

Central Chronicle

Woman killed, 16 injured as ropeway trolley crashes

Trolley cable snapped at 10 am, injuring seven passengers.

Press Trust Of India

MAHASAMUND: A woman was killed and sixteen other persons were injured when a ropeway trolley crashed while descending from a hilltop temple in Mahasamund district on Sunday, officials said.



People inspect a damaged ropeway trolley after an alleged crash near Khallari Mata Temple, in Mahasamund. | Photo PTI

The accident occurred shortly after 10 am when the trolley's cable snapped as it was bringing down seven passengers from the hilltop, Bagbahra Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Namita Markole said. Earlier, eight persons were reported to be in the trolley. Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai expressed grief over the incident and ordered a detailed investigation into it. The trolley plunged from a height of 200 to 300 feet, as per

officials. The ropeway service is commonly used by devotees to reach near the temple, located on the hilltop at an elevation of about 1,100 feet. Visitors can also access the shrine by climbing nearly 900 steps.

The SDM said the victims had arrived there to offer prayers at the Khallari Mata temple, located on a hill at Khallari (Bhimkhaj) village in the Bagbahra

tehsil, during the ongoing nine-day Navratri festival.

A woman, identified as Ayushi Satkar (28) from Raipur, died on the spot, while six others, including her husband Rishabh Dhavre (29) and another minor relative Chhayansh Dhavre (16), sustained injuries, she said.

The other injured persons have been identified as Govind Swami (47),

Extremely tragic and painful.
Vishnu Deo Sai
Chief Minister

Namita Swami (48), and minors Kushmita Swami (10) and Manshi Godaria (12), the official said.

The six injured persons were shifted to a nearby hospital, from where four of them were referred to Raipur for further medication, she added.

Following the incident, another trolley carrying around 10 passengers, which had just begun ascending, was immediately brought back to the base. Though passengers in that cable car experienced a strong jolt, no major inju-

ries were reported, officials said. Authorities have launched an investigation into the cause of the accident, they said.

CM Sai, in a post on X, said the incident was extremely tragic and painful. He condoled the woman's death in the accident and prayed for strength for her family.

"As soon as information about the accident was received, necessary instructions were issued to the officials concerned to ensure proper treatment for the injured. A detailed inquiry into the incident will be conducted, and those found responsible will not be spared. I pray to Khallari Mata for the speedy recovery of all the injured devotees," he added.

15 deer killed by stray dogs at rescue centre

Press Trust Of India

AMBIKAPUR: As many as 15 deer were killed after a pack of stray dogs attacked them inside an enclosure at an animal rescue centre in Surguja district, officials said on Sunday. The forest department has suspended four officials, including a deputy ranger and three forest guards, for alleged negligence in connection with the incident that occurred at Sanjay Van Vatika in Ambikapur on the intervening night of Friday and Saturday. The forest department manages Sanjay Van Vatika, and visitors are also allowed inside the facility, which is similar to a zoo.



including spotted deer, barking deer, and four-horned antelope, died in the attack on Saturday, while one critically injured animal succumbed to its injuries on Sunday.

The deaths were due to dog bites, he confirmed. Following postmortem examinations, the carcasses were disposed of by burning according to prescribed procedures, the official said. Chief Conservator of Forests (Surguja Circle) Dilraj Prabhakar has suspended Deputy Ranger Ashok Sinha, who was also in charge of the park, along with forest guards Mamta Porte, Pratima Lakra, and Bindu Singh for alleged negligence, he said.

NEWSLINE

NEW DELHI

Int'l film fest

Delhi is set to host its first international film festival from March 25 to 31, with more than 140 films from 47 countries to be screened across multiple venues in the national capital. The International Film Festival of Delhi (IFFD) 2026 will feature free public screenings, discussions, workshops and cultural programmes, according to a statement. Several prominent figures from Indian and international cinema, including Vicky Kaushal, Hema Malini, Bhumi Pednekar, Rana Daggubati and Madhur Bhandarkar, are expected to participate in the week-long event. The festival will open at Bharat Mandapam with a red carpet ceremony hosted by Arjun Kapoor and Nimrat Kaur. Actors Anupam Kher, Sanya Malhotra and Siddhant Chaturvedi will also attend the opening evening, which will include a gala screening of the Oscar-nominated film *Sirat*.

| TRUMP'S THREAT TO ATTACK TEHRAN'S POWER PLANTS |

Iran warns of strikes on US energy infra, IT systems

Press Trust Of India

Iran signalled retaliation would also target civilian and tech infrastructure.



SUKMA: Dubai: The Islamic Republic of Iran has issued a stern warning against any military action targeting its domestic energy and fuel sectors, promising a comprehensive response against assets belonging

to the United States and its regional allies. According to Iranian state media, Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), the threat was articulated by Ebrahim Zolfaghari,

spokesperson for Iran's Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters.

The military official indicated that Tehran's retaliatory scope would extend beyond tradi-

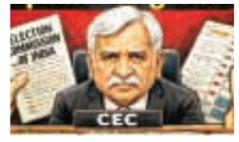
tional military targets to include critical civilian and technological infrastructure.

Speaking on the potential for escalation, Zolfaghari stated, "If Iran's fuel and energy infrastructure is attacked by the enemy, all energy infrastructure, Information Technology systems, and desalination facilities belonging to the United States and the regime in the region will be targeted."

Opposition targets CEC with 7-point chargesheet

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: The notices moved by the opposition MPs in Parliament seeking the removal of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar have accused him of "acting under the thumb of the executive", besides blaming him for "mass disenfranchisement" through the SIR exercise, and raising questions on his appointment. The



notices submitted in the two Houses of Parliament on March 12 list seven charges against the chief election commissioner (CEC) as grounds of "proved misbehaviour", calling for his removal. The opposition MPs, 130 in the Lok Sabha and 63

in the Rajya Sabha, have also sought a motion to remove the CEC. Asked about the notices, Trinamool Congress Rajya Sabha leader Derek O'Brien said they are waiting for action on them.

"If the notices are not taken up by the Union government, doubts will be raised about a tacit understanding between the executive and the CEC," said O'Brien.

Copter crash

QATAR: All seven individuals onboard a Qatari Armed Forces helicopter that crashed during a training mission earlier today have been confirmed dead, including one Turkish soldier and two personnel from Turkish defence company Aselsan.

The ministry confirmed that the victims included four personnel from the Qatari Armed Forces, one member of the Turkish Armed Forces, and two technicians from Aselsan.

| SIGNIFICANT MOMENT IN INDIA'S HISTORY |

PM Modi longest-serving head of govt

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday created history by becoming the longest-serving head of a government in India, surpassing former Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling.



With 8,931 days in office as head of govern-

ment covering his tenure

NUMBER
8931
• PM surpasses Chamling as longest-serving head of govt with 8,931 days.

as Gujarat chief minister and as Prime Minister, PM Modi has overtaken Chamling's record of 8,930 days.

The milestone marks a significant moment in India's history, reflecting decades of continuous public service and leadership.

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Raipur



The life of the valiant Avantibai Lodhi stands as an indelible example of courage, self-respect, and patriotism.

Vishnu Deo Sai
CM Ch'garh

Bastar Marathon an endeavour to build devp Bastar: Kashyap

'Bastar Heritage Marathon 2026' was organised in Bastar region on Sunday

Central Chronicle News

RAIPUR: The historic and naturally endowed land of Bastar witnessed a moment of immense pride as an unprecedented wave of enthusiasm swept through the 'Bastar Heritage Marathon 2026,' where over 9,800 registered runners participated, setting a new record. This event emerged not merely as a sporting competition, but as a vibrant symbol of Bastar's changing landscape, its growing peace, and the success of the administration's rehabilitation policies—such as 'Poona Margem.'



FACTFILE

● History created with over 9,800 runners; Bastar shines on the global stage.

Speaking at the concluding ceremony—held near the Chitrakote Waterfalls following the marathon, which com-

menced at Lalbagh in Jagdalpur, Bastar—Forest Minister Kedar Kashyap congratulated the winners. He stated that the organization of the 'Bastar Heritage Marathon 2026' would prove to be a milestone in the ongoing efforts to build a prosperous and developed Bastar region. Bastar is

changing; a region that remained turbulent for four decades is now transforming into a bastion of peace. The youth of this region are excelling not only in sports activities but also in the country's prestigious competitive examinations. Amidst this atmosphere of peace, the Bastar Marathon saw

the participation of athletes from various states across the country and abroad, as well as from other districts within the state and the Bastar division itself. Congratulating the district administration on the successful execution of the event, he expressed hope for an even grander celebration in the future. During the ceremony, MLA Kiran Singh Deo remarked that, following the organization of the 'Abujhmad Half Marathon' in the region, the 'Bastar Heritage Marathon' marks a new chapter of peace, development, and prosperity in Bastar.

Plans underway to shift passport office to Telibandha

Central Chronicle News

RAIPUR: Good news has emerged for passport applicants in the state capital, Raipur. The Passport Seva Kendra (PSK), which has been operating for years at Shyam Plaza in Pandri, is now set to close permanently. Starting April 6, all passport-related operations will be conducted at the new, high-tech office located in Telibandha. In fact, the Passport Depart-



ment has taken this major decision to further modernize its facilities.

According to the Regional Passport Office, the center that was previously operating opposite the Old Bus Stand in Pandri has now been

relocated to the second floor of 'One High Street' on Telibandha Main Road. Given the space constraints and increasing crowds at the old office, the administration had been searching for a new location for quite some time. Now, starting April 6, all matters—including applications from new applicants as well as the resolution of pending cases—will be handled at this new address.

Habitual criminal nabbed with knife

Central Chronicle News

RAIPUR: A habitual criminal has been arrested in possession of a button knife. The police stated that on March 22, 2026, they received information that an individual near the Mutton Market in Pandri was brandishing a knife and intimidating passersby.

Acting immediately on this tip-off, a police team from the Civil Lines Police Station rushed to the

scene, where they found a man named Badal Behera brandishing a knife; they cordoned off the area and apprehended him. Upon searching the accused, Badal Behera, a button knife was recovered from his possession. The weapon was seized, the accused was formally arrested, and further legal proceedings have been initiated. The arrested accused is identified as Badal Behera, S/o Ashok Behera, aged 30.

Businessman nabbed on charges of blackmailing

Central Chronicle News

RAIPUR: A businessman has been arrested on charges of blackmail after he posed as an officer of the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) to extort money from a friend. According to the police, during the investigation of a case registered at the Rakhi Police Station, it came to light that the complainant, Devlal Singh Tekam—a retired Superintending Engineer from the Public Works Department—received calls on January 28, 2026, from mobile numbers 9795675336 and 8527958502. The callers identified themselves as representatives of the Vigilance Department, ACB, or EOW, and informed the complainant that a complaint had been lodged



against him. An initial inquiry revealed that both calls were made with the specific intent of committing cyber fraud. The complainant confided in an old acquaintance, Dharmendra Chauhan, explaining that he was receiving calls from various mobile numbers and was being intimidated with claims that a complaint had been filed against him with the Vigilance Department, ACB, or EOW. The investigation revealed that upon receiving this information from the complainant, the accused, Dharmendra Chauhan, devised a plan to exploit the situation.

Mastermind of Fake Call center nabbed by police

Central Chronicle News

The mastermind behind a fake call center has been nabbed.

RAIPUR: The mastermind behind a fake call center has been nabbed. Paramjit Singh Chaddha lodged a report at the Mujgahan Police Station, stating that he resides in Kandul, Mujgahan, Raipur. In November 2024, the complainant received a phone call on his mobile number from Aniruddh Choudhary, the holder of mobile number 8826982241. Choudhary informed the complainant that an insurance policy worth a total of Rs 98,64,000—issued in the complainant's name through the DBT Bharat



Bank—had matured. He further claimed that the complainant was the designated nominee for this amount, and consequently, the bank was required to disburse the entire maturity sum to him in his capacity as the nominee. Two accused Aniruddh Choudhary and Sarla Arya laid the trap for taking deposit worth Rs 9.60 lakh from the complainant citing various reasons for release of maturity amount of insur-

ance worth Rs 98.64 lakh. The complainant deposited around Rs 8.0 lakh in three different instalment over the reasons being cited for release of this huge amount and fell victim of this online fraud. It was on asking for third instalment of Rs 3.32 lakh, the complainant turned suspicious and visited their own bank to verify the authenticity of the documents and the DD sent by Sarla Arya, bank officials informed the complainant that they had been the victim of an online fraud. Thus, Aniruddh Choudhary (holder of mobile number 8826982241) and Sarla Arya (holder of mobile number 7668121478) perpetrated an online fraud against the complainant by presenting forged documents.

| INT'L DAY OF FORESTS |

Seminar organized on the 'Role of the Herbal Sector'

Central Chronicle News

RAIPUR: On the occasion of the International Day of Forests, the Chhattisgarh Tribal Local Health Traditions and Medicinal Plants Board (CTLHT-MPB) organized a seminar on the theme, "The Role of the Herbal Sector in Achieving the Goal of a Developed Chhattisgarh by 2047." The event was held at the Board's auditorium, located within the State Forest Research Complex at Zero Point, Raipur. Addressing the



participants present at the event, the Board's Chief Executive Officer (CEO), JACS Rao, stated that the cultivation of medicinal plants could be adopted by leveraging the benefits of the state government's schemes; this initiative would not only lead to an

increase in income but also generate new employment opportunities. He called upon the youth and the general public to step forward in the herbal sector and actively contribute towards realizing the vision of a "Developed Chhattisgarh-2047."

Cultivation of medicinal plants could be adopted by leveraging the benefits of the state government's schemes.

JACS Rao
CEO CTLHTMPB

Students from various colleges, young entrepreneurs aspiring to launch startups in the herbal

sector, and distinguished citizens participated enthusiastically in the seminar. During the program, information regarding the schemes and activities undertaken by the Board was presented, and relevant videos were screened. Through a PowerPoint presentation, insights were provided on the conservation of medicinal plants, the concept of medicinal plant conservation areas, and the propagation of plants using tissue culture techniques.

Briefs

BEST OF THE REST

FRAUD IN CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS Transporter, driver, and scrap dealer taken into custody

RAIPUR: A major fraud involving construction materials has been uncovered in Raipur. A transporter, a vehicle driver, and a scrap dealer conspired to tamper with TMT steel rebar loaded onto a trailer, executing a fraud worth lakhs of rupees. The police have arrested all three accused individuals in connection with the case.

The manager of M/s Shreeji Krupa Projects Limited filed a report at the Mandir Hasoud Police Station, stating that approximately 10 metric tons of TMT steel rebar—valued at around Rs 6.90 lakhs—had been misappropriated. The rebar in question was originally ordered for the construction of a women's hostel currently being built in Sector-16, Nava Raipur. Acting on this complaint, the police registered a case under Crime No. 148/26 and initiated an investigation.



Taking the matter seriously, and acting under the directives of the Superintendent of Police, a team from the Mandir Hasoud Police Station launched an investigation. Their first step was to identify and take into custody the owner and the driver of the trailer vehicle involved.

During interrogation, the vehicle driver confessed that he had conspired with the transporter to tamper with the steel rebar at a scrap yard located in Gondwara, Ashok Vihar.

STONE LAYING CEREMONY

Groundbreaking ceremony for second floor of Daya Bhavan held

RAIPUR: The groundbreaking ceremony for the construction of the second floor of Daya Bhavan, located in Trimurti Nagar, was held on Saturday at the Gujarati Brahm Samaj (GBS) premises. The ceremony was led by Member of Parliament Brijmohan Agrawal, with Special Guest Purinder Mishra, Mayor Meenal Choubey, Chairman Mahendra Khodiyar, and Avtar Singh Bagal in attendance. On the occasion, GBS President Kirti Vyas highlighted the steady progress of the Brahm Samaj over the past 15-20 years, achieved through collective efforts. He noted that the community has established a distinct identity across Chhattisgarh. He also shared that the building has been named "Daya Bhavan" in honour of generous contributions made by Dayaben and Popat Maharaj. The event was attended by former MLA Kuldeep Juneja, former MLA Harshad Mehta, former councillor Tilak Patel, and several members of the Gujarati commu-



nity including Hemant Gohil, Prafull Barmeda, Anil Soni, Kaushik Katta, Hitesh Raichura, Bharat Bhai Gajjar, and others. Representatives from the Patidar community, including Vishal Patel, Dalpat Patel, Velji Bhai Patel, Praveen Meseri, Ashok Bhai Patel, Bipin Bhai Patel, Chandresh Shah, and Deepak Barmeda, were also present. The programme was conducted by Hitesh Vyas, while Ashok Trivedi delivered the vote of thanks.

'BAL- MAITRI INITIATIVE'

Child-friendly educational environment being fostered in Anganwadis

RAIPUR: In Chhattisgarh, a significant initiative aimed at the holistic development of children and the creation of a conducive learning environment has emerged in the form of the "Bal Maitri (Buddy Buddy)" program. Launched through the joint efforts of the Department of Women and Child Development and the Department of School Education, this initiative is proving to be a commendable step toward making the transition for children—from Anganwadi centers to primary schools—both simple and seamless.

The first six years of life are considered critically important for a child's brain development and personality formation. While children receive early education through play-based learning at Anganwadi centers, they



often experience hesitation and apprehension when they first enter the formal environment of a school. The "Bal Maitri (Buddy Buddy)" program has been launched with the specific objective of addressing this challenge and familiarizing children with the school environment in advance. Under this program, Anganwadi children in the 4 to 6 age group are taken on monthly visits to their nearby primary schools.

ALERT AHEAD OF SUMMER

Fire safety workshop under Collector's guidance; traders sensitized

RAIPUR: Under the guidance of Collector Dr. Gaurav Singh, an awareness workshop regarding fire safety—held in view of the impending severe summer heat—was organized today at the Red Cross Auditorium located within the Collectorate premises.

The workshop saw the participation of the district administration team, alongside various traders, including textile merchants and pharmaceutical dealers. The primary objective of the program was to raise awareness regarding preventive measures and safety protocols to mitigate potential fire accidents that typically occur during the summer season.

During the event, Chandramohan Singh, Director of the Home Guards, provided the traders with detailed information regarding the primary causes of fires, preventive strategies, and the protocols for taking swift



action during emergency situations. Additionally, a practical demonstration on the proper usage of fire-fighting equipment was conducted.

Singh appealed to the traders present to ensure that all necessary fire safety arrangements are in place within their respective establishments and to immediately notify the Fire Department in the event of any emergency. Participants attending the workshop lauded the initiative as highly beneficial, noting that it provided them with crucial information regarding fire prevention and safety. The traders unanimously affirmed their solidarity and support for the government and the administration.

Raipur News

Govt committed to developing Ram's maternal homeland: CM

Sai addressed Veerangana Avantibai Lodhi's 168th martyrdom day program in Semariya village, Kabirdham district.

Central Chronicle News

RAIPUR: Chhattisgarh is the sacred land of saints and Lord Ram's nanihal, and the state government is resolved to develop and prosper it. With the core principles of peace, security, prosperity, and good governance, the well-being of 3 crore residents remains our aim, stated Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai while addressing Veerangana Avantibai Lodhi's 168th martyrdom day program today in Semariya village, Kabirdham district. During the event, CM Sai unveiled the statue of Veerangana Avantibai Lodhi, offered floral tributes, and paid homage to her. He also announced funding for constructing a community hall, mini stadium, and yajnashala. The Chief Minister said Veerangana Avantibai Lodhi's life is an indelible example of courage, self-respect, and patriotism. Despite limited resources and a small army, she fought the British with indomitable courage and gave the supreme sacrifice for the country. We should draw inspiration from such a great personality and adopt values of national service and social welfare in our lives. Praising the Lodhi society, he said this community is histor-



ically known for valor, morality, and national service. Its contribution to the freedom struggle was extremely important, and even today it plays an active role in the development of the country and state. The Chief Minister said it is necessary to make the new generation aware of their glorious history so that they can carry forward that tradition. The Chief Minister stated that

the state government is continuously working for the welfare of farmers, the poor, and women. Under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, houses are being provided to a large number of people. Paddy is being procured from farmers at the rate of Rs 3,100 per quintal, taking an important step towards their economic empowerment. The difference amount was paid before Holi, pro-

FASTFACTS

• The Chief Minister said Veerangana Avantibai Lodhi's life is an indelible example of courage, self-respect, and patriotism.

viding relief to farmers and bringing happiness to their festivals. In his address at the program, Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma remembered the courage and sacrifice of Veerangana Avantibai Lodhi and appealed to the society to unite and carry forward their glorious traditions.

The program was attended by MLA Mrs. Bhawna Bohra, former MP Mr. Abhishek Singh, Mr. Santosh Kaushik, Mr. Rajendra Chandravanshi, Mr. Komal Janghel, Lodhi society representatives, and common people.

Sai highlights women aid, Ayodhya visits, and sports push

Emphasizing women's empowerment, the Chief Minister said that through the 'Mahatari Vandan Yojana', more than 70 lakh women of the state are being provided financial assistance of Rs 1,000 every month. So far, more than Rs 16,000 crore has been directly transferred to their accounts through 25 installments. This is making maternal power economically strong and self-reliant. CM Sai further said that to promote faith and culture in the state, the 'Ram Lala Darshan Yojana' is being run, under which more than 42,000 devotees have so far visited Ayodhya and had darshan of Lord Ram. Along with this, Olympics are being organized in Bastar and Surguja to hone youth talent, providing a platform to rural talents. During this time, the Chief Minister announced Rs 50 lakh for the construction of a social hall in Ward No. 26 of Kawardha, construction of a mini stadium to promote sports talents, and Rs 20 lakh for the construction of a yajnashala in Sahaspur-Lohara.

ALL-FAITH TRIBUTE |

Grand all-faith tribute to Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, Sukhdev today

Central Chronicle News

RAIPUR: In a powerful display of national pride, the Chhattisgarh Sikh Samaj is organizing a massive all-community homage gathering on Monday, March 23, 2026, at 11 AM at Bhagat Singh Chowk on Gaurav Path, directly opposite the Chief Minister's residence. This event marks the martyrdom day of Shaheed-e-Azam Sardar Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev, whose ultimate sacrifice in 1931 continues to inspire generations. The ceremony invites people from all faiths, communities, and walks of life—children, youth, citizens, freedom fighters, and elected officials—to offer floral tributes to the martyrs' statues. A unique highlight: attendees will be presented with yellow turbans just like Bhagat Singh's by the Chhattisgarh Sikh Samaj, aiming to ignite patriotism,

love for the nation, and a spirit of selfless service to society. Society President Sukhbir Singh Singhotra emphasized the event's role in fostering unity and remembrance, with fruits distributed to participants. Prominent figures confirmed to attend include Mayor Meenal Choubey, Speaker Suryakant Rathore, MIC members Amar Gidwani and Avtar Singh Baghel, NAC President Sanjay Srivastava, MLA Purandar Mishra, former MLA Kuldeep Juneja, Chhattisgarh Sikh Forum President and former Olympic Association chief Baldev Singh Bhatia, and various society leaders like Harpal Singh Bhamra, Daljit Singh Chawla, and Monu Saluja. Adding to the fervor, the My Bharat organization—under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports—will launch a commemorative march at 10:30 AM from Teli Bandha Lake Marine Drive, ending with

FASTFACTS

• This event marks the martyrdom day of Shaheed-e-Azam Sardar Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev, whose ultimate sacrifice in 1931 continues to inspire generations.

tributes at Bhagat Singh Chowk. This padyatra echoes nationwide efforts to honor the martyrs while motivating youth toward civic responsibility.

Leaders including Harkishan Singh Rajput, Narendra Singh Hargotra, Swarn Singh Chawla, Kulwant Singh Khalsa, and others have issued an open appeal to Raipur's community heads, patriotic youth, families, and freedom struggle veterans. They urge everyone to bring children to the chowk, educate them on these heroes' sacrifices, and instill values of national service.

Arrival of Athletes begins for Khelo India Tribal Games



RAIPUR: The stage is set and the excitement is palpable as athletes have begun arriving in Chhattisgarh for the prestigious Khelo India Tribal Games. The first delegation to land was a 14-member weightlifting contingent from Arunachal Pradesh, consisting of 13 athletes and one support staff member. They were greeted with a vibrant reception at the Swami Vivekananda Airport in Raipur. To mark the occasion, the Sports and Youth Welfare Department, along with officials from the Sports Authority of India (SAI), organized a traditional welcome. The athletes were treated to a colorful Raut Nacha performance, a traditional folk dance of Chhattisgarh.

Gaikwad, Manohar lead qualifying wins as World Tennis Tour

Central Chronicle News

RAIPUR: Competitive action at the World Tennis Tour J30 Raipur kicked off with high-stakes qualifying finals, where Ashok Gaikwad (6-4, 6-3 vs Shreyanath Mahantesha) and Puneet Manohar (6-0, 6-1 vs Rishikesh Mane) secured commanding victories to lead the charge into the main draw. Joining them in the winner's circle were Heet Kandoriya, who defeated Aarav Bharat 6-4, 6-3 and Aarav Dhekiyal, who triumphed over Aarav Galwa 6-2, 6-2. The inter-



national tournament, held under the aegis of the International Tennis Federation (ITF) and the All India Tennis Association (AITA), was formally inaugurated on Sunday at the Chhattisgarh State Tennis Association (CSTA) facility. The event was officially opened by

CSTA General Secretary Gurucharan Singh Hora, alongside senior officials including Advocate Naresh Gupta, Sushil Balani, Dr. Atul Shukla and Rupendra Singh Chauhan. ITF White Badge Referee Prabin Nayak is overseeing the technical standards of the compe-

tion. While Indian athletes showed strong form in the qualifiers, the tournament features a diverse international field with young talents arriving from United States, Australia and Indonesia.

With the qualifying rounds concluded, all eyes turn to the Main Draw, where the top-ranked juniors will begin their quest for ranking points. Om Patel and Vivan Badasaria are top seeded in Boys category whereas in the Girls' Singles category, Angel Patel and Disha Kumar are given priority.

Raipur launches nationwide literacy mega-exam drive



RAIPUR: Under the guidance of Collector Dr. Gaurav Singh, Raipur district kicked off a nationwide mega-examination campaign as part of the ULLAS Navbharat Saksharta Program today, with the inaugural event at Saksharta Chowk.

Special guests from the Ministry of Education, Government of India—Ms. Sunita Singh Chauhan, Senior Consultant (Adult Education Bureau), and Ms. Swati Das, Assistant Director, State Literacy Mission Authority—graced the occasion alongside local educators Dekeshwar Verma (Assistant Professor and SCL In-charge) and Mukund Sahu (Assistant Professor and DCL In-charge).

This ambitious drive aims to boost literacy rates across the region by engaging more people in foundational reading, writing, and numeracy skills. Officials highlighted the transformative power of literacy during the program, urging widespread community participation to make it a success.

Over 600 people return to Sanatan Dharma in 'Ghar Wapsi' ceremony

Central Chronicle News

RAIPUR: In a significant religious gathering held on the auspicious occasion of the Hindu New Year and Chaitra Navratri Pratipada, 610 individuals participated in a 'Ghar Wapsi' (homecoming) ceremony at the Shri Siddha Hanuman Temple in Sakti, Chhattisgarh. The event, organized under the aegis of the Dharma Jagran Samanvay, saw the formal return of converted individuals to Sanatan Dharma through traditional Vedic rituals and mantras. The program was held as part of the ongoing "Ghar Wapsi" campaign, inspired by the late Dilip Singh Judeo. His son and the head of the All India Ghar Wapsi Abhiyan, Prabal Pratap Singh Judeo, was personally present to lead the proceedings. In a symbolic gesture of respect

and inclusion, Judeo welcomed the returning families by washing their feet, a traditional ritual signifying their honored reintegration into the fold. Spiritual leaders and scholars present described the event as a symbol of cultural renaissance and the inclusive nature of Sanatan Dharma. The ceremony was graced by several spiritual and social figures, including Prema Sai Maharaj, Prabal Pratap Singh Judeo apart from local social workers and devotees such as Sudhir Gautam, Rajkumar Chandra, Anju Gabel and many others. The organizers emphasized that the 'Ghar Wapsi' initiative is a continuous effort. They stated that the campaign will persist in the future to help more individuals reconnect with their traditional identity and cultural heritage.

NEWSLINE

WORKSHOP

World Forestry Day celebrated with competitions, legal workshop



RAIPUR : On the occasion of World Forestry Day, Baloda Bazar Forest Division hosted a series of engaging programs on March 21, focusing on public awareness, participation, and dialogue to highlight forests' vital role in life, livelihoods, and the future. School and college students participated in painting, essay writing, and debate competitions on topics like forest conservation, biodiversity, and environmental balance. Top performers received certificates and prizes in recognition of their creative and insightful contributions. A key highlight was a workshop on forest and wildlife crime investigation and prosecution, featuring Additional District Judge Rakesh Kumar Verma, Chief Judicial Magistrate Girish Pal Singh, and Judicial Magistrate Kasdol Shweta Mishra. Participants gained in-depth knowledge on legal provisions, investigation processes, evidence collection, and court procedures, empowering forest officials.

Homage to freedom fighter Hemu Kalani on birth anniversary

Central Chronicle News

RAIPUR: The Raipur Municipal Corporation's Culture Department will host a floral tribute ceremony to commemorate Shaheed Hemu Kalani on his birth anniversary, Monday, March 23, 2026, at 11 AM. The event is scheduled at the statue of

the freedom fighter near Kutchery Chowk in the capital city.

Citizens and officials will offer respectful homage with floral wreaths at the site. Preparations include thorough cleaning of the statue premises and surrounding areas, floral decorations, and drinking water facilities.

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Bhilai



“Specialized NDPS training was organised for cops to strengthen narcotics investigations.”

Vijay Agrawal (SSP, Durg)

Legal experts guide investigating officers on narcotics protocols

65 investigators ranging from ASIs to Inspectors received specialized training on legal compliance and evidence documentation.

Central Chronicle News

BHILAI: Under the direction of Senior Superintendent of Police Vijay Agrawal, a comprehensive one-day training program was conducted at the Dadhichi Training Hall, Old Police Line, Durg. The initiative aimed to enhance the quality and legal robustness of investigations under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.



Durg SSP addressing the cops during training session.

ing seizures and sampling to ensure effective prosecution in court.

The session featured a panel of legal and forensic experts. AGP Prakash Sharma used case studies to guide 65 officers

on avoiding procedural lapses, while senior advocates Vijay Kasar and KK Dwivedi lectured on the admissibility of evidence and the importance of accurate documentation to meet judicial expec-

tations. Furthermore, Pankaj Tamrakar, Senior Scientific Officer from FSL Bhilai, provided technical training on the error-free sampling of narcotic tablets and capsules, highlighting the necessity of

FASTFACTS

● Emphasis was placed on flawless sampling, maintaining the chain of custody, and adhering to Sections 50, 55, and 57 of the NDPS Act.

avoiding overwriting on official documents.

Additional SP (Rural) Manishankar Chandra concluded the session by detailing the mandatory compliance of Sections 50, 55, and 57, and the legal procedures for taking action against co-accused under Section 29.

Police bust online betting racket; seven arrested



Central Chronicle News

BHILAI: The Jamul Police have dismantled a sophisticated online betting syndicate operating out of a rented house in Sundar Vihar Colony Phase-2. Acting on a tip-off, a police team raided the premises located behind Nalanda School, arresting seven individuals involved in running high-stakes illegal gambling. The gang offered various games, including Dragon Tiger, Teen Patti, and Roulette, using mule bank accounts and specialized software

to mask their multi-crore operations. During the raid, authorities seized Rs 1,00,000 in cash, 16 mobile phones, 15 ATM cards, 7 bank passbooks, and a laptop used for maintaining digital ledgers. The accused, identified as Poshan Nishad, Yogesh Vishwakarma, Gurav Tiwari, Sanjay Jaiswal, Chunes Nishad, Vikram Singh and Udal Hamme from Raipur and Bhilai, have been booked under the BNS Section 318(4) and the Chhattisgarh Gambling (Prohibition) Act, 2022.

NEWSLINE

DRUG PEDDLING

Man arrested with cannabis

BHILAI: As part of the ongoing anti-narcotics drive, Bori Police successfully apprehended a drug peddler near the Doma Road pond. Acting on a tip-off, a police team intercepted a motorcycle (CG 07 VN 3586) traveling from Navagaon to Doma. The accused, identified as Rishi Kumar Sen (32), was found in possession of 5.620 kg of Ganja valued at approximately Rs 2.8 lakh. Along with the contraband, the police seized the motorcycle and Rs 3360 in cash. A case has been registered under Section 20(b) of the NDPS Act, and the accused has been formally arrested for the illegal sale of narcotics.

PILGRIM SAFETY |

Traffic Police intensify safety measures for Dongargarh pilgrims

Central Chronicle News

BHILAI: With the ongoing Chaitra Navratri festival drawing thousands of pilgrims (Pada-yatris) toward Dongargarh, the Durg Traffic Police have launched a specialized safety campaign. The primary route from Kumhari to Anjora has been divided into dedicated sectors, each managed by patrolling units to monitor the heavy influx of devotees. To prevent night time accidents, officers are applying



HIGHLIGHT

● Special patrolling teams and radium stickers have been deployed from Kumhari to Anjora to ensure 24/7 safety for devotees marching to the Maa Bamleshwari Temple.

reflective radium stickers to the bags and clothing of pilgrims, significantly increasing their visibility to motorists. Travelers are being strictly instructed to use service roads, walk on the left side of the highway, and avoid resting on the tarmac.

Staff nurse merit list released

Central Chronicle News

BHILAI: The National Health Mission (NHM), Durg, has released the preliminary list of eligible and ineligible candidates for contractual recruitment. The positions include Staff Nurse (PICU/HDU), Staff Nurse (LMU), and Community Health Officer (NHM). Candidates can review the list on the official district website, durg.gov.in. Those wishing to file objections must log in to the portal using their registration ID and password.

CASE SOLVED |

Woman held for stealing gold worth Rs 12 lakh from her own home

Central Chronicle News

BHILAI: The Bhilai Bhatti Police arrested a 26-year-old woman for allegedly stealing a substantial quantity of gold jewelry from her father's residence. The incident came to light after the complainant, M Nachaiya, reported that ornaments worth lakhs had gone missing from his Sector-2 home earlier this year. During the investigation, police detained the



suspect, M Shyamala, who confessed to exploiting her family's trust for financial gain. She revealed that she had pawned a portion of the stolen jewelry at a pri-

vate finance company to obtain quick cash, while keeping the remaining ornaments hidden.

Officials successfully recovered approximately 7 tolas (70 grams) of gold, currently valued at nearly Rs 12 lakh. While Shyamala has been taken into custody, authorities are further investigating the potential involvement of accomplices who may have assisted her in disposing of the stolen property.

BOOTLEGGING

Youth held with illicit liquor

BHILAI: As part of the ongoing crackdown on narcotics, the Utai Police, in coordination with the ACCU team, arrested a 29-year-old man for the illegal sale of liquor. Acting on a tip-off, police raided a location near Dumardih canal and apprehended Chetan Dhimar, a resident of Pahandor village. Authorities seized 6.480 bulk liters of assorted country-made and foreign liquor, including Goa Special Whiskey and Romeo Masala, valued at Rs 3720. The accused admitted to selling the alcohol for illicit profit.

MAHTARI VANDAN YOJANA |

A lifeline for the elderly in Durg

Central Chronicle News

BHILAI: The Chhattisgarh government's ambitious Mahtari Vandan Yojana is bringing transformative changes to the lives of women, particularly those in their golden years. In the village of Purai, under the Hanoda sector of Durg, Dhela Bai Yadav stands as a testament to the scheme's profound impact. Living alone with her husband, both aged over 60 and with-



out children, Dhela Bai faced significant financial hardships. While they received a small old-age pension, it was barely enough for survival. However, since February 2024, the Mahtari Vandan

Yojana has provided her with a steady monthly assistance of 1000 rupees. “This scheme has become our support in old age,” says a grateful Dhela Bai. Facilitated by local Anganwadi workers and supervisor Sonal Soni, the additional funds now ensure their daily needs are met with dignity. For this elderly couple, the initiative is not just a policy but a crucial safety net providing security and peace of mind.

‘Ek Shaam Shri Ram Khatu Shyam Ji Ke Naam’ held

Central Chronicle News

BHILAI: A grand cultural and religious evening, “Ek Shaam Shri Ram Khatu Shyam Ji Ke Naam,” was celebrated with immense fervour at Sector-7, Bhilai. The event featured star-studded performances by The Kerala Story actress Adah Sharma, music composer Pramod Tripathi, Sa Re Ga Ma Pa fame Sharad Sharma,



and spiritual orator Meenakshi Sherawat. Distinguished guests, including Former MP

Saroj Pandey, Cabinet Minister Gajendra Yadav, Rajni Baghel (wife of MP Vijay Baghel)

and MLA Rikesh Sen, joined thousands of devotees to witness a spectacular fireworks display welcoming the New Year. A major highlight was the stunning “Operation Sindoor” Rangoli, which captivated the audience. Attendees also partook in Prasad, making the spiritual gathering a memorable blend of devotion and community harmony in the steel city.

TRAGIC ACCIDENT

Woman killed, family injured

BHILAI: A devastating road accident in the Old Bhilai police station area claimed the life of a 30-year-old woman on Saturday evening. The victim, N Bharti, a resident of Khursipar, was returning from Raipur on a motorcycle with her husband and 8-year-old son after appearing for a railway examination. A speeding truck rammed their bike on the National Highway, causing all three to fall. Tragically, Bharti died on the spot after being crushed by the truck's rear wheel. Her husband and son sustained injuries and are currently undergoing treatment at a hospital.

POLICE ARREST

Accused in deadly assault

BHILAI: In a swift operation, the Jevra Sirsa Police arrested a 40-year-old man for a nearly fatal attack on a labourer in Samoda village. On the morning of March 20, the accused, Parmeshwar Yadav, allegedly engaged in a drunken brawl over work-related issues. In a fit of rage, Yadav attacked the victim with a sharp-edged weapon, leaving him critically injured. Police registered a case under Section 109 of the BNS and apprehended Yadav within hours. The assault weapon was recovered from the scene, and the victim was rushed to the hospital for emergency treatment.

Snatcher and Jeweler arrested in chain snatching

Central Chronicle News

BHILAI: Jamul Police have successfully solved a broad daylight robbery involving an elderly woman. On March 19, Shashi Gond was targeted by a scooter-borne snatcher while on her morning walk in the Housing Board area. Acting swiftly, the police analyzed CCTV footage and technical data to



identify and apprehend the main accused, Jwala Bairagi (42). During interrogation, Bairagi

confessed to the crime and revealed he sold the stolen gold chain to a jeweler in Raipur. Consequently, the police arrested the buyer, Anuj Soni, and recovered the gold jewelry along with the scooter used in the crime, totaling Rs 55000 in value. Both accused have been booked under sections 304(2) and 112(2) of the BNS and sent to judicial custody.

Two-day free orthopaedic camp to offer advanced keyhole treatments

Central Chronicle News

BHILAI: Residents of Durg suffering from joint and bone ailments can avail of a free two-day orthopaedic consultation camp on March 23 and 24. Organized by Arogyam Super-speciality Hospital, the camp will run from 10 am to 2 pm. Renowned specialist Dr Jayesh Kumar



Soni will provide expert advice on sports injuries, robotic joint replace-

ments, and complex fractures. A major highlight of the camp is the introduction of minimally invasive “keyhole” surgery. This advanced telescope-assisted technique allows for treatment through tiny incisions, ensuring faster recovery and significantly less pain compared to traditional open surgeries.

PREPARATION INTENSIFIED |

Teachers to be appointed as enumerators for Census 2027

Central Chronicle News

BHILAI: The Durg district administration has significantly ramped up preparations for Census 2027. During a high-level review meeting held at the Collectorate, District Collector Abhijit Singh outlined a rigorous strategy to ensure the successful execution of this critical national project, emphasizing that no household should be left



behind. The first phase, focusing on House Listing, is scheduled to take place from May 1 to May 30, 2026. Collector Singh directed officials to finalize the appointment of enu-

merators and supervisors by March 31. To manage the vast scale of the operation, staff from government primary and middle schools, headmasters, and college faculty will be

deployed across all urban bodies and tehsils. Notably, the Collector mandated a 10% reserve staff to account for any contingencies and ensure a seamless workflow. “The Census is a vital national duty; any negligence will not be tolerated,” stated Singh. He further instructed officials to provide comprehensive digital records of all buildings, including mobile numbers and addresses of all

appointed personnel. The meeting saw participation from top officials, including Additional Collector Virendra Singh and municipal commissioners from Durg, Bhilai-Charoda, and Risali. Following the house-listing phase, the second stage will involve the detailed collection of demographic data to complete the digital registry, ensuring every citizen is officially accounted for in the national database.

‘Lord Ram is the epitome of love and harmony’

BHILAI: Renowned scholar and culture expert Acharya Dr Mahesh Chandra Sharma was recently honoured at the 4th International Ramayana Conference held in Bhopal. Dr Sharma was awarded for the ‘Best Research Paper Presentation’ for his work titled ‘Shri Ram as an Ideal of Social Harmony - With Special Reference to Tribal Society.’ The award, including a citation and prize money, was presented by

the Chief Guest, Prof Kaptan Singh Solanki (former Governor of Haryana and Tripura). The prestigious event was organized by Tulsi Manas Pratishthan and the Ramayana Center, in collaboration with the Culture Department of Madhya Pradesh. Scholars from eight Indian states and seven countries, including the USA, UK, Russia, and Japan, participated in the four-day convention.

N-E-W-S



"Andhra Pradesh govt has sanctioned Rs 60 cr for five Compressed Bio Gas (CBG) plants in urban local bodies.."

N Chandrababu Naidu
CM, Andhra Pradesh

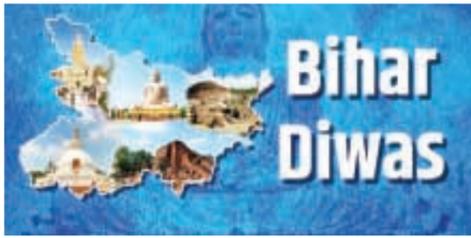
Guv, CM & Dy CMs wish people on 'Bihar Diwas'

Patna celebrates Bihar Diwas as Governor Syed Ata Hasnain and Minister Nitish Kumar extend greetings marking state's 114th foundation day.

Press Trust Of India

PATNA: Bihar Governor Syed Ata Hasnain and Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Sunday extended good wishes to the people of the state on the occasion of 'Bihar Diwas'. The 114th foundation day of Bihar is being celebrated here. Bihar was carved out of Bengal Presidency in British India on March 22, 1912.

The state government has organised multiple events as part of a three-day programme (March 22 to 24) featuring folk music, traditional dances,



cultural programmes and exhibitions showcasing Bihar's history and art.

Hasnain "conveyed his heartfelt greetings and warm felicitations to all residents of Bihar and people of Bihari origin across the world on the auspicious occasion of

Bihar Diwas," according to a statement issued by Lok Bhavan. He called upon everyone to renew their collective resolve to contribute wholeheartedly toward the holistic development of the state and the nation, while steadfastly upholding

HIGHLIGHT

● Bihar marks 114th foundation day with cultural events across state.

the rich legacy and glory of Bihar, the statement added.

"The history of Bihar has been full of glory, and through our resolve, we are building a glorious future for the state," the CM wrote in a post on X. Kumar called upon the people of the state to realise the commitment to building a prosperous

Bihar.

"We will together take Bihar to new heights of glory," he said. Through his social media post, DyCM Samrat Chaudhary also called upon people to work towards making a Bihar that is "self-reliant, prosperous, full of opportunities and complementary to the progress of the nation. Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Kumar Sinha said that the occasion is a reminder of Bihar's rich cultural heritage, historic traditions, and the invaluable contributions of the great personalities it has produced.

BIRTHDAY SPECIAL : MARCH 23



Defeating Rahul, Irani becomes Nation's 'Smriti'

Rising from a Humble Background to TV Stardom, Then Journeying to the Pinnacle of Power—An Aggressive Orator, a Resilient Leader, and a Trusted Face of the Party Organization.

Central Chronicle Bureau

RAIPUR/NEW DELHI: Ranked among the most intriguing personalities in Indian politics, Smriti Irani's story is an extraordinary journey of struggle, identity, and the ascent to power. Born on March 23, 1976, Smriti emerged from a middle-class background to first achieve stardom in the world of television, and subsequently, carve out a formidable identity for herself in politics. Her political success has been remarkable in many respects: despite losing the election in Amethi in 2014.

Childhood & TV Stardom:

Smriti Irani was born into a middle-class family in Delhi. With a Punjabi father and a Bengali mother, she grew up in a culturally diverse environment. Amidst limited resources, she began working at a young age and, through sheer struggle, made her way to Mumbai. It was there that she received her big break through the popular television serial *Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi*. The character of 'Tulsi' made her a household name, and she rose to become one of the most popular actresses on Indian television.

Rise in Politics:

She launched her political career in 2003 by joining the BJP. Rising rapidly within the party organization, she played pivotal roles in the Mahila Morcha (Women's Wing) and in formulating media strategies. In 2014, by contesting the election against Rahul Gandhi in Amethi, she established herself on the national stage. In 2019, by securing a historic victory in Amethi, she fundamentally altered the political equations.

Ministerial Roles:

Smriti Irani has helmed key portfolios such as the Ministry of Human Resource Development, the Ministry of Women and Child Development, and the Ministry of Textiles. During her tenure, several decisions, and aimed at educational reform and women's empowerment were implemented.

Distinctive Traits:

Smriti Irani is recognized as an assertive and incisive orator. Whether in Parliament or on the campaign trail, her speeches are direct and impactful. Her personal journey of struggle, her communication skills, and her strong command within the party organization set her apart.

Financial Profile:

According to her 2024 election affidavit, her total family assets are estimated at approximately Rs 17-18 crore, a figure that includes the income of her husband, Zubin Irani. Her primary sources of income include her government salary, investments, interest earnings, and agricultural income. Her return to a rebooted television show has given fresh momentum to both her public engagement and her earnings.

MP Government to roll out AI mission for governance

Press Trust Of India

MP Govt will implement AI Mission to make the administrative system more effective and ensure holistic development.

BHOPAL: The Madhya Pradesh government has announced that, to make the administrative system more effective and ensure



holistic development within the state, it will soon begin implementing the 'AI Mission' within the governance framework. The implementation will be carried out in multi-

ple phases. In the current financial year 2026-27, initiatives will focus on strengthening foundational infrastructure. During 2027-28, successful AI use cases will be scaled up and deployed across various government departments. From 2028 onwards, AI technology will be developed as a permanent institutional capability within the state's governance system.

PM calls to conserve every drop of Water



Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday reiterated the need to conserve every drop of water, urging citizens to adopt responsible usage practices while acknowledging the efforts of individuals and communities working

towards water conservation.

Marking World Water Day, observed annually on March 22, the Prime Minister highlighted the importance of sustainable water management in the face of growing global challenges.

Taking to X, PM Modi said, "Water sustains us and shapes our planet's future. On World Water Day, let us reaffirm our commitment to conserve every drop of water and use it responsibly.

Plan to merge 3 hospitals into AIIMS-like hub: CM Rekha Gupta

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Sunday said the proposed integration of Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital, Delhi State Cancer Institute, and Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hos-



pital into an AIIMS-like institute will significantly

boost postgraduate and MBBS seats besides strengthening healthcare services in the capital.

According to an official statement, the Delhi government plans to merge the three hospitals to create an autonomous medical body on

the lines of the AIIMS model.

It said efforts are also underway to develop the Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied Sciences (IHBAS) into a second National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS-2).

Fire breaks out, none injured

PALGHAR: Nine people were rescued after a fire broke out in a 12-storey residential building in Maharashtra's Palghar district on Sunday morning, an official said. There were no reports of injuries in the blaze that erupted on the eighth floor of the building in Virar East around 11 am, he said.

Election campaigns in West Bengal



BJP candidate from Shibpur Assembly constituency Rudranil Ghosh interacts with a woman during a door-to-door campaign, in Howrah on Sunday. PTI

Yoga is key to counter lifestyle disorders : VP



Press Trust Of India

PUNE: Vice-President C. P. Radhakrishnan on Sunday underlined the growing relevance of naturopathy and yoga in tackling lifestyle diseases, urging people to adopt a balanced, nature-aligned way of life.

Addressing the 81st Foundation Day of Nisargopachar Ashram in Pune, he said the institution reflected Mahatma Gandhi's vision of simple, disciplined living in harmony with nature.

Describing the ashram as "a philosophy and a way of life", Radhakrishnan said health should be seen as a state of complete physical, mental and spiritual well-being, not merely the absence of disease. He flagged the rising burden of non-communicable diseases and called for a focus on preventive health-

care through balanced nutrition, regular physical activity and mental well-being. Drawing from his tenure as Governor in Jharkhand and Maharashtra, the Vice-President pointed to the enduring value of indigenous healing practices among tribal communities, describing them as part of India's civilisational knowledge systems. He said traditional medicine systems have gained global traction in recent years, citing government efforts under Prime Minister Narendra Modi to promote AYUSH and wellness tourism. Radhakrishnan said yoga and naturopathy should be seen as complementary to modern medicine, not alternatives. In a fast-paced, material-driven world, he added, lasting fulfilment comes from balance and inner peace.



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Action should be taken against illegal transportation of minerals and its excavation as well

Kunal Dudawat
Collector Korba



Raipur Region

Multi-crore scam in construction works of WRD !

There are reports of alleged irregularities to the tune of Rs 500 cr in construction works in Chhuikhadan WRD of KCG.

Central Chronicle News

KHAIRAGARH: The Chhuikhadan Water Resources Division in the district has found itself at the center of a major controversy. A stir has been created within administrative circles following the emergence of allegations regarding alleged irregularities and corruption in construction works valued at approximately Rs500 crore. Based on a complaint submitted to the Chief Minister, directives have now been issued to conduct an investigation into the matter. It is reported that allegations of large-scale irregularities have been levelled against construction works worth nearly Rs 500 crore undertaken by the Chhuikhadan Water Resources Division between the years 2023-24 and 2025-26. In a complaint sent to the Chief Minister by M. Upadhyay, a retired Assistant Grade-3 employee, several officials and staff members of the department have been accused of engaging in irregularities through collusion. Taking the matter seriously, the Chief Minister's Secretariat has



directed the Engineer-in-Chief of the Water Resources Department, Raipur, to conduct an inquiry and take appropriate action in accordance with the rules.

The complaint prominently names Executive Engineer B.K. Markam, Assistant Engineer Ketan Kishore Sahu, Assistant Engineer Avinash Nayak, Assistant Grade-3 Karunesh Meshram, Assistant Draftsman Kamal Narayan Thakur, Site Assistant Lokesh Sharma, and Assistant Grade-2 Ajay Chandrakar. All of them have been jointly accused of corruption and violations of estab-

Demand for asset verification and criminal prosecution

The complainant has demanded a thorough investigation into the movable and immovable assets, income tax returns, and income-to-asset ratios of all implicated officials and employees. Additionally, a demand has been made to register an FIR (First Information Report) against those found guilty. In response to these demands, the Chief Minister's Secretariat has issued directives mandating that the complaint be investigated strictly in accordance with established rules and that appropriate action be taken; furthermore, instructions have been issued to record the details of this investigation and the subsequent actions taken on the 'Jan Darshan' portal. All eyes are now fixed on the progress of the departmental inquiry and the potential actions that may ensue regarding this entire matter.

lished rules. The complainant has alleged that a bribe of Rs 55,000 was demanded in exchange for the release of pending gratuity payments.

Fines worth Rs 5.18 lakh imposed in 352 cases

KHAIRAGARH: With the Navratri festival in view, the District Police are taking strict action against violators of traffic rules. An extensive, daily vehicle-checking drive is being conducted on a large scale by all police stations, outposts, and the Traffic Branch across the district. During these vehicle inspections, a total of 352 cases involving various violations were registered, resulting in the collection of Rs 5,18,700 in compounding fees/fines.

Two-day Kabir Satsang ceremony on March 24-25

ARANG: A grand two-day Kabir Satsang (spiritual gathering) ceremony is being organized in the holy town of Arang on March 24 and 25. This event will take place at Satnam Bhawan, Karma Chowk, and is expected to be attended by a large number of devotees from the local area as well as surrounding regions. The program will feature 'Satsang' and spiritual discourses held under the auspicious presence of Dharmendra Saheb (Head, Kabir Parakh Sansthan, Prayagraj).

Briefs

BEST OF THE REST

EID CELEBRATIONS

Muslim brethren offer Eid-ul-Fitr prayers and pray for peace and harmony



KATGI: Members of the Muslim community in Katgi—an 'Adarsh Gram Panchayat' (Model Village Council) falling under the Kasdol block—offered their Eid al-Fitr prayers today, Saturday, March 21. The Eid-ul-Fitr prayers were performed at 9:30 AM at the Edgah Batha.

The Eid-ul-Fitr prayers were led by a Hafiz who had arrived from Jhark-

hand. Following the prayers, supplications were offered for peace and harmony; subsequently, the congregation proceeded to the cemetery to pray for the salvation and forgiveness of the departed souls resting in their graves. A large number of people from the Muslim community of Katgi and the surrounding areas participated in the Eid-ul-Fitr prayers.

AADHAR BIOMETRIC

Complete children's Aadhar Biometric target by March 31

KHAIRAGARH: In accordance with directives from the Central Government, biometric updates for children's Aadhar cards have been made mandatory. Under this mandate, upon reaching the ages of 5 and 15 years, it is mandatory to update a child's Aadhar record with their fingerprints, iris scans, and a new photograph. A review meeting regarding these Aadhar updates—presided over by Collector Indrajit Singh Chandrawal—was held in the Collectorate conference hall, attended by the principals of all schools across the district.

During the meeting, the Collector issued clear instructions that the stipulated target must be achieved with 100% completion by March 31, 2026. It was also informed during the meeting that the facility for Aadhar biometric updates for children aged 5 to 17 years will remain available free of cost until September 30, 2026. Parents have been urged to ensure their children's Aadhar cards are updated in a timely manner to prevent any hurdles regarding school admissions, examinations, or in availing the benefits of various government schemes.

ASSUMING OFFICE

Dr. Sandeep Jain congratulates Anjay Shukla on assuming office

ARANG: Dr. Sandeep Jain, President of the Arang Municipal Council, attended the ceremony marking the assumption of charge by Anjay Shukla—the newly appointed Vice-Chairman of the Chhattisgarh Tribal Local Health Traditions and Medicinal Plants Board—and extended his best wishes and congratulations to him. The event was held at the premises of the State Forest Research and Training Institute, located at Zero Point, Raipur. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Jain remarked that Anjay Shukla's wealth of experience and his distinct working style would provide a new direction to the Board, thereby fostering the conservation and promotion of traditional health practices and medicinal plants within the state. He expressed hope that this Board would play a pivotal role in promoting and advancing traditional tribal knowledge. During the program, public representatives—including Councilor Representative Dr. Toshani Sahu, Councilor Representative Vikram Parmar, Dinesh Chandrakar (Vice President of the BJP Arang Mandal), and Narendra Lalla Sahni—extended their congratulations to the newly appointed Vice Chairman and wished him a successful tenure.

Woman seriously injured in hit-and-run case

GANDAI-PANDARIYA: On Saturday afternoon, a woman sustained serious injuries after being struck by a speeding car on the road in the village of Atariya. According to reports, Pooja Sonu Janghel (32)—a resident of Sadak Atariya, Bhatapara—was returning home when a car (CG 08 AF 3527), travelling from Ghirgholi towards Narmada, lost control, veered off the road, and collided with her. According to eyewitnesses, the car overturned after crashing into a pile of gravel and a signpost.

Three occupants of the car also sustained minor injuries in the accident. All victims were taken to the Gandai Hospital, from where the woman—who was in critical condition—was referred to Khairagarh for further treatment. Upon receiving the information, the police arrived at the scene, registered a case, and have initiated an investigation.

WORLD WATER DAY SPECIAL

Villagers of Gaurtek find a permanent solution to the Water Crisis

Central Chronicle News

BASNA: Today, the water crisis stands as a grave challenge not only for our country but for the entire world. Declining groundwater levels, erratic rainfall, and ever-increasing water demand have exacerbated the problems regarding drinking water and domestic water supply in rural areas. When a severe crisis regarding drinking water and domestic use arose in the village, Gaurtek—a village in the Basna development block—emerged as a shining example of water management. Driven by collective willpower, voluntary labour ('shramdaan'), and community cooperation, their efforts offer a solution that is not only inspiring but also eminently practical.

Until about seven or eight years ago, the village of Gaurtek, too, was grappling with a severe water crisis. Since most



fields were irrigated using borewells, farmers were able to cultivate both the 'Kharif' (monsoon) and 'Rabi' (winter) crops, a practice that led to a continuous depletion of the groundwater table. During the summer months, the situation would deteriorate to such an extent that villagers were forced to travel long distances just to procure drinking water and water for domestic use. Hand pumps and wells would run dry, significantly increasing the hardships faced by women and children. Recogniz-

ing the gravity of the situation, a large village assembly was convened in 2015-16. During this meeting—held under the leadership of the late Narmada Prasad Nayak—all the villagers, including the late Chain Kumar Nayak, the late Rajaram Nayak, Harekrishna Nayak, Rohidas Nayak, Baratram Nayak, Murlidhar Bhoi, Radheshyam Nayak, Chhabilal Nayak, Vrindavan Nayak, Ashok Pradhan, Jagatram Nayak, Medani Nayak, Balaram Nayak, Chitrasen Nayak, Rajesh Nayak, and Vidyadhar Nayak—collectively

FACTFILE

• Rs 4 Lakh in community contributions annually—a total cost of Rs 12 lakh over three years; the village becomes a model for water management.

resolved to implement a concrete, permanent solution to the water crisis. During the discussions, it came to light that to the left of the Gaurtek-Kumhari road—specifically, situated above the current paddy procurement center—lies approximately 400 acres of undulating government land. Here, rainwater flows through small rivulets, eventually draining into the main stream via a tributary channel in Kumhari. If this water were to be impounded, the village's water table could be significantly improved.

INT'NL DAY OF FOREST

Limestone mines openly violating environmental issues

Central Chronicle News

MANDIR HASOUD: While the world celebrates International Day of Forests, the limestone crusher plant located in Dhansuli is indiscriminately spewing dust and debris. This particulate matter is settling on the leaves of trees and plants, effectively stunting their growth. Fine particles emitted from the stone mines are polluting the



pristine rural environment; from the use of compressor machines to break up limestone

The dust and smoke emitted from stone quarries primarily consist of respirable crystalline silica, which poses an extreme hazard to the lungs.

Dr. Lakshmi Ananth
BMO- Arang

sheets, to the crushing of stone into concrete gravel

and dust, the resulting airborne particles—along with fumes from chemical blasting—are contaminating the atmosphere.

Although regulations mandate the establishment of a "Green Zone" surrounding crusher sites and require the use of sprinklers to spray water within the plant, this facility continues to operate unchecked in complete violation of environmental norms.

Devotees light 1,881 sacred flames at Birkoni Chandi temple



BIRKONI: The 70th 'Basanti Chaitra Navratri' Festival—featuring a special session for the lighting of 'Manokamna Jyotis' (wish-fulfilling sacred flames)—is currently underway with immense faith and devotion, organized by the Maa Chandi Siddha Shaktipeeth in Birkoni. Amidst nine days of rituals and diverse cultural programs, the enthusiasm of the devotees continues to soar. On Thursday—the first day ('Ekam') of the bright fortnight ('Shukla Paksha') of the month of 'Chaitra'—devotees lit 1,881 sacred flames ('Manokamna Jyotis') and sought blessings for their well-being from the Mother Goddess. This festival of Navratri—a celebration of reverence and faith—is being observed with great pomp and grandeur; thousands of devotees are arriving from distant

places to offer their prayers at the shrine of Maa Chandi.

In accordance with a tradition spanning many years, it is believed that whoever visits the court of Maa Chandi finds relief from all their afflictions; every wish made here with a sincere heart is said to be fulfilled. Driven by this deep-seated faith, devotees flock to this shrine from every corner of the region to seek the Mother Goddess's 'darshan' (sacred sight) and attain a profound sense of spiritual peace and bliss. Indeed, the mere sight of the Mother Goddess here is believed to dispel all sorrows and troubles.

Devotees begin to throng the temple premises early in the morning, with the crowds swelling significantly during the evening and late into the night.

Fun & Focus



Daily Horoscope

ARIES
This day is going to be a promising one for you. Moon in Taurus brings more positive energy upon you. In professional fields, you can opt for getting new scopes and chances. However, be careful in your decisions as a wrong decision may cause severe monetary loss to you. Also, be more serious about your finances.

Taurus
This is an excellent day for fresh beginnings, and you will be cheerful all day. Good success and fortune will come your way with the Moon in Taurus, which will be especially beneficial for professionals. Your colleagues will be amazed by your professional efficiency today as you are surrounded by positive cosmic energy.

Gemini
You may be overly sensitive and mindful of others' needs. This might cost you a lot of money, and it's possible that you'll make mistakes as a result of your sentiments. Listen to your instincts and let your inner voice be your closest friend when you're confused. The hour between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. is auspicious for you.

Cancer
As the Moon stays in Taurus, there is a lingering feeling of sadness that engulfs Cancer natives today. You have likely been experiencing some problems sporadically in your home. Today you will feel anxious to make things better. Work on it and make sure your workplace or home is a welcoming and peaceful place to be.

Leo
Dear Leo, thanks to the Moon's influence in Taurus, you could be quite confused. Just calm down; instead of getting impulsive, think peacefully about the reasons for your confusion. Understand what is troubling you so much. Jot down your thoughts if important and discuss them with your loved ones.

Virgo
Astrologi astrologers believe that today is a great day to focus on practical matters or to reconnect with old friends. This transit could assist you in gaining emotional control. Make use of this moment to feel confident. You will be satisfied even if your efforts are minimal. The hours of 3:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. are thought to be favourable to you.

Libra
Dear Libra, the Moon in Taurus makes you feel energetic and spontaneous. Today, you are quick to pick up on what is expected of you. Even though a lot seems to be going on, you may be able to handle everything that you undertake, perfectly. Today, wear the color red for good vibes and positive energy.

Scorpio
Dear Scorpio, the lady luck smiles on you as the Moon remains in Taurus. You exhibit an extremely high level of self-confidence in everything you do today. Utilize this to your advantage, but remember to exercise caution. Your optimism and self-assurance will impress all those people who surround you.

Sagittarius
You might find yourself in stress and discomfort today. Keep patience as things will change soon. You will soon get back your vitality and positivity. Astrologi astrologers suggest that you must maintain your positive energy to concentrate on your good vibes. Concentrate on your goal and believe in your potential to overcome the challenges.

Capricorn
Astrologi astrologers foresee a vibrant, fun-filled atmosphere in every sphere of your life today. This is due to the presence of the Moon in your own house, Taurus! The work sphere might be hectic, testing your abilities. However, the rewards will be fruitful and might prove to be a turning point in your professional space.

Aquarius
Dear Aquarius, due to some unfavorable energy brought in by the transit of the Moon in Taurus, you may not be in the best of moods today. You should avoid persons who do not give out positive energy. Allow nothing to disturb your peace of mind or cause you any unwelcome hardship. Your lucky color for the day is orange.

Pisces
Dear Pisces, with the Moon placed in Taurus, your life may take a turn for the better. During this transit, you may find yourself spiritually inclined, which will help you find solutions to problems you have been facing. Today, explore your options, talk to a loved one, and be open about your problems, as doing these might turn out to be beneficial for you.

SCIENCE WATCH

The Ring of Fire & Earthquakes



Approximately 91 per cent of the world's earthquakes and 81 per cent of the world's largest earthquakes occur within the Ring of Fire in the Pacific Ocean.

Let's calculate a leap Year



To find out if the current year is a leap year, divide the number by four. If the number is completely divisible by 4, then it is a leap year.

Love for the sword



The Vikings considered their sword as their most prized possession and gave them names like 'Fierce' or 'Leg biter'. Vikings were actually seafaring warriors using scientific adventures.

SCIENCETECH

Fangtooth Fish- This aptly named fish (*Anoplogaster cornuta*) has long, menacing fangs, but the adult fish is small, reaching only about 6 inches (17 cm) in length. Its teeth are the largest in the ocean in proportion to body size, and are so long that the fangtooth has an adaptation so that it can close its mouth! Special pouches on the roof of its mouth prevent the teeth from piercing the fish's brain when its mouth is closed. It has been found as deep as 5,000 meters (16,404 feet), making it one of the deepest living fish, but is most common between 500 and 2,000 meters (1,640 and 6,562 feet). During the day it stays in deeper areas of the ocean and at night, migrates up to shallower water to feed. (This is called a diel migration.) Younger, smaller fangtooth fish filter zooplankton from the

FANGTOOTH FISH

(*Anoplogaster cornuta*)

SMALL SIZE, BIG TEETH

DEEP OCEAN DWELLER
Lives, 500 to 5,000 meters

NIGHTTIME FEEDING
Migrate to shallower waters at night to feed

DIET
Smaller fish and squid

water and adults feed on fish and squid. See more bizarre-looking ocean life in the Creepy Critters Marine Life slideshow and learn more in the Deep Ocean Exploration section. You can see a fangtooth specimen on display in the Sant Ocean Hall at the National Museum of Natural History.

AMAZING WORLD

19-YEAR-OLD ATHARVA CHATURVEDI WINS SUPREME COURT CASE

- DENIED MBBS SEAT DUE TO EWS POLICY FLAWS
- REPRESENTED HIMSELF IN SUPREME COURT
- SECURED HIS ADMISSION & WON CASE

19-year-old Atharva Chaturvedi, a NEET aspirant from Jabalpur, represented himself in the Supreme Court and won a case against him for not getting an MBBS seat due to flaws in the EWS quota policy. He studied law on his own without any legal background and argued before a three-judge bench, which secured his admission.

19-year-old Atharva Chaturvedi, a resident of Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, was a NEET aspirant. Despite clearing the exam twice (530/720 marks), he was denied an MBBS seat due to anomalies in the EWS (Economically Weaker Section) quota policies. Atharva personally presented his case

before the Supreme Court. In a 10-minute presentation before a bench headed by Justice Surya Kant, he presented his arguments and

facts convincingly. The Supreme Court took cognizance of his case and ruled in his favour, helping him secure a medical seat.

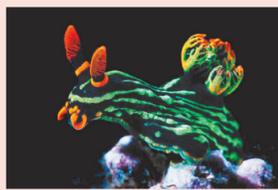
This success is a remarkable story of an ordinary student understanding the legal system and fighting for his rights.

Nudibranch

COMMON NAME: Nudibranchs
SCIENTIFIC NAME: Nudibranchia
TYPE: Invertebrates
DIET: Carnivore
AVERAGE LIFE SPAN IN THE WILD: Up to 1 years
SIZE: 0.25 to 12 inches
WEIGHT: Up to 3.3 pounds

A blob the size of a teacup slinks along the ocean floor in the shallow waters off of Australia. It's a type of sea slug called the nudibranch (NEW-dih-bronk), a slime-oozing creature with a boneless body. Many of them also sport brilliant colours and eye-catching pat-

ANIMAL KINGDOM



terns on their skin. In fact this sticky slug is often considered one of the most beautiful animals in the world. Over 3,000 species of nudibranchs exist, and most live in shallow, tropical waters. They can be anywhere from a quarter of an inch to 12 inches long and can weigh up to 3.3 pounds. These sea slugs spend their time sliding on

their bellies around their habitat in search of snacks. The animals have a set of curved teeth, which they use to eat coral, sponges, and fish eggs off the ocean floor. The nudibranch's meals don't just satisfy its hunger—the food also gives the animal its colouring. When the sea slug eats, it absorbs and displays its prey's pigment—the substance that gives the prey its colour. Some nudibranchs also absorb toxins from certain prey and secrete the poison from their own skin. This allows them to fend off enemies such as fish. So the nudibranch is stunning, resourceful, and it recycles? This slug sounds far from sluggish!

TELL ME WHY?



The Konark Sun Temple is called the "Black Pagoda" because 17th-century European sailors used its dark-colored, towering structure as a landmark for navigating the Bay of Bengal. Built in the 13th century with iron-rich sandstone that weathered to a dark hue, the temple appeared as a black, monumental tower from the coast.

IT'S QUIZ TIME!

- ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS!
- Which state government launched the Quit India-2 (Swaraj to Suraj) initiative at the historic August Kranti Maidan in August 2016?
 - Between which countries was the Seven Years' War fought?
 - Which process releases oxygen into the air?
 - Name the first city in India to use robots to control traffic?
 - Which event will India host in 2028?
 - How many non-metal elements are there in the Modern Periodic Table?
 - Where was the 'Statue of Sacrifice' unveiled?

ANSWERS -
(1) Maharashtra (2) England and France (3) Photosynthesis (4) Indore (5) commonwealth Games (6) 22 (7) Amravati

- Rama Quiz

YES OR NO

- Vikings used helmets with horns.
- Scotland's national animal is a unicorn.
- Butterflies taste with their wings.
- The human nose can detect over one trillion smells.
- Angela Merkel became the second woman to be Chancellor of Germany.

ANSWERS -
1-No (Helmets), 2-yes, 3-No (They taste with their feet), 4-Yes, 5-No (First)



Often called the most beautiful railway station in the world, Antwerpen-Centraal-the name of the principal railway station in Antwerp, Belgium-was built between 1895 and 1905. It consists of a massive main building which was designed by architect L. Delacenserie. There is a 75m high dome above the waiting hall that makes it look like a cathedral. A huge glass vault covers the platforms. The grand interiors are decorated with more than 20 different kinds of marble and stone. The complex also boasts of a shopping centre with over 30 shops selling diamonds.

WORD OF THE DAY

Applause

Meaning - An extreme or irrational fear of something

Example: My uncle always takes the train because he has a phobia of flying.

CROSSWORD -75

- Across**
- Clever (11)
 - Playing a part (6)
 - Burning (6)
 - Movie theatre (6)
 - Out of sorts (6)
 - Tear (3)
 - Be present (6)
 - Ashore (anag.) (6)
 - Impart (6)
 - Grown-ups (6)
 - At once (11)



CROSSWORD SOLUTION - 74

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

SUDOKU - 75

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

SUDOKU SOLUTION - 74

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

DAILY WORD SEARCH

- Alpaca
- Marmot
- Serval
- Argali
- Marten
- Teledu
- Baboon
- Nilgai
- Wapiti
- Badger
- Ocelot
- Weasel
- Beaver
- Quagga
- Wombat
- Cougar
- Rhesus



Business



“During the meeting with Co-Founder and CEO of Anduril Tech Brian Schimpf we discussed the avenues to advance defence innovation and deepen technology partnerships.”

Piyush Goyal
Commerce Minister

Bhagwant Mann at Kisan Mela



Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann during the Kisan Mela organized at Punjab Agricultural University, in Ludhiana, PTI.

Govt to continue capex, opt for wider fiscal deficit : L&T

L&T urges continued government capital expenditure despite rising import bill pressures, says fiscal deficit may widen temporarily amid Middle East tensions.

Press Trust Of India

MUMBAI: Amid concerns over a surge in import bill because of commodity price hardening in the wake of the Middle East conflict, Larsen & Toubro is hoping that the government continues with its capital expenditure even if it means a widening of fiscal deficit.

The engineering, procurement and construction major feels the government should borrow

more if needed to continue with capital expenditure, a senior official has said. “The import bill will go up because of oil and gas prices. The government will have to balance it. They will maybe temporarily raise the deficit, may be they will borrow more,” its Deputy Managing Director Subramanian Sarma told reporters over the weekend. “Overall, if you look at it, our fiscal situation is pretty good... we have some headroom so that

NUMBER

250

• Company's green hydrogen production maintains manufacturing capacity of 250 MW per annum.

we don't compromise on the capital for the infrastructure,” Sarma added. He also noted India has been able to curtail the fiscal deficit after the impact

of the Covid pandemic. Spends on infrastructure are necessary to achieve Viksit Bharat 2047 goals, Sarma said. Even the US, which, alongside Israel, started the conflict by attacking Iran, leading to subsequent retaliations and the hardening of commodity prices, is aware of the challenges and implementing strategies to not let oil prices skyrocket. The ongoing crisis will lead to rethink on the dependence on oil and gas

for our energy needs, and bring to the fore troubles caused by the Strait of Hormuz, Sarma said, adding that this may lead to faster adoption of non-fossil energy sources like green hydrogen and renewable energy. L&T expects thermal power to continue being the mainstay of the energy needs, and is trying to capitalise on other opportunities that will be presented through the transition to newer energy sources, Sarma said.

RBI Board clears 2026-27 budget, nods Utkarsh 3.0

Press Trust Of India

The Reserve Bank of India has approved the Bank's budget, along with its Medium-Term Strategy Framework, Utkarsh 3.0.



reviewed the evolving global and domestic economic situation, including geopolitical developments and their impact on financial markets. It also assessed associated challenges facing the economy before finalising the budget and strategic framework.

MUMBAI: The Central Board of Directors of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved the Bank's budget for the financial year 2026-27, along with its Medium-Term Strategy Framework, Utkarsh 3.0, which will guide policy priorities from 2026 to 2029.

The decision was taken at the 622nd meeting of the Central Board held in Patna under the chairmanship of RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra. According to an official statement, the Board

The meeting was attended by Deputy Governors T. Rabi Sankar, Swaminathan J., Poonam Gupta, and Shirish Chandra Murmu, along with key government nominees and directors, including Department of Economic Affairs Secretary Anuradha Thakur, Revathy Iyer, Sachin Chaturvedi, and Ravindra H. Dholakia.

Renewable energy to boost India-Africa tie-up: Minister

Press Trust Of India

India-Africa cooperation strengthens through renewable energy, grids, storage and capacity building.

NEW DELHI: Renewable energy, grid modernisation, energy storage and institutional capacity have emerged as key pillars of India-Africa cooperation, Union Power Minister Manohar Lal said. Addressing the India-Africa Strategic Partnership Meet during the Bharat Electricity Summit 2026 in the national capital, the minister said India and Africa – together representing nearly one-third of the global population – share common goals of inclusive, equitable and future-ready development.

He underlined that access to reliable and affordable power is central

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP



FACTFILE

• Power access key to growth, dignity, opportunity, says Manohar Lal Khattar.

to economic growth, dignity and opportunity, and highlighted the “One Sun, One World, One Grid” initiative as a transformative pathway for global energy connectivity. The minister reaffirmed India's commitment to strengthening collaboration with African nations, pointing to initiatives such as the International Solar Alliance. He also cited the partnership between Africa50 and Power Grid Corporation

of India Limited, including the Kenya transmission project, as an example of how technical expertise, innovative financing and public-private partnerships can deliver resilient infrastructure.

Describing the relationship as “transformational” rather than transactional, Lal said India remains a trusted partner in advancing Africa's energy transition. The meeting reiterated that both sides will deepen engagement in renewable energy expansion, development of interconnected grid systems, energy storage and flexibility solutions, and capacity building through institutional strengthening.

BizBriefs

BEST OF THE REST

APPELLATE TRIBUNAL

Vedanta moves NCLAT, challenges NCLT nod to Adani's bid for acquiring Jaiprakash Associates



NEW DELHI: Business conglomerate Vedanta Group has approached the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT), challenging the NCLT's approval to Adani Group's bid for acquiring Jaiprakash Associates Ltd for Rs 14,535 crore. Anil Agarwal-led Vedanta Group was in the race to acquire Jaiprakash Associates Ltd (JAL) through an insolvency process, but the lenders in November last year approved the resolution plan or bid of Adani Enterprises Ltd. On March 17, the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), Allahabad bench, approved Adani Enterprises Ltd's Rs 14,535 crore bid to acquire Jaiprakash Associates Ltd (JAL) through the insolvency process. In a regulatory filing, JAL had informed that the NCLT, Allahabad bench,

has “orally pronounced an order on March 17, 2026” approving the resolution plan submitted by Adani Enterprises Ltd. Now, mining giant Vedanta has filed an appeal against the said NCLT order before the appellate insolvency tribunal NCLAT. The matter is listed for hearing on Monday before a two-member bench comprising Chairperson Justice Ashok Bhushan and Member (Technical) Barun Mitra. In November last year, a Committee of Creditors (CoC) approved the resolution plan by business tycoon Gautam Adani to acquire JAL. Adani Enterprises had outbid Vedanta and Dalmia Bharat to win the bid for JAL. Adani got the maximum 89 per cent votes from creditors, followed by Dalmia Cement (Bharat) and Vedanta Group.

TAX DEMAND

Tata Capital gets Rs 413 cr tax demand; will challenge order

NEW DELHI: Non-banking finance company Tata Capital has received a reassessment order from tax authorities, raising a demand of Rs 413.18 crore for the financial year 2017-18, the firm said. The order, issued by the Deputy Commissioner of Income Tax, Mumbai, under the Income-tax Act and uploaded on March 20, 2026, pertains to Tata Capital Financial Services Ltd (TCFSL), which has since been merged with Tata Capital with effect from April 1, 2023. The demand includes interest of Rs 202.72 crore and primarily arises due to alleged short credit of taxes paid and certain disallowances, Tata Capital said in a stock exchange filing on Saturday. However, the company said the demand is based on apparent errors in the computation. It stated that the assessing officer incorrectly allowed a tax credit for Tata Capital instead of TCFSL, leading to a shortfall in credit and consequential interest levy. Tata Capital said the entire demand, comprising Rs 209.52 crore of tax and Rs 202.72 crore of interest, is not sustainable.

LAND PARCELS

Godrej Properties, acquire over 25 land parcels in FY26

NEW DELHI: Godrej Properties Ltd and Lodha Developers Ltd are bullish on India's housing demand, as both realty firms have acquired more than 25 land parcels so far this fiscal year to develop residential projects with a combined revenue potential of more than Rs 1 lakh crore. According to an investors' presentation, Lodha Developers acquired 11 land parcels across Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), Delhi-NCR, Pune, and Bengaluru during the first nine months of this fiscal year to develop housing projects. These 11 land parcels acquired by the Lodha Group have an estimated saleable area of 20.6 million sq ft and expected sales value of Rs 58,800 crore. Similarly, Godrej Properties, too, is aggressively acquiring land parcels across tier-I and II cities for group housing and residential plotted development projects.

FUEL PRICES

Sri Lanka Govt hikes fuel prices by around 25 per cent amid West Asia conflict



COLOMBO: The Sri Lankan government on Sunday raised fuel prices by around 25 per cent, the second such increase in a week amid the West Asia conflict. The step comes in the backdrop of the joint US-Israel strikes against Iran and the retaliation by the Islamic nation that has spread to the entire Gulf region. It has led to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a strategically important choke point for the world's energy supplies. The island nation's government hiked fuel prices effective midnight as the conflict, which has roiled global oil markets, entered its fourth week. The price of auto diesel rose 26.1 per cent from Sri Lankan rupees (LKR) 303 to LKR 382, super diesel 25.5 per cent from LKR 353

to LKR 443, petrol 92 octane 25.6 per cent from 317 to 398, petrol 95 octane 24.7 per cent from 365 to 455, and kerosene 30.8 per cent from 195 to 255. The price hike, caused by the conflict, is the second in a week and the third since March 1. With the cost escalations, the fuel retail prices are set to return to the levels of the 2022 economic crisis, when Sri Lanka declared its first-ever sovereign default since gaining independence from Britain in 1948. The unprecedented financial crisis led the then-president Gotabaya Rajapaksa to quit office in 2022 amid civil unrest. Due to the extensive fuel price hike, non-state bus operators in the island nation on Sunday warned that 90 per cent of their fleet may be off the road.

PROFIT BOOKING

Gold price drops nearly 6 per cent this week

Press Trust Of India

MUMBAI: Gold prices declined sharply by 5.89 per cent this week, as investors engaged in sustained profit booking amid a strengthening US dollar and shifting global cues. According to data from the India Bullion and Jewellers Association (IBJA), the price of 10 grams of 24-carat gold fell from Rs 1,56,436 on Monday to Rs 1,47,218 on Friday, reflecting a steep

weekly correction.

On the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold April futures edged up 0.23 per cent on Friday to trade at Rs 1,44,825. In contrast, silver May futures slipped 1.72 per cent to Rs 2,27,470 per kg, extending their recent decline. Analysts said precious metals are entering the coming week under pressure following a phase of correction triggered by mixed global signals. While geopolitical ten-



sions in West Asia initially supported safe-haven demand, recent volatility has dampened investor sentiment. Escalating tensions in the region, includ-

ing Israeli strikes on Iran's South Pars gas field and retaliatory attacks by Iran on energy infrastructure across Gulf nations, have pushed up crude oil and

natural gas prices. This has raised concerns over imported inflation globally, influencing market behaviour. At the same time, major central banks – including the US Federal Reserve, Bank of Japan, Bank of Canada, and Bank of England – have signalled a cautious to hawkish stance, indicating the possibility of higher or sustained interest rates. Such an outlook typically reduces the appeal of non-yielding assets like gold.



QUOTE FROM THE QUOTABLE

"Serving others is the highest form of worship and the purest form of devotion."

[Vinoba Bhave]

OUR VIEW |

India Navigates Energy Risks Amid West Asia Crisis

India's latest high-level review on energy supplies signals a familiar but intensifying reality—its economic stability remains deeply intertwined with the volatile geopolitics of West Asia. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meeting with senior ministers is more than a routine stocktaking exercise. It reflects growing concern that disruptions in West Asia—particularly tensions involving Iran and Gulf energy infrastructure—could ripple quickly into India's energy security matrix. India's dependence is stark. Nearly two-thirds of its LPG demand is met through imports, with almost half sourced from Qatar alone. Any instability—such as recent strikes affecting refinery infrastructure—immediately raises alarms in New Delhi. While crude oil flows remain stable for now, the anxiety surrounding LPG availability exposes a structural vulnerability that cannot be ignored. The broader West Asian situation remains fragile. Escalating tensions between Iran and its regional adversaries, coupled with ongoing conflicts and shifting alliances, continue to threaten critical energy corridors. The Strait of Hormuz, through which a significant portion of global oil supply passes, remains a geopolitical chokepoint. Any disruption there would not just impact India but trigger global price shocks. India's response—invoking the Essential Commodities Act, rationing LPG supplies, and encouraging a shift toward piped natural gas—is pragmatic. Yet, these are short-term stabilisation measures. The deeper question is whether India can accelerate diversification of energy sources and suppliers while scaling domestic alternatives. There is also a strategic dimension. India has, in recent years, balanced relations across West Asia—from Saudi Arabia to Iran and the UAE—seeking both energy security and geopolitical leverage. However, as regional tensions intensify, maintaining this delicate balance will become increasingly complex. Ultimately, the current crisis underscores a long-standing lesson: energy security is national security. India's challenge lies not just in managing immediate disruptions but in building resilience against an increasingly unpredictable West Asian landscape.

GUEST VIEW |

Ensuring Ethical Balance Between AI And Judiciary

Artificial intelligence offers significant opportunities to modernise the judiciary by improving efficiency, managing extensive records, and reducing procedural delays. Its capacity to analyse large datasets and identify patterns can greatly support judges in handling complex caseloads. When used appropriately, AI can strengthen institutional effectiveness and contribute to faster justice delivery. However, the integration of AI must be approached with caution to ensure that it does not encroach upon the core judicial function. The process of adjudication is not purely technical; it requires human reasoning, contextual understanding, and ethical judgment. These qualities cannot be replicated by algorithms. Any excessive reliance on AI in decision-making could undermine transparency, accountability, and public trust in the justice system. The final stage of delivering judgments must remain firmly within human control. Judges must rely on their experience, analytical skills, and constitutional values while deciding cases. Technology should serve only as an aid—facilitating research, streamlining procedures, and assisting in dispute resolution—without influencing the ultimate outcome. A balanced and principle-based approach is therefore essential. While embracing technological innovation, it is equally important to safeguard judicial independence and integrity. AI should remain a supportive tool, ensuring that efficiency is enhanced without compromising the fundamental human essence of justice.



Dr. Jitendra Singh

Comment

Science Society And Gender Identity Redefining Modern Indian Social Values

Recent discussions in India on the changing relationship between gender identity, science, and society have sparked a new debate. Anaya Bangar, daughter of former Indian cricketer Sanjay Bangar, embarking on a new life after undergoing gender-affirming surgery has become not just a personal event but a subject of social, scientific, and ethical debate. This story is not only about one person's courage and self-acceptance, but also about the questions facing a society trying to find a balance between traditional beliefs and modern science in a rapidly changing world.

Understanding gender identity is a prerequisite for this entire discussion. It is not limited to the biological sex assigned at birth, but is also linked to a person's inner feelings, mental structure, and social identity. For many, their mind and body do not align, causing deep discomfort and mental stress. In such situations, steps like gender-affirming surgery, hormone therapy, and social transition provide a means of relief and balance. This is not a quick decision, but the result of years of self-discovery, psychological counseling, and therapeutic practice.

Anaya Bangar's journey exemplifies this complex

process. She demonstrated the courage to understand, accept, and resolve her inner conflict over a long period of time. Her family's support during this journey is particularly noteworthy. In Indian society, where hesitation and shyness still persist regarding issues like gender and identity, a father's support of his child in this way signals a positive change. Sanjay Bangar's support is not only significant on a personal level, but also sends a message on a societal level: acceptance and understanding can facilitate any change.

An important aspect of this entire issue is the role of modern medical science. The possibility of sperm freezing before surgery and future childbearing through IVF and surrogacy has further complicated the issue. A trans woman's ability to achieve motherhood through her own biological resources appears to challenge traditional biological and social definitions. Some see this as a scientific achievement, while others consider it an interference with the laws of nature.

In fact, the concepts of "natural" and "unnatural" themselves have evolved over time. Throughout history, whenever a new technology or social change emerged, it was initially rejected, then



Dr. Priyanka Saurabh
Writer is a PhD (Political Science), a poet and social thinker.

gradually accepted. Technologies like IVF, surrogacy, and organ transplantation were once viewed with suspicion, but today they have become a source of hope and solace for millions. Similarly, gender-affirming medicine is a means of improving the quality of life for those struggling with their own identities.

It's also important to question whether people are truly happy after such changes. Various studies and experiences show that most people experience improved mental health after gender transition. Self-satisfaction increases, levels of depression and anxiety decrease, and individuals develop a more positive outlook on life. However, it's also true that not everyone's experience is the same. Lack of social acceptance, discrimination, and prejudice often make this journey difficult. In such cases, the problem lies not only in the individual's decision, but also in society's thinking.

The transgender community still faces struggles on many levels in Indian society. Opportunities for education, employment, and social respect are limited, and they often face prejudice. In this context, Anaya Bangar's story is not only an individual achievement, but also a social signal that change is possible, provided society broadens its

perspective.

This debate isn't just about science versus nature, but also about the balance between individual freedom and social responsibility. Every individual should have the right to make decisions about their lives, but society must also ensure that such decisions are made with understanding, medical advice, and ethical responsibility. Gender-affirming procedures are not imposed on anyone; rather, they are a choice for those who want to improve their lives.

Ultimately, it's important to understand that there's no single standard for "happiness." Each individual determines the direction of their life based on their circumstances, experiences, and desires. Some find satisfaction in a traditional life, while others redefine life by embracing a new identity. It's important that society provides them with the opportunity to live their lives with dignity and respect.

Anaya Bangar's journey is not just a story of personal transformation, but a mirror for society. It forces us to consider whether we are ready to adapt to the changing world, or whether we will remain stuck in our old beliefs. This is a time for understanding, empathy, and dialogue, as the progress of any society depends on its ability to embrace diversity.

India Leads Global Child Mortality Reduction Efforts

India's sustained public health initiatives and improved neonatal care have significantly reduced child mortality rates, positioning the country as a global leader in child survival progress. *By PTI*

India has emerged as a key contributor to global progress in reducing child mortality, according to the latest United Nations report.

The UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (UNIGME) Report 2025 highlighted India's sustained and large-scale efforts in improving child survival outcomes, particularly across neonatal and under-five mortality indicators.

Highlighting the report in an X post, Union Health Minister J P Nadda attributed the progress to India's focused, comprehensive approach to neonatal care.

Over the last two decades, India has played a pivotal role in reducing child mortality in the South Asia region, which witnessed a 76 per cent decline in under-five deaths since 1990 and a 68 per cent drop since 2000.

The under-five mortality rate in the region fell significantly from 92 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2000 to nearly 32 in 2024, reflecting sustained progress in child health outcomes.

This sharp reduction is largely driven by countries like India through targeted public health interventions, improved institutional delivery systems, and expanded immunisation coverage.

"India is among the countries demonstrating steady



progress in reducing child mortality through sustained public health efforts. This reflects the strength of a coordinated, standards-driven approach led by the Government of India in collaboration with states, with a clear focus on translating national priorities into improved outcomes for children," UNICEF India said in a press statement.

Highlighting India's statistics in the report, Health Minister Nadda said on X, "As per the UNIGME 2025 report, Neonatal Mortality Rate (NMR) has declined by nearly 70% -- from 57 deaths

per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 17 in 2024 -- reflecting sustained improvements in maternal and newborn healthcare services. Similarly, the Under-5 Mortality Rate (U5MR) has registered an even steeper reduction of 79%, declining from 127 in 1990 to 27 in 2024."

Pointing to the key initiatives that led to this reduction, he said, "Key initiatives -- Special Newborn Care Units (SNCUs), Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY), Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (JSSK), and expanded immunisation combined with robust

health systems have been driving this transformation." "India's focused comprehensive approach on neonatal care has paved the way for eliminating preventable child deaths and securing a healthy future for our children," he added.

The UNIGME report underscored that a majority of child deaths are preventable or treatable, and India's scaling up of interventions such as the Universal Immunisation Programme, facility-based newborn care, and Integrated Management of Neonatal and Childhood Illnesses has sig-

nificantly improved survival rates.

India's improvements in neonatal care systems have been particularly impactful. Across South Asia, neonatal deaths declined by nearly 60 per cent since 2000 and mortality in children aged 1 to 59 months declined by over 75 per cent.

While South Asia still accounts for nearly 25 per cent of global under-five deaths, the region has made one of the fastest reductions globally, positioning India as a leader among high-burden countries. India's success demonstrates that targeted, large-scale, and equity-driven interventions can deliver rapid results, even in populous and diverse settings, health ministry sources said.

India is among the first few countries to set targets and release operational guidelines on Stillbirth Surveillance and response, the report said. This surveillance will strengthen systematic reporting to enable corrective actions in the public health system.

"India's experience shows that sustained leadership, strategic investments and strong collaboration with committed stakeholders have enabled a robust, scalable and effective implementation framework targeted towards the achievement of the SDGs," the report said.

YOUR LETTERS

Geopolitical fallout and domestic political costs

The Hormuz dilemma could reshape global geopolitics, strengthening Iran's determination to pursue nuclear weapons and encouraging hardline regimes like North Korea to justify expanding their arsenals for security. While it may not spark a regional nuclear race, it heightens tensions and instability. Economically, rising war costs are hurting domestic political prospects, particularly for Republicans. Though US oil firms may gain financially, inflationary pressures could undermine public support and further damage President Trump's popularity at home.

Rakesh Gupta, Korba

Judicial reforms need structural strengthening approach

The Supreme Court's effort to regulate adjournments is positive, but deeper structural issues remain. Reducing delays alone cannot ensure timely justice without addressing the heavy burden on courts. The key problem is the high case-to-judge ratio, especially in lower courts. Without regular and sufficient judicial appointments, procedural changes will have limited effect. Meaningful reform requires a balanced strategy that combines stricter discipline with enhanced judicial capacity, infrastructure, and manpower to deliver efficient and lasting improvements.

Shivkumar Mishra, Raipur

Send your articles (600-650 words) and letters (70-8 0 words) for this page on: editorialcc007@gmail.com The letters can be edited or rewritten for clarity.



AI must strengthen, not override judiciary.

Justice Surya Kant
Chief Justice of India

CPI(M) - Sudhakaran: War of words escalates

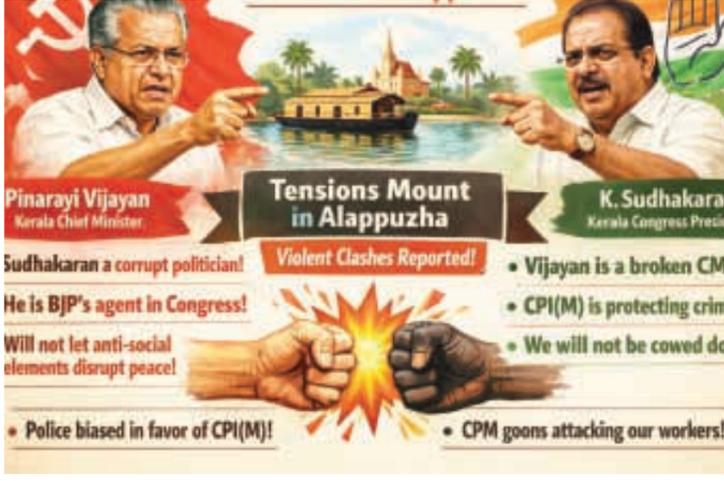
Sudhakaran, at a UDF meet, downplayed Vijayan's "chetta" remark, saying it can also mean poor people and their homes.

Press Trust Of India

ALAPPUZHA: The war of words between CPI(M) leaders and G Sudhakaran, who left the party to contest as an independent in Ambalapuzha, showed no signs of easing, with the latest exchange between Left leader V Vijayaraghavan and the veteran communist on Sunday.

Sudhakaran, speaking at a UDF meeting, refused to respond sharply to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's remark calling him "chetta" (closely translated as bad man), saying the word also denotes poor people and their house. Addressing a CPI(M) election convention here, Vijayaraghavan said it was for the first time in history that a person had referred to 'The Communist Manifesto' before joining rival alliances. He alleged that Sudhakaran failed to understand even the first line of the book.

"We must understand that Sudhakaran read the Communist Mani-



HIGHLIGHT

● Left leader Vijayaraghavan called it a first to cite 'The Communist Manifesto' before switching sides.

● Sudhakaran said that Vijayaraghavan had become "like this" after reading the Communist Manifesto correctly.

festos upside down. It is an opportunity to prove that while he read it upside down, we have read it properly," he

said. Vijayaraghavan further alleged that Sudhakaran, driven by parliamentary ambitions, was invoking popular communist leaders in an unprecedented manner. "He is perhaps the first person to leave the party after his desire to remain an MLA for life was not fulfilled. Such desire is called ambition. Can the party stand with that ambition?" he asked.

He added that there was nothing right in Sudhakaran's demands and

that his stand against the party could not be taken lightly. Vijayaraghavan also said the party leadership had made multiple attempts to prevent Sudhakaran from going astray, including the chief minister contacting him thrice, but he did not respond as he was expecting a call from Congress leaders. Responding to the remarks, Sudhakaran told reporters that Vijayaraghavan had become "like this" after reading the Communist Manifesto correctly.

Four cops suspended

BHOPAL: Four Madhya Pradesh police personnel have been suspended for allegedly accepting Rs 20 lakh as "hush money" from a Gujarat-based businessman after discovering Rs 1 crore in his car, police said on Sunday. According to the police, the incident occurred on March 19 in the Ruthiyai outpost area under the Dharnaavda police station in Guna district.

A Gujarat-registered SUV was stopped for checking, and a search led to the recovery of Rs 1 crore in cash. Instead of initiating legal action, the policemen allegedly struck a deal with the businessman, releasing the vehicle after taking Rs 20 lakh and returning Rs 80 lakh without any paperwork or informing the Income Tax department.

Talking to PTI, Gwalior Zone Inspector General of Police Arvind Saxena said, "The incident was brought to my knowledge on Saturday. I immediately sent my deputy inspector general (DIG), and after the initial inquiry, four police personnel were suspended as they did not stick to the rules while dealing with the case." IPS officer Ayush Jakhar from Shivpuri district will conduct a detailed inquiry into the incident, he said.

Briefs

BEST OF THE REST

JOB LETTER DISTRIBUTION

CM Adityanath hands over job letters to nurses, stresses their heavy demand across world

LUCKNOW: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday said there is a heavy demand for Indian nursing professionals across the world.

Addressing a function to distribute job letters to 1,228 nursing professionals, including 131 males, at the Lok Bhavan here, Adityanath said, "Recently, I went to Japan, where there is a heavy demand for Indian nursing professionals. The same is the case in Germany and Korea. If you go to European countries, there is a feeling among people that Indian nursing professionals will do good work."

The chief minister also said that before 2017, Uttar Pradesh was in a



poor condition. "From 1947 to 2017, there were only 17 government medical colleges in Uttar Pradesh. If we include the private sector, the total was 40. Today, the number of government-run medical colleges has surpassed that of the private sector. The total count has risen to 81 in just nine years," Adityanath said. PTI

'BIG BROTHER' ATTITUDE DMK ally TVK exits alliance ahead of assembly polls

CHENNAI: Ahead of the April 23 Tamil Nadu Assembly polls, Tamilaga Vazhuvirimai Katchi on Sunday announced quitting the DMK-led SPA, with its founder T Velmurugan objecting to the ruling party's "big brother" attitude.

The decision was taken also following his party being "ignored," Velmurugan, incumbent MLA from Panruti (Cuddalore dt) Assembly segment, told reporters here. "We were told during seat-sharing negotiations that we will be allotted one seat for the Assembly polls. We have been raising a set of demands, including regarding social justice. PTI

RELIGIOUS GATHERING LG flags off Vaishno Devi chhadi yatra from Kol Kandoli temple

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Sunday flagged off the 24th Shri Mata Vaishno Devi pracheen marg pavitra chhadi yatra from the Kol Kandoli temple in the outskirts of Jammu city.

LG Sinha participated in the 'Pratham Pooja' of the Chhadi Yatra at the temple in Nagrota, marking the commencement of the spiritual journey. He paid obeisance at the holy temple and prayed for peace, prosperity, and well-being of all. The lieutenant governor also interacted with the devotees and extended his greetings on the auspicious occasion. PTI

'OPERATION BUJONI'

Assam Police camp attacked by ULFA(I) militants

Press Trust Of India

CM said counter operations have been launched to nab those behind the attack.

NEW DELHI: A 23-year-old man died, and two others were injured after a Mercedes SUV (G63) allegedly rammed into them near a mall on Nelson Mandela Marg in upscale Delhi's Vasant Kunj area early Sunday, police said.

The accident occurred at 2.33 am when a PCR call was received at Vasant Kunj North police station. "A team reached the spot opposite a mall and found a mangled Mercedes G63," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southwest) Amit Goel said in a statement.



According to the police, three men -- aged 23, 35, and 23 years -- all employees of a restaurant in Ambience Mall, were found injured at the spot. They were waiting for a vehicle to return to their rented accommodation in Munirka after finishing their shift, police said.

The three were taken to a hospital where Rohit

(23), a native of Uttarakhand's Chamoli, was declared dead by doctors, while the other two injured persons -- Kapil and Lalit -- are undergoing treatment, they said.

According to police, Kapil's condition is stated to be serious, and he remains admitted in the ICU, police sources said. Preliminary inquiry

HIGHLIGHT

● The attack comes ahead of the state assembly elections, scheduled on April 9.

● At least four security personnel were injured in this militant attack.

indicated that the high-end vehicle first lost control after the vehicle hit a divider and then crashed into a pole before veering sharply towards an auto stand where the three victims were waiting, police said. The car driver, Shivam (29), a resident of Karol Bagh, has been apprehended. He was returning home after attending a wedding and was accompanied by his wife and elder brother at the time of the crash, police added.

CLOSED-DOOR MEETING

'Good beginning at restoring peace, talks to proceed'

Press Trust Of India

IMPHAL: Manipur Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh on Sunday said his meeting with a Kuki Zo Council delegation was a "good beginning" at restoring peace in the state and rebuilding trust between Meiteis and Kukis. A day after holding the closed-door meeting with the delegation in Guwahati, he told reporters here that "the talk between the Kuki Zo Council (KZC)



Interaction was an ice-breaking session.

Y Khemchand Singh
Manipur CM

and the state government for the first time in nearly three years is a really good thing".

"The talks will proceed," the chief minister said. More than 260

people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups since May 2023. The KZC, in a statement on Sunday, said the meeting commenced at 7

pm on Saturday and lasted around 1 hour and 45 minutes. The interaction was largely an ice-breaking session, it said. Addressing the media on Sunday, the chief minister said, "In Manipur's situation, the most saddening part is that internally displaced persons (IDPs) are unable to return to their native homes.. "What is of utmost importance for their return is to rebuild the trust between the two communities.

“Everytime I add my older south songs - it's just pure nostalgia and to see it trending, makes me feel some films and some sentiments are beyond trends - they just last for a lifetime.”

Genelia Deshmukh



& Glitters

OTT Watch



Khushalii Kumar debuts in Sapne Vs Everyone

Khushalii Kumar marks her OTT debut with Sapne Vs Everyone Season 2, sharing a heartfelt note of gratitude. She introduces her character Tripti, calling the experience special while praising the team and creative journey.



Bhuvan Bam joins Dharma for debut film

Bhuvan Bam teams up with Karan Johar for his Bollywood debut Kuku Ki Kundli, a quirky romantic comedy that blends love, destiny, and family chaos, marking a big step in his career.



Vijay Varma leads Matka King Series

Vijay Varma leads Matka King, with a new poster teasing 1960s Mumbai's underground gambling rise. The Prime Video series explores power, ambition, and risk in a high-stakes world shaped by the Matka network.



Adivi Sesh returns with Goodachari 2

Adivi Sesh returns with Goodachari 2 (G2), announced at a Prime Video event. Set six years later, the sequel follows a global espionage mission packed with action, secrets, and emotional twists.



Kalki Koechlin leads horror series Anarth

Kalki Koechlin, Preeti Panigrahi and Gulshan Devaiah star in Anarth, a chilling horror series. The first look teaser hints at grief, fear, and a sinister supernatural force targeting vulnerable children.

CLOSE UP

Shahid Kapoor calls 'Farzi 2' a natural story evolution

Actor promises bigger stakes and organic continuation of gripping first season.

Central Chronicle News

Shahid Kapoor returns as Sunny, begins shooting for Farzi season two.

Shahid Kapoor is gearing up to return as Sunny in Farzi 2, and the excitement around the crime-thriller's second season is already building. The actor, who has begun shooting for the series, said he had been eagerly waiting for this moment. "I've been waiting to start season two for the last two years, and I'm so excited that finally it's happening," Kapoor shared, calling it one of his favourite roles. Talking about the new season, Kapoor revealed that the story feels like a natural extension of the first chapter. "Whatever they have taken me through sounds like a level up from the first season, but also very much like a natural progression of the story," he said, adding that he appreciates how organically the narrative has been developed. The first season of Farzi, released in 2023, marked Kapoor's OTT debut and received strong praise for its gripping storyline and performances. The series followed Sunny, a talented artist who gets pulled into the high-stakes world of counterfeit currency, leading to intense confrontations and moral dilemmas.



Shahid Kapoor confirms Farzi season 2 shooting



The makers have hinted that the upcoming season will be darker, grittier, and packed with unexpected twists, while continuing the journeys of key characters. With filming

underway and expectations high, Farzi 2 is shaping up to be a thrilling continuation that promises more drama, intensity, and edge-of-the-seat storytelling for audiences.

| HOLLYWOOD |

Chuck Norris the legendary was America's Rajinikanth

Central Chronicle News

Chuck Norris, the legendary action star and martial artist, passed away at 86, leaving behind a legacy that blurred the line between cinema and myth. For Indian audiences, he was the Western counterpart to Rajinikanth a figure larger than life, celebrated as much through stories and jokes as through his screen presence. Much like Rajinikanth, Norris wasn't just admired he was mythologised. His films established him as a symbol of strength and discipline, from martial arts showdowns to his iconic run in Walker,



Chuck Norris, legendary martial artist passed away at 86

HIGHLIGHT

● Chuck Norris, America's Rajinikanth, redefined action with myth, power, and legacy.

Texas Ranger. But his cultural impact went far beyond action sequences. He became the face of a global joke phenomenon that turned exaggeration into admiration.

Even those who hadn't watched his films knew his name through these viral "facts." His persona travelled faster than his filmography, reaching audiences across gener-

ations and cultures. In many ways, he became an internet legend before the internet fully took shape. "Chuck Norris facts" transformed him into an unstoppable force of nature someone who didn't follow rules but created them. These humorous one-liners, much like Rajinikanth jokes in India, became a shared language of fandom.

CineBriefs

BEST OF THE REST

Bollywood

Taha Shah returns to Dharma with Nazdeekiyan

After winning praise for Heeramandi, Taha Shah Badussha is set to star in Nazdeekiyan, a new Prime Video series backed by Karan Johar's Dharmatic Entertainment. The show is reportedly inspired by Kabhi Alvida Naa Kehna and explores complex modern relationships and emotional conflicts between couples. Alongside Taha, the series also features Paresh Pahuja, Aakanksha Singh, and Nikita Dutta in key roles. Calling it a "full-circle moment," Taha expressed excitement about reuniting with Dharma and exploring a new creative space. With its intense themes and strong cast, Nazdeekiyan is expected to mark another important step in the actor's growing career.

Web Series

New Behen Alert: Shruti Haasan joins Bae 2

Call Me Bae is back with its second season and the buzz is already strong. Ananya Panday returns as Bella "Bae" Chowdhary, but this time, she's joined by a new 'behen' Shruti Haasan. The teaser hints at more drama as Bae starts her own news show, juggling rising fame and complicated relationships. Her bond with Shruti's character adds a fresh twist, even as tensions rise within her girl gang. With returning faces and new dynamics, the upcoming season promises romance, rivalry, and surprises. Backed by Dharmatic Entertainment, Call Me Bae Season 2 is set to deliver bigger drama and excitement.

The Bollywood hot pair

Priyanka's sweet video With Nick is pure couple goals



Priyanka Chopra Jonas and Nick Jonas continue to inspire fans with their strong bond as the actress opened up about his journey with Type 1 Diabetes. Sharing a personal glimpse into their marriage, Priyanka revealed how she would often wake up at night in the early days to check on Nick,

reflecting her deep concern and care. Over time, the couple has navigated the challenges together with resilience and understanding. Their relationship stands as a testament to partnership and support, with Priyanka now using her voice to spread awareness while celebrating their journey together.

Fashion

Alia Bhatt nails vintage power dressing with denim twist

Alia Bhatt delivered a standout style moment by blending vintage elegance with modern ease. She paired a Victorian-inspired jacket, defined by structured shoulders and intricate detailing, with classic blue denim, creating a striking high-low contrast. The look felt both timeless and wearable, proving that heritage fashion can seamlessly fit into everyday wardrobes.



Trending on Insta



@saieemanjrekar

Saiee Manjrekar's bangs bring a fresh twist

Saiee M Manjrekar embraces summer with a fresh makeover, debuting shorter hair and soft bangs. The new look feels playful yet elegant, marking a shift towards a lighter, effortless style that enhances her contemporary charm.

@iak

Ibrahim gives glimpse of Taimur's Eid Biryani treat

Actor Ibrahim Ali Khan shared a glimpse of Eid celebrations, posting a picture of younger brother Taimur Ali Khan enjoying a plate of biryani as the family hosted a festive feast at home.





Wellness

DOWN SYNDROME AWARENESS

Awareness that inspires inclusion and acceptance in all

World Down Syndrome Day 2026 calls for awareness beyond assumptions.



Celebrate every life with Down syndrome

healthcare and better support systems, individuals today are living longer, healthier, and more fulfilling lives than ever before. There are also assumptions around learning abilities. Many believe children with Down syndrome cannot succeed academically. However, with early intervention, inclusive education, and the right guidance, they can grow, adapt, and achieve meaningful milestones. Their learning journey may look different, but it is no less valuable. Independence is often misunderstood too. While support needs vary, many individuals go on to work, build relationships, and lead semi-independent lives. Families often discover unexpected strengths, deeper bonds, and greater empathy along the way.

At its core, the message is simple: the real limitation has never been the condition itself, but society's perception. True inclusion begins when people are seen for who they are individuals first, beyond any label.

HIGHLIGHT

● Rethinking Down syndrome can help build a more inclusive, understanding society.



On World Down Syndrome Day 2026, the focus shifts from simple awareness to deeper understanding. Many widely held beliefs about Down syndrome are still rooted in outdated assumptions rather than real experiences, making it important to challenge and rethink them. One of the most common misconceptions is that individuals with Down syndrome are always happy or emotionally limited. In reality, they experience a full range of emotions joy, sadness, anxiety, and frustration just like anyone else. Ignoring these emotional needs can sometimes lead to serious concerns being overlooked, especially when co-existing conditions like autism spectrum disorder are involved. Emotional validation and open communication play a crucial role in their overall well-being. Another myth is that Down syndrome is usually inherited or extremely rare. In fact, most cases occur randomly and are not passed down through families. With advances in

When sweating becomes a red flag for your health

Sweating is often seen as a normal response to heat or exercise, but changes in patterns can reveal hidden health issues. Doctors say how much you sweat, when it happens, and where it appears can offer important clues. Persistent night sweats, especially with fever, fatigue, or weight loss, may signal infections like tuberculosis or hormonal imbalances. Sudden excessive sweating without exertion could be linked to thyroid problems or certain medications. Cold, clammy sweat is more serious and may indicate conditions such as a heart attack or low blood sugar.



GOOD LIVING

Truth behind castor oil belly patches



The castor oil belly patch trend is going viral, with many claiming it helps digestion, detox, and overall wellness. Loosely inspired by Ayurveda, it involves placing oil-soaked patches on the abdomen or navel for hours. While some users report feeling relaxed or relieved, experts say the benefits are mostly superficial. Scientifically, the skin acts as a strong barrier, preventing oils from reaching internal organs or affecting digestion. Any comfort may come from warmth or gentle pressure rather than the oil itself. Prolonged or overnight use can irritate skin, clog pores, or cause reactions. Doctors advise caution and recommend not relying on such trends for ongoing digestive or health issues.

| SELF-SILENCING |

Anti-Inflammation diet made simple for health & well-being

Fighting inflammation is possible with simple foods and mindful lifestyle choices every day.

Vidya Balan made headlines for following an anti-inflammatory diet to improve her health and overall well-being. While it may sound like a celebrity luxury, the concept is simple and practical. Inflammation is the body's natural response, but when it becomes chronic due to poor diet, stress, lack of sleep, and inactivity, it can lead to fatigue, weight gain, digestive issues, and long-term health problems. The good news is that you don't need expensive superfoods to reduce inflammation. A com-

mon person can rely on local, seasonal foods found in Indian kitchens. Ingredients like turmeric, ginger, garlic, and green leafy vegetables naturally help fight inflammation. At the same time, cutting down on processed foods, sugary snacks, and fried items is essential, as these are major triggers. Even small changes like cooking fresh meals at home can make a big difference. Choosing whole foods over packaged options helps the body function better. Over time, these habits can also improve energy levels and overall well-being. Healthy fats also play an important role. Instead of avoiding fats completely, including nuts, seeds, and small amounts of ghee can support overall health. Staying hydrated with water, lemon



Eat clean, live better and reduce inflammation daily

water, or jeera water helps improve digestion and remove toxins from the body. Adding fruits, whole grains, and home-cooked meals further strengthens this approach.

Lifestyle matters just as much as diet. Proper sleep, managing stress, and daily physical activity like walking or yoga can significantly reduce inflammation levels. Simple, balanced meals like roti, dal, sabzi, and salad can meet nutritional needs without being complicated.

The key takeaway is simple: it's not about copying a celebrity diet, but adopting clean eating and consistent habits for long-term health.

HealthTips

AIR FRYER RECIPES

Crispy Potato Wedges

Ingredients
2 potatoes, 1 tbsp olive oil, ½ tsp paprika, ½ tsp garlic powder, salt to taste, black pepper, dried herbs (optional)

Instructions
Cut potatoes into wedges and soak in water for 20 minutes to remove starch. Pat dry completely. Toss with oil, spices, and herbs. Preheat air fryer and cook at 200°C for 18-20 minutes, shaking halfway for even crisping. Serve hot with dip.

Benefits
Crispy, low-oil snack, filling, easy to prepare, healthier alternative to deep-fried fries.



Air Fryer Paneer Tikka

Ingredients
200g paneer cubes, 2 tbsp curd, 1 tsp tikka masala, ½ tsp turmeric, 1 tsp ginger-garlic paste, salt, lemon juice

Instructions
Mix curd, spices, and paste into a marinade. Add paneer and coat well. Let it rest for 30 minutes. Arrange in air fryer and cook at 180°C for 12-15 minutes, turning once midway. Squeeze lemon before serving.

Benefits
High-protein, flavourful, low-oil, great vegetarian starter, satisfying and nutritious option.



Air Fryer Veg Cutlets

Ingredients
1 cup boiled vegetables, ½ cup breadcrumbs, 1 tsp garam masala, salt, coriander leaves, chili powder

Instructions
Mash boiled vegetables and mix with breadcrumbs, spices, and coriander. Shape the mixture into small patties. Place them in the air fryer basket and cook at 180°C for about 15 minutes, flipping halfway, until golden and crisp. Serve with chutney or ketchup.

Benefits
Fiber-rich, low-oil, filling, healthy snack, kid-friendly, great use of leftover vegetables.



Air Fryer Banana Chips

Ingredients
2 raw bananas, 1 tsp oil, salt, pinch turmeric, black pepper

Instructions
Peel and thinly slice raw bananas using a slicer. Toss slices with oil, salt, and spices. Arrange them in a single layer in the air fryer basket. Cook at 180°C for 12-15 minutes, shaking occasionally for even crisping. Let them cool before serving.

Benefits
Crunchy, light, low-oil snack, easy to make, healthier than deep-fried chips.



Air Fryer Stuffed Capsicum

Ingredients
2 capsicums, 1 cup spiced mashed potatoes, 2 tbsp corn, cheese (optional), salt, spices

Instructions
Cut tops of capsicums and remove seeds. Mix mashed potatoes with spices and corn. Stuff capsicums with filling and top with cheese if desired. Air fry at 180°C for 15-18 minutes until tender and slightly charred. Serve hot for best taste.

Benefits
Nutritious, filling, rich in vitamins, balanced meal, flavourful and satisfying.



Air Fryer Chocolate Lava Cake

Ingredients
½ cup flour, ¼ cup cocoa powder, ½ cup sugar, ½ cup milk, chocolate chunks, butter

Instructions
Mix flour, cocoa powder, sugar, milk, and butter into a smooth batter. Pour into greased ramekins and add chocolate chunks in the center. Air fry at 180°C for 8-10 minutes until edges are set but center remains gooey. Serve warm for best taste.

Benefits
Quick dessert, rich, indulgent, easy to make, perfect for sweet cravings.





Dhoni may shift to a mentor-player role, bat lower, and gradually step away as IPL 2026 likely marks his final season.

Robin Uthappa
Former India Cricketer

It is potentially make or break season: Pant

Rishabh Pant enters IPL 2026 under intense pressure, shifting to number three as Lucknow Super Giants bank on his leadership and batting revival.

Press Trust Of India

High price tag and poor last season add pressure on captain.

NEW DELHI: Lucknow Super Giants captain Rishabh Pant is set for a crucial IPL 2026 season, with a new batting role and mounting expectations shaping his path forward.

Rishabh Pant will bat at number three for Lucknow Super Giants in what could be a defining season for both his leadership and career trajectory. After being acquired for a record Rs 27 crore in the 2025 mega auction, expectations are immense as the franchise looks to bounce back from a disappointing previous campaign. Pant, who primarily batted at number four last season, had only modest returns and a strike rate that fell below expectations, prompting a strategic rethink by team management.

The decision to promote Pant to number three has been taken in alignment with coach Justin Langer and the support staff, who believe this position best suits his aggressive style and ability to anchor innings. The top order is now expected to feature Aiden Markram, Mitch-



ell Marsh, and Pant, while the middle order, including Nicholas Pooran, Ayush Badoni, Abdul Samad, and Shahbaz Ahmed, will remain flexible based on match situations.

Beyond franchise success, Pant's performance carries added significance for his international career. Having lost his place in India's T20 setup after the 2024 World Cup triumph, he faces stiff competition from in-form wicketkeeper-batters like Sanju Samson and Ishan Kishan. A strong IPL showing could revive his prospects in the shortest format, where he is currently on the fringes.

Last season, Pant struggled for consistency, scoring 269 runs with a significant chunk coming from a single innings. His leadership was also under scrutiny as LSG failed to make a strong impact. Improving both his personal form and team results will be key this time around.

While the batting lineup appears settled, LSG's bowling remains an area of concern. Injuries to key pacers such as Mayank Yadav and Mohsin Khan hurt the team last season, though there is optimism about improved fitness and depth this year.

Briefs

BEST OF THE REST

FALLING GIANTS CRISIS

Liverpool, Chelsea crises deepen as defeats threaten Champions League hopes



LIVERPOOL: Liverpool and Chelsea endure alarming Premier League setbacks, raising serious Champions League qualification fears. Liverpool suffered a 2-1 defeat at Brighton, marking their 10th league loss and extending a winless run. Danny Welbeck struck twice, canceling Milos Kerkez's equalizer. Chelsea's struggles deepened with a 3-0 loss to Ever-

ton, days after a humiliating Champions League exit to Paris Saint-Germain. Both clubs, despite massive spending, are faltering badly. Liverpool sit fifth, narrowly ahead of Chelsea, but remain 21 points behind Arsenal. Manager Arne Slot admitted performances are unacceptable amid injuries to key players like Mohamed Salah and Alisson Becker. **PTI**

SECOND HALF SURGE

AC Milan comeback victory boosts title hopes and narrows gap



MILAN: AC Milan staged a spirited second-half comeback to defeat Inter Milan's Serie A lead to six points. After a slow start, Strahinja Pavlovic's stunning strike gave Milan the lead, but Giovanni Simeone equalized before halftime. Inspired by coach Massi-

miliano Allegri, Milan responded strongly as Adrien Rabiot and Youssef Fofana scored quickly after the break. Torino pulled one back late, creating tension. Elsewhere, Juventus drew 1-1 with Sassuolo despite a whooping cough outbreak, missing a late penalty. **PTI**

RELIEF AND REVIVAL

Elche comeback victory ends long drought deepens Mallorca relegation worries



MADRID: Elche secured a vital 2-1 comeback win over Mallorca, ending its winless run in 2026 and climbing out of La Liga's relegation zone. After Pablo Torre put Mallorca ahead in the 58th minute, Elche responded quickly through Rafa Mir and Tete Morente to seal victory. The result lifted Elche to 16th place, just above danger, after months

without a win. Mallorca slipped into the bottom three following the defeat. Meanwhile, Sevilla's poor form continued with a 2-0 loss to Valencia, despite staying narrowly above relegation. Hugo Duro and Largie Ramazani scored early goals. Valencia defender José Gaya and Sevilla's Juanlu suffered head injuries after a collision. **PTI**

RECORD BREAKING GLORY

Duplantis dominates again with record vault and fourth indoor title



TORUN (POLAND): Armand Duplantis secured his fourth consecutive world indoor pole vault title with a record-breaking 6.25m jump after a fierce contest with Greece's Emmanouil Karalis. Both cleared 6.05m, but Duplantis excelled with clean attempts at higher marks, while Karalis failed at 6.25m, finishing second again. Duplantis chose not to chase his own world record,

citing fatigue. Australia's Kurtis Marschall took third with a personal-best 6.00m, marking a historic event with three vaulters clearing six meters. Elsewhere, Switzerland's Simon Ehammer set a heptathlon world record, while Zaynab Dosso, Christopher Morales Williams, Lurdes Gloria Manuel, and Josh Kerr claimed victories in their respective track events. **PTI**

Kane scores again and Bayern closer to Bundesliga title

BERLIN: Harry Kane scored again and Bayern Munich stepped closer toward its 13th Bundesliga title in 14 years after beating Union Berlin 4-0. Kane scored for the break for his 31st league goal.

He has seven more rounds to try and match Robert Lewandowski's season record of 41. Serge Gnabry scored twice and Michael Olise also grabbed a goal for Bayern, taking the team's tally after 27 rounds to 97, on course to smash the season record of 101 goals set by Bayern in 1971-72. "It'll fall," Bayern sports director Christoph Freund said of the record.

RIISING STAR IMPACT |

PSG retakes Ligue 1 lead after teenager nets first goal in rout at Nice

Press Trust Of India

Teenager shines as PSG dominate Nice to reclaim league leadership again

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain returned to the top of Ligue 1 with an emphatic 4-0 victory over struggling Nice, highlighted by teenager Dro Fernández's maiden goal for the club. The 18-year-old midfielder, who joined from Barcelona in January, marked a memorable night by scoring PSG's third goal after a fine assist from Ousmane Dembélé. The win lifted PSG one point above Lens, although the defending champions still have a game in hand, setting up a potentially decisive clash between the two sides on April 11.



Nice matched PSG for much of the first half, but a controversial handball decision shifted momentum. A penalty was awarded after Morgan Sanson was judged to have handled the ball, allowing

Nuno Mendes to open the scoring. Mendes later turned provider, assisting Désiré Doué early in the second half. Nice's situation worsened when Youssef Ndayishimiye was sent off, after which PSG added two late goals

FACTFILE

• PSG rout Nice comfortably as young Fernández scores first senior goal impressively.

• Toulouse and Auxerre secure wins amid campaigns, red cards, adversity situations.

through Fernández and Warren Zaire-Emery.

Elsewhere, Toulouse edged Lorient 1-0 thanks to a brilliant solo effort from Emersonn, with the match also promoting disability awareness through inclusive initiatives. Auxerre secured a 3-0 win over Brest despite an early red card, with Bryan Okoh scoring twice and Danny Namaso sealing the victory.

FORM UNDER PRESSURE |

IPL 2026: Varun, Rinku's form a worry for KKR

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) head into IPL 2026 with notable concerns surrounding the form of key players Rinku Singh and Varun Chakravathy, as highlighted by former Indian cricketer Irfan Pathan. Rinku, once a breakout star in 2023, has struggled

Rinku must regain consistency while Varun needs confidence; both are crucial for KKR's balance and success this season.

Irfan Pathan
Former Indian Cricketer
to maintain consistency, managing mod-



est returns since his impressive 474-run season. His underwhelm-

ing T20 World Cup campaign, scoring just 24 runs in five innings, has further raised doubts about his reliability in crucial situations.

Meanwhile, spinner Varun Chakravathy, despite a strong start in the World Cup, experienced a sharp dip in later stages, affecting his overall impact. However, his IPL record

remains solid, with 99 wickets in 83 matches for KKR. The challenge for the franchise lies in restoring confidence and ensuring both players deliver consistently. With familiar conditions at Kolkata and past success to draw from, KKR will hope these players regain form and contribute significantly in the upcoming season.

Sports News

Proteas outclass New Zealand to square series

South Africa produced a disciplined bowling display and a crucial batting effort to defeat New Zealand, leveling the T20 series and setting up a thrilling decider.

Press Trust Of India

South Africa's spinners dismantled New Zealand's middle order with precision, turning a strong start into a collapse.

WELLINGTON: South Africa bounced back strongly to defeat New Zealand by 19 runs in the fourth T20 international in Wellington, leveling the five-match series at 2-2. The match was defined by a combination of steady batting and exceptional spin bowling, which ultimately tilted the contest in the visitors' favor.

After opting to bat first, South Africa posted a competitive total of 164-5. The innings was anchored by Connor Esterhuizen, who scored a composed 57 off just 33 balls. Walking in early after the loss of Wiaan Mulder on the second delivery, Esterhuizen immediately took charge, maintaining momentum through aggressive yet controlled stroke play. His innings included multiple boundaries and sixes, helping South Africa reach their best powerplay score of the



series.

Esterhuizen found support from Tony de Zorzi, with the pair adding 81 runs for the second wicket. Though de

Zorzi played a quieter role, his contribution of 23 ensured stability. Later, Ruben Hermann's unbeaten 28 and quick contributions from Jason

Smith and George Linde helped South Africa maintain a respectable total, despite a slowdown in the final overs.

New Zealand began

their chase confidently, reaching 63-2 during the powerplay, with Tim Robinson leading the charge with 32. However, the momentum shifted dramatically once South Africa introduced their spinners. Debutant Prenelan Subrayen impressed with figures of 2-13, while Keshav Maharaj claimed 2-22, both exploiting variations in pace and flight to dismantle the middle order.

Dane Cleaver showed promise with a quick 26, but his dismissal triggered a collapse. Subrayen's accuracy proved difficult to handle, as he bowled both Cleaver and Bevon Jacobs with deceptive deliveries. Maharaj further tightened the grip by removing key batters, ensuring New Zealand never regained control.

Despite some resistance, New Zealand fell short, hindered by poor execution and missed opportunities. Injuries and absences in their squad also added to their struggles.

With the series now tied, the final match in Christchurch promises an exciting conclusion between two evenly matched sides.

India tour to test Australia as CA unveil gruelling 2026-27 schedule

Press Trust Of India

Australia faces intense 2026-27 schedule ahead of crucial India Test series challenge.

MELBOURNE: Cricket Australia on Sunday unveiled its 2026-27 international calendar with a packed itinerary leaving little turn-around time ahead of the marquee Border-Gavaskar Trophy in India, expected to begin in mid or late-January.

The five-Test away series against India next year is set to be a decisive phase in an unprecedented and taxing schedule for Pat Cummins' ageing side.

Australia are slated to play 10 Tests in a 14-week window between December and March, making it one of the most demanding stretches in their history.

The home season will commence in August 2026, with two Tests against Bangladesh and conclude in March 2027 with a day-night spectacle at the MCG – the 150th anniversary Test against England.

The home series against New Zealand has been squeezed into a window of just over four weeks, while Australia's tour of South Africa later this year runs until the end of October, followed by an eight-match white-ball series against England in November.



Australia's Test schedule

- August: Two Tests vs Bangladesh (home)
- October: Three Tests vs South Africa (away)
- December-January: Four Tests vs New Zealand (home)
- January-March: Five Tests vs India (away)
- March 11-15: 150th anniversary Test vs England (home)
- June: WTC final (if qualified, England)
- June-August: Five Tests vs England (away).

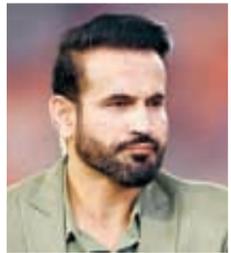
Punjab Kings are moving in the right direction: Pathan

Press Trust Of India

Balanced team with strong all-rounders boosts title hopes for upcoming IPL season.

NEW DELHI: Former India all-rounder Irfan Pathan believes Punjab Kings are finally heading in the right direction after making smart and bold decisions at the IPL auction. Their improved planning and leadership clarity have raised expectations of ending their long title drought.

Punjab's turnaround was evident last season when they finished run-



ners-up after a close final loss to Royal Challengers Bengaluru. Pathan credited the franchise's approach at the auction, stating that success often begins with strong decision-making during team building.

He highlighted that Punjab did not hesitate to

make tough calls, including releasing inconsistent performers like Glenn Maxwell. Instead, they focused on building a balanced squad with impactful all-rounders such as Azmatullah Omarzai, Marco Jansen, and Marcus Stoinis.

The franchise also showed clear intent by targeting Shreyas Iyer as captain, ensuring stability in leadership. Combined with a promising young Indian batting core, Punjab now appears more structured and confident, positioning themselves as strong contenders in the upcoming IPL season.

Shanaka set to join Rajasthan Royals as Curran's replacement

NEW DELHI: In yet another blow to Pakistan Super League, Sri Lanka captain and all-rounder Dasun Shanaka is set to join Rajasthan Royals as a replacement for the injured Sam Curran in the upcoming Indian Premier League.

The move will make Shanaka the latest player to switch from the PSL to the IPL after Zimbabwe pacer Blessing Muzarabani pulled out of his contract with Islamabad United to join Kolkata Knight Riders as a replacement for Mustafizur Rahman.

"Dasun's signing is pending owing to his

paperwork in the PSL, which is a formality. He is likely to join the squad in Guwahati," a team source told PTI.

RR will begin their campaign against Chennai Super Kings in Guwahati, their home venue in the first phase of the IPL schedule that has been announced so far.

Under Shanaka's leadership, co-hosts Sri Lanka had crashed out in the Super Eight stage of the T20 World Cup.

Shanaka scored 165 runs including a 31-ball 76 not out against Pakistan, while he also took three wickets in the T20 World Cup.

India U20 women eye strong Asian campaign

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: India's U20 women's team has shown marked progress ahead of the AFC U20 Women's Asian Cup, with head coach Joakim Alexandersson expressing confidence in their readiness. The Young Tigresses have arrived early in Bangkok to prepare for a challenging Group C campaign.

India will begin their tournament against Japan

on April 2, followed by matches against Australia and Chinese Taipei. Despite facing some of Asia's strongest teams, Alexandersson believes the squad has developed significantly since the qualifiers.

The coach highlighted improvements in ball movement, quicker passing, and better organisation in defence. Communication, especially from goalkeepers, has also

become more effective, making the team more cohesive overall.

Preparation matches against Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan have helped the team adapt to different playing styles. While acknowledging India may not be physically dominant, Alexandersson emphasized tactical discipline, defensive aggression, and early engagement with opponents.

RSPB 'A' and PSPB clinch National Chess titles

Central Chronicle News

Top teams dominate national chess championships with commanding performances in Raipur event.

RAIPUR: Railway Sports Promotion Board 'A' and Petroleum Sports Promotion Board emerged champions in the Chief Minister Chhattisgarh Trophy, marking the 45th National Men's and 23rd Women's Team Chess Championships held in Raipur.

The week-long tournament, organised by the Chhattisgarh State Chess Association under the All India Chess Federation, concluded at Agrasen Dham with intense competition across categories. Railway Sports Promotion Board 'A' secured the



Open title, finishing ahead of Airports Authority of India and Railway Sports Promotion Board 'B', who claimed second and third places respectively.

In the women's section, Petroleum Sports Promotion Board dominated the field to lift the title, while Airports Authority of India fin-

ished runners-up and West Bengal 'A' secured third place.

The winners were honoured by Chief Guest Guru Khushwant Saheb, who highlighted chess as a game of patience, composure, and intellect, urging players to imbibe these qualities in daily life. He also praised the

state's growing sports ecosystem under current leadership.

The event was presided over by Raghavendra Singhania, Vice President of the All India Chess Federation and State Association President. Distinguished guests included Dr. Vikram Sisodia, Dharmendra Kumar, and Vinod Rathi, whose presence added prestige and significance to the championship ceremony.

The championship also featured an impressive prize pool, rewarding top-performing teams across both categories. In the Open section, champions Railway Sports Promotion Board 'A' received Rs 1,25,000 along with the prestigious trophy, while runners-up Airports Authority of India were awarded Rs 1,00,000

and the third-placed Railway Sports Promotion Board 'B' earned Rs 75,000. Cash prizes extended to other top finishers, with Telangana 'A' receiving Rs 60,000 for fourth place, Kerala 'A' Rs 50,000 for fifth, Haryana 'A' Rs 30,000 for sixth, and Odisha 'B' and Tamil Nadu 'B' earning Rs 20,000 each for seventh and eighth positions.

Delhi and Uttarakhand 'A' secured Rs 10,000 each for ninth and tenth places. In the Women's category, champions Petroleum Sports Promotion Board were awarded Rs 1,25,000, while Airports Authority of India and West Bengal 'A' received Rs 1,00,000 and Rs 75,000 respectively, underlining the tournament's strong recognition of excellence.

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World



"Iran now has the capacity to reach deep into Europe and poses a danger to the entire world."

Benjamin Netanyahu
Israeli Prime Minister

Trump threatens Iran power plants over Hormuz stoppage

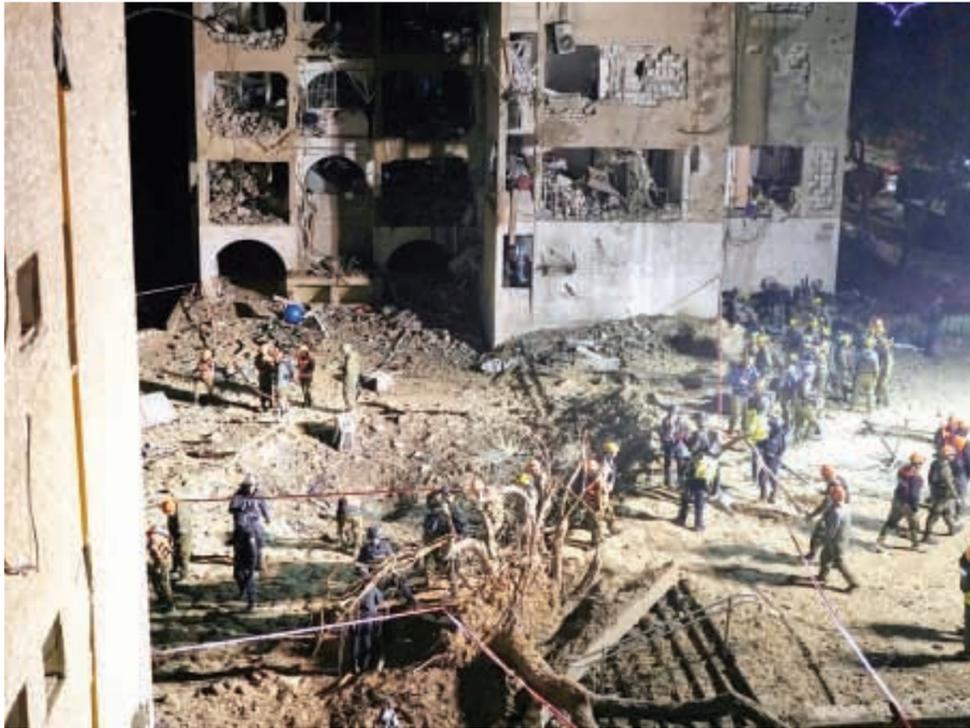
President Trump has given Tehran 48 hours to fully reopen the Strait of Hormuz or face the "obliteration" of its major power plants.

Press Trust Of India

CAIRO: Iran responded Sunday with threats of its own, a day after President Donald Trump warned the United States will "obliterate" Iran's power plants if Tehran fails to fully open the Strait of Hormuz in 48 hours and Iranian missiles struck two cities near Israel's main nuclear research centre, injuring dozens and shattering apartment buildings.

The developments signalled the war in the Middle East, now in its fourth week, was moving in a dangerous new direction. Sirens blared across Israel on Sunday morning, warning of new Iranian barrages as residents faced the devastation in the southern cities of Dimona and Arad. In northern Israel, a man was killed in a strike by the Lebanese militant Hezbollah group.

In Doha, six people were confirmed killed in a Qatari helicopter crash in the Persian Gulf nation's territorial waters. One person was still missing from Saturday's crash, which was blamed on a "technical malfunction". Qatar's Defence Ministry said the dead included three Qatari forces and three Turkish nationals, including a military officer and two civilians. The



Israeli security forces and rescue teams work at the site struck by an Iranian missile in Arad, southern Israel, Sunday, March 22, 2026. | File AP

missing person is a Qatari airman, it said. Trump said on Saturday that he would give Iran 48 hours to open the vital Strait of Hormuz or face a new round of attacks. He said the US would destroy "various POWER PLANTS, STARTING WITH THE BIGGEST ONE FIRST!" He may have meant the Bushehr nuclear power plant, Iran's biggest,

HIGHLIGHT

Iranian missiles recently struck cities near Israel's nuclear research center, while Hezbollah strikes in northern Israel have resulted in fatalities.

which was already hit last week, or Damavand, a natural gas plant near Tehran, Iran's capital. In

turn, Iran warned early Sunday that any strike on its energy facilities would prompt attacks on US and Israeli energy and infrastructure assets -- specifically information technology and desalination facilities -- in the region, according to a statement citing an Iranian military spokesperson carried by state media and semi-official outlets.

The Strait of Hormuz

connects the Persian Gulf to the Indian Ocean and is a critical pathway for the world's flow of oil. Attacks on commercial ships and threats of further strikes have stopped nearly all tankers from carrying oil, gas and other goods through the passage, leading to cuts in output from some of the world's largest oil producers, because their crude has nowhere to go.

FRANCE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

French voters hit polls for high-stakes municipal runoffs across cities

Press Trust Of India

The second-round results serve as a critical power test for political parties ahead of the 2027 presidential race.

PARIS: French voters are returning to the polls Sunday for the second and final round of municipal elections in over 1,500 communes. The vote is a test of the balance of power on France's local political map before the 2027 presidential race begins to take shape. It is also a measure of whether the far right can convert national momentum into control of major cities, where it has often struggled to break through.

The most closely watched contests are concentrated in major cities



People line up as they wait to cast their ballot during the second round of France's municipal elections in Paris. | File AP

after a first round that left France's traditional left and right competitive, the far right strongly placed in several urban races, and President Emmanuel Macron's Renaissance movement keeping a low profile in many of the most closely watched races. After days of mergers, withdrawals and tactical deals between lists, three-way races remain

common in the runoff. Paris is one of the biggest prizes. Emmanuel Grégoire, heading a united left and green list, finished first in the opening round with 37.98 per cent of the vote, ahead of conservative Rachida Dati on 25.46 per cent, while La France Insoumise candidate Sophia Chikirou stayed in the race, setting up a volatile three-

FACTFILE

Observers are tracking whether the far right can convert national momentum into control of major urban hubs like Marseille and Nice.

Major cities like Paris and Lyon face volatile three-way races and narrow duels following intense tactical deals between left, right, and centrist blocs.

way contest. Marseille is another marquee battle, where incumbent left-wing Mayor Benoît Payan led with 36.70 per cent, only narrowly ahead of far-right candidate Franck Allisio on 35.02 per cent, with Martine Vassal of the right also still in play.

WHO: Sudan Hospital strike kills 64

CAIRO: At least 64 people were killed, including at least 13 children, in a strike on a hospital in Sudan's western Darfur region last week, the World Health Organization said Saturday. The strike on the Al Daein Teaching Hospital in East Darfur on Friday also injured at least 89 people and rendered the hospital non-functional, Tedros Ghebreyesus, the head of the WHO, said on X. Sudan slid into chaos in April 2023 when a power struggle between the military and the rival paramilitary Rapid Support Forces exploded into war throughout the country. The RSF has blamed the military for the strike on the hospital.

The army has denied the attack, but two military officials said the strike was targeting a nearby police station. They spoke on the condition of anonymity as they were not allowed to discuss the matter openly.

AFRICA CHINA SOLAR

Africa solar costs rise as China cuts subsidies

Press Trust Of India

NAIROBI: China's decision to end value-added tax rebates on solar panel exports and phase out incentives for making battery storage equipment could push up the cost of solar installations in Africa, which relies heavily on imported Chinese technology. The changes, expected to take effect April 1 for solar panels



and beginning next year for batteries, may complicate efforts to expand renewable energy to close vast electricity gaps

across Africa, though experts say the impact likely will be manageable. "We are likely to see solar panel prices

"The entire recent solar boom was built on artificially cheap Chinese pricing. That era is now ending."

John van Zuylen
CEO of the Africa Solar Industry Association.

increase in Africa because most of the inputs come

from China," said Wangari Muchiri, an energy analyst focused on Africa's clean energy sector. "Removing the rebate will add to existing costs, especially when you consider shipping, logistics, and other import fees."

Africa already pays significantly more for solar equipment than other regions because of transport costs, smaller import volumes and tariffs.

Briefs

BEST OF THE REST

ITALY'S JUSTICE REFERENDUM

Italy's justice referendum becomes a high stakes test for conservative Premier Giorgia Meloni



ROME: Italy's conservative Premier Giorgia Meloni faces a pivotal political test in a two-day referendum on judicial reform that starts Sunday, a vote that has transformed into a broader judgment on her leadership at home and abroad.

Originally presented as a technical overhaul of the justice system, the reform has sharpened political divisions and unified the center-left opposition, turning the referendum into a symbolic showdown on Meloni's strength one year ahead of national elections. Recent polls show the race remains too close to call, with the "No" camp gaining late momentum in a polarized climate where turnout may prove decisive. Lorenzo Pregliasco, political analyst and polling expert at YouTrend, said a rejection of the reform would carry significant political weight. "A possible 'No' victory would send a political signal, weakening Meloni's aura of invincibility, while

pushing the center-left opposition to say that there is already an alternative in the country," he told The Associated Press. Meloni initially avoided tying her image too closely to the referendum, wary of the danger that a defeat could weaken her domestically and abroad. She currently presides over Italy's most stable government in years, after gaining credibility among her European allies as a charismatic leader. A referendum win would further strengthen her tenure at home, alongside her international standing.

That's why, as the vote neared and polls tightened, the Italian premier shifted strategy and fully embraced the "Yes" campaign. Meloni has sharpened her rhetoric, accusing parts of the judiciary of hindering government work on migration and security, and warning that failure to pass the reform would strengthen unaccountable judicial "factions" and endanger citizens' safety. **PTI**

EU SLOVENIA ELECTION

Slovenia voters choose between Liberals and Populists

LJUBLJANA: Voters in Slovenia headed to the polls on Sunday in a highly contested parliamentary election that pits the governing liberals against right-wing populists in a vote that will decide whether the small European Union nation stays on its liberal course or sways toward the right. The race is expected to be tight and follows a campaign rocked by allegations of foreign interference that stunned the traditionally moderate EU country. The vote comes down to two main players: Prime Minister Robert Golob's Freedom Movement and the right-wing Slovenian Democratic Party, or SDS, led by three-time premier Janez Jansa, a populist-style politician and an admirer of US President Donald Trump. Who wins will resonate wider in the 27-member EU bloc. Golob's government has been a strong liberal voice in the bloc while a victory of Jansa -- also a close ally of nationalist Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán -- would strengthen Europe's surging populist groups. **PTI**

WASIA WEST BANK

Israeli settlers smash cars, set fires in attacks on Palestinians in West Bank

RAMALLAH: Israeli settlers rampaged through multiple Palestinian villages overnight Saturday and into Sunday, smashing cars, setting fires and wounding several men in the latest flare-up of violence in the occupied West Bank. The official Palestinian news agency Wafa reported attacks in at least six communities on Sunday.

The Palestinian Red Crescent Society said at least three Palestinians in the village of Jalud suffered head wounds from beatings and were hospitalised after confronting settlers, who were also reported injured. The violence came as Israel's government presses ahead with new settlements in the occupied West Bank. Attacks by settlers have intensified alongside a broader surge in violence since the Iran war started. Israel's military said it responded to Israeli civilians carrying out "arson against structures and property, as well as engaging in disturbances in the area," but did not report any arrests or indicate whether investigations were opened. **PTI**

CUBA GRID COLLAPSE

Cuba's power grid collapses leaving it without electricity for the 3rd time this month



HAVANA: Cuba's power grid collapsed Saturday leaving the country without electricity for a third time in March as the communist government battles with a decaying infrastructure and a U.S.-imposed oil blockade.

The Cuban Electric Union, which reports to the Ministry of Energy and Mines, announced a total blackout across the island without initially giving a cause for the outage. The union later said the blackout was caused by an unexpected failure of a generating unit at the Nuevitas thermoelectric plant in Camagüey province.

"From that moment, a cascading effect occurred in the machines that were online," said a report from the

Ministry of Energy and Mines, which activated "micro-islands" of generating units to provide power to vital centers, hospitals and water systems. Authorities said they were working to restore power.

Power outages, whether nationwide or regional, have become relatively common in the last two years due to breakdowns in the aging infrastructure. The breakdowns are compounded by daily blackouts of up to 12 hours caused by fuel shortages, which also destabilize the system. The last nationwide blackout occurred on Monday. Saturday's outage was the second in the past week and the third in March. **PTI**