old national highway alignment between Alistop and Doonipora, including Wanpoh, Khanabal, Batengoo, Padshahi Bagh and Bijbehara. Truck drivers are advised to avoid their journey on the highway from 4 am April 1 (Monday) to 7 am April 2 (Tuesday)," the department said.

# JAL JEEVAN MISSION

## 274 contractors to face action over delay in work

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Latur, March 31:** A total of 274 contractors will face action over alleged delay in carrying out the work under the 'Jal Jeevan Mission' in Maharashtra's Latur district, an official said Sunday.

Jal Jeevan Mission is a central programme envisioned to provide safe and adequate drinking water through individual tap connections to all house-



holds in rural India. The officials said there were complaints of delay in the work

under the programme.

He said that Chief Executive Officer of Latur Zilla Parishad Anmol Sagar has ordered action as per government rules against 274 such contractors for failing to do their work on time.

In August last year, Latur MP Sudhakar Shrangare had demanded a probe alleging sub-standard work in the implementation of the Jal Jeevan Mission scheme in the district.

# School faces de-recognition

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Srinagar, March 31:** Authorities in Kashmir have de-recognised a private school in Budgam district for "anarchist and rebellious attitude" of the management of the institute.

In an order, Directorate of School Education (DoE) has withdrawn the recognition order issued in favour of Foundation World Mammam Budgam, which was issued November 23, 2021.

The order said Chief Education Officer (CEO), Budgam, had constituted an inquiry committee to look into various complaints against the school. The CEO Budgam has

also intimated that the concerned school management provided documents/material not upto the mark and without seal and signature due to which the committee could not ascertain the factual position owing to the non-cooperation of the school management. The order said the school has not shown any inclination towards considering or implementing suggestions and has never taken the departmental representative on board for the official business of the school till date which is mandatory as per standing norms.



# Restoration of ancient Martand temple on cards

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jammu, March 31:** Jammu and Kashmir administration has convened an officers meeting here next week to discuss 'protection, conservation and restoration' of an eighth-century old Martand Sun temple in Anantnag district.

The temple located at village Kehribal area of Mattan, some 63-km south of Srinagar, is considered as the oldest of the Sun temples in the country and a symbol of invaluable ancient spiritual heritage.

It has been declared as a site of national importance by Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and also appears in the list of centrally protected monuments.

According to a notice issued by Jammu and Kashmir



department of culture, a meeting has been convened at House Secretariat in Jammu April 1 to discuss the matter regarding protection, conservation and restoration of the ancient tem-

ples in Kashmir with installation of Emperor Lalitaditya Muktapada in the premises of Martand Sun temple. The meeting, to be chaired by Principal Secretary, will be at-

Thousands of pilgrims including Kashmiri Pandits visit the temple every year and have been demanding its restoration

tended among others by Director Archives, Archaeology and Museums (J&K), superintendent of Archaeologist (incharge) ASI (Srinagar circle).

Thousands of pilgrims including Kashmiri Pandits visit the temple every year and have been demanding its restoration.

In May 2022, Lt Governor Manoj Sinha took part in 'Navgrah Ashtamangala Pooja' at the temple which was protested by ASI as "violation of rules" for not seeking required

permission. However, J&K administration defended the pooja citing rule 7(2) of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, which states that this should not apply to any event held "in pursuance of a recognised religious usage or custom". Built on the top of a plateau, the temple ruins and related archaeological findings revealed that it was an excellent specimen of Kashmiri architecture, which had blended the Gandharan, Gupta and Chinese forms of architecture.

The temple has a colonnaded courtyard, with its primary shrine in its centre and surrounded by 84 smaller shrines, stretching to be 220 feet long and 142 feet broad total and incorporating a smaller temple that was previously built.

# leisure



## REBEL WILSON ASHAMED OF HER EATING HABITS

Actress Rebel Wilson, who recently criticised actor Sacha Baron Cohen regarding leaked intimate scenes, has revealed the emotional struggles she faced regarding her weight. She recounted feeling conflicted as both a proud individual and someone ashamed of her eating habits.

## BLACKPINK'S JENNIE TO RELEASE NEW SOLO ALBUM

K-pop all-girls band Blackpink member Jennie is reportedly releasing a new solo album under her own label, OA. According to reports, she will be making her solo comeback via a new album in June, reports *allkpop.com*.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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#### ARIES

Your work and family will vie with each other for your attention. Merry-making will seem a good idea in the evening. Your desire for name and fame will meet with success shortly, maybe even today! Ganesh shows his blessings on you.

#### TAURUS

As a manager, you may be able to outclass your colleagues by a great margin, predicts Ganesh. You will soften your approach with time and move towards a more democratic style of decision-making rather than the arbitrary protocol that you are used to. With this, you will taste success and prove your mettle in adverse situations, feels Ganesh.

#### GEMINI

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

#### CANCER

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

#### LEO

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

#### VIRGO

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

#### LIBRA

Wedding bells are ringing, and you are about to get very lucky! Ganesh foresees a plethora of marriage proposals coming your way on this day full of special occasions, as you turn up your charisma and sweep the enthralled opposite sex off their feet with your charm. You may end up spending quite a bit on fun and entertainment, but it's all for a good cause.

#### SCORPIO

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

#### SAGITTARIUS

Running helter-skelter and muddling of affairs is on the menu. Expect not to find even a moment's peace. But take a break, says Ganesh. And dive right back in the chaos and make the most of it.

#### CAPRICORN

Impulsiveness, which is not really your trait, will be very evident in whatever work you do today, says Ganesh. Money matters will keep you preoccupied for major part of the day, but ironically, your otherwise methodical approach to everything will go for a toss.

#### AQUARIUS

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

#### PISCES

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



**Mumbai:** Social media personality Uorfi Javed, who played the role of a mischief maker in the youth-based reality show *MTV Splitsvilla X5 ExSqueeze Me Please*, has talked about dating 'narcissistic men' and toxic relationships in the upcoming episode.

## Uorfi on dating narcissistic men

The contestants will be shocked as Uorfi, in her own quirky way, introduces the exes in the show. She unveils a quirky challenge where contestants must burn frames to reveal hidden surprises.

She said, "I like to ignite the fire. That's my favourite hobby." As the flames dance on the frames, shocking images of exes are revealed. She then drops the news, announcing, "Welcome to Ex Isle, where you will get front-row seats to see your exes spicing it up in *Splitsvilla*," leaving everyone stunned.

Contestant Nayera's hiccup-filled relationship with her ex-flame Siwet, starting and abruptly ending on another reality show, added an extra kick to the drama. Uorfi told her, "Girl, we have all been there and dated some narcissistic men."

Meanwhile, Deekila's unresolved feelings for her ex, Aniket, who cheated on her, add to the emotional drama. Uorfi comforts her by sharing her own wild adventures and possessive relationships, knowing firsthand the toll it takes on you.

*MTV Splitsvilla X5: ExSqueeze Me Please* airs on MTV and on JioCinema.



## Respect others' time to earn respect: Rakul

**Mumbai:** In a day and age where many opt for the trend of being fashionably late, often blaming traffic congestion, actress Rakul Preet Singh stands out for her punctuality. She has earned a reputation for being exceptionally disciplined when it comes to managing her time.

The *De De Pyaar De* actress said, "As a voracious reader, I have come to realise the significance of time management and punctuality, traits emphasised by global leaders. If you want people to respect you and your time, you have to value them and their time. So, being on time is part of who I am. I start getting panic attacks if I am running even two minutes late. Even when I know events and shoots might not always start on time, I still prioritise punctuality."

The actress credits discipline as a crucial factor in her success story. Her commitment to punctuality contributes to maximising productivity even within time constraints.

On the personal front, Rakul tied the knot with producer-and-actor Jackky Bhagnani in February this year in Goa.

# Alaya talks about layers of nepotism

**Mumbai:** Ahead of the release of her upcoming film *Bade Miyan Chote Miyan*, actress Alaya F opened up about her experiences in the film industry and reflected on the complexities of nepotism during an interview. Notably, Alaya, who is the daughter of actress Pooja Bedi, shared insights into the fine layers of nepotism.

During the conversation, she opened up on the topic of nepotism and said that her struggle was a privileged one.

Nepotism also has levels and layers. Her nepotism got her into trouble. Directors and producers would meet with her, but no one gave her a movie. She got her first movie, after testing for one and a half years.

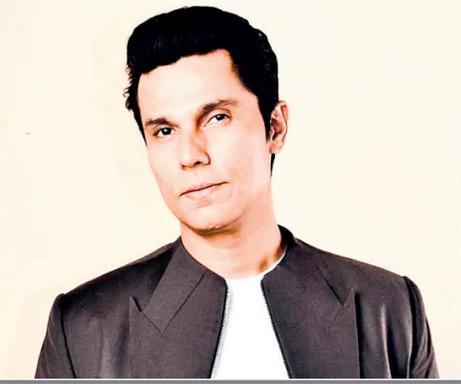
She made her mark in the Hindi film industry with her role opposite Saif Ali Khan and Tabu in the 2020 film *Jawaani Jaaneman*, where she portrayed Saif's daughter. Her stellar performance in the movie earned her the prestigious award for Best Female Debut. Since then, she has showcased her talent in various projects, including *Freddy* alongside Kartik Aaryan, *Almost Pyaar with DJ Mohabbat* starring alongside Karan Mehta, and *U-turn*.



# Randeep calls method acting a misused term

**Mumbai:** Actor Randeep Hooda, who made his directorial debut with the recently released film *Swatantra Veer Savarkar*, shared that method acting is often an abused term in the film industry.

The actor on a podcast said, "Method acting' has been given a different colour altogether. The term has been made a means to tolerate the tantrums of actors, it has gotten to that point. Actors often say, 'I won't do this, I won't do that. I won't talk to the artist with whom I'm about to engage in a fight sequence for the film.'"



"I'll explain this through a very simple example. If you're doing a scene where you have to sit in a car and drive off to an airport, that's it, that's your shot. Neither do you actually drive off to the airport, nor does the camera trace your journey to the airport. When the shot gets cut, you turn around your car for a retake if the director doesn't get what he wants in the first take," he added.

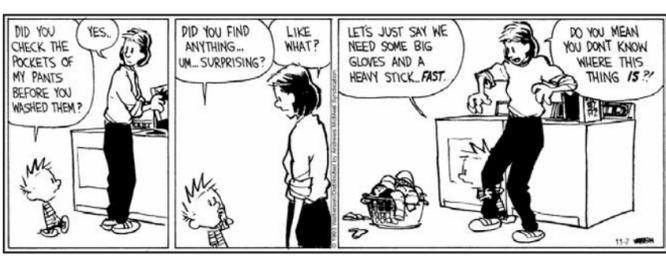
The *Once Upon a Time in Mumbaai* actor also said that he has stopped sharing his process with fellow actors as

well as the directors because the directors don't have an interest in understanding the process of actors. "They just want the scene and emotions to be on point, how an actor does it is completely their call."

### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

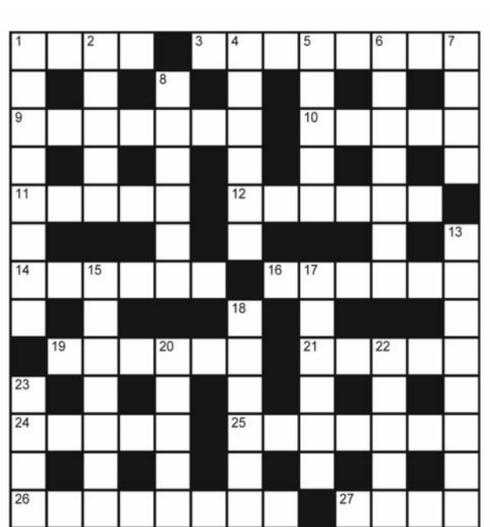


### BREVITY



### FUN post

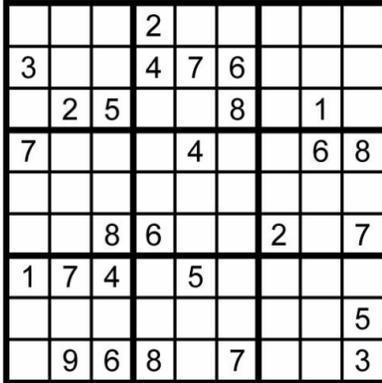
### CROSSWORD



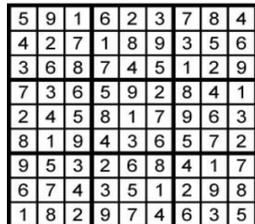
- Across**
- 1 Surrender
  - 3 Ranting
  - 9 Happy \_\_\_! (3,4)
  - 10 Wash cycle
  - 11 Cay
  - 12 Boil
  - 14 Declare null and void
  - 16 A hot dish?
  - 19 Surface
  - 21 Bulgarian city
  - 24 Out of practice
  - 25 Found in legumes
  - 26 Wrongful conduct
  - 27 Antares, for one
  - Down**
  - 1 Win over
  - 2 Wooden pin
  - 4 From the top
  - 5 Cliffside dwelling
  - 6 Striped or checked fabric
  - 7 \_\_\_ and anon
  - 8 Core
  - 13 Lawyer's charge
  - 15 Goddess of divine retribution
  - 17 Capital of Portugal
  - 18 Harvested
  - 20 Jingle
  - 22 Armada
  - 23 Streetcar

### SUDOKU

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



### SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



# BATTLEFIELD 2024



## SAMBALPUR ASSEMBLY SEAT

### BJD plans to pick BJP MP's brother

The two parties are yet to decide on the candidature for Sambalpur Assembly seat though they have announced their Lok Sabha nominees for Sambalpur



SUDHIR PUJARI

**Sambalpur, March 31:** The general election throws up many surprises while members of the same family pitted against each other from two ideologically different parties is nothing new in Indian politics. This assumes significance as reports are pouring in about the ruling BJD's plan to field Sudhir Pujari, younger brother of BJP's Bargarh MP Suresh Pujari, from Sambalpur Assembly constituency.

The two parties are yet to decide on the candidature for Sambalpur Assembly seat though they have announced their Lok Sabha nominees for Sambalpur. The BJD has fielded Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan while Pranab Prakash Das is the BJD's choice for the seat. Das visited Sambalpur Friday when the supporters of former Sambalpur MLA Raseswari Panigrahi met him and demanded a ticket for her.

They also discreetly expressed their opposition to the party's district president and one of the aspirants for the Sambalpur Assembly seat Rohit Pujari. Rohit is the sitting MLA from Redhakhole Assembly constituency under the Lok Sabha segment.

Das also visited Redhakhole the same day where party sup-

porters raised the local issues and demanded to field a local leader as the party candidate for the Redhakhole seat.

In this backdrop, the BJD is yet to finalise a candidate though aspirants are many. Sources said the party is searching for a new face for Sambalpur Assembly seat.

The name of former MLA Raseswari Panigrahi, district party president Er Rohit Pujari, former district president and state general secretary Siddharth Das, advisor Sanjit Mohanty of state kendu leaf welfare board, Sanjay Babu, the

president of Samaleswari Temple Trust Board and advisor of Kalia Yojana are in the list of probable candidates. However, the party authorities are looking for a better candidate and searching for a new face to contest from the seat.

Meanwhile, a new face Sudhir Pujari has emerged before the party authorities. Chatters are buzz that he is one among the probable candidates for BJD.

Sudhir, younger brother of BJP's Bargarh MP Suresh Pujari and founder member and advisor of a social outfit Utsarg in the area, was also one of the probable candidates of BJD during the 2014 election. He was then in government service. Moreover, he withdrew himself from the race after BJP fielded his elder brother from Sambalpur Lok Sabha constituency.

Sudhir is involved in various social activities and his elder brother's supporters are likely to back him if he gets a ticket. Political analysts believe that BJD will never let go such a personality and might field him from Sambalpur Assembly seat this time.

### PM slams INDIA bloc at Meerut rally

FIGHTING BIG BATTLE AGAINST CORRUPT, WON'T BE INTIMIDATED BY ATTACKS: MODI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Meerut (UP), March 31:** Allying that the Opposition INDIA bloc wanted to protect the corrupt, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday asserted that he will not stop his fight against corruption despite their attacks on him and those who looted the country will face action irrespective of their status.

"When Modi is fighting the battle against corruption with full strength, these people have formed the INDI alliance. They think they will intimidate Modi, but for me, my Bharat is my family and I am taking steps to protect it from the corrupt," the prime minister said here in his first rally in Uttar Pradesh after the announcement of the Lok Sabha election schedule.

Modi's counter-offensive came as the stalwarts of the INDIA bloc parties held a 'Loktantra Bachao' (Save Democracy) rally at the Ramlila Maidan in New Delhi in support of AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal and JMM leader Hemant Soren, arrested on graft charges, and accused the prime minister of running a "dictatorship".

The prime minister said some people are rattled because he is taking action against corruption. "Modi's mantra is 'bhrashtachar hatao' (remove corruption). They say 'bhrashtachari bachao' (save the corrupt)."

"I am fighting a big battle to save my country from the corrupt. That is why they are behind bars today and not even getting bail from the Supreme Court," Modi said.

The prime minister said his government took steps in the



last 10 years to ensure that the money meant for the poor is not usurped by the corrupt.

"This election is a fight between two camps. On one side you have the NDA committed to eradicating corruption, on the other side is the INDI Alliance focused on protecting corrupt leaders. You have to decide whether corruption should be removed or not," he said at the rally in Meerut.

"Corrupt people should listen... No matter how many attacks you make on Modi, this is Modi, he is not going to stop. No matter how big the corrupt person is, action will definitely be taken. The one who has looted the country will have to give it back. This is Modi's guarantee," he said.

The INDIA bloc has alleged that the Modi government is misusing agencies to target its leaders to cripple the Opposition before the Lok Sabha polls.

Raising the Katchatheevu island issue, Modi accused the Congress and the Opposition alliance of trying to harm the country's unity and sovereignty.

"Today, yet another anti-India conduct of Congress has been exposed. The island of Katchatheevu, which lies between India and Sri Lanka and

is extremely important from the perspective of national security was given away by Congress after independence. India is still paying for the misdeeds of the Congress government," he said.

The 2024 Lok Sabha election is not just for making a government but to make a 'Viksit Bharat', Modi said, adding his government was preparing the roadmap for the next five years.

Modi lauded Meerut as the land of "revolution and revolutionaries" that gave leaders like Chaudhary Charan Singh to the nation.

Former prime minister Charan Singh's grandson and Rashtriya Lok Dal president Jayant Chaudhary, who recently joined the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance, shared the dais with the prime minister at the rally.

"This land of Meerut is the land of revolution and revolutionaries. It is blessed by Baba Aughad Dham. This land has given great sons like Chaudhary Charan Singh to the country. Our government has the privilege of awarding him Bharat Ratna. I respectfully pay tributes to Chaudhary Saheb," the prime minister said.

Modi recalled that he started his election campaign in 2014

and 2019 from Meerut. "Now the first rally of the 2024 elections is being held in Meerut itself," he said.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Haryana CM Naib Singh Saini and veteran actor Arun Govil of TV serial 'Ramayan' fame, who is the BJP candidate in Meerut, were present on dais along with leaders of NDA constituents Apna Dal (S), Nirbal Shoshit Indian Hamara Aam Dal (Nishad) and Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party (SBSP) as well as BJP and RLD candidates from Baghat, Kairana, Muzaffarnagar and Bijnor.

Modi greeted everyone with "Ram-Ram" at the start of his speech.

Referring to the removal of Article 370 that gave special status to Jammu and Kashmir and the construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, Modi said that many tasks that were considered impossible have been done by his government in the last 10 years.

"People used to consider it impossible for a grand temple of Ram Lalla to be constructed in Ayodhya. But today, Ram temple has been made and lakhs of people are also going there."

"You all saw that Kanha and Radha, like always, played Holi in Braj, this time Ram Lalla also played Holi in Avadh," Modi said.

"It was also considered impossible to implement one rank one pension. But, we implemented it. A stringent law against triple talaq was also considered impossible but today a law has been made against it."

"Reservation for women in Lok Sabha and legislative assemblies was considered impossible. But, Nari Shakti Vandan Yojna has become a reality today."

"Removal of Article 370 was once considered impossible. But Article 370 has been removed and development is also being done. This is why people today are blessing BJP with 370 seats."

### Jual confident of second hatrick from Sundargarh

THE FIVE-TIME MP CALLS DILIP TIRKEY HIS 'YOUNGER BROTHER' WHO LACKS POLITICAL EXPERIENCE

RAJESH MOHANTY, OP

**Rourkela, March 31:** Jual Oram, BJP's MP candidate for Sundargarh and the sitting MP, arrived to a rousing welcome by party leaders, cadres and general public at Rourkela railway station, Sunday.

"This time I am going to script a second hatrick from here. I had lost only in 2009. Else, I have won from here five times, and this time too I am confident," Jual said to the waiting media. As soon as he got down from the train the entire Rourkela station reverberated with slogans like 'BJP Jindabad' and 'Jual Bhai Jindabad'. Soon he was taken in a procession on an open vintage car with slogan shouting cadres following it.

When asked about the candidature of Padma Shri Dilip Tirkey (from the BJD) from the constituency, he said, "He (Dilip) is a good person and my younger brother. He is a hockey star. But politics is a different ballgame altogether. In my view, he is relatively less experienced than me in politics. Politics is not a game of hockey, it is played differently."

The saffron part strongman also claimed he was confident of his victory. "That is because of the atmosphere created by our Prime Minister Narendra Modiji, and also the work he has done. All of these will be an asset for me. However, our political strategy cannot be discussed in public," he said.

On local issues, he explained, "It was due to my initiative that the Talcher-Bimalagarh railway link took a definite and final shape. Similarly, everyone was cribbing about Brahmani bridge

earlier. And today it is there for all to see."

Regarding healthcare issues, he said, "I ensured that the super specialty hospital be ready for the public. At Sundargarh, the NTPC Medical College and Hospital is functional now. Besides, the medical infrastructure in the district has been strengthened."

On flight connectivity to Rourkela, he said, "The airport is fully operational now. It will take some more time to become full-legged functional."

On the Birsa Munda Hockey Stadium, Jual said, "The hockey stadium came up using DMF fund, and only after we released the funds it became ready." He also spoke about the Rourkela Smart City project. In addition, he also mentioned about 'Eklabya schools' in each block and also smart city Rourkela. "Voters should be reminded about all these and also the success of digital network and Atal Behari Vajpayee Gramin Sadak Yojana," he added.

The last when Jual and Dilip faced each other in the political battlefield was in 2014 when the former, who had recovered from the shock defeat of 2009, defeated the latter by a small margin of 18,829 votes.



Abakash Sahu from Boudh, along with his supporters from CPI, joined BJD at Sankha Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Sunday



BJD candidate for Basudevpur Assembly constituency Bishnubrata Routray being welcomed by party workers at Tihidi in Bhadrak during a motorcycle rally, Sunday



Congress leaders addressing a press meet on electoral bonds at Congress Bhawan in Angul, Sunday



BJD MLA candidate for Dharmagarh Assembly constituency Pushpendra Singhdeo attending a party workers' meet at Ladugaon village under Koksara in Kalahandi district, Sunday

### 'Message of Lord Ram's life is that power is not permanent'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 31:** In a stinging attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra Sunday said she would like to tell him that the message of Lord Ram's life is that power is not permanent and arrogance gets shattered.

In her remarks before reading out the INDIA bloc's demands at a rally at the Ramlila Maidan here, Priyanka Gandhi said, "I have been coming to the Ramlila Maidan since childhood. Every year Ravan's effigy is burnt."

"When I was a kid, I used to come (here) with my grandmother Indira Gandhi Ji. She

used to narrate Ram's 'jeevan gaatha' to me. Those in power today call themselves Ram bhakts. When I was sitting here, I thought that I should say something to them in this context," the Congress general secretary said.

Priyanka Gandhi said she thinks that those in power today are besotted with showoff and she wants to remind them of the thousands of years old tale and its message.

"When Lord Ram fought for truth, he did not have power, resources or even a chariot. Ravan had chariots, resources, army and golden Lanka but Lord Ram had hope, belief, love, kindness, modesty, patience, courage and he had truth."



"I want to tell those in power and PM Narendra Modi that the message of Lord Ram's life is that power is not permanent, power comes and goes and arrogance gets shattered one day," Priyanka Gandhi said.

In a show of opposition unity ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, INDIA bloc leaders came to-

gether at a 'Loktantra Bachao' rally at the Ramlila ground here Sunday in the backdrop of Delhi Chief Minister Kejriwal's arrest.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, former party chiefs Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, NCP (Sharadchandra Pawar) leader Sharad Pawar, Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav, CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury, CPI general secretary D Raja, PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti, National Conference chief Feroq Abdullah, and Jharkhand Chief Minister Champai Soren, among others, attended the rally.

# national

## of the day quote

Why they have selected Channapatna is because BJP and JD(S) are not united there, their workers are not united there. BJP and JD(S) workers who have fought each other day in and out, and even during local body polls, are not working together. So, Amit Shah is starting his campaign from there



D K SHIVAKUMAR | KATAK DEPUTY CM

Is it our responsibility to make the Opposition weak or strong? When we had just two MPs and were weak, we never got any package out of sympathy



NITIN GADKARI | BJP LEADER

If you are so confident of crossing 400 (Lok Sabha seats in polls), why are you scared of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leaders? You sent Arvind Kejriwal to jail... Hemant Soren was sent to jail



AKHILESH YADAV | SP CHIEF

## SHORT TAKES

### Villagers, police clash; 21 detained

**Hyderabad:** As many as 21 villagers were detained after they clashed with police following a row between groups of two neighbouring villages in Telangana's Khammam district Sunday, a senior official said. The incident occurred in Sathupalli mandal of the district. Police said that a fight broke out between two groups of residents of Buggapadu and Chandrayapalem villages over a group's alleged encroachment of forest land. Police and forest officials soon reached the spot and negotiated with the villagers, after which one group left. But the other allegedly attacked the police resulting in injuries to some personnel, a senior official told PTI.

### SC to hear Gyanvapi committee's plea today

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear April 1 a Gyanvapi mosque management committee's plea against an Allahabad High Court decision upholding a lower court's order allowing Hindu prayers in the southern cellar of the mosque. A bench of Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra will hear the plea of Anjum Intezamia Masjid Committee, which manages the affairs of the Gyanvapi mosque in Varanasi, challenging the HC's February 26 decision.

### SP leader's wife shot dead

**Hapur (Uttar Pradesh):** Nazreen, the wife of Samajwadi Party (SP) leader and property dealer, Jahir Salmani, was shot dead here Saturday, the police said. According to initial information, Salmani's wife, Nazreen, sustained three gunshot wounds, two to the head and one to the chest. She was rushed to Devnandini Hospital in Hapur in critical condition, where doctors pronounced her dead upon arrival.

### Infosys to receive ₹6,329cr I-T refund

**New Delhi:** Infosys is expecting a refund of ₹6,329 crore from the Income Tax Department, the country's second largest IT services company has said. It also informed the stock exchanges about tax demand to the tune of ₹2,763 crore, citing various assessment orders. The Bangalore-headquartered IT company also said it has received an order for assessment year 22-23 with a tax demand of ₹2,763 crore, including interest, and for assessment year 11-12 with a tax demand of ₹4 crore, interest included.



What Karunanidhi was doing when the Centre concluded pacts in 1974 and 1976 to cede the island to Sri Lanka?

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN | UNION MINISTER

## TRI-SERVICE EXERCISE 'TIGER TRIUMPH-24' CONCLUDES

The bilateral tri-service Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) amphibious exercise between India and the US, 'Tiger Triumph 2024' concluded onboard the USS Somerset. The Indian Navy said Sunday that the sea phase was conducted from March 26 to 30 and it included units of both countries undertaking maritime exercises at sea followed by the landing of troops at Kakinada for setting up a joint Command and Control Centre and a Joint Relief and Medical Camp for HADR operations



## KATCHATHEEVU ISLAND ROW

# KHARGE HITS BACK AT MODI

**MALLIKARJUN KHARGE ACCUSED PM MODI OF NEGLECTING INDIA'S TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND NATIONAL SECURITY, CITING HIS RESPONSE TO BORDER TENSION WITH CHINA. KHARGE ALSO QUESTIONED MODI'S FOCUS ON CONGRESS RATHER THAN ADDRESSING KEY ISSUES AFFECTING THE NATION**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 31:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday led a BJP charge against the Congress for "callously" giving away Katchatheevu island to Sri Lanka, slamming it as yet another "anti-national" act of the party for which the country is still paying the price.

With the issue having a resonance in Tamil Nadu whose fishermen often bear the brunt of Lankan action against their alleged intrusion into its waters, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge hit back asking why the government did not act to take back the island in its 10 years in power and termed Modi's attack as poll-eve desperation.

Modi seized on a media report - based on an I reply Tamil Nadu BJP president K Annamalai received on the decision of the then Indra Gandhi government in 1974 to hand over the territory in Palk Strait to the neighbouring country - to target the Congress, an ally of the

state's ruling DMK. "Eye-opening and startling! New facts reveal how Congress callously gave away Katchatheevu. This has angered every Indian and reaffirmed in people's minds- we can't ever trust Congress," he said on X, sharing the report.

Modi added, "Weakening India's unity, integrity and interests has been Congress' way of working for 75 years and counting."

He raised the matter later at his rally in Meerut and linked the issue of the capture of Tamil Nadu fishermen and the seizure of their boats by the Lankan forces to the island treaty.

Reacting to the charge, Kharge said the island was given to Sri Lanka as part of a friendly agreement in 1974 and reminded the government that it too had undertaken a similar "friendly gesture" towards Bangladesh with an exchange of border enclaves.

"Pradhan Mantri Narendra Modi ji, You have suddenly woken up to the issues of territorial



integrity and national security in your 10th year of misrule. Perhaps, elections are the trigger. Your desperation is palpable," he said in a post on X.

In the past, Modi has raised the issue in Parliament as well, while noting that the Tamil Nadu government often writes to him over the issue.

The BJP is hopeful that the issue will come in handy in its efforts to gain political traction in the Dravidian territory during the Lok Sabha polls, more so as it involves neighbouring Sri Lanka whose treatment of its own Tamilian citizens and Tamil Nadu fishermen has long been a charged political issue in the state. In his Meerut rally, Modi

said one more "anti-national" act of the Congress has appeared before the country.

The island was with India and was very important from the point of view of security, he asserted. However, the Congress claimed that it was of no use and "cut off a part of Maa Bharti" and separated it from the country, he charged.

The country is still paying a price, the prime minister said referring to the capture of fishermen and their boats when they go near the island.

He said, "It is a consequence of the sins of the Congress that our fishermen are still getting punished." Home Minister Amit Shah said the decision of the



## 4 killed, over 100 injured as storm hits Jalpaiguri

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jalpaiguri (WB), March 31:** Four people died and over 100 were injured as a "sudden" storm wreaked havoc in parts of Jalpaiguri district in northern West Bengal Sunday, officials said in a statement.

Several hutments and houses were damaged, trees uprooted and electric poles came crashing down as strong winds accompanied by hail struck most parts of the district headquarters town and many areas of neighbouring Mainaguri, they said.

Among the most affected areas were Rajarhat, Barnish, Bakali, Jorpakdi, Madhabdanga and Saptibari, the officials said, adding that several acres of agricultural lands and crops suffered damages. Meanwhile, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has cancelled her scheduled programmes and will head to Jalpaiguri later Sunday, TMC sources said. An emergency cell has also been opened at the Raj Bhavan to deal with the situation in Jalpaiguri, they said.

Condoning the loss of lives in the storm, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday said he had spoken with officials and asked them to ensure proper assistance to those affected by it.

# Mamata challenges BJP to 'cross even 200 seats'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Krishnanagar (WB), March 31:** West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Sunday mocked the BJP-led NDA's target of winning 400-plus seats in the Lok Sabha polls and challenged the saffron party to win at least 200 constituencies.

The TMC chief also reaffirmed her refusal to allow the enforcement of the Citizenship Amendment Act in the state and cautioned the people that applying for CAA would turn an applicant into a foreigner and urged them not to apply for it.

Dubbing the BJP a 'jumla' party, the TMC supremo accused them of "peddling lies" regarding the CAA, stating "Modi's guarantee on CAA is a zero guarantee."

"The CAA is a trap to turn legal citizens into foreigners. Once you implement CAA, NRC will follow. We would allow neither CAA nor NRC in West Bengal. Don't fall for the false assurance of the central government. If you apply, you will be designated as a foreigner for 5 years," Banerjee said while addressing her first rally in the election season after her injury earlier this month.

Reaching out to the Matua community who are expected to benefit most from the implementation of the CAA, the TMC supremo urged the community to have faith in her, stating she would never allow "anyone to snatch your citizenship."



The BJP is saying '400 paar', I challenge them to cross the 200-seat benchmark first. In the 2021 West Bengal Assembly polls, they aimed for 200 plus seats but had to stop at 77. Some of these 77 have since joined us

MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER

According to the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), rules of which were notified on March 13, the government will now start granting Indian nationality to persecuted non-Muslim migrants - Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Parsis, and Christians - from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan who arrived in India before December 31, 2014.

Praising Moitra for her fight against the BJP, Banerjee said, "Despite Mahua Moitra being elected by you people (electorate), she was expelled unceremoniously." "We have again re-nominated her from this seat. Mahua was expelled as she was most vocal against the BJP in parliament. You people have to ensure her victory with a record margin," she said.

Banerjee criticised the Opposition bloc INDIA partners - CPI(M) and Congress -- for "joining hands with the BJP" in West Bengal.



HIP HIP HOORAY: Students celebrate their success after the declaration of the class 10th results of the Bihar Board in Patna, Bihar

## TIDBITS

### Rough seas cause havoc in coastal hamlets of Kerala

**Thiruvananthapuram:** Strong waves and rough seas wreaked havoc in several coastal hamlets of Kerala Sunday flooding houses and roads and damaging boats and fishing equipment. The unexpected high tides and surge in the water level was experienced in the coastal areas of Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Alappuzha, Thirissur districts. While several houses and roads were flooded in Adimalathura, Pozhiyur and Poonthura here due to the rough sea, tourists were restricted from venturing to the ocean in nearby Kovalam, official sources said. Rough seas were reported in Purakkad, Cherthala and Pallithodu areas of Alappuzha while strong winds and high tides damaged fishing nets in some areas in Thirissur, local residents said.

### ED action on Lawrence Bishnoi's key aide

**New Delhi:** Cash, bank deposits and land worth ₹17.82 crore belonging to the family members of "gangster" Surender Singh alias Chiku have been attached as part of a money laundering investigation against the Lawrence Bishnoi gang and others, the Enforcement Directorate said Sunday. The immovable assets are located in Haryana's Narnaul and Rajasthan's Jaipur, the central agency said in a statement. It said Chiku was "managing the crime money of Lawrence Bishnoi through his gang members and acquired properties in the names of his family members and relatives". Chiku is currently lodged in Tihar jail and was arrested in this case by the ED in February after the agency conducted searches against his family members and linked persons in Rajasthan and Haryana. The probe found, the ED said, alleged "illegal" involvement of Chiku in mining businesses in Narnaul through a company called Nimawat Granites Pvt. Ltd.

### 19 traditional crafts, products of Assam get GI tag

**Guwahati:** As many as 19 traditional products and crafts of Assam, including 'Bihu Dhol', 'Jaapi' and several items of the Bodo community, have been accorded the geographical indication (GI) tag, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said Sunday. Thirteen of these products are specifically linked to the Bodos, who form the largest tribal group in the state. Terming it a big win for the state's heritage, Sarma wrote on X: "Six prestigious GI Tags have been granted to traditional crafts with support from NABARD, RO Guwahati, and facilitated by Padma Shri Dr Rajani Kant, GI Expert". "This includes iconic items like Assam Bihu Dhol, Japi, Sarthebari Metal Craft, and more. These products, deeply rooted in history, support nearly one lakh people directly," he said.

## TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 31:** An individual's emotional reaction to climate change whether it is guilt, anger, hope or fear could have a bearing on their climate policy preferences, a new research has found.

It found that while the guilty atone through options requiring them to shell out money like fossil fuel tax, those feeling hopeful or sad about climate change place their faith in proactive policies, such as investing in infrastructure.

Individuals angry about climate change too were found to be comfortable with money-extracting policies. However, the research, led by George Mason University, Virginia, US, found that those fearful of climate change were the ones most likely to support any and all kinds of policies, especially regulatory

# Emotional response affects policy preference

ones such as those around carbon emissions.

The researchers said that existing research has not explored the unique links between specific emotions and the types of climate policies these emotions drive an individual to support. The study is published in the journal PLoS Climate.

The findings showed that emotional investment can help raise awareness of important issues and galvanise an otherwise apathetic public, they said.

For example, individuals and organisations advocating for proactive climate solutions might appeal to feelings of hope, they said.

For the study, the researchers used surveys to examine how common emotional reactions to climate change -- guilt, anger, hope, sadness and fear -- influenced one's policy preferences. The survey questions enquired



Representational image

about the respondents' emotional response to climate change, and support for specific policies - for example, "Increase federal funding to low-income communities and communities of colour who are disproportionately harmed by air and water pollution."

The surveys were distributed every six months from 2010 to 2022.

Of the total 16,605 participants, 51 per cent reported as being women and 73 per cent as being "White, non-Hispanic". On average, they were aged 45-54 years and had received "some college" education. The questions accounted for political ideologies as well, the team said.

They found that the five emotions investigated were uniquely associated with support for specific types of climate policies - taxes or investments or regula-

tory ones. However, the stronger the emotionality, the stronger the support for any policy, they found.

"We find that in comparison to other policy options: those who are more fearful of climate change are more likely to support regulatory-first approaches to policy; those who feel more guilty support personally costly climate policies; and those who are more hopeful support more proactive climate policies like generating renewable energy on public land," the authors wrote in their study.

"Future work should examine experimentally whether messages that target these emotions are more effective at increasing support for the specific policy types, but in the meantime, communicators may wish to consider how their campaign's emotional tones match their targeted policy goals," they wrote.

# international

## of the day quote

I took office with clean hands and thus I will retire from the presidency in 2026

**DINA BOLUARTE** | PRESIDENT, PERU

Despite efforts to promote stability and security in our maritime domain, the Philippines continues to confront a range of serious challenges that threaten territorial integrity, but also the peaceful existence of Filipinos

**FERNAND MARCOS JR** | PRESIDENT, PHILIPPINE

We will deliver hundreds of old armoured vehicles and new surface-to-air missiles to Ukraine in its war against Russia

**SEBASTIEN LECORNU** | DEFENCE MINISTER, FRANCE

## SHORT TAKES

### Army conscription: Putin signs decree

**Moscow:** Russian President Vladimir Putin has signed a decree setting out the routine spring conscription campaign, calling up 150,000 citizens for statutory military service, a document posted on the Kremlin's website showed Sunday. All men in Russia are required to do a year-long military service, or equivalent training during higher education, from the age of 18. In July Russia's lower house of parliament voted to raise the maximum age at which men can be conscripted to 30 from 27. The new legislation came into effect January 1, 2024. Compulsory military service has long been a sensitive issue in Russia, where many men go to great lengths to avoid being handed conscription papers during the twice-yearly call-up periods.

### Canada sends troops to Jamaica

**Ottawa:** Canada has sent around 70 soldiers to Jamaica to train troops from Caribbean nations who are due to take part in an UN-authorized mission to Haiti, the Canadian defense ministry said Saturday. Kenya announced last year it would lead the force, which is designed to help national police fight powerful gangs in Haiti where spiraling violence has fueled a humanitarian disaster. The initiative has been tied up in Kenyan court challenges ever since, effectively putting the mission on hold. The Canadian troops, from the predominantly French-speaking province of Quebec, will provide training on core peace-keeping skills and combat first aid, the defense ministry said in a statement.

## CYCLE OF EXTREME WEATHER

The drought in Zimbabwe, neighboring Zambia and Malawi has reached crisis levels. Zambia and Malawi have declared national disasters. Zimbabwe could be on the brink of doing the same. The drought has reached Botswana and Angola to the west, and Mozambique and Madagascar to the east

**Mangwe, March 31:** Delicately and with intense concentration, Zanyiwe Ncube poured her small share of precious golden cooking oil into a plastic bottle at a food aid distribution site deep in rural Zimbabwe.

"I don't want to lose a single drop," she said.

Her relief at the handout — paid for by the United States government as her southern African coun-

# Sunak's seat at risk

*'The Sunday Times' analysis of the major seat-by-seat survey claims Tory prospects have hit a record low, which means they are on track for their worst election result, winning fewer than 100 seats*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**London, March 31:** A new so-called mega poll conducted by a civil society campaign organisation indicates that the governing Conservative Party is in for a major drubbing in the general election expected later this year, with even British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's seat in North Yorkshire hanging in the balance.

The 15,029-person MRP poll conducted by Survation on behalf of Best for Britain puts the Opposition Labour Party on 45 per cent of the vote share with a 19-point lead over the Conservatives, up three points from the group's previous poll at the end of last year.

"The Sunday Times' analysis of the major seat-by-seat survey claims Tory prospects have hit a record low, which means they are on track for their worst election result, winning fewer than 100 seats. Labour could win 468, giving Opposition leader Sir Keir Starmer's party a whopping 286-seat majority."

"Our MRP forecast shows that, if the election were held tomorrow, Sunak's Conservatives would lose 250 MPs across the country and the Labour Party would win with 468 seats. This would be the worst ever result for the Conservatives at a General Election," claims the Best for



There were certainly several MPs who said they would have immediately put letters in to force a confidence vote

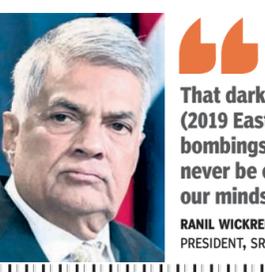
**TORY MP**

Britain analysis. "The extent of the damage to the Conservative Party doesn't stop there either. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's seat of Richmond and Northallerton becomes a hyper-marginal, with the Labour Party just 2.4 per cent behind him. The same is true in Chancellor Jeremy Hunt's new seat of Godalming and Ash in which the Liberal Democrats trail by just 1 per cent," it adds.

The analysis claims that of the estimated 28 sitting Cabinet members expected to contest the polls, only 13 of them would be re-elected should they decide to stand again. While undecided voters were not accounted for in the survey, they represented about 15 per cent of those asked and the Tories will be pinning their hopes on winning them over when the country finally goes to the polls.

Lord David Frost, the former Brexit secretary and a vocal critic of Sunak, told 'The Sunday Times' that these latest survey figures showed the "desperate situation" the Conservative Party was facing.

"The polling is getting worse over time, not better," he said. Sunak's aides fear he could face a leadership challenge after the local elections if, as predicted, the Tories face humiliating defeats in



That dark memory (2019 Easter Sunday bombings) would never be erased off our minds

**RANIL WICKREMESINGHE** | PRESIDENT, SRI LANKA

## CASH-STRAPPED

### Pak bans red carpets at official events

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Islamabad, March 31:** Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has banned the use of red carpets at government events, reserving them exclusively for diplomatic receptions, as part of austerity measures to cut down unnecessary expenditures in the cash-strapped nation.

Sharif expressed annoyance over the use of red carpets during the visits of federal ministers and senior authorities at government functions.

According to the Cabinet Division, a ban has been imposed on the use of red carpet on the prime minister's directives.

According to a notification issued by the Cabinet division, the prime minister has instructed that the red carpet will not be used for federal ministers and government figures at official events in the future.

However, it could be used as a protocol only for foreign diplomats, The Express Tribune newspaper reported.

The decision to ban red carpets is more than just a symbolic gesture. It represents a tangible effort to curb unnecessary expenditures and redirect resources to more critical areas of governance.

By eliminating the use of red carpets, the government aims to save funds and promote a more responsible and prudent approach to public finances.

Last week, Prime Minister Sharif and members of the Cabinet decided to voluntarily forego their salaries and perks as part of the government's efforts to promote austerity. Last month, the prime minister stated that austerity measures were the government's top priority.

## NO PEACE

# Fighting rages across Gaza amid truce talks

*Hamas has sought to parlay any deal into an end to the fighting and withdrawal of Israeli forces. Israel has ruled this out, saying it would eventually resume efforts to dismantle the governing and military capabilities of Hamas*

REUTERS

**Cairo, March 31:** Israeli military strikes killed dozens of Palestinians across the Gaza Strip Sunday, health officials said, as Egypt hosted an Israeli delegation for a new round of talks in a bid to secure a truce with Gaza's Hamas rulers.

The warring sides have stepped up negotiations, mediated by Qatar and Egypt, on a six-week suspension of Israel's offensive in return for the proposed release of 40 of 130 hostages still held by Hamas militants in Gaza after their October 7 attack on southern Israel.

Hamas would not be present at the talks in Cairo, an official told Reuters Sunday, as it waited to hear from mediators on whether



LOCAL ELECTION IN TURKEY

Turks voted Sunday in municipal elections focused on President Tayyip Erdogan's bid to reclaim control of Istanbul from rival Ekrem Imamoglu, who aims to reassert the opposition as a political force after bitter election defeats last year



a new Israeli offer was on the table. Palestinian health officials said an Israeli air strike killed nine people in Bani Suhaila near Khan Younis, while another air strike killed four people in Al-Maghazi camp in the central Gaza Strip.

In Deir Al-Balah, health officials and Hamas media said an Israeli air strike hit several tents inside Shuhada Al-Aqsa Hospital, killing four people and wounding several, including some journalists.

In the peace talks, Hamas also wants hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who were displaced from Gaza City and surrounding areas southward during the first stage of the war to be allowed back north.

More than 32,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's military offensive in the Gaza Strip since October 7.

## Netanyahu to undergo hernia surgery

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office says the Israeli leader will undergo surgery Sunday for a hernia. Netanyahu's office said the hernia was discovered during a routine checkup, and that the prime minister will be under full anaesthesia and unconscious for the procedure. Justice Minister Yariv Levin, a close confidant who also holds the title of deputy prime minister, will serve as acting prime minister during the operation, the office said. Netanyahu, 74, has kept a full schedule throughout Israel's nearly six-month-long war against Hamas, and his doctors have said he is in good health. Last year, however, doctors acknowledged he had concealed a long-known heart problem after they implanted a pacemaker.

## RARE SIGHTINGS

### King Charles attends Easter Sunday service in Windsor

**London:** A smiling King Charles III attended the Easter Sunday service at St George's Chapel in Windsor, marking the British monarch's first major public appearance since his cancer diagnosis was made public last month. The 75-year-old royal was joined by wife Queen Camilla, 76, as the couple walked up waving to the gathered crowds outside the chapel, where royals have traditionally attended the annual holy service. Prince William and his wife Kate Middleton did not join the tradition this year after the Princess of Wales revealed her own cancer diagnosis last week and said she was undergoing "preventative chemotherapy". The King's public appearance, which is not believed to indicate a full-time return to all his public-facing duties yet as he continues to undergo outpatient treatment, is seen as a move to reassure the British public after his daughter-in-law's video message sharing the news of her cancer — with Buckingham Palace not revealing the form of cancer in either of the royal's diagnoses for their privacy.



### Pope Francis soldiers through Easter Vigil

**Vatican City:** Pope Francis Saturday soldiered through a more than 2-hour Easter Vigil Mass in St Peter's Basilica, one of the longest services in Catholic liturgy, amid renewed concerns about the 87-year-old's frail condition. His voice at times sounded raspy and out of breath, but he read out all of his prepared texts, including a more than one-page long homily, and he smiled and waved at the congregation as he left in a wheelchair. In other occasions, Francis has delegated longer readings to aides. On Friday, the pope skipped at the last minute the night-time Via Crucis (Way of the Cross) procession at Rome's Colosseum in what the Vatican said was a bid to "preserve his health" ahead of other Holy Week events. The surprise move came after weeks in which Francis repeatedly limited his public speaking and cancelled engagements while struggling with what has been described as colds, bronchitis and the flu.



## SECURITY REASONS

# 'Chinese workers planning to leave Pak'

*Thousands of Chinese personnel are working in Pakistan on several projects being carried out under the aegis of the \$60bn China-Pakistan Economic Corridor*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Islamabad, March 31:** The recent deadly attack on Chinese workers in Pakistan has shaken their confidence and some of them are planning to leave the country over security reasons, according to a security analyst.

Muhammad Amir Rana in an article published in Dawn newspaper Sunday wrote that the terrorist attack on the Chinese engineers' vehicle Tuesday, which killed five Chinese, is having consequences and Chinese companies have suspended work on at least three critical hydropower projects: the Dasu dam, the Diamer-Basha dam, and the Tarbela 5th Extension.

"The attack has caused significant alarm. Apart from disrupting these vital infrastructure projects, it has shaken the confidence of Chinese nationals working in

spring to mind: Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Balochistan Liberation Army, and the Islamic State-Khorasan and the same is the case for the recent Shungla attack as the names of all three groups popped up immediately after the attack.

The TTP has been projected as the prime suspect, as one of its commanders was declared the mastermind behind a similar attack on the Chinese in Kohistan in 2021, and the names of a few TTP commanders who may have orchestrated the attack are circulating in the media.

Rana said Pakistan's militant landscape may not be too complex but is diverse, where ideologies, sociopolitical factors, and group dynamics all work within local contexts. In any counterterrorism inquiry, local context and dynamics are more important than broader ideological and political motivations.

Security institutions, bureaucracy, and the area's political leadership have tried to run the administration through local jirgas and by involving religious scholars, which can result in leniency towards criminals, with many extremist elements taking the law into their own hands.



# Drought in southern Africa leaves 20mn facing hunger

try deals with a severe drought — was tempered when aid workers gently broke the news that this would be their last visit.

Ncube and her 7-month-old son she carried on her back were among 2,000 people who received rations of cooking oil, sorghum, peas and other supplies in the Mangwe district in southwestern Zimbabwe. The food distribution is part of a program funded by American aid agency USAID and rolled out by the United Nations'



World Food Programme. They're aiming to help some of the 2.7 million people in rural Zimbabwe threatened with hunger because of the drought that has enveloped large parts of southern Africa since late 2023. It has scorched the crops that tens of millions of people grow themselves and rely on to survive, helped by what should be the rainy season.

They can rely on their crops and the weather less and less.

A year ago, much of this region was drenched by deadly tropical storms and floods. It is in the midst

of a vicious weather cycle: too much rain, then not enough. It's a story of the climate extremes that scientists say are becoming more frequent and more damaging, especially for the world's most vulnerable people.

In Mangwe, the young and the old lined up for food, some with donkey carts to carry home whatever they might get, others with wheelbarrows. Those waiting their turn sat on the dusty ground. Nearby, a goat tried its luck with a nibble on a thorny, scraggly bush.

The United Nations Children's Fund says there are "overlapping crises" of extreme weather in eastern and southern Africa, with both regions lurching between storms

and floods and heat and drought in the past year.

In southern Africa, an estimated 9 million people, half of them children, need help in Malawi. More than 6 million in Zambia, 3 million of them children, are impacted by the drought, UNICEF said. That's nearly half of Malawi's population and 30% of Zambia's.

While human-made climate change has spurred more erratic weather globally, there is something else parching southern Africa this year.

El Niño, the naturally occurring climatic phenomenon that warms parts of the Pacific Ocean every two to seven years, has varied effects on the world's weather. In southern Africa, it means below-average rainfall, sometimes drought, and is being blamed for the current situation.

Distressingly, extreme weather is expected to be the norm in eastern and southern Africa in the years to come

**EVA KADILLI** | REGIONAL DIRECTOR, UNICEF

of the day quote

The recently notified competition regulations on settlement, commitment, leniency plus and global turnover will be applicable to cases that are under investigation by the Competition Commission

RAVNEET KAUR | CHIEF, COMPETITION COMMISSION OF INDIA

The market is expected to grow 20 per cent this summer season. There could be some slowdown (in sales) due to general elections and we have to closely watch it

B THIAGARAJAN | MD, BLUE STAR

Indian consumers are really eager to travel, but it is also a price-sensitive market. What I see is that whenever a new route is announced, there is enormous demand from consumers to travel

PIETER ELSBES | CEO, INDIGO

SHORT TAKES

Mcap of seven top companies climbs

**New Delhi:** The combined market valuation of seven of the 10 most valued firms climbed ₹67,259.99 crore in a holiday-shortened last week, with Reliance Industries emerging as the biggest gainer, amid an overall optimistic trend in equities. Last week, the BSE benchmark climbed 819.41 points or 1.12 per cent. Markets saw just three trading sessions last week, as they were closed Monday for Holi and Good Friday March 29. Reliance Industries continued to rule the chart of the most valued firms, followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India, Infosys, LIC, ITC and Hindustan Unilever.

Bol raises lending rate by 10 bps

**New Delhi:** State-owned Bank of India (BoI) has announced a hike in lending rate by 10 basis points, a move which will make loans, including retail, expensive. The lending rate increase comes ahead of the monetary policy announcement by the Reserve Bank of India April 5. The new rate would be effective from April 1, BoI said in a regulatory filing Saturday. The bank has increased the mark-up by 10 bps from the existing level of 2.75 per cent to 2.85 per cent, and with the present repo rate of 6.5 per cent, the repo-based lending rate (RBLR) will be 9.35 per cent, it said. Meanwhile, in a separate filing, another public sector lender Indian Bank has hiked the lending rate linked to base rate and Benchmark Prime Lending Rate by 5 basis points. The new rates are effective from April 3 in the case of the Indian Bank.

Exporters write to PM

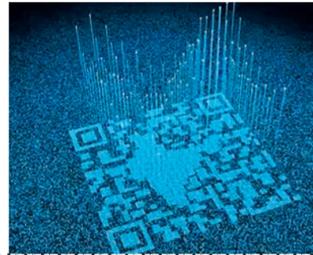
**New Delhi:** Indian exporters have urged the government to exempt them from the 45-day payment rule for goods bought from micro and small enterprises (MSEs) as it will impact their businesses. In a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, chiefs of major export promotion councils and federation of Indian export organisations have appealed to waive the export companies from section 43B(h) of the Income Tax law. The new rule, Section 43B(h) of the Income Tax Act, introduced in the Finance Act 2023, is designed to make sure small businesses get paid on time. It allows companies to get tax breaks if they pay their small business suppliers within the time limits set by the MSMED (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development) Act, 2006.



**Biochar manufacturing, using stainless steel chambers, is the future, offering non-corrosive (and) non-toxic sturdy material. Besides agriculture use, it can be input in an electric arc furnace**  
ARUNA SHARMA | FORMER STEEL SECRETARY

RBI MULLS TO SET UP DIGITA

As part of its efforts to curb growing cyber fraud, the Reserve Bank is considering establishing a Digital India Trust Agency (DIGITA) to stop the mushrooming of illegal lending apps. The proposed agency will enable verification of digital lending apps and maintain a public register of verified apps, sources said



RBI may hold rate yet again

THE CENTRAL BANK LAST HIKED THE REPO RATE TO 6.5% IN FEBRUARY 2023 AND SINCE THEN IT HAS HELD THE RATE AT THE SAME LEVEL IN ITS LAST SIX BI-MONTHLY POLICIES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, March 31:** The RBI may again keep the key interest rate unchanged in April as it is likely to focus more on bringing down inflation to the 4 per cent target after concerns over economic growth abated with GDP growth estimated at nearly 8 per cent, said experts.

Also, the Reserve Bank's rate-setting panel - Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) - may take cues from the central banks of some major economies like the US and UK, which are apparently in wait-and-watch mode on interest rate cuts.

Switzerland has become the first major economy to cut interest rates, while Japan, the world's third-largest economy, ended its eight-year period of negative interest rates regime.

The meeting of the Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das headed MPC is scheduled for April 3-5. The decision will be announced April 5 (Friday). It will be the first bi-monthly monetary policy of fiscal 2024-25. A total of six MPC meetings are scheduled for the fiscal beginning April 1, 2024.

"Given that inflation is still in the 5 per cent range and there is a possibility of future shocks on the food inflation front, the MPC is expected to maintain the

status quo on rate and stance this time," said Madan Sabnavis, Chief Economist, Bank of Baroda.

He further said there can be a revision in the GDP forecast, which will be eagerly awaited. Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist,

on the sustenance of the growth momentum and the US Fed's rate decisions," she said. Consequently, the earliest rate cut is only likely in the October 2024 meeting unless growth posits a negative surprise in the intervening quarters, amid a shallow rate cut cycle limited



The growth in FY24 has been much better than expected, and hence, the central bank will have less concern here and will continue focusing on targeting inflation

MADAN SABNAVIS | CHIEF ECONOMIST, BANK OF BARODA

Icra, said the upward revision in the The National Statistical Office's (NSO) GDP growth estimates for the first and second quarters of fiscal 2023-24, three successive quarters of 8 per cent plus GDP expansion and the CPI print of 5.1 per cent for February 2024, suggest status quo on rates and stance in the upcoming April meeting.

"Icra believes that the policy stance is unlikely to be changed before the August 2024 MPC review until there is visibility on the monsoon turnout as well as

to 50 bps at best, Nayar added. On expectations from the MPC, Ranen Banerjee, Partner and Leader Economic Advisory, PwC India, opined that the overall strong GDP growth in the third quarter, moderating core inflation going below 3.5 per cent, global increase in crude prices, increased logistics costs and the escalating situation in geopolitical conflicts would be the key issues for deliberation.

"While some of the central banks in emerging economies have started to cut policy rates,

India posted 8.4% economic growth in the December quarter of the fiscal 2023-24. The NSO has revised GDP estimates for the first, second quarters of this fiscal to 8.2 and 8.1% from 7.8% and 7.6%, respectively

the central banks of major economies are still unsure. The yield differential between India and the US has narrowed putting pressure on fund flows," he said.

Banerjee added that the rupee is cushioned owing to the bond index-related flows anticipated from the second quarter and is providing comfort despite the narrowing of the yields. In a recent report, global rating agency Moody's also said the Reserve Bank will likely keep rates on hold in the coming months given strong growth and firm inflation.

The government has mandated the RBI to ensure the consumer price index (CPI) based inflation remains at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on either side.

STRONG MARKET SENTIMENT

Fundraising via QIP soars to ₹78,000cr, surges over 7X YoY

The 2024-25 fiscal is expected to be very robust as companies will continue to garner capital for capex post-election results



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 31:** Fuelled by improved market sentiments and robust underlying demand, fundraising by issuing shares/units to institutional investors soared to ₹78,000 crore in 2023-24, a more than seven-fold surge year-on-year.

"In an unprecedented era of economic development aided by pro-business reforms and macro-economic stability, India is set to become the third largest economy globally by 2027 and will continue to see strong flows. In this backdrop, we expect FY25 to also very strong year from a primary capital perspective as companies will continue to look to raise capital for capex post-election results," Neha Agarwal, MD & Head of Equity Capital Markets at JM Financial Ltd, told PTI. Financial companies

raise funds through qualified institutional placement (QIP) to meet their additional capital requirement buffer to support their growth plans and enhance their business.

QIP is one of the quickest products to raise funds from institutional investors. It is designed for the listed firms and investment trusts, which allow them to mobilise funds quickly from institutional investors without the need to submit any pre-issue filings to market regulators.

According to data compiled by Prime Database, fundraising through the QIP route reached ₹78,089 crore in 2023-24, which was higher than ₹10,235 crore mopped up in the preceding financial year. This included fund mobilisation by REITs and infrastructure investment trusts (InvITs) through the QIP mode. Before that, ₹28,532 crore was mobilised through the QIP route in 2021-22 and an all-time high of ₹81,731 crore in 2020-21. Of ₹78,089 crore collected in

FY24, a total of ₹68,933 crore was raised by 55 companies through the route, remaining ₹9,156 crore was mopped up by one REIT and two InvITs.

Brookfield India Real Estate Trust garnered ₹2,305 crore through QIP. National Highways Infra Trust mopped up ₹6,181 crore and Grid Trust collected ₹669 crore through the route.

Market experts attributed the primary reason for the increase in QIP fundraising to the market and investor sentiments that play an important role in their success.

"With improved market sentiments and strong underlying demand, companies looked to raise capital to seize growth opportunities," JM Financial's Agarwal said.

Akshay Tiwari - Fundamental Analyst at Religare Broking - said the Indian stock market continued to rally, wherein the benchmark indices Nifty 50 surged by 32 per cent during FY24. The growth in the capital market was backed by domestic inflows of funds, which led to optimism in the street.

The soaring growth in the indices implied that many companies got re-rated with respect to their valuation. This provided an opportunity for companies to raise money at a higher valuation and utilise the funds to fuel future growth, he added.

QIPs were dominated by banking and financial services companies, as they accounted for 58 per cent (₹40,020 crore) of the overall amount.

The largest fundraising through this route was from Bajaj Finance, which raised ₹8,800 crore, accounting for 13 per cent of the total QIP amount. Other noteworthy contributors to the fundraising spree included Cholamandalam Investment & Finance, Federal Bank, IDFC First Bank, Aditya Birla Capital and Bank of Maharashtra.

Dividend receipts from CPSEs exceed estimates by 26%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 31:** The Centre's dividend receipts from CPSEs have exceeded the revised budget estimate by 26 per cent to about ₹63,000 crore, with PSU behemoths like Coal India, ONGC, Powergrid and GAIL making handsome payouts in the current fiscal.

The revised estimates of the Budget presented in Parliament February 1 pegged dividend receipts from CPSEs at ₹50,000 crore for the current fiscal.

The actual dividend collections have been about 26 per cent higher at ₹62,929.27 crore in the 2023-24 fiscal ending March 31, 2024, as per the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) website.

Panasonic to form JV with IOCL to make lithium cells

Cylindrical lithium-ion batteries are commonly used in consumer electronics, power tools, and EVs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 31:** Panasonic Group will form a joint venture with Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOCL), the nation's biggest oil firm, to manufacture cylindrical lithium-ion batteries.

Panasonic Energy Co Ltd, a group firm of Japan-based multinational electronics company, has signed a binding term sheet and initiated discussions with IOCL "to draw a framework for the formation of a joint venture" to manufacture cylindrical lithium-ion batteries, said a statement Sunday.

"This initiative is driven by the anticipated expansion of demand for batteries for two- and three-wheel vehicles and energy storage systems in the Indian market," it added.

Panasonic Energy is a maker of automotive lithium-ion batteries. The two companies are engaging in a feasibility study regarding the utilisation of battery technology to facilitate the transition to clean energy in India, the statement said.

The companies are aiming for "finalising details of their collaboration by the summer of

HCC divests entire equity shareholding in HREL Real Estate



**New Delhi:** Hindustan Construction Company (HCC) Sunday said it has divested its entire equity shareholding in HREL Real Estate Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of the company. Accordingly, HREL and its following subsidiaries -- Nashik Township Developers Ltd, Powai Real Estate Developers Ltd, HCC Aviation Ltd, HCC Realty Ltd have ceased to be subsidiaries of the company, HCC said in a regulatory filing. "Hindustan Construction Company Ltd has divested its entire equity shareholding in HREL Real Estate Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of the company vide share purchase agreement executed on March 31, 2024," it said. The consideration received from sale stood at ₹10 lakh. HCC had reported a consolidated profit of ₹233.22 crore in the December quarter.

TIDBITS

Gas price for Reliance slashed to \$9.87

**New Delhi:** The government Sunday cut the price of natural gas produced from difficult areas like deep sea KG-D6 block of Reliance Industries (RIL), marginally to \$9.87 per million British thermal unit in line with softening of benchmark international gas prices, an official notification said. However, the price of gas that is used for making CNG for fuelling automobiles or piping to household kitchens for cooking purposes will remain unchanged due to a price cap that is set at 30 per cent less than market rates such as that paid to Reliance. For the six-month period starting April 1, the price of gas from deepsea and high-pressure, high-temperature (HPTP) areas has been cut to \$9.87 per mmbtu from \$9.96, oil ministry's Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell (PPAC) said in a notification. This is the third straight bi-annual reduction in rates for difficult fields. Price was for six months beginning October 1, 2023 slashed 18 per cent to \$9.96 per mmbtu from \$12.12 for the April to September 2023 period. Prior to that, the rate was a record \$12.46 for October 2022 to March 2023. The government bi-annually fixes prices of the locally-produced natural gas -- which is converted into CNG for use in automobiles, piped to household kitchens for cooking and used to generate electricity and make fertilisers.



PHARMA, SOLAR IN DEMAND

PLI schemes attract over ₹1.06L-crore investments

The response to the schemes was tepid in sectors like IT hardware, auto, and auto components, textiles, and ACC battery storage till December last year

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 31:** Production-linked incentive (PLI) schemes for 14 sectors have attracted over ₹1.06 lakh crore investments till December 2023 with pharma and solar modules accounting for nearly half of the total, according to government data.

The government in 2021 announced PLI schemes for 14 sectors such as telecommunication, white goods, textiles, manufacturing of medical devices, automobiles, speciality steel, food products, high-efficiency solar PV modules, advanced chemistry cell battery, drones, and pharma with an outlay of ₹1.97 lakh crore.

According to the data, pharmaceuticals and drugs sector attracted ₹25,813 crore till December last year, exceeding the expected investments of ₹17,275 crore.

The major beneficiaries in this sector include Dr Reddy's Laboratories, Cipla, Glenmark Pharma, Biocon and Wockhardt Ltd.

As regards the high efficiency solar PV modules, the total in-



vestment was ₹22,904 crore as against the expected investment of ₹1.10 lakh crore.

In this sector, the PLI beneficiaries include Shirdi Sai Electricals, Reliance New Energy Solar Ltd, Adani Infrastructure and Tata Power Solar.

The other PLI sectors which received healthy investments till December last year included bulk drugs (₹3,586 crore as against expected investments of ₹3,939 crore), medical devices (₹864 crore as against expected investments of ₹1,330 crore), food processing (₹7,350 crore as against expected investments of ₹7,541 crore), and telecom (₹2,865 crore as against expected investments of ₹4,014 crore).

The lowest investment was received in IT hardware at ₹270 crore against expected invest-

Key indicators point to economic resilience at end of FY24: NCAER

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 31:** Key markers point to the Indian economy remaining buoyant at the end of 2023-24 with Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) for manufacturing increasing and that of services maintaining a robust trend, as per the monthly economic review by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER).

The PMI for manufacturing activity increased to 56.9 in February, reflecting a strong expansionary momentum, as growth in the output of eight key infrastructure sectors rose to a three-month high of 6.7 per cent in February from 4.1 per cent in January, NCAER said in its review for March that was released Sunday.

The economic think tank added that goods and services tax (GST) collections, too, remained buoyant, reaching ₹1.7 lakh crore in February, registering a year-on-year growth of 12.5 per cent, while collections of GST E-way bills marked an equally impressive year-on-year growth of 18.9 per cent.

Meanwhile, NCAER said inflationary pressures remained elevated with Consumer Price Index headline inflation at 5.1 per cent in February, primarily due to high food price inflation and despite core inflation declining.



**MESSAGE FROM A GREAT**

Olympic champion Abhinav Bindra has a few words of advice for Paris Olympics bound Indian shooters. "Success is not a one-off event. Doing the right things consistently day in and day out is what leads to success. You have to be brutally honest with yourself and everyday look yourself in the mirror before you go to sleep and ask yourself - 'Did I do my best?'. If the answer is yes you will find you will have the result eventually," said the 2008 Olympics gold winner

**BACK IN CAPTAINCY ROLE**

Babar Azam was Sunday reappointed as the white-ball captain as he replaced Shaheen Shah Afridi. The decision was taken after a unanimous recommendation from the PCB selection committee. Babar had stepped down as captain from all three formats after a disappointing outing at the ODI World Cup in India



**COLLINS REIGNS SUPREME**



**Miami Gardens (US), March 31:** Danielle Collins had the perfect send-off at her final Miami Open, beating Elena Rybakina 7-5, 6-3 to capture the title in her home state before an adoring crowd that included Andre Agassi and Martina Navratilova. The 30-year-old Collins announced at the Australian Open that this season would be her last because she's suffering from en-

dometriosis, a painful ailment that affects the uterus. On her fourth match point, Collins hit a backhand crosscourt winner, then bent over for 10 seconds without moving. "That game took a lot out of me and Elena was pushing me all around the court," Collins said. "At the end I was just like, 'Thank God.' It all caught up to me." Collins was teary-eyed during the on-court trophy ceremony. "To the fans, I've played a lot of tennis, a few finals, and nothing close to

**In my home state, to come out here in front of thousands of my best friends pushing me to get over this hurdle, I was getting very emotional. They wanted me to win so bad, I didn't want to let the crowd down. Elena (Rybakina) does not give up. I just had to hang in there**  
**DANIELLE COLLINS**

this," Collins said. "In my home state, to come out here in front of thousands of my best friends pushing me to get over this hurdle, I was getting very emotional. It was an incredible environment. I've never experienced anything like it."

Ranked No.53 and unseeded, Collins was animated throughout the two-hour match against the fourth-ranked Rybakina, pumping her fist and staring up at the crowd that featured a big American flag in the third row. It was too much for the ragged Rybakina, who hit several backhands long. It was the third career title and first since San Jose in 2021 for Collins, who became the lowest-ranked women's champion at Miami. She leaves with \$1.1 million in prize money and will move up to 22nd in the rankings. Collins said her impending retirement has motivated her to win more titles. "This was the biggest of her career and her first in a Masters 1000-level event. Collins, who won NCAA singles titles at Virginia in 2014 and 2016, had never had Agassi attend one of her matches. Collins saved 10 of the 11 break points she faced. Rybakina, meanwhile, had played four prior three-set matches in the tournament and said it took a toll. Rybakina saved two break points while trying to serve her way into a first-set tie-breaker. Collins finally seized the set as the Kazakh player nervously poked a backhand deep on the third set point. In the second set, Collins broke at 4-4 as Rybakina hit a swinging volley into the net, then pounded another backhand long on break point. Serving for the match, Collins jumped to a 30-0 lead, fell behind 30-40, then finally sealed it on the fourth match point. Her immediate plans were to enjoy Miami. "Now I get to celebrate," Collins said. "I had so many family members fly in. We're going to have a great weekend. And I have a night out on the town. I haven't done that in a while if I can stay up for it and wear a non-tennis outfit."

**Miami delight for Bopanna**

**Miami (US), March 31:** Ace Indian tennis player Rohan Bopanna rewrote his own record to continue to be the oldest ATP Masters 1000 champion as he and his Australian partner Matt Ebden clinched the men's doubles crown at the Miami Open here. Continuing their fine run this year, the 44-year-old Bopanna and Ebden fought back from a set down to pull off an exhilarating 6-7(3-7), 6-3, 10-6 win over Croatia's Ivan Dodig and American Austin Krajicek at the Hard Rock Stadium Saturday. With the win, Bopanna surpassed his record created last year when he won the Indian Wells title at the age of 43, and also reclaimed the top spot in the doubles ranking. "It's amazing. As long as you are doing well in these big events, it's what we play for," Bopanna said after the win. "I want to do well in the Masters 1000s and the Grand Slams. It's good to keep that record going and keep giving everyone else a run for their money," added Bopanna, who won his maiden doubles Grand Slam title at the Australian Open earlier this year. This was Bopanna's 14th ATP Masters 1000 final. Overall, it was the veteran Indian player's 63rd ATP Tour level final and 26th doubles title. Bopanna also achieved a rare feat as he became the second Indian after Leander Paes to reach the final of all nine ATP Masters events. Bopanna and Ebden, the top seeds for the tournament, tapped into their deep reservoir of experience to fetch the final six points of the summit clash. They had three set points on serve at 6-5 in the opening set but their second-seeded opponents warded off all three to force a tiebreaker



before taking a 1-0 lead. Bopanna and Ebden then staged a comeback as they broke their opponent early in the second set which helped them level the game. Like the opening two sets, the tie-breaker was also fought on an even keel with the reigning Australian Open champions emerging victorious. Following the Australian Open triumph, Bopanna climbed to the World No.1 spot in the ATP rankings, becoming the oldest player to do so. But they slipped to the second spot in the doubles rankings after a quarterfinal loss at the Dubai Championships and a round-of-32 exit at the Indian Wells Masters. But with the win here, the pair will be back to the top spot.

**Raphinha leads Barca to win over Las Palmas**



**Barcelona, March 31:** Raphinha helped to reduce Las Palmas to 10 men before scoring to lead Barcelona to a 1-0 victory in the Spanish league, Saturday night. The Brazil winger was racing clear behind the defensive line when Las Palmas goalkeeper Alvaro Valles raced out of his area and crashed into him, earning a direct red card in the 24th minute. Las Palmas bunkered down in its area until Raphinha broke through in the 59th when he headed in a perfectly floated pass by substitute Joao Felix. Second-placed Barcelona closed to within five points of leader Real Madrid before they host Athletic Bilbao Sunday. The Spanish powerhouses will meet in the capital in three weeks after the Champions League quarterfinals, where Barcelona face PSG and Madrid face Manchester City. Felix had a great chance to add to the lead when Jules Kounde found him all alone at the far post, only for the Portugal forward to send his shot off the crossbar. Despite being down a man, Alberto Moleiro almost equalized for the Canary Islands club in the final minutes when he hit the side netting. Since Xavi said he would not continue next season after a series of painful losses, Barcelona have improved — above all in defense — and gone unbeaten in 11

straight across all competitions. Xavi said he hoped the decision would spark a reaction in his team. Raphinha said after Saturday's game that the turnaround was due to the players "talking about things internally and about what we needed to do to get wins." Xavi and his players have 11 days to prepare for PSG. With the league taking a break next weekend for the Copa del Rey final, Barcelona won't play again until the opening leg of their matchup against PSG April 10. Barcelona's Ferran Torres returned as a second-half substitute for his first minutes since he injured his right thigh in late January. **RACIST INSULTS** Sevilla's 1-0 win at Getafe was marred by racist insults by fans targeting Sevilla defender Marcos Acuna and coach Quique Sanchez Flores. Sergio Ramos scored the fifth-minute winner. Referee Javier Iglesias halted the game in the 68th minute when Acuna, a world champion with Argentina, was insulted by fans, including calling him a "monkey," according to the match report. The game was restarted after the spectators were informed by loudspeaker to refrain from racist or xenophobic language. Iglesias did not record any more incidents. But Sanchez Flores confirmed after the match his Roma heritage was insulted. Sanchez Flores has coached Getafe on three occasions.

**Mirabai eyes Paris 2024 berth**

**Phuket (Thailand), March 31:** Tokyo Olympics silver medalist lifter Mirabai Chanu will return to competitive action after a six-month injury layoff when she participates at the IWF World Cup to confirm her Paris Games berth here Monday. The World Cup is not only the final Olympic qualifying event but also a mandatory qualifier for the Paris Games. Chanu, who has been recuperating from hip tendonitis she suffered during the Asian Games in September last year, has all but qualified for the Paris Olympics. An appearance at the World Cup Monday will be enough for her to seal her passage to Paris as the former world champion is ranked second in the women's 49kg Olympic Qualification Ranking (OQR) behind China's Jian HuiHua. Under the 2024 Olympics qualification rules, the 2023 World



Championships and the 2024 World Cup are compulsory events. Apart from these two tournaments, a lifter must participate in at least three of the following

events — the 2022 World Championships, the 2023 Continental Championships, the 2023 Grand Prix I, the 2023 Grand Prix II and the 2024 Continental Championships. Chanu has fulfilled the criteria. She competed at the 2022 World Championship and the 2023 Asian Championships, finishing second and sixth respectively. At the 2023 Worlds and Grand Prix II, she did not heave the barbell due to her injury but completed all the necessary formalities to remain eligible for the Paris Games. At the end of the World Cup, the top 10 lifters, who have met the criteria, will qualify for Paris in their weight category. The best three performances at the qualifying events will be taken into account for final assessment and Chanu's came at the 2022 Worlds where she lifted a total of 200kg (87kg+113kg). The Manipuri lifter, who has struggled with injuries in the past two years, has registered an entry weight of 185kg, far from her personal best of 207kg (88kg+119kg). Gurugram, March 31: India's Veer Ahlawat recorded his best-ever finish in a DP World tour event, signing off tied second after carding a fine one-under 71 on the fourth and final day of the Indian Open at the DLF Golf & Country Club here Sunday. The 28-year-old, who was five shots adrift of leader Keita Nakajima of Japan, produced a sensational eagle on the last hole to end the tournament with a four-day total of 275, four shots adrift of winner Nakajima. Nakajima claimed his first DP World Tour title in emphatic style as a closing 73 handed him a four-shot wire-to-wire win. Starting the day from sole sixth position, Ahlawat, who had finished tied fifth last Sunday at the Kolkata Challenge, shared the second position with Swedish Sebastian Sodberg and USA's Johannes Verman with both shooting a matching 67 on day 4.

**Mayank Yadav found inspiration in jet planes**

**Lucknow, March 31:** Speed thrills and excites India's latest fast-bowling sensation Mayank Yadav, a passion he cultivated since childhood when the sleek lines of jet planes, awe-inspiring force of rockets, and the raw power of superbikes captured his imagination. The 21-year-old's 150kmph thunderbolts amazed one and all during his side Lucknow Super Giants' 21-run win over Punjab Kings here Saturday. Mayank (3/27) stole the limelight with his searing pace. In the 12th over of Punjab's innings, he bowled the season's fastest ball at 155.8 kmph. "Even in normal life, apart from cricket, I love things which have speed with them. Whether it is a rocket, aeroplane or superbike, speed excites me. In my childhood, I liked jet planes and would get inspiration from them," said Mayank at the post-match press conference. "I have never bowled 156kmph before this. I clicked 155kmph during Mushtaq Ali, but this is my fastest ball," added the pacer from Punjabi Bagh in New Delhi. Mayank had played just two



List A games before he was picked by LSG ahead of IPL 2022. He did not play a single match in the first season and was ruled out of the next season with a torn hamstring. After he recovered from the injury, he played for North Zone in the 50-over Deodhar Trophy where he knocked out Rahul Tripathi's middle stump with a ripper.

"Injuries are part of fast bowlers' life, they are your friends. I had two-three major injuries in the past one or one and a half years. Those were my setbacks. "Last season also, I missed playing in IPL because of injury. I had side strain injury with rib fracture and that happened after Vizay Hazare. My effort is to give more attention to recovery and to myself, in training and physically." It's natural that Mayank would get inspiration from a speed merchant — South African great Dale Steyn. "I look up to only one fast bowler, and that is Dale Steyn. He is my idol and I idolise him a lot." He said he did not feel any pressure or nervousness during his debut match. "A lot of excitement was there in my debut. For the last two years, I have been visualising just one thing that, that is when I make my debut what will I feel when I bowl my first ball. "Everybody said there would be some pressure or nervousness but I did not feel it at all. When my captain told me to bowl the first over, I felt inside me that I belonged to this place and there was a lot of confidence."

**My aim is to always remain consistent and give away less runs to help the team. Pace is a plus point for me which I try to use in a good way**  
**- MAYANK YADAV**

**He's (Mayank) got a very calm run-up that gathers pace throughout. He's balanced at the crease. I think when you bowl that sort of pace at 156, if you give width, you disappear. But he was at the batters, he was over the stumps, cramping them. As IPL debuts go, it was spectacular**  
**- STUART BROAD**

**He is an exceptional talent and obviously, he is a candidate for exclusive pace bowling contract like Aakash Deep, Umran Malik or Vijaykumar Vyshak. He has to play the full IPL. But he is injury-prone and has to show that he can last a full season including Ranji Trophy. For the time being he would be seen as a white ball prospect unless he plays Ranji Trophy. But he needs to play India A and smaller bilateral rubbers first**  
**- BCCI SOURCE**

# Mohit, Miller seal Titans win vs SRH



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ahmedabad, March 31:** Dishing out an all-round show, Gujarat Titans brought down high-flying Sunrisers Hyderabad with a clinical seven-wicket win in the IPL here Sunday.

Veteran seamer Mohit Sharma was at his deceptive best in the last over for his splendid figures of 3/25, while Afghan spin twins Rashid Khan and Noor Ahmad bossed the middle overs as GT restricted the marauding SRH to a modest 162/8 after Pat Cummins opted to bat. SRH must be disappointed with themselves after putting on board an astonishing 277/5 in their last outing.

South African batter David Miller found his flair in his 44 not out (27b, 4x4, 2x6) to anchor the small chase despite suffering cramps and finished the game with a six off Jaydev Unadkat in the first ball of the final over. Sai Sudharsan (45, 36b, 4x4, 1x6) also lifted his game as GT won with five balls to spare.

GT now have won both their matches at home. Their only loss came against Chennai Super Kings in an away match. SRH have suffered two losses and with one win they have two points from three

matches. GT had things under control in pursuit of the small target at their home venue and Wriddhiman Saha did his job to set the tone. But he could not convert his start, only to be dismissed for 25.

From going at nine runs per over, GT suddenly struggled to pace the innings with Sudharsan typically slow at one end. Gill (36, 28b, 2x4, 1x6) was looking fluent at the other end but Sudharsan was unable to rotate the strike and ate up a lot of deliveries, putting pressure on his skipper. Gill eventually threw his wicket away, holding out to Abdul Samad at long on in a soft dismissal.

With Miller also struggling to get going, the Cummins-led side fancied their chances at the halfway mark where GT were 78/2, needing 85 from the back-10. Miller soon got into the act and the small target didn't help the cause for SRH.

Fresh from smashing a record 277 in their last game, SRH were going great guns with 56/1 inside the powerplay but the young and experienced Afghan duo of Noor Ahmad (1/32) and Rashid Khan (1/33) turned the match on its head in the crucial 7-15th over phase. Noor dismissed the in-form SRH

opener Travis Head (19), while Rashid sent back explosive Heinrich Klaasen (24) before taking a splendid forward-diving catch at long-on to see the back of Aiden Markram (17).

Having dismissed the in-form Abhishek Sharma in the 10th over, Mohit returned to shine at the death by taking two in two balls in the final over - Shahbaz Ahmed (22) and Washington Sundar (0).

The 35-year-old cleverly varied his pace, bowled wide yorker, slow off-cutters to stifle SRH in the final over that saw three runs for three wickets, including the run out of Abdul Samad (29).

The 2014 Purple Cap winner and 2015 World Cup semifinalist, Mohit who returned from the oblivion at GT two seasons ago conceded just one boundary - a six - in his four overs. In the last five overs, SRH managed just 40 runs and lost five wickets.

**BRIEF SCORES**  
SRH 162/8 (Abdul Samad 29, Abhishek Sharma 29, Heinrich Klaasen 24, Shahbaz Ahmed 22; Mohit Sharma 3/25, Azmatullah Omarzai 1/24) lost to GT 168/3 (Sai Sudharsan 45, David Miller 44 n o, Shubman Gill 36; Shahbaz Ahmed 1/20) by 7 wickets.

# Pant shines in DC win, MSD special in vain

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Visakhapatnam, March 31:** Comeback man Rishabh Pant hit a much-awaited fifty (51, 32b, 4x4, 3x6) after David Warner's well-constructed 52 (35b, 5x4, 3x6) to set up Delhi Capitals' convincing 20-run win over Chennai Super Kings for whom veteran MS Dhoni's vintage knock (37 n o, 16b, 4x4, 3x6) was not enough to cross the line in their IPL match here Sunday.

Faced with a tough 192-run target, the Super Kings tried to scale it down through Ajinkya Rahane (45, 30b, 5x4, 2x6), Dhoni and Daryl Mitchell (34, 26b, 1x4, 2x6) but the Capitals carried far too many guns for them on the night. CSK ended up at 171/6.

In the first session, Warner and Prithvi Shaw (43, 27b, 4x4, 2x6) overcame a slow start to share a 93-run opening stand before Pant powered DC to a competitive 191/5.

Matheesha Pathirana (3/31) was excellent with the ball and two of his three wickets were treats to watch. He first uprooted the middle stump of Mitchell Marsh with a 150kph thunderbolt before rattling Tristan Stubbs' timbers with an in-swinging yorker.

Pant, who came into the tournament after recovering from a life-threatening road mishap in December 2022, belted four boundaries and three maximums for his first fifty in 15 months.

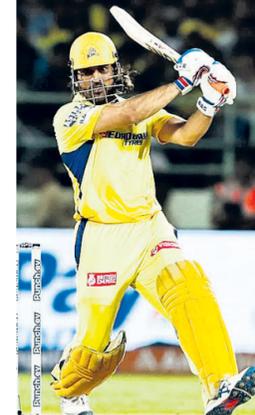
Left-arm pacer Khaleel Ahmed (2/21) set the tone for DC's defence



MUKESH KUMAR



RISHABH PANT



MS DHONI

with his twin strikes in the powerplay which led to its fruition by pacer Mukesh Kumar (3/21).

While Rituraj Gaikwad's (1) trouble against left-arm seamers continued as he was done in by a superb inswinger, a frustrated Rachin Ravindra (2) holed out to Tristan Stubbs after a 12-ball stay as CSK slumped to 32/2 in six overs.

Rahane and Mitchell provided some stability with a 68-run stand but left-arm spinner Axar Patel ousted the New Zealander to break the alliance. It was a Mukesh show thereafter as coming on to bowl after the 13th over, he struck twice in two balls to remove Rahane

and Sameer Rizvi (0), leaving CSK at 102/5 in the 14th over. Shivam Dube (18) was next to go off Mukesh.

With CSK needing 58 off 18 balls, Dhoni walked out to bat for the first time this season amid chants of "Dhoni Dhoni" and treated his fans to some delightful shots. The former CSK skipper blasted two fours in the first three balls with Ahmed dropping a sitter in the second ball.

Dhoni then clobbered a six over extra cover off Ahmed, who ended up with three wickets to concede just 5 runs in the 19th over to crush CSK's dream, leaving them

to make an impossible 41 off the last over.

Dhoni, who turned the clock back, however, gave his fans enough to cheer with a four and a one-handed six off the first two balls before producing another four and a last-ball six as CSK racked up 20 runs. But the Dhoni hurricane came a trifle late.

**BRIEF SCORES:** DC 191/5 (David Warner 52, Rishabh Pant 51, Prithvi Shaw 43; Matheesha Pathirana 3/31) beat CSK 171/6 (Ajinkya Rahane 45, MS Dhoni 37 n o, Daryl Mitchell 34; Ravindra Jadeja 21 n o; Mukesh Kumar 3/21, Khaleel Ahmed 2/21) by 20 runs.

# Struggling MI look for happy homecoming

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, March 31:** IPL's perennial slow-starters Mumbai Indians under new captain Hardik Pandya will hope for a happy homecoming when they take on a confident Rajasthan Royals at the Wankhede Stadium here Monday.

Despite the change at the helm with Pandya replacing five-time title-winning skipper Rohit Sharma - a move that has sparked brutal attack on the former - Mumbai Indians have once again made a familiar disappointing start to their IPL campaign as they lost their first two matches.

A six-run defeat to Pandya's former team Gujarat Titans was followed by a walloping by Sunrisers Hyderabad who won the record run-fest by 32 runs in Hyderabad, with Mumbai Indians plummeting to the last spot in the 10-team points table.

These are still early days in the 17th edition of the T20 league but Pandya's Mumbai Indians will need to end their losing streak and improve their Net Run Rate which is the worst among all teams at -0.925.



Even though Mumbai Indians enjoy a 4-1 head-to-head record in their last five meetings with Rajasthan Royals, the home side will have a tough task at hand given Sanju Samson's team has turned up all guns blazing to begin their IPL season with two wins.

On their part, Rajasthan Royals will look to keep ticking all the boxes after two wins at the start. Samson remains dangerous in the early stages of the IPL while the immensely talented Yashasvi Jaiswal, who is yet to fire in this IPL, would be keen to get his first big score of this season.

Riyan Parag is primed to continue his ascent as a mature middle-order batter, whereas for Mumbai,

Tilak Varma, Tim David and Naman Dhir would aim to make the most of their positive starts.

While Nandre Burger has teamed up well with Trent Boult for early inroads, the spin duo of Ravichandran Ashwin and Yuzvendra Chahal can control the flow of runs in the middle. Avesh Khan's control at the death along with Sandeep Sharma is Royals' forte and has been among crucial factors for Rajasthan's fine show so far.

**MATCHDAY**  
Indian Premier League  
**MI vs RR**  
Time: 07:30 pm  
Telecast: Star Sports Network  
Stream: Jio Cinema

# Man Utd lucky to draw at Brentford in Premier League

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**London, March 31:** Under Alex Ferguson, Manchester United was famous for scoring decisive winning goals late in matches. There is nothing comparable under the helm of current coach Erik ten Hag, who witnessed his players relinquish an undeserved lead deep in stoppage time and draw at Brentford 1-1 in the English Premier League Saturday.

Following yet another uninspired display that further dented the club's Champions League hopes, Manchester United was in sixth place, eight points behind fifth-placed Tottenham.

Totally against the run of the play, United took the lead in stoppage time through substitute Mason Mount's effort past Mark Flekken. United conceded three minutes later when Ivan Toney cut the ball back inside the area for the unmarked Kristoffer Ajer to level.

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# HARDIK, SALIMA BAG TOP HONOURS AT 6TH HI ANNUAL AWARDS



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 31:** Star Indian midfielders Hardik Singh and Salima Tete were Sunday conferred with the Player of the Year awards in men and women categories respectively during the 6th Hockey India Annual Awards here. Both the awards, in the name of legendary Balbir Singh Sr, carries a cash prize of Rs 25 lakh each.

India vice-captain Hardik also bagged Ajit Pal Singh Award for Midfielder of the Year, which carries a prize purse of Rs 5 lakh.

India captain Harmanpreet Singh won the Pargat Singh Award for Defender of the Year and took home Rs 5 lakh, while veteran custodian PR Sreejesh was honoured with the Baljit Singh Award for Goalkeeper of the Year. Dhanraj Pillay Award for Forward of the Year went to young striker Abhishek.

Asunta Lakra Award for Upcoming Player of the Year (Women, U-21) was bagged by Deepika Soreng, while the recognition in the men's division, which is in the name of former India drag-flicker Jugraj Singh, went to Arajjeet

Singh Hundal. Both the awards carry a prize money of Rs 10 lakh each. The final award of the day, the prestigious Major Dhyan Chand Lifetime Achievement Award, which carries a prize money of Rs 30 lakh, was won by his son, Ashok Kumar. This year, the total prize pool was Rs 7.56 crore.

The glittering ceremony started with the Milestone Awards 2023 with Vivek Sagar Prasad, Hardik, Nilakanta Sharma, Sumit, Krishan Bahadur Pathak, Udita, Salima, and Gurjant Singh winning a cash prize of Rs 1 lakh and a trophy each for completing 100 international caps. Nikki Pradhan, Amit Rohidas, Lalit Kumar Upadhyay, and Neha were also presented with Rs 1.5 lakh and a trophy each for completing 150 international caps.

Harmanpreet was also awarded Rs 2 lakh and a trophy for completing 200 international caps, while Indian women's hockey team goalkeeper Savita was presented with Rs 2.5 lakh along with a trophy for earning 250th caps. Sreejesh was presented with Rs 3 lakh along with a trophy for earning his 300th international cap.

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