

WEATHER

Partly cloudy. Nearby storms may bring lightning, gusty winds. Maximum and minimum temperatures likely to be around 36°C and 27°C respectively.

RAINFALL: NIL

RELATIVE HUMI	DITY
Max. 72%	Min. 55%
TEMPERATURE	
Max: 36.5°C	Min: 27.8°C
SUN RISES	SUN SETS
05:27 hrs	17:52 hrs
MOON RISES	MOON SETS
09:08 hrs	23:26 hrs

Full Moon on 13 April

THUMBNAILS



Amit Shah defends Waqf Bill, accuses Opp of misinformation

Fierce debate in Lok Sabha over controversial legislation

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

trongly defending the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, Union Home Minister Amit Shah rejected the Opposition's charge that the government wants to interfere in the religious affairs of Muslims through the legislation and said its provisions are aimed at better management of the Waqf properties.

Intervening in the debate on the Bill in the Lok Sabha

in the law, he emphasised that such changes should strengthen the Act rather than exacerbate problems and disputes, which, he argued, would result from the proposed amendments. Mr Gogoi accused the government of attempting

to create chaos by enabling cases to be filed across the country, thereby disrupting the "atmosphere of brotherhood".

"Our Constitution says every citizen must receive political, social, and eco-

lost in Mahakumbh can be covered up. "Not only about the lives lost, but this government should tell where is the list of about 1,000 Hindus who have been lost and not been found yet," the Samajwadi Party chief said. Trinamul Congress (TMC) MP Kalyan Banerjee strongly opposed the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, calling it a direct violation of the Constitution.

He claimed that the Bill "hits the basic structure" of the Constitution and CPI (Maoist) Central Comnomic justice... freedom of encroaches upon the rights mittee spokesperson Abhay,

Maoists call for peace talks ahead of Amit Shah's Chhattisgarh visit

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE RAIPUR. 2 APRIL

Just days before Union Home Minister Amit Shah's visit to Chhattisgarh, the outlawed CPI (Maoist) has issued a press statement proposing peace talks, urging the government to halt security operations in Maoist-affected regions. The rebel outfit claims that intensified anti-Maoist operations, particularly under 'Operation Kagar,' have led to large-scale violence against tribal communities. The press note, issued by



hostilities, a halt to antiinsurgency operations, and the withdrawal of security personnel from conflict zones.

The CPI (Maoist) called on intellectuals, human rights organizations, journalists, students, and environmental activists to support their demand for negotiations and pressurise the government into engaging in dialogue. Chhattisgarh Home Min-

Women offer prayers while performing Chaiti Chhath rituals, in Patna, on Wednesday. ANI

Pakistan Army violated ceasefire in Poonch sector, says Indian Army: The Pakistan Army violated the ceasefire agreement by opening unprovoked firing in the Poonch sector of Jammu and Kashmir on Tuesday, a statement by the Indian Army said. It is learnt that the Pakistan Army and other agencies were trying to push heavily armed terrorists into the Indian territory by giving them a cover of firing.

on Wednesday, the home minister said the legislation would not be implemented with retrospective effect. He accused the Opposition of trying to mislead the people and create fear among members of the Muslim community.

Extending his support to the Bill, Mr Shah said there are misconceptions among several members, either genuinely or politically over the Bill.

Bill.

Mr Shah categorically said there is no provision for the appointment of non-Muslims in the processes related to religion in the

Stating that no non-Muslim would come into the Waqf, Mr Shah said there is no such provision to include any non-Muslim among those who manage the religious institutions.

The minister further said that they would only look after the administration of property donated by someone under the Waqf Law. He also said that a person can donate only the property

that belongs to him, not the property that belongs to the government or any other individual. His comments came as MPs of a united Opposition assailed the Waqf (Amend-

ment) Bill as an attempt to interfere in the affairs of a religion and violative of the Constitution of India in an hours-long debate in the Lok Sabha.

Initiating the debate on the Bill in the Lok Sabha, Deputy Leader of the Congress Gaurav Gogoi expressed concern over the intentions of the government for bringing the Bill.

"Today, they have their eyes on the land of a particular community; tomorrow, they will target the land of other minorities in society," he said.

While acknowledging the need for amendments

expression and religion... This Bill is an attack on the fundamental structure of the Constitution. This government aims to dilute the constitution through this Bill. Second, they want to defame the minority community. Third, they want to divide Indian society," he alleged. Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav said whenever the BJP brings up a new Bill, it hides its failure. Participating in the debate on the Bill, Mr Yadav alleged that the BJP is talking about identifying the land

Board and granting state governments the power to decide disputes related to Waqf properties, including land and buildings. Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) also

strongly opposed the Waqf Amendment Bill and slammed the BJP, saying that a party which does not have a single Muslim of Muslim brothers so that MP in the Lok Sabha is the issue of identifying the ironically going to protect the rights of the minorities. Hindus who have died or

of the Muslim community calls for an immediate ceaseto manage its religious fire and withdrawal of security forces from conflict zones affairs. Mr Banerjee argued that the Bill impacts two as a precondition for diakey areas – governance of logue.

religious aspects of the Waqf The statement says that over 400 Maoist cadres and civilians have been killed in counter-insurgency operations, with reports of mass detentions and human rights violations surfacing from affected regions. The group also claims that women Maoist members have faced sexual violence and extrajudicial executions.

The Maoists have outlined a set of preconditions for the peace talks, including an immediate cessation of said.

ister Vijay Sharma responded to the Maoist proposal, stating that while the government is open to discussions, talks cannot proceed under preconditions set by the rebel group. "The government is committed to bring lasting peace to Bastar and other affected regions, but negotiations cannot be dictated by extremist forces. If Maoists are serious about peace, they should surrender and take advantage of the state's rehabilitation policy," Mr Sharma



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epaper.thestatesman.com









Firecracker blast: Arrested owner attended safety session last week

Some members of the

Firecracker unit owners and traders surprised how the accused stored illegal material

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE KOLKATA, 2 APRIL

handrakanta Banik, prime accused in the series of firecracker blasts at his residential premises at Dakshin Raipur under Dholahat police station in South 24-Parganas district, had attended a training programme on crackers safety awareness at Batanagar on 24 March.

Chandrakanta was produced before the court in Kakdwip today while his brother Tushar has been absconding so far till this evening.

The accused attended the training hardly a week before the incident occurred on 31 March night that claimed eight lives, including four babies, all belonging to his family.

According to sources in



the district administration, measures.

senior officials of the state directorate of factories had union have raised their eyeattended the event organised brows saying: "How did Chanby the All Bengal Trinamul drakanta, who attended the Green Firecrackers Manuawareness programme one facturing Workers Union. week ago, store raw materials, Around 500 firecrackers including explosive items. The Monday night incident

manufacturers and traders had undergone an orientation session on how to manufacture and store crackers following safety and security

ufacture firecrackers illegally. Our stand is not to stand beside those manufacturers, who do business violating government rules and regulations," said Sukdeb Naskar, president of the Maheshtala Firecrackers Association.

Several manufacturers alleged that the small scale illegal firecracker units are on the rise because of irrational attitude of the state government because it only ensures land but not adequate fund for infrastructure for setting up of a unit. It requires Rs 4-5 lakh for setting up of a manufacturing unit, they said requesting anonymity.

Sukdeb Naskar, president Maheshtala firecrackers association, chandrakanta didn't follow rules. We won't stand showed he used to run the beside those who illegally manufacture and store firecrackers. Police investigating

"Chandrakanta didn't follow rules and used to man-Chandrakanta and his brother

Tushar in connection with the incident found their negligence in handling combustible and explosive materials. Cases have also been registered for storing such raw materials endangering life and safety and culpable homicide not amounting to murder under BNS and West

Bengal Fire Services Act. All the deceased and injured people belong to the Baniks, who have run the manufacturing business of firecrackers for the past 10 years.

Two of the deceased babies are below one year while two others are toddlers. Three others sustaining severe burn injuries are undergoing treatment at Diamond Harbour Medical College Hospital.

The Baniks have 11 members, including an 80-yearold Prabhaboti Banik, Chandranath's grandmother.

Bengal illegal firecracker factory blast: Role of panchayat under scanner

AGENCIES KOLKATA, 2 APRIL

After eight people died in a blast at an illegal firecracker factory at Patharpratima in West Bengal's South 24-Parganas district, the role of the local panchayat has come under the scanner of investigating officials.

The blast took place on Monday night. District administration sources said that it had been revealed that the Banik family, at whose residence the illegal firecracker was being run, had secured an ordinary trade license from the local panchayat, which did not come with the permission to run a firecracker manufacturing unit.

Now, questions are being raised about how even that ordinary trade license was granted by the local panchayat, especially in the backdrop of criminal antecedents of one of the two arrested accused in connection with the blast, Chandrakanta Banik.

As per police records, Banik was arrested in 2022 for his involvement in the trading of illegal firecrackers and at that time, around 67 kilograms of illegal firecrackers were recovered from his possession.

Now, questions are being raised as to whether the local rural civic body granted that trade licence without background verification of the license application from the local police.

At the same time, questions are also being raised on how the local police did not have the knowledge that an illegal firecracker factory was being run at the residence by virtue of that ordinary trade licence that did not carry permission to run a firecracker manufacturing unit.

Local people have already claimed that the cops had ignored repeated alerts of a possible mishap because of the illegal firecracker factory being run from the Banik residence.

Tushar Banik, the brother

of Chandrakanta Banik, the joint owner of the residence where the illegal firecracker factory was being run, is still absconding.

Police have registered a case against the Banik brothers under Section 287 (negligent conduct concerning fire or combustible matter endangering human life or causing harm), Section 288 (negligent conduct concerning explosive substances potentially endangering human life or causing injury), Section 105 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder), Section 110 (attempt to commit culpable homicide), Section 125 9 endangering human lives) and Section 61 (criminal conspiracy) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

Additionally, they have been booked under Sections 24 and 25 of the West Bengal Fire Services Act, 1950. The last two sections are related to running of firecracker manufacturing business without a proper licence for the same.

Burdwan dietician runs practice as MBBS, health dept begins probe name as 'Dr Tanmoy Sidhhanta, MD (alternative medicine) written both in his chamber's board and also in the prescription. On 9 March, some villagers had challenged his degree asking for his Medical Council of India registration number, which he'd declined to provide raising further suspicion of the locals. They then complained about Sidhhanta to the Kalna Superspecialty Hospital superintendent, Dr Goutam Biswas After the complaint was that was forwarded to Dr Soren, the CMOH today and an investigation was ordered. On 11 March, Dr Biswas, the medical superintendent of Kalna Hospital had received a complaint against one Laboni Bhowmik that she'd been practicing as an eye surgeon mentioning in her prescription that she's attached with that hospital, An RDA practitioner refers which was scrapped by Dr Biswas. Dr Biswas said: "I'm the medical superintendent here since 2018, and I've also Tanmoy Sidhhanta of examined the previous records, **STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE** but no such eye surgeon was BHUBANESWAR, 2 APRIL: ever registered with this gov-

With trees felled, civics body erectus shades at traffic junctions

ment did not stop at planting;

Binay and Debi elected as CAO president & secretary respectively

CATERING ASSOCIATION OF ODISHA

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE **BURDWAN, 2 APRIL**

One RDA (recommended dietary allowances) practitioner has been issuing prescriptions, using a fake MBBS degree and a 'Dr' prefix before his name since over 30 years, which the villagers have opposed these days and a complaint against whom was registered today with the district health administration.

registered, Dr Joyram Hembram, chief medical officer, East Burdwan, said: "We've primarily observed that the person was conducting medical practice illegally. We've taken cognisance about his unauthorised act and an inquiry has been suggested.'

to someone who uses recommended dietary allowances, the average daily nutrient intake.

Singerkone village in Kalna, over the three decades has been practicing as a 'doctor' serving at least 10 localities over the years. He uses his

Bengal Police unnecessarily creating panic over Ram Navami: BJP

ernment hospital."



AGENCIES KOLKATA, 2 APRIL

A senior leader of the BJP from West Bengal, on Wednesday, accused the West Bengal Police of creating unnecessary panic among common people over

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE BOLANGIR, 2 APRIL:

business illegally."

The Bolangir Municipality

has erected shades at various locations across the town, particularly at traffic junctions.

These overhead shades provide much-needed relief to commuters waiting at traffic signals, reducing their exposure to the scorching sun and minimizing the risk of sunstroke.

"For the first time, the administration has identified a major public inconvenience and taken a meaningful step to address it" remarked Madhusudan Sahu, a local resident.

Tata Steel's Ferro Alloys and

Minerals Division (FAMD),

emerged as the winner in

the "Best Integrated Water

Management Project" cat-

egory at the Water Digest

World Water Awards 2024-

25 organised in Delhi recent-

of Jal Shakti, Raj Bhushan

Choudhary, presented the

award to Tata Steel followed

by the felicitation. Natasha

Jha, Head, Projects, Tech-

nology and Improvement

(FAMD), Tata Steel received

the award on behalf of the

(FAMD)'s cutting-edge digital

technologies to optimise

water management processes

and drive sustainability in

Acknowledging Tata Steel

Minister of State, Ministry

ly.

company.

It is worth noting that a

decade ago, before the roadwidening project commenced, Bolangir town was lined with thousands of trees on both sides of the roads. However, in the name of development, the forest department permitted felling of trees without any effort

to recreate a tree cover in the town. Frustrated by administrative apathy and largescale corruption under the guise of plantation initiatives, a group of tree lovers formed

a social network group named "Sabuja Bolangir" before the last monsoon. They took it upon them-

In-Charge (FAMD), Tata Steel

said, "India is a water stressed

country and various sectors

including agriculture, com-

competing for this scarce

resource. We are doing our

like the Central Effluent

Treatment Plant (CETP) at

Kamarda and Saruabil mines

and the Effluent Treatment

stewardship."

selves to restore the town's greenery, planting thousands of saplings. Their commit-

zine.

they also fenced the saplings and watered them regularly Later, Municipality joined the movement, engaging

municipal staff in tree plantation and fencing efforts, particularly from Cocheri Chowk to Santipada. However, in a distressing

turn of events, unidentified miscreants recently destroyed at least 50 trees, along with their protective fencing, on the newly built ring road from Sambalpur Road (NH-26) to Chiminibhati.

Members of Sabuja Balangir have since lodged a formal complaint at the police station, seeking action against the unidentified cul-

meeting here recently. The office bearers were elected Tata Steel's FAMD gets award unanimously for the period of 2025-29. for water management Debi Prasad Rath and M Jay

prits.

Plant (ETP) and Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) at Sukinda mines in Jajpur district of Odisha, which treat

At the Ferro Alloy Plant decreased its dependency ing over 40% reduction in water usage. Similarly, FAMD has leveraged IoT-based

use efficiency at FAP Athagarh - located in Odisha's Cuttack district - resulting in significant reduction in total water intake and raw water consumption in slag cooling.

Coolers donated for jail inmates were present during the han-

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

The election of the Catering

Association of Odisha (CAO)

at its Annual General Body

Binaya Bhusan Patnaik,

BHUBANESWAR, 2 APRIL

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE BOLANGIR, 2 APRIL

To provide relief to inmates from the scorching summer heat, members of the Agharia Samaj donated two large water coolers to the District Jail.

With temperatures soaring above 40°C, the initiative aims to help prisoners cope with the extreme weather conditions. Noted businessman and philanthropist Rajkumar Patel and vice president of Agharia Samaj Bolangir, spearheaded the donation drive.

He was accompanied by Agharia Samaj president Subhransu Patel and other prominent members like Dwarika Nath Patel and Digambara Naik of the community

President, Secretary and Treasurer respectively.

Other office bearers are Anup Kumar Bagaei, Naba Ranjan Patnaik, Prabodha Kumar Das and Debasis Dhala as Chairman, Pattern, Chief Advisor and PRO respectively.

dover ceremony at the jail

the inmates, Patel said, "Every-

one deserves basic comforts,

especially during such harsh

weather. We hope these coolers

will provide some relief to the

The jail authorities appreciated the thoughtful contri-

Expressing his concern for

premises.

prisoners.

cation projects.

landscape of our country'

Dr. Mamata Rani Agarwal,

the Additional Secretary of

AIU, Former Air Force Pilot,

New Delhi, highlighted the

role of such platforms in

shaping future women leaders

and said such events focus

on women's voice is crucial.

cellor of Centurion University,

shared his vision of promoting

gender inclusivity in educa-

Dr. G. S. N. Raju, Chan-

said the Governor.

Centurion university hosts AIU national

While congratulating all the newly elected office bearers and the members, President Binaya Bhusan Patnaik said

"together we can make our Association stronger and stronger. As we observed during the marriage, birthday and other social functions the wastage of food is a matter of serious concern. We must lunch massive drive to create awareness among public "

The secretary Debi Prasad Rath said "during the social functions we must give emphasis on Odia cuisine ".

Secretary of Cooperative Society arrested **STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE**

BALASORE, 2 APRIL

The in-charge secretary of Durgadevi Co-operative Society of Balasore district has been arrested by the vigilance for misappropriating government funds to the tune of Rs 6 lakh under the PM Fasal Bima Yojana(PMFBY).

bution, stating that it would significantly improve living conditions inside the facility. The Agharia Samaj, known for its social welfare initiatives, has been serving cooked meals at hospital campus on regular basis beside it also engaged in supporting healthcare, donation of blood and edu-

The accused identified as Girish Chandra Behera, has allegedly misappropriated the government.money from the society by diverting Indemnity claims under the PMFBY meant for 38 farmers who happened to be the victims of crop loss during the years 2021-2023.

(FAP) in Joda in Keonjhar district of Odisha, innovative measures have been implemented to significantly reduce water consumption. By utilizing treated water from the ETP and scrubber pond water, the plant has

on fresh surface water, achievsmart water management systems to enhance water

Prasad Rao were elected as its operations, the coveted award was presented to the steel major at the event organised by a water magaand reuse wastewater. Pankaj Satija, Executive-

munity and industry are

bit to minimise the water consumption in our processes. We are happy to be recognised for our commitment and efforts in adopting innovative digital solutions in our journey towards water FAMD exemplifies this commitment with initiatives

the forthcoming Ram Navami festival.

BIP's former national vicepresident and former party Lok Sabha member Dilip Ghosh said that the decision of the police authorities to cancel the leaves of all cops, except for emergency reasons, from 2-9 April was unnecessary.

"Such panic-driven decisions are prompted only during Hindu festivals. The police should take care of those who create trouble. Hindus are well organised and they perform their religious rituals peacefully. Lakhs of people participate in Durga Puja, and no tension is created. It has become a habit of the ruling party to create tension and panic," Ghosh said. He also said that the chances of untoward incidents over the Ram Navami processions will not be there if the police strictly handle those who want to create tension on the occasion.

Last week, two senior officials of West Bengal Police told media persons that they have got specific intelligence inputs on some vested interests trying to instigate violence in the coming days, especially targeting the forthcoming Ram Navami

We requested people not to get instigated. There is no need to worry. But at the same time, we also request people to alert the local police in case they notice any suspicious activities in their respective areas," said

Additional Director General (South Bengal) Supratim Sarkar on 29 March.

"There are plans to instigate

people through different posters

or posts. The police are on

alert. There might be attempts

to instigate tension among

people from different com-

munities, especially focusing

on the occasion of Ram Navami.

Recently, there were reports of communal clashes from Mothabari in Malda district.

Recently, the Leader of the Opposition in West Bengal, Suvendu Adhikari, said at least 2,000 rallies, big and small combined, will be brought out on the occasion of Ram Navami this year. He also said that participants at the rallies on Ram

Navami this year will be double compared to last year. "Ram Navami will be cele-

brated this year in a major way. I will be there on the streets on that day. Last year, around 50 lakh Hindus were on the streets to participate in rallies on the occasion of Ram Navami. Last year, there were 1,000 rallies. This year there will be 2,000 rallies and around one crore Hindus will participate in those rallies this year," he claimed.

dead in Belgharia

TMC worker shot

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE KOLKATA, 2 APRIL

Tension flared up in Belgharia after a Trinamul Congress (TMC) worker was shot dead at point-blank range late on Tuesday night. Police said that the deceased, identified

as Rehan Khan (aged between 30 and 35). The victim was reportedly a close aide of local TMC councillor Debjani Mukherjee. The incident took place in front of the party office in ward 35, triggering unrest in the area.

According to local sources, miscreants targeted Rehan late at night, leaving him grievously injured. Shockingly, his body remained at the spot throughout the night. On Wednesday morning, he was rushed to Sagar Dutta Hospital, where doctors declared him dead. The murder has sent shockwaves through political circles. The Barrackpore Police Commissionerate has launched a manhunt for the attackers. Police are probing whether the killing was linked to business disputes, personal enmity, or

Rehan was attacked late at night and left grievously injured, with his body remaining at the spot until morning.

political rivalry. Eyewitnesses described a disturbing scene. "In the morning, we saw his body being taken away in a toto to the hospital. There was a visible hole at the back of his head. It seemed like a gunshot wound," said a local resident. A police officer involved in the investigation stated: "He was sitting at the place talking. We even found a liquor bottle at the spot, suggesting he might have been drinking. His family informed us that they spoke to him

between 11.30 p.m. and midnight. His body was recovered around 5.30 a.m. We are trying to identify who was present at the time and who might be responsible.'

As political and security concerns escalate in Belgharia, police continue their probe into the brutal killing.



women student parliament

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE PARALAKHEMUNDI, 2 APRIL:

The AIU National Women Student Parliament was inaugurated by his Governor Dr Kumbhampati Haribabu at Centurion University here.

The event saw the participation of over 30 universities and more than 200 female student leaders from across the country. Prof. Sangram Keshari Swain, Convener of AIU,

delivered the welcome address and set the tone for the engaging event. This was followed by an address from Dr Supriya Pattanayak, Vice-Chancellor of Centurion University, who emphasized the significance of empowering young women through leadership and dialogue. Empowering women is not about protest but about the future of women's voice and power. "Equality, empowerment and emancipation are not

the Indian constitution. In today's India, women are leading corporations, serving in senior governance roles, driving innovation, arguing before the various courts of law and revolutionizing social change. The rise of women in business, sports, law, just ideas, but realities for policy, making and arts is a every woman in India, we testament to the changing

must also acknowledge the

pioneering women who con-

tributed to the drafting of



tion and leadership. Dr Gitanjali Dash, The Vice-Chancellor of Berhampur University, Dr. Amiya Kumar Rath, Vice-Chancellor of Biju Patnaik University of Technology also addressed the gathering.

The event was also graced by Dr. Muktikanta Mishra, President of Centurion University, and Prof. D. N. Rao, Vice President of Centurion University, adding to the distinguished panel of dignitaries.

The inaugural session concluded with an introduction of the team managers. In the afternoon, the event moved forward with its preliminary rounds, where student leaders engaged in thought-provoking discussions and debates on various socio-political issues.

The event will feature multiple sessions over the next few days, culminating in meaningful resolutions aimed at empowering future women leaders.





CM turns teacher at 'Shishu Vatika' event in Baragarh High School

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE BHUBANESWAR, 2 APRIL

he atmosphere was filled with joy as children excitedly held their new writing boards and chalks while Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi sat among them, guiding their tiny hands to write and draw.

The event took place at Baragarh High School, where a nursery 'Shishu Vatika' was inaugurated as part of a statewide initiative. A former teacher before venturing into politics, the CM briefly returned to his earlier role, engaging with the children by drawing circles with chalk and teaching them to write their first letter, 'Ma.' He further connected with the little ones by asking their parents' names, what they had for food, and other simple questions, fostering an interactive and joyful environment.

During his visit, the Chief Minister also served lunch

to students of Classes IX and X, distributed learning kits, and explored the exhibits displaying educational materials. Expressing his vision for strengthening early education, he remarked that the nursery

in all primary schools

enhance the primary education sector in the state.

The launch of pre-primary education aligns with the National Education Policy 2020. From the academic

a dedicated pre-primary education center. These centers will cater to children aged 5 to 6 years, providing them with educational kits and engaging them in entertainment-based learning programs to make education more appealing and interactive.

The event, organized by school in the state will have the School and Mass Edu-

cation Department, witnessed the presence of MLAs Babu Singh and Prashant Jagdeb, Bhubaneswar Mayor Sulochana Das, social worker Jagannath Pradhan, School and Mass Education Department Commissioner and Administrative Secretary Shalin Pandit, and OSEPAR Project Director Ananya

Marathon debate over Odisha University

Das.

Govt fails to recover over Rs 3966 crore from mining lessees: CAG Report

>> OMBADC fund

mismanagement

detected

BHUBANESWAR, THURSDAY 03 APRIL 2025

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE BHUBANESWAR 2 APRIL

The Odisha government has failed to take effective measures to recover Rs 3,966.34 crore in fines imposed by the Supreme Court for illegal mining, according to a performance audit report by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG).

The Supreme Court, in its August 2017 ruling, directed the state government to impose penalties on mining companies that had extracted iron ore and manganese without proper environmental or forest clearance. The court mandated that 100% of the illegally mined minerals' value be recovered from the mining lessees.

The report stated that all outstanding dues were to be deposited with the Odisha Mineral Bearing Areas Development Corporation (OMBADC) by December 31, 2017. A central empowered committee had recommended the collection of Rs 19,174 crore in fines from 131 mining leaseholders who had violated regulations.

However, as of December 2017, only 82 mining lessees had paid Rs 8,289.87 crore,

of March 2022, Rs 13.94 crore remained unutilized and was not refunded to OMBADC. Payments were made based on manipulated photographs.

Only Rs 229.98 crore

Of the 1,969 Anganwadi

(Jajpur, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj,

Sundargarh), only 620 (31.48%)

were completed by December 2022. In Keonjhar and Sun-

dargarh, only 485 of the 1,408 proposed Model AWCs (34%)

were allocated to mining-

affected areas, with the rest

targeted toilets (38.15%) were

completed in four districts.

Only 1,488 out of 3,900

allocated elsewhere.

In skill development projects attaching the defaulters' it found that out of 200 candiimmovable properties, to recover the outstanding amount. dates enrolled for skill devel-The CAG's performance opment, 191 (95.5%) were not audit of "Management of from identified mining-affected

The Statesman

Odisha Mineral Bearing Areas villages, depriving the earmarked SC/ST youth of the **Development Corporation** Funds" identified several shortbenefits. comings in planning and execution. The Project Monitoring (34.90%) of the approved health project budget was allocated Unit (PMU) of OMBADC subto mining districts, with the mitted a 10-year perspective plan in June 2020. However, majority diverted to nonas of April 2023, the plan had mining blocks. yet to be approved for implecenters targeted in four districts mentation.

As far as Drinking Water Projects were concerned, instances of no feasibility studies conducted for 27 small piped water supply (PWS) projects covering 49 villages in Angul, Mayurbhanj, Jajpur, and Koraput was done, projects worth Rs 1.73 crore were abandoned midway due to unavailable water sources, resulting in a loss of OMBADC funds.

Keonjhar and Jajpur failed to No projects were approved for 12 villages in Angul and 15 construct even a single toilet villages in Koraput, depriving out of the targeted 1,332. Only 27 mining-affected villages of 795 kitchens were built against leaving Rs 10,884.51 crore clean drinking water were unrecovered. By January 2023, some of the instances pointed an additional Rs 7,371 crore out by the audit. The housing projects had been recovered, yet Rs showed that beneficiaries for pucca houses were not selected using a bottom-up approach, leading to repeated modifi-

year 2025-26, every primary initiative would significantly BJD leader raises Sambalpuri 10 students injured as Kosali language issue in Assembly

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

>> 'A nursery school will be opened

overturns in Karanjia

school van

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE BARIPADA. 2 APRIL:

At least 10 students sustained injuries when a school van in which they were travelling overturned at Bhaura village on the road between Karanjia-Chadeibhol.

The incident took place when a school van was on the way to drop the students to their destination after school on Wednesday. All the students were studying in a private school.

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The injured were brought to Karanjia hospital for treatment and their condition was stable. Sources said that on being informed, the staff of the private school and guardian reached the hospital when local police initiated the investigation to ascertain the cause of the mishap.

Irate people of the locality and some guardians staged a road blockade on the Karanjia-Chadeibhol road demanding proper treatment of the injured students and repair of the road.

They also raised the demand to check the proper fitness certificates and other documents of the school buses.

Villagers celebrate 21st day of new born elephant

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE ANGUL, 2 APRIL

Driven by irresistible love villagers of Gurunga, 15, kms from here, celebrated the 21st day function of a newborn elephant calf. The calf was born at the outskirts of the village.

The villagers have been

BHUBANESWAR, 2 APRIL:

Raising a highly sensitive issue, theDeputyLeaderofOpposition in the Odisha Assembly, Prasanna Acharya, urged the Odisha government to grant state language status to Sambalpuri Kosali and push for its inclusion in the Eighth Schedule of the

Indian Constitution. On Tuesday, the statehood day was celebrated and Odisha is the first state to be formed

on linguistic basis. But one crucial aspect is often overlooked, he said . The fact is that over 1.5 crore people living across 11 districts speak Sambalpuri Kosali language which is distinct from Odia.

The BJD leader went on to elaborate on the rich culture and heritage of the western region, the poems, songs, books and its own dictionary. The Sambalpuri song 'Rangabati' has become popular across the country and abroad. Its singer, lyricist and musician have been bestowed with the



padma awards, he noted. Sambalpuri handloom is a craze world wide.

There is enough justification for the state government to recognize Sambalpuri Kosali language and also send a proposal for its inclusion in the 8th Schedule, he said

The government is free to accord state language status to more than one language, he said while citing Constitutional provisions. He cautioned that if the aspirations of 1.5 crore people is ignored, it may have serious ramifications

The demand was echoed by his party colleague Dibya Shankar Mishra.

Recently, the statements

ofveteran BJP MLA Javanaravan Mishra had caused a flutter when he said integration of Koshal region with Odisha was a 'historical blunder' .. "You

are exploiting us, our wealth, our mines, our agriculture, our forests and now you are trying to exploit us culturally", he had stated at an official function in the presence of Panchayati Raj Minister Rabi Nayak.

The government was in a bind and after a few days of hullabaloo, the Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan made a statement saying the remarks of Mishra are his personal views and not that of the government.

amendment bill

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE BHUBANESWAR, 2 APRIL

The Odisha Assembly witnessed a marathon debate over the Odisha Universities Amendment Bill. The debate continued well past midnight and by 1 am only three clauses of the total 18 in the bill had been passed.

Minister Suryavanshi Suraj piloted the Bill. Opposition BJD members

had moved several amendments in as many as 12 clauses of the Bill Veteran Ranendra Pratap

Swain, Dr Arun Sahoo, Ganeswar Behera and others discussed each and every clause threadbear pushing

for their amendments.

3,996.34 crore remained unpaid. Despite the passage of six years since the court order, the government has not taken cations in target numbers. As stringent measures, such as

the target of 2,239. The report highlights major inefficiencies and misman-

agement in the utilization of OMBADC funds, raising concerns over the government's accountability in addressing the needs of mining-affected areas.

BJD Chairperson of Vyas Nagar municipality voted out by partymen

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE JAJPUR, 2 APRIL

The chairperson of Vyas Nagar municipality, Sangeeta Pingua 18 votes to succeed but ultiof the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) mately secured 20 against the lost a no-confidence vote chairperson. brought against her by her Kalinga Nagar Additional

own party on Wednesday, an District Magistrate Sapan official said. Kumar Nanda, also the return-As many as 20 of the total ing officer for the voting

26 councilors participated in the voting process.

At least six councilors including4 from BJD abstained from voting.

The polling for the no confidence vote began on Wednes-day. As many as 20 councilors,

16 from BJD and 4 from Congress reached the venue and all voted against Pingua. The opposition required

process said the chairperson

lost the no-confidence motion.

Nagar municipality, the BJD

has 20 members followed by

five of Congress's and one

In the 26-member Vyas

openly criticized her party's leadership, accusing them of reducing functionaries to 'rubber stamps'.

Political analysts observe that such a vote within the party underscores underlying tensions and aligns with broader dissent expressed by some members within the party's ranks. This is the third such incident in Vyas Nagar Municipality in the last 9 years. First no confidence motion against Vyas Nagar Municipality Chairperson Sabita Rout in 2016 and 2017 had failed when BJD councilors strategically

BJP councilor. Before the vote, Sangeeta abstained from voting.

Concern over shortage of professionals in medical rehab

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE BHUBANESWAR, 2 APRIL

The dire need to address the shortage of trained professionals in medical rehabilitation was emphasized at the National Convention on Autism held here by the department of social security and empowerment of persons with disabilities in collaboration with the Institute of Health Sciences (IHS), bringing together government officials, medical experts, and disability rights advocates on Wednesday.

Dr. Sharanjeet Kaur, Chairperson of the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI), addressed the global shortage medical rehabilitation. She stressed the need for expanding higher education programs in rehabilitation sciences and

National Convention on Autism hosted by SSEPD dept

pointed out the rewarding career opportunities in the field.

Anu Garg, Development Commissioner reassured the gathering of the government's ongoing support for the development of better rehabilitation infrastructure. She acknowledged the vital role of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in service delivery.

Bratati Harichandan, State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities, shared her extensive experience and advocated for joint initiatives of trained professionals in to advance the rights of persons with disabilities while Professor Satya Mahapatra, the founder of IHS, spoke of the increasing prevalence of autism and the

importance of strengthening support structures.

He also highlighted IHS's on-going research and its commitment to disability rehabilitation, manpower development in rehabilitation sciences, and allied health services.

Niyati Pattnaik, Director of SSEPD and Dr. Subhasmita Sahoo, Assistant Professor of Audiology at HIS conducted the proceedings. A technical session featured distinguished experts, including Dr. (Prof.) Saroj Arya from the National Institute for the Empowerment of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (Secunderabad), Dr. Nirmalya Mukherjee (Kolkata), and Dr. Neha Tiwari (Lucknow). They discussed the importance of early detection and a multidisciplinary approach to autism treatment and rehabilitation.

in abduction case **STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE** a ransom call demanding

BHUBANESWAR, 2 APRIL The Commissionerate Police on Wednesday arrested five

Five including girl held

persons in connection with said Prapti who lived with an alleged kidnapping case here as it panned out to be her brother may be aware a case of a live- in relationof the incident. ship turning soar and the Police found out that girl conspiring to abduct Somnath and Prapti had

the boy for ransom. The arrested accused have been identified as Prapti Sharma (23) of Jamshedpur, Rakesh Chandra Barik (33), Shyamsundar Sahoo (22), Sibaram Behera (28), Akash Parida (29) of Bhubaneswar.

The police investigations began on 1 April when one Anjita Nayak lodged a complaint saying she had received

& Bhadrak district Rs 10 lakh for the release of **STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE** her brother Somanath Swain BALASORE, 2 APRIL: (28). The kidnapper had used

Somanath's mobile to make Security measures have been the call. The complainant beefed up to ensure smooth celebration of Ram Navami in the sensitive areas of Bhadrak and Balasore districts.

DGI Eastern Range Satyajit been living together for Naik stated on Wednesday three years and on 30 March that at least 17 platoon police they had quarreled as he forces, three companies of suspected her of having an Central Armed Forces in Balaffair with another boy. asore along with 26 platoons Prapti narrated it all to her of police forces, one company of Central Reserve Police elder sister who informed her boyfriend Akash. Finally Force, a company of Border Akash and others kidnapped Security Force(BSF) and one Somanath and confined him company Rapid Action Force along with 10 to 15 drones The police rescued Somwill be engaged. State Crime Branch Special

DGP Vinaytosh Mishra

reviewed the law and order situation in the two districts and the arrangements that are to be made for the festival.

To enhance security, mobile patrolling teams, traffic control measures, and police deployment in every lane or path will be implemented. Ahead of Ram Navami, a special drive will be conducted to arrest warranted criminals, and non-bailable arrest warrants will also be issued, he further stated. In case of any complaints, the Rapid Action Force (RAF) will take immediate action. To manage large crowds, a one-way traffic sys-

tem will also be implemented, the DIG informed.

Security beefed up for Ram Navami in Balasore

nature lovers and have protected the nearby jungle over several years. In this case on 12 March a female elephant gave birth to a calf close to their village. There was a herd of six elephants which left after the calf was born. Villagers gathered to see the event in large numbers.

According to Arun Naik of the village after giving birth to the child the mother elephant took her calf to the nearby jungle which was photographed by villagers. Then the villagers decided to celebrate the 21st day as it is the practice in hindu families . All rituals were performed on 1 April praying for a long happy life to the calf. The villagers also named the calf as Budhaditya.

The mother and calf are near the Mandargiri forests, stated Naik. Angul forest range officer Hargobind Naik said that he was aware of the fact and the follow up celebrations in the village.



Paradip port retains spot at the top in cargo handling

in a hotel room.

nath.

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE PARADIP. 2 APRIL:

in FY 2024-25.

Paradip Port has retained its No. 1 position in cargo handling volume has grown by 111%, among India's major ports and has achieved a historic milestone by joining the exclusive 150 MMT club, recording fiscal year.

150.41 MMT cargo throughput Paradip Port also achieved a milestone in rail traffic during the last fiscal year. Despite market challenges such as a decline in iron ore The number of rakes handled export demand and coking by PPA grew by 5.32%, reachcoal imports, Paradip Port ing 22,818, while total railborne traffic increased by Authority (PPA) continues to 3.21%, hitting 81.01 MMT lead in cargo handling across both major and non-major the highest among all Indian ports on India's eastern coast. major ports. The port further Several system improvemade history by launching ment measures introduced EXIM container traffic, hanby the port this year have dling 12,711 TEUs last fiscal fueled this growth, noted the year. Additionally, PPA port authorities. Coastal cargo retained its No. 1 ranking in handling now constitutes berth productivity, achieving 42.36% of the total cargo vol-

an impressive 34,283 MT per ume, registering 7.65% yearday per berth.

Among PPA's terminal on-year (Y-o-Y) growth and reaching 63.71 MMT, making operators, Kalinga International Coal Terminal Pvt. Ltd. record-PPA the No. 1 Indian major port in coastal shipping. Addied 15.18% Y-o-Y growth, while tionally, containerized cargo Paradip East Quay Cargo Terminal Pvt. Ltd. registered while flux volume has increased 12.53% growth, achieving their by 32% Y-o-Y in the current highest-ever cargo volumes. It is pertinent to note that

> major expansion projects like construction of the 25 MMTPA Western Dock Project, executed by M/s JPPL, is progressing with the first phase scheduled for completion by 2026. Plans for a a new green hydrogen/ammonia export terminal are in the pipeline. P.L. Haranadh, Chairman of PPA, congratulated the entire team, including exporters, importers, officers, staff unions, PPP operators, stevedores, and shipping agents, whose collective efforts contributed to this remarkable achievement.



Manheld withover 21kgganja

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE ROURKELA, 2 APRIL:

The police have arrested one Sanjib Behera of Boudh district while another accomplice Rabi Rana managed to escape during a check on their vehicle and the recovery of over 21kg

of ganja. According to police on 1 April it received information that one person was smuggling ganja in a private car. Check points were immediately activated and vehicle checks were soon undertaken. It was during the checking that the vehicle of Behera and Rana was intercepted.

They were carrying a gunny bag packed with ganja weighing 21 kilograms 200 grams. Police seized the car and also two mobile phones from the arrested Sanjib.

Infant dies at child care home even as husband waits for custody

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE JAGATSINGHPUR, 2 MARCH:

The death of a 26-day-old infant in a child care institution here sparked a controversy here even as the family was waiting for the child to be handed over to them.

The situation arose when a25-year-old married woman, Sumitra Behera, identified herself as unwed at the hospital and handed over her newborn to the Child Welfare Committee (CWC), allegedly as an act of defiance against her in-laws. Sumitra Behera, posed as an unwed mother and concealed her husband;s name while admitting herself to the



District Headquarters Hospital (DHH) for delivery. Upon suspicion, DHH Superintendent Saroj Jena sought police and CWC intervention. Investigations later revealed that Sumitra was indeed married but had taken this step to sever ties with her husband, citing years

of domestic abuse. After delivery, she refused to hand over the child to her husband and in-laws and instead entrusted the newborn to the CWC for care and protection. Her husband, Chabbi Behera claimed that he had repeatedly approached CWC officials to gain custody of his son but was denied access. Today, when we came to

take him home, we were informed that he had died. This is shocking and heartbreaking, said Chabbi Behera. He alleged negligence on the part of the CWC, stating that the lack of timely medical care. District Child Protection

Officer Kanhu Charan Rout confirmed that Sumitra had initially declared herself unwed. "Five days later, our inquiry revealed that she was married. A man then claimed to be the father of the child, and verification was ongoing when the child passed away," he stated. Jagatsinghpur police have

registered an unnatural death case and sent the body for post-mortem.



TheStatesman BHUBANESWAR, THURSDAY 03 APRIL 2025



THUMBNAILS

Indo-U.S HADR amphibious exercise Tiger Triumph begins: The 4th edition of the bilateral joint Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) amphibious exercise between India and the United States of America- Tiger Triumph 2025 – started today with the opening ceremony conducted onboard the Indian Navy`s INS Jalashwa (L41). Showcasing the deepening convergence of U.S.-India strategic maritime interests and the countries` defense partnership, the joint exercise aims to further enhance the interoperability and combined joint alldomain operations during large-scale HADR operations. A joint statement issued by the Indian Navy`s spokesperson stated that the harbour phase of the exercise, underway at Visakhapatnam, involves a planning process for the execution of various training events at sea, as well as further refinement of procedures established in previous iterations of Tiger Triumph. In addition, the harbor phase will include training and Subject Matter Expert Exchange (SMEE) events on a range of professional subjects, such as special operations, emergency medical response procedures, and operations across the air, maritime, cyber and space domains.

Environment Ministry intervenes in HCU row

The ministry directed the Forest Department to take legal action in the case

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

HYDERABAD, 2 APRIL

he Union Ministry ofEnvironmentand Forest has intervened in the clearing of the 400 acres of forest land in Kancha Gachibowli for auction, demanding a factual report on the matter from the Telangana government.

The ministry directing the Forest Department to take legal action in the case under the provisions of the various forest Acts.

Meanwhile, the Telangana Police resorted to a lathi charge on students and faculty of the Hyderabad Central University (HCU) protesting against the government's decision to auction 400 acres of land at Kancha Gachibowli.

A letter to the additional secretary (Forests) of Telangana government from the assistant inspector general offorest, government of India, was shared by G Kishan Reddy, the Union minister for mines and the state BJP president.

INIVERSITY OF HYDERABAL

bowli Village, Ranga Reddy district of Telangana by the Telangana State Industrial

Infrastructure Corporation (TSIIC)," the letter sought a factual report and directed the Forest Department to take legal action under the provisions of Indian Forest Act, Wildlife Protection Act and Van Adhiniyam. The BJP MPs had sub-

students have been boycotting classes to organise protests against the state government. Meanwhile, the University

charge to disperse them. The

of Hyderabad Students' Union called for an indefinite strike at the university's administrative building. The students are upset with the university authorities for facilitating the presence of police personnel and clearing off the land. Meanwhile, the "Save HCU biodiversity" campaign on social media gained momentum. An online petition to save the rich biodiversity of Kancha Gachibowli has been initiated, which will be filed before the National Green Tribunal. It stated, "Famed for its ecodiversity, Kancha Gachibowli is not just a forest, but a green lung, a natural sink, making significant contributions to the overall air quality and ameliorating climate change impacts...We strongly request the concerned authorities to

IMRAN MOJIB PATNA, 2 APRIL

community.

government to control the Waqf properties by appointing roll back the proposed auction a non-Muslim CEO and giving of Kancha Gachibowli forest unlimited power to District Magistrates to decide about any property whether it is Waqf or not. But the detailed structure of the Waqf Board under the

Muslims in Bihar miffed at Nitish for supporting Waqf Bill

new law, as mentioned by

Union Minister of Parliamen-

tary Affairs Kiren Rijiju in the

parliament, shows that this

bill has become even more

dangerous for the commu-

in the parliament that now

Shia, Sunni, Bohra, backward

Muslims, women, and expert

Non-Muslims will also be

It is simply a prescription

for chaos in society. There is

there in the Waqf Board.

The minister announced

nity.



Muslims in Bihar are miffed at Chief Minister Nitish Kumar for his decision to support the contentious WaqfAmendment Bill 2025, which was tabled in the parliament on Wednesday. They said that the Bill is not just aimed at usurping Waqf properties in the country but is also aimed at sowing the seeds of discord between various sects of the

so much religious divide between Shia, Sunni and So far, the community members were under the Bohra communities that they impression that, if passed, rarely agree on any particular the new law will allow the point. That is why there are separate Waqf Boards for Sunni, Shia and Bohra communities. Making any arrangement to appoint representatives

will pave the way for the government to interfere and make a decision as per their whims and fancies.

Abdul Bari Siddiqui, a strong leader of the Rashtriva Janata Dal (RJD), warned against the catastrophic consequences.

He said that the Waqf Amendment Bill is against the Constitution. Muslims are being targeted through the Bill. This community will die but will not let go of its rights, he said.

The RJD leader further said that if the Bill was for the betterment of Muslim community, the government should have discussed it with Muslim community leaders. Their suggestions should have been included, but this was not done.

Prashant Kishore, the founder of Jan Suraaj Party, said that if the Waqf Bill is passed by the Parliament, then Nitish Kumar and Janata Dal (United) will be responsible for it. Muslims had a big contribution in making Nitish Kumar the Chief Minister in 2015; today Nitish Kumar is breaking the promise with them. Amending the Waqf Bill without the consent of the Muslim community will

cation mminister Dharmendra Pradhan. Meanwhile, a large contingent of police personnel

has been deployed near the east campus of the university, along with barricades, as earthmovers engaged in clearing the vegetation to level the ground. The faculty organised a protest rally today from Ambedkar Auditorium

Stating that the ministry came to know about the "illegal felling and removal of vegetation in Kancha Gachi-

mitted a memorandum to the Union Minister of Environment and Forest Bhupendra Yadav as well as Edu-

joined by the students raising slogans. As they attempted to breach the barricades, the police resorted to a lathi

Citizens have been protesting against the government's decision to auction the land offline and online.

land by TGIIC.'

from every sect of Muslim community on the Board is bound to make every Waqf property controversial, which

you (Modi) to increase it

be a violation of the promise made by the founding fathers of the Constitution to protect their rights, he said.

Court stops bike taxi services in Bengaluru

set of guidelines on the safety

and security aspects of two-

on Wednesday ordered the

suspension of bike taxi services

within six weeks, saying that

they cannot operate without

guidelines that the govern-

ment must frame. It has

directed the government to

ensure compliance with the

The orders relating to two-

court order.

The Karnataka High Court

wheeler taxi services.



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE BENGALURU, 2 APRIL

In several cities, motorcycle and scooter taxis run by aggregators like Uber, Ola, and Rapido provide commuters with a cheaper option, albeit slightly risky in terms of safety.

But in Bengaluru, they must cease operations within six weeks unless the government comes out with a specific

wheeler taxis came on a petition filed by taxi services aggregator Rapido, pleading for the registration of twowheelers as transport vehicles and the issuance of necessary permits under the Motor Vehicles Act.

> In its order, the court also asked the government to frame rules and regulations for bike taxi services within three months. The government maintained that twowheeler taxis were illegal and could not operate commercially.

Justice BM Shyam Prasad said the transport department cannot be compelled to register motorcycles as transport vehicles or issue contract carriage permits for bike taxis without a proper regulatory framework.

Which is why the aggregator petitioner has been asked to immediately cease operations. There needs to be regulatory clarity before allowing the services to resume, the court said.

Probe Committee finds no evidence against previous BJP regime

LAKSHMANA VENKAT KUCHI **BENGALURU, 2 APRIL**

The BJP in Karnataka has got a partial relief with the Justice Nagamohan Das Committee probing the alleged 40 per cent Commission finding no evidence in the allegations made by the Contractors association, though it said that the malaise of corruption was prevalent during the BJP regime that it examined.

Although, the one-man judicial commission that probed the charges of corruption against the previous government, said that corruption was deep-rooted in the system but it found no evidence of the charges of 40 percent commission being the norm for securing government contracts and passing of bills as alleged

by the contractors association before the previous Assembly elections.

In fact, the then opposition, Congress made corruption the central plank of its campaign and ran a very catchy and successful PayCM campaign and 40 per cent Sarkara against the BJP government and the campaign seemingly worked. It added to the overall push for the Congress to oust the BJP government and corruption became one of the crucial issues that played out in

the elections in 2023. The BJP as a party, and the then chief minister Basavaraj Bommai, had flatly denied the Congress charges then, but during the campaign, the charges stuck to them.

CM Revanth criticises PM for ignoring Telangana's BC Bills

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE HYDERABAD, 2 APRIL

Lashing out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi for ignoring the Bills to enhance reservation for backward classes (BCs), Telangana chief minister A Revanth Reddy today warned that their protests will spread like wildfire throughout the country. The BC Poru Garjana was held today at Jantar Mantar in Delhi, demanding the Centre's consent for the two Bills that were passed by the Telangana Assembly recently.

Addressing the gathering, the chief minister criticized the Prime Minister, wondering why the BC reservation bill of Telangana enhancing their reservation to 42 percent was being ignored. "We said we will increase BC reservation in our state. We did not ask

in his state... BC groups met BJP leaders demanding an increase in reservation according to the Assembly's resolution. But there was no response," said the chief minister, explaining why the rally was being held in New Delhi. Dubbing it to be a righteous war (dharma yuddha), he warned that the BJP will face a tough time if it does not give consent to the Bills passed by the Assembly. He said: "Don't try to dominate us. You have seen what hap-

pened to the Nizam rulers. You have seen what happened to the Andhra rulers." The chief minister also took a dig at Union minister for Home Affairs Bandi San-

jay Kumar. He said "Bandi

Sanjay said he will give his

life for BCs. We do not want

your life just increase the

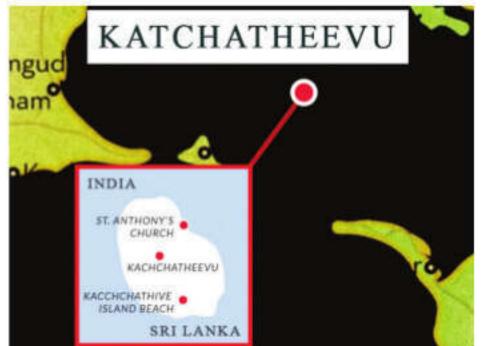
reservation for BCs." He

tions were allowed to be increased in Telangana, then "we will hold a meeting with ten lakh people and felicitate Prime Minister Narendra Modi." The Telangana Assembly has passed two Bills

also said that if BC reserva-

to increase BC reservations in local bodies, employment and education and the Congress demanded that the central government should approve the two Bills immediately. The BC leaders also demanded immediate nationwide caste census and 33 percent sub quota for BC women in legislatures. Key leaders from other Opposition parties, including AIMIM president and Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi, RJD MP Manoj Jha, and DMK MP Kanimozi, expressed solidarity with the BC protests.

Katchatheevu continues to haunt DMK, TN House passes resolution for its retrieval



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE CHENNAL 2 APRIL

More than half a century after the tiny rocky islet Katchatheevu in the Palk Strait was ceded to Sri Lanka, the Tamil Nadu Assembly passed a unanimous resolution demanding the Union government to retrieve it so as to protect the livelihood and traditional rights of Indian fishermen and secure

The resolution moved by Chief Minister MK Stalin received the support of all parties, including the BJP. Floor leaders of all parties spoke on retrieving the islet to protect the fishermen from being harassed and arrested by the island nation's Navy, which also impounded their boats.

The 285-acre barren uninhabited islet, which has a shrine to St Antony in the

and hydrocarbon-rich Wadge Bank down Kannyakumari. The issue continues to haunt the ruling DMK, as the party was in power under M Karunanidhi at the time. According to the reso-

lution, the retrieval of the islet alone could provide a lasting solution to safeguard the traditional fishing rights of the fishermen of Tamil Nadu's southern coast. Howthe release of fishers still strategic Palk Strait, was ever, observers and the Lankan side maintain that the arrest of Indian fishermen by the Lankan Navy happens off Katchatheevu as the marine wealth on

the Indian side has been depleted due to bottom trawling. Referring to Prime Minister Modi's upcoming visit to Sri Lanka on 4 and 5 April, the resolution urged him to hold talks with Colombo to secure the release of all incarcerated fishermen along with their boats on a goodwill basis. Besides demanding that the Union government mitigate the sufferings of the fisherfolk, it emphasised the need to review the 1974 and 1976 pacts with Colombo and take steps to retrieve the islet.

lution, Stalin said that despite the political change in Sri Lanka, there is no end in sight to the attacks on fishermen and accused New Delhi of forgetting that Tamil fishermen are also Indian fishermen and the state government had to repeatedly remind it. On the continued attacks on the fishermen, he said, "I have written 74 letters seeking intervention to prevent the attacks on our fishermen," and asked whether fishermen from other states were arrested like this would their governments remain silent? Referring to Modi's

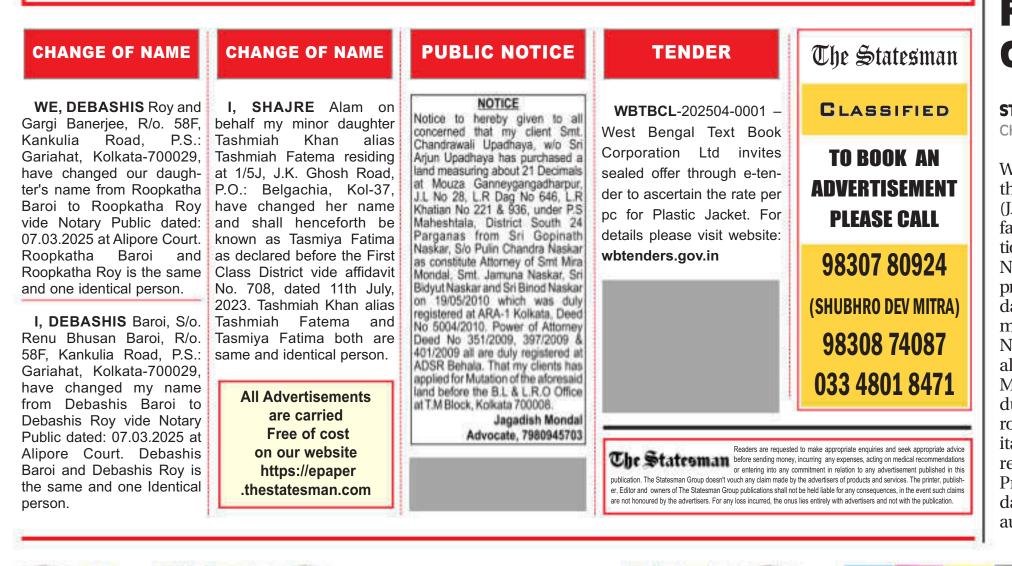
remarks in the run-up to the 2014 Lok Sabha polls that if the BJP formed the government, there would not be arrest of even a single fisherman, he said sadly, the attacks are continuing, A total of 530 fishermen were arrested by Lankan authorities and awarded jail term and enhanced penalty, he added.

Incidentally, a case filed by the late Chief Minister Jayalalithaa in the Supreme Court, seeking to annul the 1974 and 1976 pacts and retrieve Katchatheevu, is expected to come up for hearing shortly.

incarcerated in the island nation.

ceded to Sri Lanka in 1974 in exchange for the marine

While moving the reso-



Classified

Fair Delimitation: Stalin to lead delegation of MPs, seeks appointment with Modi

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE CHENNAI, 2 APRIL

Within a fortnight of hosting the Joint Action Committee (JAC) of non-BJP-ruled states facing the threat of population-based delimitation, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK president MKStalin on Wednesday sought an early appointment with Prime Minister Narendra Modi to meet him along with a delegation of MPs. To present a memorandum on the concerns surrounding the proposed delimitation, the Chief Minister had requested a meeting with the Prime Minister at an early date. "I write to request an audience with you, along with



to present a memorandum on delimitation that emerged from our recent deliberations,' says Stalin's letter to Modi, posted on his 'X' handle. Though shared on Wednesday,

the letter was written on 27 March. This followed the March 22 Joint Action Committee (JAC) meeting hosted by Tamil Nadu in Chennai in which Chief Ministers Pinarayi Vijayan (Kerala), Revanth Reddy (Telangana), Bhagwant Mann (Punjab), DK Shiva Kumar, Deputy Chief Minister of Karnataka, formerOdishaChiefMinister, and Biju Janata Dal chief Naveen Patnaik as well as leaders from the Congress, CPI, RSP, Kerala Congress, Jana Sena of Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister, and actor Pawan Kalyan participated. The JAC demanded a freeze on the delimitation exercise for another 25 years. It has also appealed to the Prime Minister to declare

this on the floor of Parliament. Prior to this, Stalin had convened an all-party meeting in Tamil Nadu, which was attended by nearly 50 registered political parties, barring the BJP.

"The voices emerging from our deliberations transcend political boundaries, embodying the concerns of citizens from diverse regions who seek fair representation in our parliamentary democracy. As this issue holds significant importance to our states and citizens, I kindly request a meeting with you to formally submit the Memorandum on behalf of the Joint Action Committee," the letter read, expecting a positive response at the earliest.









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THUMBNAILS

Jaipur blast conspiracy accused arrested: The Madhya Pradesh police have arrested Firoz Khan, the prime accused who had been absconding for three years in the 2022 case related to the conspiracy to carry out blasts in Jaipur, from Ratlam city in MP in the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday, said police officials. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) had declared Khan as the 'most wanted' accused in the case and had announced a reward of Rs 5 lakh on his head. According to Ratlam SP Amit Kumar, Firoz Khan was arrested from his sister's house in Ratlam based on a tip-off. The official said that the police received information that Khan would come to his sister`s house in Ratlam's Anand Colony. Based on the input, a police team nabbed Firoz Khan during the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday. The SP said the police were questioning Khan, and the NIA had been informed about his arrest. According to reports, on March 28, 2022, the police seized a huge quantity of explosive material from a four-wheeler in Nimbahera town in Rajasthan. The recovery of the explosives from Rajasthan in 2022 was part of a plan to carry out a blast in Jaipur.

NEP paves way for making a self-reliant nation: PM

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said the NEP has restored primacy to all Indian languages



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL**



renaissance, paving the way for a self-reliant, globally competitive nation through education and innovation.

Responding to a post by Union Education Minister

2020 as India's intellectual

education sector has undergone a historic transformation in the last decade. NEP 2020 is more than a reform; it is India's intellectual renaissance, paving the way for a self-reliant, globally com-

a decisive break from the "inglorious past" when cor-

ruption and governance deficit were the defining features of the country's educational system. The policy is not merely an education reform, it is the intellectual decolonisation that India had awaited for a long time, he said.

"Nothing could be further from the truth than the argument that the education system has veered offits course in the last decade," the education minister said and drew attention to an article he has written in a newspaper to showcase the "true picture" of India's educational transformation.

In the article, Mr Pradhan said the NEP has restored primacy to all Indian languages and knowledge traditions, overcoming the decades of 'English First' policies.

"The government remains focused on building a Viksit Bharat wherein education truly liberates and empowers. The decade ahead will witness an educational renaissance that honours India's past while fearlessly embracing the future. India's educational system has finally broken free from colonial shadows and ideological captivity. It stands poised to fulfil the dreams of Millions of Indias," the minister said.

Mr Pradhan said one of the primary objectives of the

Railway accidents declined to 81 in 2024-25 from 400 earlier, says Vaishnaw

TheStatesman

AGENCIES

BHUBANESWAR, THURSDAY 03 APRIL 2025

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

There has been a marked improvement in safety in the operations of Indian Railways, with the number of train accidents declining significantly to 81 in financial year 2024-25 from 400 earlier, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday.

Making a comparison with the tenure of earlier railway ministers during the erstwhile UPA regime, Vaishnaw said: "During Lalu Ji's time, there were around 700 accidents per year, during Mamata Ji's time, there were around 400 accidents, during Kharge Ji's time, there were around 385 accidents."

Speaking during Question Hour in the Lower House, the minister said that efforts were continuously being made to introduce technological and procedural changes and new training methods, to further reduce rail accidents in the country.

"In financial year 2024-25, which has just come to an end, the number has reduced

Thamizhachi Thangapandian about the lack of South Indian dishes offered on the Vande Bharat trains operating in Tamil Nadu, the Railway Minister said that a pilot scheme was being tested by Southern Railways.

from 400 to 81, there has been

a very significant improve-

on instances of delay in the

filing of FIRs related to crimes

on the railway network, the

minister said the Government

Railway Police of each state

and the Railway Protection

Force continuously hold dis-

cussions to coordinate action,

and the government has intro-

duced the system of filing

zero FIRs that will help address

to improve the regional pas-

senger experience, the Indian

Railways have proposed to

offer a variety of different

Indian cuisines on select trains.

by the Railway Minister in

the Lok Sabha during Question

by DMK's Sumathy

Hour on Wednesday.

This proposal was brought

In answer to a question

The minister also said that

the issues.

In answer to a question

ment," he remarked.

the past decade, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday hailed the National Education Policy (NEP)

Dharmendra Pradhan on X, the PM stated: "Union Education Minister Shri@dpradhanbjp highlights how India's

petitive nation through education and innovation."

Mr Pradhan, in his post, said the NEP 2020 represents

NEP is to correct structural inequalities inherited from centralised, rigid and elitist frameworks.

Rajasthan HC adjourns hearing on Asaram's bail plea: The Rajasthan High Court on Wednesday adjourned the hearing on a plea to extend the period of interim bail of Asaram Bapu, a convict in the rape case of a minor, until 7 April.

น่วาเล สิยุเสล ลี่สร 🙂 pnb punjob national bank PUNJAB NATIONAL BANK, CIRCLE OFFICE-BERHAMPUR (GANJAM), Siva Arcade, 2nd Floor, Tata Benz Square, Berhampur, Dist.: Ganjam, Odisha, PIN-760005 PREMISES REQUIRED

Punjab National Bank requires suitable ready built and well constructed hall type building having Carpet Area as per the measurements at various locations mentioned below on lease rental basis. Premises should be preferably in Ground Floor and i in first floor with lift facility

SI. No.	Name of the existing Branch at location	District	the location	Required sqft. Area for promises
1.	SARALAPADAR (281200),	GAJAPATI	RURAL	1200 To 1600

Premises offered should have all clearance certificates from statutory authorities. Interested owners / registered Power o attorney Holders of such premises in the desired locality who are ready to lease out their readily available premises on long term lease basis preferably for 15 years or more may send their offers in the prescribed format available on Bank's website www.pnbindia.in or the same may be obtained from the above address during office hours. The complete offer duly sealed 8 signed and should reach the undersigned on or before 16.04.2025 & 4.00 P.M. at the above address.

No brokerage will be paid by the Bank. Bank reserves the right to accept or reject any or all offers at its sole discretion without assigning any reasons whatsoever. Place: Berhampur, Date: 03.04.2025

Sd/- CIRCLE HEAD



APPLICATIONS ARE INVITED FOR APPOINTMENT

Union Bank of India Invites applications for the post of Financial Literacy Credit Counsellor for their PARALAKHEMUNDI centers from prospective candidates. The appointment shall be purely on Contract Basis for a period of one year.

The job involves creating Financial Awareness and Educating Common people through Financial Literacy Camps on Management of Money, Importance of savings, other facilities extended by Banks, benefits of borrowings from Banks, digital awareness, direct benefit transfer and other finance related issues in Rural and Semi Urban areas.

Eligibility:

 a) Age – above 35 Years and up to 64 Years – physically active with sound health and have aptitude for counseling with good communication skills

b) Education - Graduate

c) Retired/VRS opted bank employees will be preferred

d) Candidate having Banking Knowledge / Financial Services . having completed IIBF Certification Course to be considered.

e) Should be computer literate knowing basics and internet.

 Applicant should be resident of above specified District and must have knowledge of local language.

Remuneration: Fixed remuneration of Rs 20,000/- per month. NOTE: Selected candidates have to mandatorily provide a refundable security deposit of Rs 30,000/-

Interested candidates may apply with a NON Refundable fees of Re 1000/- in favor of "Regional Head, Union Bank of India, Regional Office Rayagada" payable at RAYAGADA (DD of any nationalized Bank is accepted)on a plain paper with full Bio data and experience if any.

The acceptance of application will remain open till such period minimum applications are received. Bank reserves the right to close or cancel the advertisement and accept or reject the applications without assigning any reason whatsoever. Address:

Regional Head, Union bank of India, Regional Office: Rayagada, 1st Floor Sri Vinayaka House, Besides MI Division, New Colony, Rayagada Phone : 06856291029

Regional Head

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s is a clear Modi gov- lecided to test loss of	Notice" published in The Statesman on 30.03.2025, the Branch name mentioned for Borrower: M/s Khushi Enterprises should be read as "Rahama Branch" instead of	Tangi, Bhubaneswar, Dist.: Khurda, PIN- 751002, Odisha declare by this Affidavit No.: 9276, dtd. 28.07.2008 that now onwards I shall be known as		CIRCLE SASTRA CEN E, 2ND FLOOR, BHARAT TIMBER COMPL Email Id: cs8190@pnb.co.in, Nodal Offic	EX, VIVEKANAND MARG,	BALASORE - 75	6001	
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to the people of the country what prompted the government to normalise relations with China while our territorial integrity remains "gravely said.

The party further said that the prime minister should take the people into confidence on this issue of national importance. Congress general secretary in-charge of Communications Jairam Ramesh on Tuesday noted that India's Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri and Chinese Ambassador Xu Feihong jointly cut a cake to celebrate the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between India and China. "President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minis Narendra Modi exchan greetings with their Chin counterparts, President Jinping and Premier Li Qia respectively. What takes cake is how this is a cl signal that the Modi g ernment has decided accept the greatest loss

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

Congress on Wednesday

demanded that Prime Minister

Narendra Modi should explain

NEW DELHI. 2 APRIL

compromised".



consistency in the prime minister's pusillanimous approach to China, the Conour brave soldiers made the

Indian territory in decades, surrendering over 2,000 sq km of land in Ladakh in the guise of disengagement," he Asserting that there is a

gress MP claimed that it started with the infamous public clean chit he gave to China when he declared "na koi hamari seema mein ghus aaya hai, na hi koi ghusa *hua hai*" on live television, only four days after 20 of

supreme sacrifice in Galwan on 15 June, 2020. "It continues today in the

Modi government's failure to safeguard our sovereignty

Congress questions PM on normalisation of ties

with China despite its incursion on Indian territory

while pursuing normalisation with China. More than four months after the signing of the disengagement agreement of 21 October, 2024, the Indian government has failed to assuage widespread

concerns that the agreement represents a major setback to India's territorial integrity and national interest," the parliamentarian said in a statement.

"Even amid the Chinese incursions on our sovereignty, our economic dependence on China continues to grow. Chinese imports have exceeded \$100 billion and are headed higher in 2024-25, with our

he claimed that the Chinese firms that agree to tie up with the PM's close friends are being rolled out a red carpet to enter the Indian market, even as India's jobgenerating MSMEs are being devastated by the onslaught of Chinese imports. "We reiterate our demand that the prime minister should

trade deficit vis-à-vis China

also hitting record highs,"

Without naming anyone,

he pointed out.

take the people into confidence on this issue of critical national importance and explain why we are normalising relations with China and deepening our economic dependence on them even as our territorial integrity remains so gravely compromised," added Ramesh.

4.2025 now
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AFFIDAV

No.

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Mohammaed Nadeem Dayan Mohammad, Res of Dwarstha Apartment,

Bhubaneswar, Dist-Khor Odisha, Pin-751002 de that by this Affidavit

Ground

AFFIDAVIT

I Ali Asger S/o Saifuddin Gohil, resident of Plot No-361/1900, Sarala Nagar, Haldiapada, Laxmisagar, Bhubaneswar, Dist- Khurda, Odisha, Pin-751006 Declare by this Affidavit No-1877, Date-15/02/2025, that now onwards I shall be known as Ali Asger Gohil for all Future purposes.

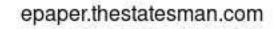
AFFIDAVIT

SUSHRITA SAMANTARA SAUMYARANJAN W/O SAMANTARA RESIDENT OF AT/PO- GOBARDHANPUR, JAGATSINGHPUR, PIN-754160 ODISHA DECLARE BY THIS AFFIDAVIT NO. 9075, DTD. 25/03/2025 THAT NOW ONWARDS I SHALL BE KNOWN AS SUSHRITA KHUNTIA FOR ALL PURPOSES.

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BHUBANESWAR, THURSDAY 03 APRIL 2025

TheStatesman

Incorporating and directly descended from THE FRIEND OF INDIA - Founded 1818

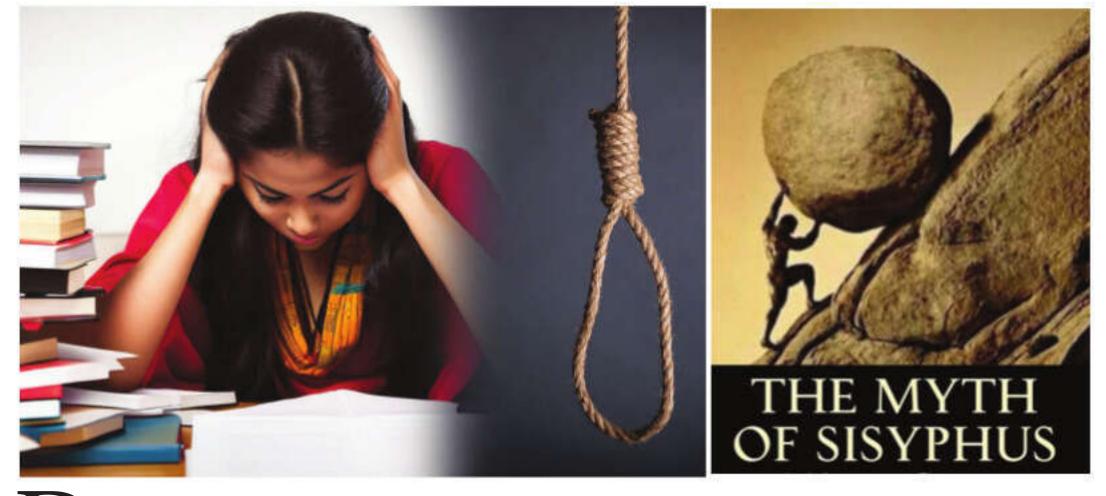
Powerful signal

rime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) headquarters in Nagpur is more than just a routine event ~ it is a powerful political signal. As the ideological fountainhead of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, the RSS wields considerable influence over the party's direction, policies, and electoral strategies. Mr Modi's visit, therefore, is not just symbolic but a reaffirmation of the deep-rooted ties between the government and the Sangh. This meeting with RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat comes at a crucial juncture, when the nation is on the cusp of another election cycle and the BJP faces both opportunities and challenges. The party has maintained a strong electoral presence, but with opposition forces regrouping and public discourse around governance and policy intensifying, Mr Modi's presence at the RSS headquarters could be seen as an attempt to consolidate ideological and organisational support ahead of the political battles to come.

The RSS has long been the backbone of the BJP's grassroots mobilisation efforts, ensuring electoral victories through disciplined cadre work and ideological propagation. It is no secret that many senior BJP leaders, including Mr Modi himself, have deep RSS roots. While the Prime Minister has, at times, sought to carve out a distinct image of governance focused on development and national security, the RSS remains an indispensable part of the broader political ecosystem that sustains the BJP. His visit signals that despite any apparent divergences, the government and the RSS remain aligned in their larger vision for the country. One must also consider the internal dynamics at play. Mr Modi's relationship with the RSS has seen phases of both synergy and strategic distance. While his government has championed policies that align with the Sangh's nationalist vision, it has also, at times, taken a pragmatic approach that diverges from traditional RSS positions. Economic reforms, foreign policy manoeuvers, and governance priorities have not always been in lockstep with the RSS worldview. This visit could be an effort to smooth over any differences, ensuring continued cooperation as the party and its parent prepare for future challenges. For Mr Bhagwat and the RSS leadership, Mr Modi's visit serves as an acknowledgment of the Sangh's enduring relevance. While the RSS does not directly participate in electoral politics, its influence is undeniable. By hosting the Prime Minister, Mr Bhagwat reiterates that the organisation remains central to shaping the ideological and strategic discourse of the ruling dispensation. Ultimately, the visit to Nagpur is a reminder that in Indian politics, ideological anchoring is as important as electoral arithmetic. Mr Modi's visit to the RSS headquarters underscores the symbiotic relationship between the party and its ideological mentor. Whether this is a show of strength or a necessity dictated by the political moment, one thing is clear ~ the RSS continues to hold significant sway over the country's political trajectory.

Life and Death~II

Because ultimately we live for others, just as much as we live for ourselves – through our work and lives – in our professions and at home. We are constantly spending every bit of our lives, our time and energies thinking about others' well-being. And therefore, our lives can never be entirely ours – our presence, our existence is so intertwined with those of our near ones, and theirs in ours, and that our lives can never be thought of in isolation. And therefore it cannot be our decision to end it either



aniel Kahneman, a dari, once again, writes, "If our Gallup and the UN Sustainable think positively. In the preface

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A model of innovation for cities

Tiong'an New Area, established as a national-level district, following the **L** example of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone and Shanghai Pudong New Area, is a key initiative of national significance. Its development is a major strategic decision made by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China with General Secretary Xi Jinping at its core, to advance the coordinated development of Beijing, Tianjin, and Hebei province.

Xiong'an is designed to play the role of an important engine for the region's development by absorbing Beijing's non-capital functions and promoting innovation. With a forward-thinking vision, Xiong'an adheres to international standards and the new development philosophy, laying the foundation for high-standard, modern urban construction in the new era. Xiong'an New Area's innovation-driven development strategy is focused on institutional reforms, technological breakthroughs and systemic optimization. It strives to unleash its potential through institutional improvements, and focus on technological development which is at the heart of its future growth.

French turmoil

he decision to bar Marine Le Pen from running for public office for five years is nothing short of seismic for French politics. With her far-right National Rally (RN) gaining ground over recent years, Ms Le Pen's absence from the 2027 presidential race reshapes the political landscape in ways that are both predictable and unpredictable. While legal consequences must apply to all politicians equally, the broader implications of this ruling raise pressing questions about democracy, political strategy, and the future of France's right-wing populism. Ms Le Pen's conviction for misappropriating European funds and her subsequent sentencing, including a prison term and financial penalties, reinforce the principle that no politician is above the law. At the heart of the case was a system of using European Parliament funds to pay staff who worked primarily for RN, an act deemed as fraud by the courts.

The ruling sends a strong message about accountability, particularly in an era when public trust in institutions is fragile. However, the immediacy of her disqualification ~ despite the possibility of appeal ~ introduces concerns about judicial influence over political processes, especially since past cases involving French politicians allowed more time before a ban took effect. The most immediate consequence of this ruling is the leadership vacuum within RN. Ms Le Pen was widely seen as the far-right's strongest candidate for 2027, with polls suggesting she could have mounted a formidable challenge to centrist governance. Now, her party must either rally behind a successor, most likely Jordan Bardella, or risk losing momentum. Mr Bardella, as RN's president, has positioned himself as a charismatic and competent figure, but whether he can command the same level of personal loyalty and electoral success remains uncertain. The ruling may force RN to accelerate its transition into a broader populist movement rather than relying on the Le Pen family brand. But this decision doesn't only affect the far right. French democracy itself now faces an intense debate on whether judicial rulings should have the power to reshape elections. Figures from both the left and the right, including Mr Jean-Luc Mélenchon and Mr Laurent Wauquiez, have expressed unease about a judge's decision effectively removing a popular politician from electoral contention. Their concerns tap into a larger question: should the electorate alone have the power to remove leaders, or is judicial oversight necessary to safeguard democracy from corruption? Ms Le Pen and her supporters will undoubtedly frame this as a political persecution, fuelling anti-establishment sentiment. When populist rhetoric thrives on narratives of victimhood and elite suppression, this ruling could backfire. Rather than diminishing RN's influence, it might galvanise its base, reinforcing the belief that the system is rigged against them. If the party can effectively channel this grievance into electoral gains in the legislative elections, the French political establishment may find itself facing an even stronger far-right movement.

Nobel laureate in Economics, died by assisted suicide (according to Wikipedia, "Assisted suicide, also known as physician-assisted suicide (PAS), is the process by which a person, with the help of others, takes drugs to end their life) on 27 March 2024, three weeks after his 90th birthday, in Switzerland (a country where PAS is legal). In fact he went to Switzerland... to die.

He had earlier written an email where he said: "I have believed since I was a teenager that the miseries and indignities of the last years of life are superfluous, and I am acting on that belief. I am still active, enjoying many things in life (except the daily news) and will die a happy man. But my kidneys are on their last legs, the frequency of mental lapses is increasing, and I am ninety years old. It is time to go."

Who are we to decide when it's time to go? Because, after all, our lives are not entirely ours. Had Kahneman's children hugged him closely and made him feel loved and wanted in spite of his ailments, would he still wish to go? Would he still have gone?

Because ultimately we live for others, just as much as we live for ourselves ~ through our work and lives ~ in our professions and at home. We are constantly spending every bit of our lives, our time and energies thinking about others' well-being. Poet Sunil Bhandari writes, "Because the fact is that our breath, our life, is also a collective. We are made of the efforts, the hope springs, the heart carvings, the soul bindings, the body cravings, the thought mouldings of all who love and care for us. We start being someone and then are slowly changed and created out of what others see us as. What might start as an opinion, an illusion, starts getting recre-

ated. We then are what we make of ourselves, but are also deeply vented and grooved by what our world thinks of us.'

And therefore, our lives can never be entirely ours ~ our pre- Denmark, Iceland and Sweden sence, our existence is so inter- remain the top four and in the twined with those of our near ones, and theirs in ours, and that our lives can never be thought of in isolation. And therefore it cannot be our decision to end it either. In the same vein, Bhan-

presence makes a difference to the lives of someone else, we are not only our own. If our mere breath gives solace to someone else, we are not our own. If mere presence, without words, without effort, makes someone's life feel complete, then our life is not merely ours."

And we have also seen instances of how hard ending one's life could be. One is reminded of Somerset Maugham's famous short story, The Lotus Eater (a reference to the Lotus eaters of

Greek Mythology who led a life of indolence), where the protagonist gives up his job in London to spend his life in a small cottage on the island of Capri. He arranged his finances in a way that he would be able to support

himself for a fixed number of years (till he is sixty years old), with the assumption

die naturally, and after having sold his assets was still unable to make ends meet, and so decided to end his life. He shut himself up in his cottage and lit a charcoal fire to fill the room with carbon monoxide. But somehow with ample leakages, his suicide attempt seemed halfhearted and it failed. He survived but with grave brain damage and lived out the remainder years of his life in a deplorable state. Maugham therefore wanted to show that it wasn't easy to end one's life. The other day there was an

article in *The Statesman* that said Finland is named the happiest country in the world for the eighth year in a row, according to the World Happiness Report 2025. Other Nordic countries are once again at the top of the happiness rankings. Finland,

Development Solutions Network. "Happiness isn't just about wealth or growth ~ it's about trust, connection and knowing people have your back," said Jon Clifton, the CEO of Gallup. "If we want stronger communities and economies, we must invest in what truly matters: each other.'

"Researchers say that beyond health and wealth, some factors that influence happiness sound deceptively simple - sharing meals with others, having

somebody to count on for social support, and household size. In Mexico and Europe, for example, a household size of four to five people predicts the highest levels of happiness, the study said.

Believing in the kindness of others is also much more closely tied to happiness than previously thought, ac-

cording to the latest findings. As an example, the report suggests that people who believe that others are willing to return their lost wallet is a strong predictor of the overall happiness of a population.

So one must find the light at the end of the tunnel ~ would families survive if their friends and relatives reached out to them, if they reached out to their friends and relatives? In earlier days with joint families, and societies being much more closely knit, much more supportive of one's kin and neighbours, it would be hard to imagine circumstances where entire families could choose to end their lives.

The growing importance of virtual friendships and relationships no doubt add fuel to the flames of isolation and loneliness. Solitude and depression become a commonplace circumstance instead of being of rare occurrence. Virtual existences, instead of binding and bringing people closer in warm bonds of camaraderie, in physical proximity to each other and in forging genuine relationships, fan the frosty breeze of separation and solitariness.

to The Myth of Sisyphus, he writes, "The fundamental subject of The Myth of Sisyphus is this: it is legitimate and necessary to wonder whether life has a meaning; therefore it is legitimate to meet the problem of suicide face to face. The answer, underlying and appearing through the paradoxes which cover it, is this: even if one does not believe in God, suicide is not legitimate. Written fifteen years ago, in 1940, amid the French and European disaster, this book declares that even within the limits of nihilism it is possible to find the means to proceed beyond nihilism. In all the books

I have written since, I have attempted to pursue this direction. Although The Myth of Sisyphus poses mortal problems, it sums itself up for me as a lucid invitation to live and to create, in the very midst of the desert."

And hence, concluding in words of Camus again:

"I leave Sisyphus at the foot of the mountain! One always finds one's burden again. But Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that negates the gods and raises rocks. He too concludes that all is well. This universe henceforth without a master seems to him neither sterile nor futile.

"Each atom of that stone, each mineral flake of that nightfilled mountain, in itself forms a world. The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart.

"One must imagine Sisyphus happy."

So life may be a desert, but it is up to us to create forests in it, we may be given a huge stone to roll up a mountain knowing very well that it will roll back, but it is we who will have to accomplish the feat, it's we who will have to arrange to have meals together, and look out for each other, it's we who will have to return lost wallets and show kindness to others, it's we who will have to feel the breeze and the sun on our skin and start living, start wanting to live like the toad and all living beings, it's we who will have to stop being lotus eaters and start seeking like meaningfully, not just spending it like a burden. It is up to us to be happy Sisyphuses.

Xiong'an has implemented bold and pioneering reforms, es-

CHINADAILY

tablished a streamlined, efficient management structure, introduced a unified administrative and political office system, and adopted a flat management mechanism. These measures are aimed at improving governance efficiency and ensuring smoother operations. The area is also exploring innovative personnel management practices, such as establishing institutions without administrative levels or staffing restrictions, which provide flexibility for key areas of work.

The new area is focusing on nurturing high-tech industries by attracting quality research and innovation resources from Beijing. With the establishment of research platforms such as the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Xiong'an Institute of Innovation and China Telecom's Xiong'an Smart City Industrial Park, the area has attracted top-tier talents and innovation projects, creating a dynamic ecosystem for technological advancement. Throughout its development, Xiong'an has integrated cutting-edge digital technology and smart infrastructure to build a smart city. For instance, the Beijing-Xiong'an intercity railway employs BIM(building information modeling) for 3D digital management, and big data and cloud computing to ensure intelligent operations.

The city has achieved full 5G network coverage and built smart systems like the "City Brain", greatly enhancing urban governance and integrating technological innovation into every aspect of its construction and management. A key mission of Xiong'an is to absorb Beijing's non-capital functions, such as universities, research institutions, high-end medical facilities, corporate headquarters and financial institutions.



The writer is Associate ofessor, Economic Research **Unit, Indian Statistical** Institute, Kolkata

that he would either die naturally by then, or commit suicide. It turned out that he did not

editor@thestatesman.com



same order.

Country rankings were based on answers people give when asked to rate their own lives. The study was done in partnership with the analytics firm

But Camus urges us to

(*Concluded*)



BANERJEE NAMITA — Remembering you silently in tears. — Son Amales, Daughter-in-law Alpana, granddaughter Sreya.

TETTERS TO THE EDITOR Insulate the campus

SIR, The article "Crisis on campus" (23 March) by Amrita Banerjee expresses serious concern over increasing radicalisation at Jadavpur University campus and calls for concrete action to check its detrimental impact on academic life, institutional integrity and societal advancement.

Ideally, university education serves as a beacon of intellectual freedom, critical thought and cul-



ture of debate and discussion that inculcates a sense of dissent, tolerance and mutual respect. It prepares students to solve crucial problems of society and work for the progress and development of mankind in an increasingly competitive world. The recent incidents of student violence and insecurity at one of the premier institutions of higher learning in the country are symptomatic of the growing academic malaise on campuses across the country.

Apart from growing materialism, deterioration in moral and religious values, aggressive behaviour generated by social and mainstream media, and devaluation of liberal arts, social sciences and humanities, Indian uni-

versities today suffer from disproportionate political interference and polarisation. The politicallyaffiliated students promote party agendas rather than individual development. Instead of progressive student activism as witnessed before and after Independence, they indulge in physical clashes, disgraceful rowdyism, damage public property, and disrupt public life, raising concerns about safety and well-being of students, faculty, staff and visitors. This vicious culture of violence severely impacts academic autonomy and diversity of thought, stunts the intellectual, psychological and emotional growth of students, erodes teachers' respect, weakens the university's self-governance ability, undermines its reputation when it fails to create the best of human resources

DEADLY

SIR, A contractor allegedly employed a 16-year-old boy to clean a water tank at a housing society in Thane. The boy died from an electric shock while doing the job on March 20.

This incident laid bare two deadly menaces ~ namely the prevalence of child labour and the deadly working conditions. Often, workers are forced to work without adequate safety equipment. As a result, deaths after falling from scaffolding or while cleaning a tank or in a tunnel happen frequently in India.

Lack of teeth in labour laws and a callous attitude towards the implementation of even the existing ones make the lives of workers most vulnerable.

Yours, etc., Sujit De, Kolkata, 30 March.

including quality educators, doctors, engineers and researchers, and makes the higher education system inefficient.

The universities should be insulated from partisan politics to provide them greater autonomy in academic, administrative,

and financial matters, and make them a bastion of free speech, academic freedom, and the marketplace of ideas which are essential for a vibrant democracy and sustainable future.

> Yours, etc., D S Kang, Hoshiarpur, 28 March.





Of women's rights and global chauvinism

VITIT MUNTARBHORN

Women's rights and their role as bridge-builders today, connecting between the multilateral and local settings? A recent seminar at the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), hosted by its International Studies Center, elaborated upon the situation in a world witnessing tumultuous changes.

Notably, there has never been a woman UN Secretary General, nor, for Thailand, a woman Minister of Foreign Affairs. Less than 20 per cent of key politicians at the national and local levels in this country are women. Yet, there has been some progress due to welcome changes of laws, policies and practices, such as the country's Gender Equality Act. Of course, the country's Prime Minister is a woman, but the fate of her aunt, also a PM, overturned by a coup d'etat, should not be overlooked.

The fickleness of international and national politics interplays with the fate of women's rights, especially their implementation. Currently, the post-World War II multilateral framework is being compromised, if not dismantled, by rampant nationalismcum-transactionalism, with an introspective vibe at the apex of the superpower level. There is an ideological undercurrent which seeks to stifle a more liberal interpretation of women's rights and to upstage the gains which have been enjoyed by all, including the impetus from the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Beware of the rambunctious chauvinism emanating from key international players, whether in peace or in war!

times. The most prominent instrument safeguarding women's rights is the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

The CEDAW Committee which supervises the treaty's implementation has been broadminded to interpret women's rights to cover sexual orientation and gender identity, shaping welcome space also for lesbians and transgender communities. A couple of years ago, it ruled in a seminal case concerning a South Asian country that an old colonial law prohibiting same sex relations between women was in breach of the CEDAW's anti-discrimination provisions. This is complemented well by Thailand's most recent reform with a marriage equality law enabling same sex marriages.

That openness to change needs to be well protected. If there are cracks in the nodes of multilateralism today, the advocacy to sustain and strengthen advances on the part of humanity needs to be astutely supported. The CEDAW remains important. The SDGs, especially their targets to eradicate gender-based violence and discrimination, are value added for global and national programmes propelling gender-transformative change.

Special Procedures under the UN Human Rights Council emerging from the UN Charter, rather than from a human rights treaty such as the CEDAW.

What has this Working Group recommended to Thailand? Among a myriad number of findings, some are particularly significant. In the field of civil and political rights, it called upon the Thai authorities to address more the issue of gender-based violence and harassment against women politicians and other members of the public, together with more women's gateways to the top of the power stratum.

It expressed concern as regards Strategic Litigation against Public Participation (SLAPP) against women human rights defenders (WHRD), especially "the charges brought against at least 470 WHRDs for participating in pro-democracy activities since July 2020 and (it) urges the Government to refrain from suppressing their freedom of expression and assembly and to ensure their protection in accordance with international



blockage from a male-dominated religious hierarchy. With regard to the new marriage equality law, it advised that if a person has reached the age of 18, permission from the parents to marry should not be needed. former is that it is based on too much mediation without accountability, while the loophole of the latter is that it is constrained by national security and religious grounds. The country also needs a comprehensive anti-

100 YEARS AGO OCCASIONAL NOTE

TheStatesman

BHUBANESWAR, THURSDAY 03 APRIL 2025

A JARRING note in the chorus of congratulations which has hailed the achievement of Sir Sefton Brancker, and the selection of Karachi as the main air depot for India, is struck by Commander Burney, M.P., the originator of the Empire airship mail and passenger service scheme, and also the inventor of the plan for carrying passengers inside instead of outside the giant envelope of the airship. "Personally," he declared to an Australian newspaper representative the other day, "I disagree with the Air Ministry's plans for an airship service calling at Egypt, Karachi, Bombay, Calcutta, Rangoon, and Singapore." The Commander would prefer an arrangement with stops only at Baghdad, Colombo, Freemantle, and Wellington. This plan would enable Freemantle to be reached in six and a half days, and Wellington in nine days from London. He would not, however, leave India entirely in the cold-metaphorically speaking. Night flying aeroplanes would carry the mails to distant parts of India and Australia; but so far as Commander Burney is concerned, Karachi might whistle for such a thing as passengers by airship.

S NEWS ITEMS

PACT OF THE FIVE POWERS FRANCE & ENTRY OF GERMANY

(" TIMES ? WECIAL SERVICE.) LONDON, APRIL 1.

THE Italian attitude towards the Security problem would seem to coincide with that of the British, declares the Rome correspondent of The Times. The Government strongly favours a five- power pact between Britain, France, Italy, Belgium, and Germany. This, it is believed, would be best accomplished by the four first-named states agreeing among themselves on the main lines governing the Pact, and thereafter inviting Germany to subscribe to the agreement. The French Government's view, states The Times Paris correspondent, is that the opening of security negotiations with the idea of the inclusion of Germany, should be conditional upon the receipt of satisfactory information regarding the following points : • Germany must define her new attitude towards the League of Nations. • If she is admitted at Geneva, is she prepared to assume all obligations connected therewith? Is she still bent on securing an Austrian reunion?

The global community and friends of women's rights need to be more strategic in these fluctuating To this should be added the need to realign global partnerships and alliances so that beyond the superpower realm, countries of the middle to higher power spectrum must cooperate more resolutely to overcome the assistance-cum-protection vacuum.

Interlinking between the multilateral and the local, there was the visit to Thailand by the UN's Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls at the end of 2024 whose advice needs to be better disseminated. This Group is one of the

human rights standards."

On the economic front, the Group called for more participation of women at the top of the employment ladder, supporting action to share the multiple loads of women in housework, child care, and workplace, with an assurance of equal wages. While recognizing a high proportion of women in education, it encouraged more space for women in the science and technology field.

On family and social matters, it underlined discrepancies in the Thai nationality law and the challenge of early marriage among girls in parts of the country, coupled with polygamy in Southern Thailand. It can be added that there are no women religious judges and there remains the The advent of climate change and environmental degradation takes its toll among women and the Group advised a gender-responsive approach to climate-related mitigation and adaptation. It then singled out the issue of intersectionality whereby women and girls are affected multiply via a variety of statuses and situations, including disabilities, security in Thailand's Southern Provinces, women in detention, refugee, migrant and displaced women, ethnic minority and indigenous women, gender diverse and older women.

Finally, it called for adjustments to ensure that the existing domestic violence law and the gender equality law comply with international standards. The weakness of the discrimination law.

Those propositions will doubtlessly be re-visited when the country next appears before the CEDAW Committee, tentatively in 2025. Ostensibly, women's rights and roles as bridgebuilders of peace, human rights, democracy and sustainable development, connecting between multilateral/international standards and local wisdom, are at the heart of every society, without exception. And navigating the uncharted course of the future will invite not only dexterity and creativity but also empathy for all.

(The writer is Professor Emeritus at Chulalongkorn University and a UN Special Rapporteur under the UN Human Rights Council who wrote Thailand's first report for the CEDAW.)

> Germany must also state her real intentions with regard to her eastern frontiers. France cannot tolerate any tinkering with the Polish frontier, which cannot be altered without Poland's free consent.

ELECTIONS LULL GERMAN PARTIES FAIL TO COMPROMISE

("TIMES" SPECIAL SERVICE.) LONDON, APRIL 2.

THE nomination of Herr Marx remains, so far, the only definite move in the German elections.

No progress has been made with the suggestion that the Centre party should join the Right element in support of a common candidate, and thus defeat the Socialists. The Press of the Centre party opposes the plan, and the Right Section appears divided, not only on this particular issue, but on the campaign generally.

EX-OFFICER'S TRIAL

DESERTION CHARGE AGAINST FRENCH COMMUNIST

PARIS, MAR. 31.

THE trial opened to-day at Orleans, before a court-martial, of ex-Captain Sadoul, an erstwhile French Communist, who was sentenced to death in 1919 for communicating intelligence to the enemy, but who is now a naturalized Russian. On the application of the prosecution, all charges against him, except that of desertion, were withdrawn. Sadoul, who is an ex-barrister, conducted his own defence. He emphasized his services to France whilst in Russia and described himself as one of the pioneers of the Franco-Russian rapprochement. The hearing was adjourned.

Culture wars that reshape societies

LEE BYUNG-JONG

nyone who grew up watching Disney's classic animated film Snow White might find Lits recent live-action remake jarring. The fair-skinned Snow White of the original has been replaced by Rachel Zegler, a Latina actress with a darker complexion. The princess is no longer a passive damsel awaiting rescue by a prince but an assertive heroine who fights the Evil Queen and forges her own destiny. These changes have sparked a heated debate in the US. Some praise the remake for promoting racial diversity and challenging gender stereotypes, while others argue it strays too far from the original, embracing political correctness to an extreme.

This controversy highlights the growing cultural polarization in the US, exacerbated by President Trump's opposition to progressive ideals. Preaching traditional family values, Trump has waged a culture war against so-called "wokeness," which promotes diversity, equity and inclusion. Since taking office, he has issued a series of executive orders aimed at reversing progressive policies of the past. For instance, he has threatened to defund universities that allow transgender women to compete in women's sports. Trump has also pushed to revoke birthright citizenship for children of undocumented immigrants, despite constitutional protections.

correctness in the US has gone too far. In Snow White, for example, some critics have labelled the prince's kiss on the sleeping princess as sexual harassment due to a lack of consent — an argument many find excessive. Similarly, transgender athletes competing in women's sports often retain biological advantages, raising concerns about fairness. Additionally, some women engage in "birth tourism," entering the US late in pregnancy to secure citizenship for their children, who sometimes later serve as "anchor babies" for family members seeking green cards.

Despite these issues, Trump's policies challenge the fundamental principles of the US, a nation built by immigrants. The first English settlers were, in fact, undocumented immigrants. Many believe the country's racial and cultural diversity has been a key to its strength and prosperity. They warn Trump's nativist and ethnocentric policies can stifle its dynamism. On a practical level, mass deportations of undocumented immigrants could also harm industries like agriculture and construction, which rely on their cheap labour.

The culture war is not unique to

diverse and multicultural. As birth rates plummet and the population shrinks, Korea faces an urgent need to accept more immigrants.

The number of foreigners in Korea is steadily rising. Last year, they made up a record 4.9 per cent of the total population, up from 3.8 per cent in 2021. That figure is expected to surpass 5 per cent this year, the threshold for multicultural status set by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Analysts predict it will reach 7 per cent by the early 2040s. Immigration could help offset Korea's declining population, which has fallen by 500,000, or about 1 per cent, over the past five years.

Yeongam County in North Gyeongsang Province exemplifies the crisis. Each year, only about 25 babies are born in that county, while around 300 people die. Over the past two decades, the county's population has plummeted by 25 per cent to just 15,000 - the lowest among all Korean counties. In a desperate effort to reverse this trend, local officials recently announced plans to invite about 40 Myanmar refugees currently living in Thai border camps under UN protection. Authorities believe the refugees' Confucian and Buddhist traditions will help them integrate into Korean society. As Korea grows more multicultural, social tensions are emerging. In the southern city of Daegu, a plan to build an Islamic mosque has faced fierce local opposition, with residents staging a pork barbecue protest and



prominently displaying a pig's head — an overt insult to the Islamic religion. Foreign brides often struggle with language and cultural barriers, and marriages have high rates of domestic violence and divorce. Meanwhile, foreign workers frequently report discrimination at workplaces and poor working conditions.

But Korea's cultural divisions extend beyond race and immigration. Sharp divides based on gender, generation, region and religion have fueled internal conflict. Young women, particularly in their 20s and 30s, overwhelmingly support progressive ideals and the opposition Democratic Party, while young men lean conservative and favour the ruling People Power Party. The longstanding regional rivalry between the liberal southwestern Jeolla provinces and the conservative southeastern Gyeongsang provinces remains strong, often leading to mutual animosity. Religious divides also

contribute to tensions, with Christians generally holding more conservative views than non-Christians.

In many ways, Korea is beginning to resemble the US, where political and ideological confrontations deepen cultural rifts. Elections are increasingly decided along gender, generational and ideological lines. Recent protests over President Yoon Suk Yeol's impeachment illustrate this stark divide. Opponents of impeachment include Christians, young men and south-eastern residents, while supporters include a lot of young women and people from the southwest.

Already divided from North Already divided from North Korea, South Korea cannot afford further internal fractures. As the country navigates its evolving identity, finding common ground will be essential to maintaining national unity.

NO-293095

To some extent, Trump's actions resonate with those who feel political

CROSSWORD

US.

the US. As societies advance, they inevitably become more multicultural, leading to internal tensions and conflicts. South Korea, while still largely homogeneous compared to the US or Europe, is experiencing similar challenges. With an influx of foreign workers and brides, Korean society is becoming increasingly

The Korea Herald/ANN.

It is expected that the trial will last a week. The Police are adopting stringent measures to prevent any disturbances.

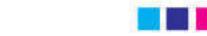
COMMONS BY RADIO

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE PROPOSAL DROPPED

THE political correspondent of The Times understands that Mr. Baldwin has dropped the proposal to appoint a Parliamentary committee on the subject of broadcasting Parliamentary affairs. The matter will probably he discussed later in the year when the whole position of broadcasting comes up for review.

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 4 5 6 7 8 5 6 7 8 4 5 6 7 8 5 6 7 8 4 5 6 7 8 5 6 7 8 1 Hold out something that looks like a foot (4) 1 Hold out something that looks like a foot (4) 14 Power supplied by energy source in sudden intake (4) 25 Perverse high lunar tide swamping loch 16 Church in Spain covered in material tide swamping loch 13 Head of college in take (4) 14 Head of college in take (4) 14 Head of college in take (4) 15 Head of college in take (4) 16		144 mil	 				1.1 1.4					-		
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1 1		22		23		20	6	O O O O V V N A M B U S H S T A M P E D E B N I O P V A M P E D E W A R D D I P L O O C U S T L E H L O O C U S C A S I N O I R O N C L A D N N U S G O U G V S T A G E S T Y O R K E R	often subject to examination (10) 12 Somewhat obscure regarding US singer and curtailed repeat appearance (9)	 foreign party? (9) 20 Petty restrictions placed around car accessory (4) 21 Was keen about retaining revolutionary live work on program (5) 	laughing matter, perhaps (4) DOWN 1 Island native, flightless bird, going between both sides (5)	7 8	Cryptic behaviour? I cite Nimrod's puzzling (12) Old safety mechanism is valuable (2,3) Apply solvent to uninteresting carbon prop (3-5)	 22 Advertising expenditure? (5) 23 Ill-bred fellow caught having fling (5) 24 Vacuous compassion I expressed after the writer tumbled over (5)



















PMtolaunch₹2,500 crprojects in Varanasi on 11 April

The Prime Minister is expected to stay in his constituency for about four hours



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE VARANASI, 2 APRIL

ime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to visit his parliamentary constituency, Varanasi, on 11 April, during which he will lay the foundation stone and inaugurate projects

crore.

Officials here on Wednesday said that preparations for the PM's visit have begun. The Prime Minister is expected to stay in his constituency for about four hours. However,

(PMO) has yet to release the

worth approximately Rs 2,500 official schedule.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister YogiAdityanath is also scheduled to visit Varanasi tomorrow to inspect the projects that will be inaugurated and those whose foundations will be laid by the Prime Minister. the Prime Minister's Office

The Chief Minister will also visit the Mehndiganj Ground, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is also scheduled to visit Varanasi tomorrow to inspect the projects that will be inaugurated and those whose foundations will be laid by the Prime Minister.

where the PM is slated to address a public meeting. Additionally, CM Yogi will inaugurate a Ram temple in the Kashmiriganj Khojwan area tomorrow.

Officials stated that among the projects to be launched, projects worth Rs 600 crore will be inaugurated, while the foundation stone will be laid for projects worth Rs 1,900 crore.

The Prime Minister will inaugurate a project worth approximately Rs 500 crore related to the Electricity Corporation and lay the foundation stone for a tunnel connecting the runway to Babatpur Airport.

The Prime Minister may also inspect the ropeway project. In anticipation of this,

the concerned authorities have completed work on the Kashi Vidyapeeth Ropeway Station.

Meanwhile, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat will arrive in Kashi on a three-day visit starting 3 April. He will stay at Nivedita Shiksha Sadan in Mahmoorganj.

Preparations for his visit have been completed. During his stay, the Sangh chief is expected to meet several individuals, including BJP leaders, and address RSS workers and

volunteers. Following his stay in Kashi, Bhagwat will leave for Lucknow on 7 April, where he will stay until 8 April, before proceeding to Kanpur. (File photo)

Lok Sabha witnesses wordy duel between Amit Shah & Akhilesh Yadav

the controversial Waqf

(Amendment) Bill. While

slamming the BJP and the

Centre over discriminatory

amendments in the legislation,

he said the party that projects

itself as the world's largest

has not been able to hold

elections for party president.

quick to retort. "For family-

run parties, it is very easy to

pick their presidents. But,

the BJP, with its over 12 crore

party workers, undertakes

an extensive exercise to elect

its leader," he remarked amid

peals of laughter. He told Mr

The home minister was



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

Home Minister Amit Shah and Samajwadi Party President Akhilesh Yadav were engaged in a wordy duel in the Lok

Sabha on Wednesday during the debate on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill.

The two leaders took jibes at each other over their respective party presidents, though they kept smiling through the exchange, maintaining decorum in the House.

It all started when the SP leader stood up to speak on

The SP MP accused the Centre of targeting Muslims by bringing contentious amendments in the Waqf Bill and also of depriving them of their ownership rights.

Yadav, "In your case, it will not take much time. I am saying that you will remain president for 25 years."

To this, Mr Yadav indirectly referred to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Nagpur recently for an RSS event and wondered whether the 'yatra' was for an 'extension'.

The SP MP accused the Centre of targeting Muslims by bringing contentious amendments in the Waqf Bill and also of depriving them of their ownership rights.

He further stated, "There is a fight within the BJP leaders to prove who is the 'worst Hindu' and stated that this was being done to garner support from one community.

Officer (SDPO) of Yairipok,

has been appointed as the

SDPO of Singjamei.

Tripura CM flags cross-border drug trafficking, reaffirms

Assampanchayat elections to be held in two

Major IPS reshuffle in Manipur amid rising security concerns

zero-tolerance policy

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE AGARTALA, 2 APRIL

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha has said that drugs are transported to Tripura from Myanmarvia Assam and Mizoram, and his government has adopted a zero tolerance policy towards drug trafficking and substance abuse.

"Drugs are coming from Myanmarvia Assam and Mizoram while ganja is going out of the state," the chief minister stated.

He highlighted that 70 individuals have been convicted under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act in the past three years.

Addressing the state Assembly, Saha pointed to Tripura's role as both a transit route and a production hub in the

Responding to a notice, Saha outlined the law enforcement agencies' approach

against the drug menace.

regional drug trade, emphasising the administration's intensified crackdown on narcotics.

against the drug menace.

viduals were convicted.

Responding to a notice, Saha outlined the law enforcement agencies' approach

According to official records, 19 individuals were convicted in 2022 across 13 cases under the NDPS Act, followed by 20 convictions in 2023 across 16 cases. In 2024, the number rose to 26 convictions, while in the first two months of 2025 alone, five more indi-

phases on 2 May, 7 May, vote counting on 11 May

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE GUWAHATI, 2 APRIL

The Assam State Election Commission has officially announced that the Panchayat elections in the state will be conducted in two phases on May 2 and May 7, 2025, setting the stage for a crucial electoral battle ahead of the 2026 Assembly elections.

The first phase will cover the districts of Upper Assam and Barak Valley, while the second phase will take place in Lower Assam districts.

The vote counting is scheduled for May 11, 2025. In a significant decision, the elections will be conducted using traditional ballot papers instead of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), as confirmed by State Election Commissioner Alok Kumar.



Ahead of the polls, the Assam government undertook a fresh delimitation of Gaon Panchayat, Anchalik Panchayat, and Zilla Parishad constituencies across 27 districts in 2024, excluding areas under the Sixth Schedule and municipal regions.

voters. While the Assam Pan-

Following this exercise, the final electoral rolls were published on December 28,

2024, listing a total of 1,80,14,913 registered voters, comprising 90,60,640 male voters, 89,53,865 female voters, and 408 third-gender

chayat (Amendment) Bill, 2023, provided the framework for the introduction of EVMs in local body elections, the State Election Commission

has opted to retain ballot papers for the upcoming polls.

The last Panchayat elections in Assam were held in 2018, in which the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) secured a resounding victory.

Political analysts view the Panchayat elections as a litmus test for political parties ahead of the 2026 Assam Assembly elections.

Given the large voter base and grassroots significance of the Panchayat system, these elections are expected to witness an intense electoral contest between the ruling BJP and opposition parties, including the Congress, the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), and regional outfits like the Asom Jatiya Parishad (AJP) and Raijor Dal.

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE IMPHAL, 2 APRIL

In a major reshuffle, the Manipur government has transferred 14 police officers, including the superintendents of police (SPs) of two districts amid growing security challenges to the state.

The Personnel and Administrative Reforms Department issued an official notification on Tuesday detailing the transfers that affect key law enforcement positions.

As per the order, Jiribam SP Shaikh Mohd Zakir has been reassigned as the SP of Kakching district, while Priyadarshini Laishram, the former SP of Kakching, will now take charge as the SP of Jiribam.

Additionally, Gaurav Dogra, previously serving as the Sub-Divisional Police

Other significant changes include the appointment of Assistant Commandant of 1st Manipur Rifles, Abhinav, to additional responsibilities as the Additional Superintendent of Police (SP) for Kangpokpi district. Akoijam Sadananda Singh has been designated as the new Additional SP Traffic for Imphal East, while Keisham Bojoukumar Singh has been transferred to the post of Additional SP Vigi-

lance. Furthermore, Rattana Ngasekpam will now serve as the Additional SP CID (Special Duty).

The transfers came at a time when Manipur continues to grapple with ethnic unrest, insurgency, and rising cases of extortion linked to militant outfits.

Bombay HC to hear petition by Disha Salian's father



AGENCIES MUMBAI, 2 APRIL

The Bombay High Court will

The writ petition was filed by Disha Salian's father Satish Salian, who is demand-

pertaining to her death.

ing a fresh investigation into his daughter's death and questioning of a few powerful people.

In the petition he had claimed that Disha was raped and murdered. Interestingly, Satish Salian had five years ago insisted his daughter was not raped and murdered.

When questioned on this by the media, Satish Salian's advocate Nilesh Ojha said that "the distraught father

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TRANSFORMER FROM BHADRAK/

TRACTION SUB-STATION TO

was manipulated by certain political leaders and the police who wanted to shield the son of a leading politician.'

Nilesh Ojha had on 25 March filed a fresh FIR in Disha's death case.

Ojha said that a written complaint has been filed with the police commissioner and in the FIR, names of Aaditya Thackeray, Dino Morea and Suraj Pancholi have been mentioned.

According to Ojha, "Aaditya Thackeray, Dino Morea, Suraj Pancholi and his bodyguard, Parambir Singh, Sachin Vaze and Rhea Chakraborty are all accused in the FIR."

He claimed that Parambir Singh was the main mastermind for the

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE IMPHAL, 2 APRIL

Legislators of BJP in Manipur has called for the review of the 2001 census and implementation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) before the state undergoes the Supreme Court-mandated delimitation exercise.

The demand comes amid heightened ethnic tensions in the state, where the ongoing violence between Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities has claimed over 250 lives and displaced thousands since May 2023.

The demand was raised at a meeting of BJP MLAs on Tuesday, convened in response to the Supreme Court's 17 March directive to the central government to complete the delimitation



 $Manipur\,BJP\,MLAs\,demand\,NRC\,and\,census\,review\,before\,delimitation$

Arunachal Pradesh, and Nagaland within three months.

Of the 37 BJP MLAs in Manipur, only 12 attended the meeting, all of whom represent constituencies in the Imphal Valley.

Senior BJP MLA Konthoujam Govindas emphasised the need to rectify perceived discrepancies in the 2001 the rights of indigenous communities.

On 25 March, a coalition of 13 political parties, excluding the BJP and Congress, held a meeting to push for a review of the 2001 Census. The parties—including the National People's Party (NPP), Janata Dal (United), Communist Party of India (Marxist), and Trinamul Congress—urged the Centre to delay the exercise until the alleged errors in the Census are rectified.

with the delimitation process.

The demand echoes concerns from the Coordination Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI), a prominent Meitei civil society organization. COCOMI has strongly opposed any delimitation exercise before implementing the NRC, arguing that without removing illegal immigrants,

tutional process undertaken periodically to redraw electoral boundaries based on population data to ensure fair representation. The last nation-

wide delimitation occurred in 2008, but it was deferred in Manipur and three other northeastern states due to security concerns and demo-

Delimitation is a consti-

hear on Wednesday the writ petition filed by the father



RMD DEGREE COLLEGE.

PATIA, BHUBANESWAR-31	AND COMMISSIONING OF THE SAME AT VENDERADA PARATERACTION SUB-STATION Ojha said: "Parambir	process in Manipur, Assam,	Census before proceeding	the process could undermine	graphic complexities.
TENDER CALL NOTICE TENDER DOCUMENT FOR PROCUREMENT COMPUTER HARDWARE, PERIPHERALS AND IT EQUIPMENTS The interested firms/dealers may download the papers in details from college website. List of each with specification are available in the www.rmddc.ac.in Dr. Prasant Kum Principa	Advertised Value 718,33,165.68, END T36,700 ¹ , Period of Completion: 90 days. Bidding Start Date: 03.04.2025, Tender Closing date & time 17.04.2025, 1300 hrs. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Singh held a press con- ference and fabricated lies to save Aaditya Thackeray. NCB's probe proves that Aaditya Thackeray was involved in a drug business	6,886 railway, road proj- ects carried out in NER in last 5 years: A total of 6,886 infrastructure projects worth Rs 1,76,742.89 crore, relating to railway and road	OVER WaqfA STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE	ounded in Ut mendment	Bill DGP Prashant Kumar
SAMBALPUR MUNICIPAL CORPOR SAMBALPUR Email id: sambalpurm.hud@nic.in	GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA	infrastructure, were carried out in the North-Eastern Region (NER) from 2019- 2024, the government said	LUCKNOW, 2 APRIL The Uttar Pradesh government has sounded high alert in the state in view of the tabling of	with four companies of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) being kept in reserve. However, there is a mixed	said that the holidays have been cancelled till the next order.
c-02 'e' Procurement Notice Bid Identification No. 39/SMC_SBP/2024-25 Tender ID No. 2025_ORULB_1H909	OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER "e" procurement Notice E-Mail I.D.: eepwdcuttack2@gmail.com Tel./ Fax No.(0671)-2973399	on Wednesday. In a written reply in Lok Sabha in response to a question by BJP MP Biplab Kumar Deb for	state in view of the tabling of the Waqf Amendment Bill in the Lok Sabha on Wednes- day.	reaction to the Waqf Bill with the BJP leaders in support while the Opposition and Muslim organisations opposing	Khan, who was in Mathura today, while reacting on the Waqf Bill, said, "When I was a minister in Uttar Pradesh, I
The Municipal Commissioner on behalf of Municipal C Sambalpur invites tenders in double Cover System. Bid consisting of specification the Schedule of Quantities and the and conditions of contract and other necessary documents of the Govt. Website i.e. https://tendersodisha.gov.in	of terms 1 Name of the work 1 Name of the work 1 Name of the work	details regarding the railway and road infrastructure proj- ects carried out in the NER during the last five years,	The UP Police have can- celled all leaves of their per- sonnel with the instructions to keep a vigil in view of	it. UP MinorityAffairs Minister Danish Ali has welcomed the Waqf Amendment Bill and	was in charge of the Waqf Department. No less than 90% of the Waqf property was embroiled in court cases. Is
1. Number of Civil works : 1 (One) number 2. Estimated Costs: : Rs. 51.15 lakhs 3. Period of completion : As per NIT 4. Date and time of availability of : From 11 A.M. of 29.0		Union Minister of State for Development of North-East Region (DoNER) Sukanta Majumdar presented the data. According to the data	security in Bareilly, Aligarh, Rampur and Meerut. Meanwhile, flag marches are being carried out in several cities of the state.	has appealed to the Opposition to support it so that all irreg- ularities in the Waqf could be removed. The BJP leader and former	there any work being done for the society through waque in Mathura? There are several lawsuits on a waqfland, which should be solved. The poor
the bid documents in the portal 05.00 PM of 15.04.2 5. Last Date/ Time for receipt of : 05.00 PM of 15.04.2 bids in the portal 6. Bids will be opened on : 11.00 AM of DL 16.0	6. Date & time of Opening : 11AM of 16.04.2025 of Bids 7. Name and address of the : Superintending Engineer	shared by the Minister, a total of 18 projects covering a length of 1,368 km were	DGP Prashant Kumar said that the holidays have been cancelled till the next order.	UP minister Mohsin Raza thanked the prime minister forbringing the Waqf Amend-	are not benefiting from this. Today, Waqf is occupied by big people".
6. Bids will be opened on : 11.00 AM of DL 16.0 7. Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid Sambalpur Municipation, Sambalpur Sd/- Com	Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in. Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website.	constructed by the Ministry of Railways during the said period in the region. The total costs of these projects	The Samajwadi Party and other Opposition parties, along with Muslim organisations, announced a protest against	ment Bill. He said this would be the biggest 'Idi' from PM Modi for backward Muslims. On the Waqf Amendment	SP Spokesperson Rajendra Choudhary said his party was opposing the Bill and party president Akhilesh Yadav has
OIPR-13122/11/0109/2425 Sambalpur Municipal C	Superintending Engineer	were Rs 74,972 crore. 🔳 SNS	the Bill. Additional police force has	Bill 2024 in Mathura, Bihar Governor Arif Mohammad	already spoken about it in the Lok Sabha.



epaper.thestatesman.com



Israel's operations in Gaza expand to seize 'large areas'

Israeli strikes overnight and into Wednesday had killed more than 40 people, nearly a dozen of them children

ASSOCIATED PRESS JERUSALEM. 2 APRIL

srael's military operation in the Gaza Strip is expanding to seize "large L areas," the defence minister said, while officials at hospitals inside the Palestinian territory said that Israeli strikes overnight and into Wednesday had killed more than 40 people, nearly a dozen of them children. Israel's offensive in the

Palestinian territory was "expanding to crush and clean the area" of militants and "seizing large areas that will be added to the security zones of the State of Israel," Defence Minister Israel Katz said in a written statement. The Israeli government

has long maintained a buffer zone just inside Gaza along its security fence and has

war began in 2023. Israel says the buffer zone is needed for its security, while Palestinians view it as a land grab that further shrinks the narrow coastal territory, home to around two million people. Katz didn't specify which

greatly expanded since the

areas of Gaza would be seized in the expanded operation, which he said includes the "extensive evacuation" of the population from fighting areas.

His statement came after Israel ordered the full evacuation of the southern city of Rafah and nearby areas.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said Israel aims to maintain an openended but unspecified security control of the Gaza Strip once it achieves its aim of

crushing Hamas.



Gaza residents to "expel Hamas and return all hostages.'

The militant group still holds 59 captives, of whom 24 are believed to still be alive, after most of the rest were released in ceasefire agreements or other deals. "This is the only way to

end the war," Katz said. Since the breakdown of

The minister called on the ceasefire last month,

when Israel ordered people to move and expanded their areas of operation, the "nogo" zones in Gaza now constitute more than 60 per cent of the strip, said Olga Cherevko, a spokesperson for the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Aid groups are providing assistance as the situation allows, as supplies dwindled because of Israel's monthlong blockade on Gaza.

"No-go" zones include the military zone in the Netzarim corridor — a zone carved out by Israel separating northern from southern Gaza — and the expanded buffer zone and evacuation areas. The Hostage Families

Forum, which represents most captives' families, said that it was "horrified to wake up this morning to the Defence Minister's announcement about expanding military operations in Gaza."

The group said the Israeli government "has an obligation to free all 59 hostages from Hamas captivity — to pursue every possible channel to advance a deal for their release."

They stressed that every passing day puts their loved ones' lives at greater risk.

AGENCIES

BANGKOK,2 APRIL

magnitude earthquake.

But most teams were finding only bodies, and concerns were growing that continued military attacks on resistance forces could jeopardise relief efforts.

The quake hit midday

hit, according to the United Nations.

Two of the major armed resistance forces fighting the military, which seized power in 2021 from the democratically elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi, have announced ceasefires to facilitate the humanitarian response to the earthquake, but the military hasn't relented in its attacks.

"Once again they are putting regime survival above the interests of people, even at a time of calamity,' said Richard Horsey, senior adviser for Myanmar with the Crisis Group.

In the capital, Naypyitaw, a team of Turkish and local rescue workers used an endoscopic camera to locate Naing Lin Tun on a lower floor of the damaged hotel where he worked. They pulled him gingerly through a hole jackhammered through a floor and loaded him on to a gurney nearly 108 hours after he was first trapped.

Awary Europe awaits Rubio with NATO's future on the line

AGENCIES WASHINGTON, 2 APRIL



upend all of that when he and other NATO leaders

Wisconsin and Florida elections provide early warning signs to Trump and Republicans

Rescuers pulled two men alive from the ruins of a hotel in Myanmar's capital on Wednesday and a third from a guesthouse in another city, five days after a 7.7

Friday, toppling thousands of buildings, collapsing bridges and buckling roads. The death toll rose to 2,886 Wednesday, with

another 4,639 injured, according to state television *MRTV*. Local reports suggest

much higher figures. The earthquake came amid civil war in Myanmar, making a dire humanitarian crisis even worse. More than three million people had been displaced from their homes and nearly 20 million were in need even before it

The Statesman

Military attacks threaten relief efforts as more

Myanmar earthquake survivors are found

BHUBANESWAR, THURSDAY 03 APRIL 2025

American Secretary of State Marco Rubio travels this week to a gathering of top diplomats from NATO countries and is sure to find allies that are alarmed, angered and confused by the Trump administration's desire to reestablish ties with Russia and its escalating rhetorical attacks on longtime transatlantic partners.

Allies are deeply concerned by President Donald Trump's readiness to draw closer to Russian leader Vladimir Putin, who sees NATO as a threat, amid n American effort to broker a ceasefire in Ukraine. Recent

White House comments and

insults directed at NATO allies Canada and Denmark — as well as the military alliance itself — have only increased the angst, especially as new American tariffs are taking effect against friends

and foes alike. Rubio arrives in Brussels on Thursday for two days of meetings with his NATO counterparts and European

officials, and he can expect to be confronted with guestions about the future U.S. role in the alliance.

For 75 years, NATO has been anchored on American leadership, and based on what they have seen and heard since Trump took office in January, European officials have expressed deep concerns that Trump may

meet for a June summit in the Netherlands.

As Rubio did last month at a meeting of foreign ministers from the Group of 7 industrialised democracies, America's top diplomat, who is regarded by many overseas as a more pragmatic and less dogmatic member of Trump's administration, may be able to salvage a watered-down group consensus on the war in Ukraine.

That's even as Trump said this week that Ukraine "was never going to be a member of NATO" despite leaders declaring at last year's summit that the country was on an "irreversible" path to join.

AGENCIES

WISCONSIN, 2 APRIL

A trio of elections on Tuesday provided early warning signs to Republicans and President Donald Trump at the beginning of an ambitious term, as Democrats rallied against his efforts to slash the federal government and the outsize role being played by billionaire Elon Musk. In the marquee race for

a Wisconsin Supreme Court seat, the conservative judge endorsed by Trump and backed by Musk and his groups to the tune of \$21 million lost by a significant margin in a state Trump won in November.



gins.

Susan Crawford, a Dane County judge who led legal fights to protect union power and abortion rights and to oppose voter ID, defeated Republican- and Elon Muskbacked Brad Schimel in a race that broke records for spending, was the highestturnout Wisconsin Supreme

The elections — the first major contests since Trump's return to power-were seen as an early measure of voter sentiment as Trump works with unprecedented speed to dramatically upend the federal government, clashing with the courts and seeking revenge as he tests the bounds of presidential power.

The party that loses the presidency in November typically picks up seats in the next midterm elections, and Tuesday's results provided hope for Democrats — who have faced a barrage of internal and external criticism about their response to Trump—that they can follow that trend.

Cory Booker sets a record with marathon Senate speech

AGENCIES

WASHINGTON, 2 APRIL

In a feat of determination, New Jersey Democratic Sen. Cory Booker held the Senate floor with a marathon speech that lasted all night and into Tuesday night, setting a historic mark to show Democrats' resistance to President Donald Trump's sweeping actions.

Booker took to the Senate floor on Monday evening, saying he would remain there as long as he was "physically able."

It wasn't until 25 hours and 5 minutes later that the 55-year-old senator, a former football tight end, finished speaking and limped off the floor. It set the record for the

longest continuous Senate floor speech in the chamber's history. Booker was assisted by fellow Democrats who gave him a break from speaking by asking him questions on the Senate floor.

It was a remarkable show of stamina as Democrats try to show their frustrated supporters that they are doing everything possible to contest Trump's agenda.

Yet Booker also provided a moment of historical solace for a party searching for its way forward: By standing on the Senate floor for more than a night and day and

refusing to leave, he had broken a record set 68 years ago by then Sen. Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, a segre-



gationist and southern Demobecause as powerful as he crat, to filibuster the advance was, the people are more of the Civil Rights Act in powerful.' 1957. House Democratic Leader

"I'm here despite his Hakeem Jeffries, the first Black party leader in Conspeech," said Booker, who spoke openly on the Senate gress, slipped into the Senate floor of his roots as the chamber to watch Booker descendant of both slaves on Tuesday afternoon. He and slave-owners. called it "an incredibly powerful moment" because

He added, "I'm here

our democracy."

speech on a call for his party to find its resolve, saying, "We all must look in the mirror and say, 'We will do better.'" "These are not normal

times in our nation," Booker said as he began the speech Monday evening.

"And they should not be treated as such in the United States Senate. The threats to the American people and American democracy are grave and urgent, and we all must do more to stand against them.

Val Kilmer, *Top Gun* and Batman star with an intense approach, dies at 65

Court election ever and

became a proxy fight for the

licans held two of the most

pro-Trump House districts

in the country, both candi-

dates also underperformed

Trump's November mar-

And while Florida Repub-

nation's political battles.

AGENCIES

Ambulance

LOS ANGELES, 2 APRIL

Val Kilmer, the brooding, versatile actor who played fan favourite Iceman in Top *Gun*, donned a voluminous cape as Batman in *Batman Forever* and portrayed Jim Morrison in *The Doors*, has died. He was 65.

Kilmer died Tuesday night in Los Angeles, surrounded by family and friends, his daughter, Mercedes Kilmer, said in an email to agencies. The New York Times was the first to report his death on Tuesday.

Val Kilmer died from

Hearse Service



pneumonia. He had recov-

ered after a 2014 throat

cancer diagnosis that

required two tracheotomies.

I have behaved bravely. I

have behaved bizarrely to

some. I deny none of this

and have no regrets because

Railway

2490666

Air Service

Central Enquiry(Khurda Road)

"I have behaved poorly.

of myself that I never knew existed," he says toward the end of Val, the 2021 documentary on his career. "And I am blessed." Kilmer, the youngest actor ever accepted to the presti-

I have lost and found parts

gious Juilliard School at the time he attended, experienced the ups and downs of fame more dramatically than most. His break came in 1984's spy spoof *Top Secret!* followed by the comedy Real Genius in 1985.

Kilmer would later show his comedy chops again in films including *MacGruber* and Kiss Kiss Bang Bang.

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Deputy Commissioner of

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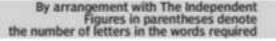
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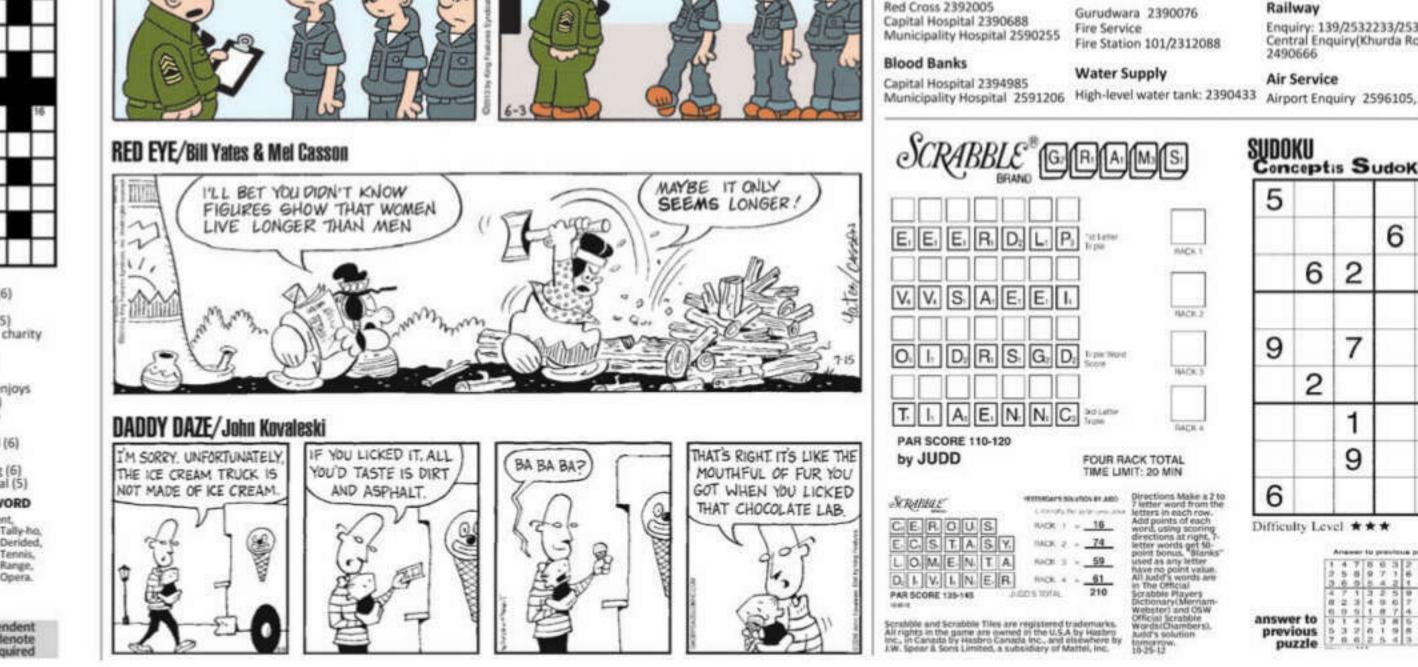


of a segregationist and was "fighting to preserve the American way of life and Still, Booker centered his

Booker had broken the record

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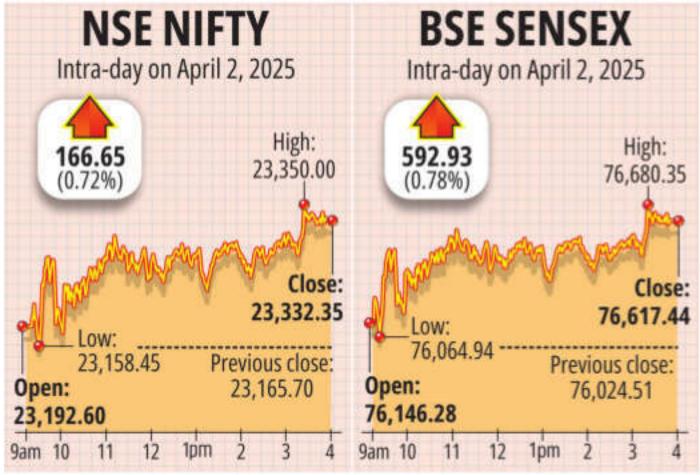
THUMBNAILS

Uber for Teens in India: Uber today announced the launch of Uber for Teens, a product designed to provide safe, reliable, and convenient transportation solutions specifically tailored for teenagers in India aged between 13 and 17 years. Uber for Teens has been launched across 37 cities in the country, including Delhi NCR, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Bangalore, Kolkata, etc. The service aims to offer peace of mind to parents around the country while also offering their wards greater independence. The product is built around a framework of stringent safety protocols that includes GPS tracking. real-time ride tracking, and an in-app emergency button.

Mahindra to redevelop two societies in Mumbai: Mahindra Group's real estate arm Mahindra Lifespace Developers Ltd (MLDL), has been appointed as the preferred partner for the redevelopment of two residential societies in the Lokhandwala Complex, Andheri West, Mumbai, with a project value of approximately Rs 1,200 crore, according to an exchange filing. The company will redevelop two residential societies in the posh

Market erases previous losses; Sensex up 593 pts

Almost all indices ended in the green with Nifty Realty emerging as top performer



progress, hitting 23350 intra-

day, to finish near day's high.

BSE Midcap and smallcap

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL**

enchmark indices Wednesday on erased previous losses and snapped twoday losing streak amid buying across the sectors.

At close, Sensex was up 592.93 points or 0.78 per with Nifty around 23200 and Bank and Nifty FMCG jumped extended the rise as the day 1 per cent each.

> Nifty Auto, Nifty Financial Services, Nifty IT, and Nifty Pharma also rose around 0.8 per cent each.

indices rose nearly 1 per cent Central Bank of India shares plunged nearly 10% Among the sectors, almost all ended in the green with while other PSU banks like the Nifty Realty emerging as Indian Overseas Bank and the top performer, up by 3.6 Punjab & Sind Bank also

of losses in which it had declined by 4.21 per cent.

Tech Mahindra led the gains, rising 2.21 per cent while Infosys and Wipro followed closely, gaining 1.9 per cent and 1.12 per cent, respectively. Persistent Systems was up 1.64 per cent, and only HCL Technologies and Coforge were in the red. On the BSE, nearly 85

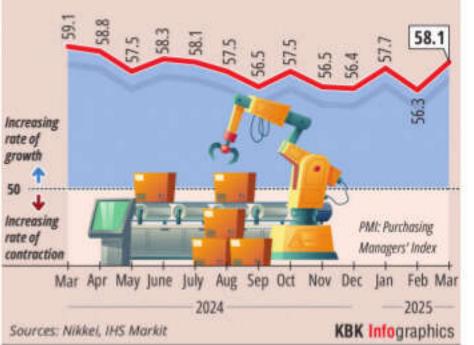
stocks touched their 52-week low. These included Punjab and Sind Bank, Central Bank of India, UCO Bank, Kajaria Ceramics, IOB, Colgate Palmolive, Birlasoft, Metropolis Healthcare, Sona BLW, KEI Industries, among others.

on the gaining side were Tata Consumer (6.91 per cent), Zomato (4.9 per cent), Titan (3.7 per cent), IndusInd Bank (2.8 per cent), and Maruti Suzuki (2 per cent). While on the losing side were Bharat Electronics (3.34 per cent), Nestle India (1.3 per cent), UltraTech Cement (1 per cent), PowerGrid (0.9 per cent), and Bajaj Finserv (0.7 per cent).

Shares of Tata Consumer Products jumped 8.15% in early trade to an intraday high of Rs 1,073.15 on the NSE after Goldman Sachs upgraded the stock to BUY.

India's Manufacturing PMI rises to 58.1 in March, highest in 8 months

India Manufacturing PMI 50 = No change on previous month (Seasonally adjusted)



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

India's Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) rose to 58.1 in March 2025, up from 56.3 in February, and its highest mark in 8 months.

According to data released by HSBC and compiled by S&P Global, the rise was driven by stronger new orders growth, as the New Orders Index reached its highest level in eight months, supported by increased customer interest, favourable demand conditions,

To prevent stock shortages, manufacturers boosted input purchases to a sevenmonth high, well above the average. Suppliers largely met demand, though lead times shortened at a slower pace.

during the previous month. Although international orders slightly slowed, overall demand momentum remained robust, and the new orders index recorded an eight-month high of 61.5," Pranjul Bhandari, Chief India Economist at HSBC, said.

Strong demand prompted firms to tap into their inventories, causing the fastest drop in finished goods stocks in over three years. Business expectations remained fairly optimistic, with around 30 per cent of survey participants foreseeing greater output volumes in the year ahead, compared to less than 2 per cent that anticipate a contraction, he added. The data also highlighted that in order to meet rising demand, firms tapped into their inventories, leading to the fastest drop in finished goods stocks since January 2022. Companies also increased input purchases at the quickest rate in seven months to counter stock depletion.

Further on the Nifty50,

sales expanding at the fastest pace since July 2024, as a result of strong demand, positive customer interest, and effective marketing, leading to increased production at

the fiscal year-end. New export orders grew but at a slower three-month pace, with gains from Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. To prevent stock shortages, manufacturers boosted input purchases to a seven-month high, well above the average. Suppliers largely met demand,

Lokhandwala Complex under the Maharashtra state's cluster development scheme.

cent at 76,617.44, and the Nifty was up 166.65 points or 0.72 per cent at 23, 332.35.

per cent. It was followed by Nifty Consumer Durables, which The market opened higher added 2.5 per cent, Nifty

each.

faced declines.

Nifty IT index gained 1.07 per cent in intraday trade, rebounding after two sessions

and successful marketing initiatives.

The rise was driven by a surge in new orders, with total up substantially from 56.3

at a slower pace. "India registered a 58.1 manufacturing PMI in March,

though lead times shortened

Rupee projected to trade in range of 85.5-87.5 per dollar in FY26

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

The performance of Indian rupee in FY25, when compared with other global currencies, was relatively stable, with a stronger dollar weighing on all major currency pairs, a report showed on Wednesday.

However, towards the end of the year, a reversal in dollar strength and FPI inflows into debt supported a rally in rupee, with the domestic currency recouping as much as 2.4 per cent in a singlemonth alone, according to a report by Bank of Baroda (BoB).

The coming year is likely to be marked by a period of volatility, awaiting clarity on US tariff policies. This will also set the stage for the US Fed's rate actions, in turn, affecting how the dollar behaves.

"On the domestic front, nificant repricing of Fed rate

the rupee is likely to find cut expectations, which, in turn, boosted the demand support from improvement in growth prospects, lower for the dollar.

inflation and stable external deficits. Overall, we expect the rupee to trade in the range of 85.5-87.5 per dollar in FY26," said Aditi Gupta, Economist, Bank of Baroda. FY25 was an interesting

year for the rupee as it underwent periods of stability, rapid depreciation and consolidation thereafter. While the first 7 months

of the year were marked by a largely rangebound currency, the latter part of the year was characterised by wide fluctuations in the rupee movement.

The results of the US presidential elections in November were a key catalyst for the global forex market as a win for Donald Trump cast a shadow of uncertainty over US growth and inflation dynamics. This led to a sig-

"The rupee's fortune also varied in turn. Between March to October, it depreciated by just 0.8 per cent, with average daily annualised volatility at multi-year lows of just 1.5 per cent," said Gupta.

While strong domestic fundamentals underlined a period of stability in the currency in the first part of the year, changing global landscape played an important role in the domestic currency's performance in the latter part of the year.

Going ahead, the US tariff stance will play a critical role in the movement of global currencies.

"After some upheaval, markets have largely taken US tariff actions in stride, however, the balance will once again be tested," the report mentioned.

Need for modernising Central KYC Records Registry, streamlining KYC process: DFS Secretary

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

M. Nagaraju, Secretary, Department of Financial Services (DFS) emphasised the need for the modernisation of the Central KYC Records Registry (CKYCR) and streamlining of KYC process.

The DFS chaired the to discuss the revamp of the Central KYC Records Registry and key issues related to Know Your Customer (KYC) compliance with the objective of making life of citizen comfortable while availing Financial Services.

The meeting included senior officials from concerned Ministries/Departments, financial sector regulators, financial institutions, and other stakeholders.

At the meeting, he also highlighted key issues & challenges concerning individuals



and regulated entities. The DFS also shared the measures so far taken by the Govern-

ment and Financial Sector Regulators and proposed measures for further enhanc-

ing efficiency, reducing redundancy and improving security relating to KYC process across financial sectors were discussed at length.

During the discussion, many suggestions were received from stakeholders which will be considered for further easing of the KYC process.

It is to be highlighted that during the Union Budget 2025, Finance Miniter Nirmala SItharaman introduced a revamped Central KYC registry.

The new framework aimed to simplify and standardise KYC procedures across the financial sector, reducing bureaucratic hurdles and ensuring greater security and efficiency.

The Budget 2025 announcement highlighted key enhancements to CKYC, including technology-driven verification methods and seamless integration with digital platforms.

Poonam Gupta appointed Deputy Governor of RBI

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

The government appointed Poonam Gupta as the Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on 1 April, 2025. She will hold the position for three years, the appointments committee order stated.

She is currently serving as the Director General of the National Council for Applied Economics Research



She holds a Master's degree and a PhD in Economics from the University of Maryland, USA, and a Master's degree in Economics from Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi.

She has held various roles in academia, think tanks, and government and nongovernment organisations, including the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP), among others. She is also a member of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister and Convener of the Advisory Council to the 16th Finance Commission.

Gupta taught at the Delhi School of Economics, University of Maryland (USA), and as a visiting faculty at ISI, Delhi. She has also been the RBI Chair Professor at NIPFP and a Professor at ICRIER.

She currently serves on the boards of NIPFP and GDN (Global Development Network). She is a member of the World Bank's advisory groups on 'Poverty & Equity' and the 'World Development Report', the Development Advisory Committee of NITI Aayog, and FICCI's Executive Committee.

India surpasses US in terms of locomotive production in FY25; NHAI capex spikes 21 pc

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

India surpasses the total locomotive production of regions such as the United States, Europe, South America, Africa, and Australia, emerged as a global leader in railway locomotive manufacturing.

The country has achieved a record production of 1,681 locomotives in the financial duction is the highest ever for locomotive manufacturing in the country, reflecting the significant achievements of all units in enhancing railway infrastructure and capacity," Ministry of Railways said in a statement.

The ministry further said that between 2004 and 2014, India produced a total of 4,695 locomotives, with a national annual average of 470.

Works manufactured 700 locomotives, Banaras Locomotive Works produced 477, Patiala Locomotive Works contributed 304 locomotives and 100 locomotives each were manufactured at the Madhepura and Marhowrah units. The majority of the locomotives produced in the country were intended for freight trains.

Further, the National High-In contrast, from 2014 to 2024, locomotive manufacwayAuthority of India (NHAI) turing witnessed a significant has also shared its update during the Financial Year surge, with 9,168 locomotives produced, raising the annual 2024-25 saying it constructed 5,614 km of National Highways average to approximately 917. against the target of 5,150 km As per the data, the profor the year.

Chittaranjan Locomotive

(NCAER).

At NCAER, Gupta leads the work on issues related to economic growth, international financial architecture, central banking, macroeconomic stability, public debt, and state finances.

Gupta will succeed about two months after he Michael Debaprata Patra retires from the position.

She was also the Chair of the Task Force on Macroeconomics and Trade during India's G20 Presidency.

year 2024-25.

This marks an increase of 209 locomotives, or 19 per cent, compared to the 1,472 locomotives produced in the previous financial year 2023-24.

> "This record-breaking production was distributed as:

Curious case of GST on popcorn: A 'namkeen,' packaged & sweet saga

C.A ARUPA DEY BANIK

Popcorn, the ubiquitous snack of movie nights and casual munching, has found itself embroiled in a surprisingly complex tax tale in India.

The Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs (CBIC) has recently stepped in to clarify the labyrinthine Goods and Services Tax (GST) rates applied to this seemingly simple treat, revealing a three-tiered structure that distinguishes between the salty, sweet, and packaged varieties.

To bring clarity to ongoing disputes, the CBIC has announced that rate disputes on specific categories of popcorn up to February 14th will

prevailing genuine doubts regarding the applicability of GST rate on ready to eat popcorn mixed with salt and spices, as recommended by the (GST)

Council, issue for past period up to 14.02.2025, is hereby regularised on 'as is where is' basis," a recent circular declared. This move, prompted by requests, followed the GST Council's decision in December 2024 to issue a detailed clarification.

The crux of the matter lies in the distinction between loose, packaged, and sweetened popcorn. According to the CBIC, ready-to-eat popcorn mixed with salt and spices

be regularised. "In view of the reflecting its classification as "namkeen." However, the same popcorn, when prepackaged and labelled, incurs a 12 per cent GST, due to its status as a packaged food item. Conversely, caramel popcorn, with its sugar content, is deemed a sugar confectionery and attracts the highest rate of 18 per cent.

Now let us understand the taxation journey of this popular snack-from simple to stratified. For decades, popcorn enjoyed a relatively straightforward tax treatment. Prior to the 55th GST Council meeting, a uniform 5 per cent GST rate applied to both loose and prepackaged popcorn, aligning attracts a 5% GST if sold loose, with the taxation of other non-



luxury food items. However, the 55th meeting ushered in a new era of granular classification, driven by packaging, ingredients, and preparation methods.

Before, whether you grabbed a bag of popcorn at the theatre or bought a prepackaged version from the store, the tax was the same. Now, the 55th GST Council

Meeting has made the following changes:

Loose Popcorn (Unpackaged): Remains at 5 per cent, consistent with its classification as a basic snack. Pre-Packaged Popcorn: Now taxed at 12 per cent, reflecting its status as a packaged food item.

Caramelized Popcorn: Sees a significant jump to 18 per cent, aligning it with other sugar-based confectioneries, similar to candies and chocolates.

As a clarification, popcorn served to customers in theatres in loose form will continue to attract a rate of 5 per cent as applicable to 'restaurant service'

as long as supplied independently of the cinema exhibition service. Once bundled with Movie Tickets, there is another layer of complexity and the GST rate for the entire bundle is determined by the movie ticket's GST rate. If the movie ticket is taxed at 12 per cent GST, the popcorn bundled with it will also be taxed at 12 per cent, even if it is loose popcorn. If the movie ticket has a GST rate of 18 per cent, the entire combo, including the popcorn, will be taxed at 18 per cent, satisfying the test of composite supply.

Evidently, the rationale behind these varying rates lies in the perceived characteristics and also venue of consumption

of each popcorn type. Ultimately, the popcorn saga reveals more than just tax rates; it's a mirror to the evolving landscape of consumer goods and the ongoing quest for clarity within India's fiscal framework. So, the next time vou reach for that buttery, salty, or sweet treat, remember: you're not just enjoying a snack, you're partaking in a surprisingly intricate economic drama, where every kernel carries a carefully calculated tax burden. While the CBIC's recent clarifications aim to resolve existing ambiguities, the curious case of popcorn taxation serves as a reminder of the dynamic nature of tax







regulations in India.



ISL: Jamshedpur FC look to overturn poor record against Mohun Bagan

Hosts face tough task against reigning League Shield champions in the first leg of the semifinals at their home ground

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE JAMSHEDPUR, 2 APRIL

amshedpur FC are set to host Mohun Bagan Super Giant (MBSG) in the first leg of their Indian Super League (ISL) 2024-25 semifinal fixture on Thursday. This will be the first time that these two sides meet in the playoffs, with MBSG reaching the last-four courtesy of winning the ISL League Shield, whereas the Red Miners defeated NorthEast United FC 2-0 in the one-legged eliminator.

Jamshedpur FC have not secured a victory in their previous six matches against Mohun Bagan Super Giant in the ISL, losing on four occasions. Another failure to win here will make it their longest winless run in front of any opponent in the competition.

Meanwhile, MBSG have been unbeaten on the road in the previous six games, winning thrice and scoring 13 goals at the expense of conceding merely thrice. Avoiding a loss here will not only mark a new club record





gives Forest win over Man Utd

AGENCIES

BHUBANESWAR, THURSDAY 03 APRIL 2025

NOTTINGHAM. 2 APRIL

Anthony Elanga's stunning first half goal was enough for Nottingham Forest to claim three Premier League points against Manchester United at the City Ground.

The Statesman

The Forest winger stormed through the United defence with just five minutes played in NG2 to secure the win for Nuno Espírito Santo's Reds.

Fresh from booking their place in the FA Cup semifinals with a penalty shootout victory over Brighton & amp; Hove Albion on Saturday, Nuno Espirito Santo's men took another big step towards qualifying for the UEFA Champions League.

It was a trademark counter-attacking goal that decided the contest, with Elanga running from deep inside his own half before tucking home after only five minutes.

Ruben Amorim's Red Devils applied plenty of pressure thereafter but could not find an equaliser, with Harry Maguire squandering two glorious chances late on.

Elanga dedicated his goal against Manchester United to the Nottingham Forest supporters and teammates, he said, "I wanted to thank the Forest fans because

nothing. When they scored we changed the game a little bit from what they want. We tried with good opportunities, but in the last third, the last pass, the last assist wasn't there. Then if we don't have that we cannot score goals," said Man United manager Ruben Amorim.

This season continues United's onfield decline since managerial great Alex Ferguson retired in 2013 after winning the club's last league title.

It was his and United's 13th championship of the first 20 years of the Premier League. The club hasn't won another since.

Its lowest finish in the Premier League under Ferguson was third.

Amorim said in January that this might be the worst team in United's history and things have only got worse since then.

Among United's many problems this season have been a lack of goals. The Forest game was the 11th time it has failed to score in the league - prompting a desperate Amorim to play center back Harry Maguire in attack as he went in search of a late equalizer.

Maguire came closer than any of his teammates to scoring when seeing a stoppage time effort cleared off the line. "We deserved more in this game, that is clear, but it was our fault. We need to be better in the last third," Amorim said.

for their longest such streak away from home in the league but also enable them to enter the second and decisive leg in Kolkata high on confidence.

Jamshedpur FC have the advantage of making a strong start to the semifinal tie, but they have lost both of their last two games here – with their last longer losing streak at the stadium coming between November and December 2022, of three games each.

Jamshedpur FC have seen a purple patch upfront in 2025, scoring the most goals (22) since the start of the cal-

endar year - one more than Mohun Bagan Super Giant (21), who are the highest scorers in the league with 47 strikes.

MBSG have won just one of their last six ISL playoff matches in regulation or extra time (D3 L2), including a 1-3 defeat to Mumbai City FC in last season's final. They

will want to set this record straight to clinch the ISL Cup after falling short at the final hurdle last season.



remains unbeaten in the ISL playoffs (W1 D2) from his tenure with ATK in 2016. If he avoids a defeat here, Molina

will surpass John Gregory (W2 D1 in 2017-18 for Chennaiyin FC) to become the tactician with the longest unbeaten streak in the playoffs.

> Jamshedpur FC's head coach, Khalid Jamil, outlined an optimistic perspective before the fixture. "There are

Head coach Iose Molina

two legs to play and we are facing a very good team. We are positive since we are playing at home, and we must think of a positive result," he said.

Mohun Bagan Super Giant head coach Jose Molina affirmed his side's commitment to winning the ISL Cup. "We are ready and we want to win the ISL Cup. We are absolutely happy with the season, but we want to win the Cup too," he said.

Jamshedpur FC and Mohun Bagan Super Giant have faced each other 10 times in the ISL, with MBSG winning five times and the Red Miners emerging victorious thrice. Two encounters have produced draws.

Jamshedpur FC's Javi Hernandez is just two goal contributions away from reaching 50 in the ISL (29 goals and 19 assists). If he scores in this game, he will record the second-highest goal tally in a

GEARING UP FOR BATTLE

they've supported me so much this season and last season as well.'

single season for Jamshedpur

FC, behind Greg Stewart (11

Giant's Jason Cummings has

provided an assist in each of

their last two away games.

Setting up another goal here

will make him the first club

player to assist in three con-

secutive away matches in

ISL history. Overall, he has

netted four times and directly

facilitated six strikes during

the current campaign.

Mohun Bagan Super

goals in 2021-22).

"It's credit to all the players that started against Brighton and again today. Tomorrow is all about recovery because we have another big game on Saturday against Villa who are doing well as well."

Manchester United remain in 13th spot, while the victory took third-placed Forest eight points clear of Chelsea and nine above Manchester City ahead of their matches later this week.

"We controlled the game, but we already knew this team can score goals out of

Rasmus Hojlund, a striker signed from Atalanta for \$82 million last season, has only scored eight goals in his 41 games in all competitions this term.

Strike partner Joshua Zirkzee has scored six in 45 appearances. United has scored 37 in the league all season with a goal difference of minus 4.

BoxingWorldCup: Jadumanienters semifinals

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

A resilient display under pressure allowed national champion Jadumani Singh Mandengbam to overcome the formidable Ellis Trowbridge of Britain to reach the semifinals of the men's 50kg category at the World Boxing Cup Brazil 2025.

Trowbridge, the 2024 World Boxing Cup Finals silver medallist, began the bout in his usual aggressive style but the Indian was prepared to absorb the pressure and find ways to land his punches, earning a 3:2 split decision in his favour on Tuesday. He will now face former Asian U-22 champion Asilbek Jalilov of Uzbekistan for a place in the final.

However, India's challenge in the 75kg, 85kg and 90+kg categories came to an end after all the three boxers went down fighting in their respective bouts. Nikhil Dubey lost the 75kg bout 0:5 against local favourite Kaue Belini while Jugnoo was at the wrong



end of a 1:4 split decision decision. In the other cateagainst France's Abdoulaye gories, Manish Rathore (55kg) Traore in 85kg. Narender will take on Paris Olympian came close to beating Kaza-Yusulf Chothia of Australia, khastan's Daniyal Saparbay, Hitesh (70kg) will meet even getting a 30-27 verdict Gabriele Guidi Rontani of from one one judge but lost Italy while Abhinash Jamwal the 90+kg bout on a 3:2 split (65kg) has to overcome the

challenge of Denis Bril of Germany. Earlier, Lakshya Chahar had a disappointing start to his campaign, suffering a 0-5 defeat against Brazil's Wanderley Pereira in the opening round of the men's 80 kg division on Day 1.



Kolkata Knight Riders players take a break during a practice session at the iconic Eden Gardens in Kolkata ahead of their Indian Premier Clash (IPL) against Sunrisers Hyderabad on Thursday. MOUL Mondal

Vandana credits influence of Pillay, Ronaldo, Bolt for iconic hockey career

AGENCIES NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

Indian women's hockey team forward Vandana Katariya, who retired from the international circuit on Tuesday, revealed drawing inspiration from legends like Dhanraj Pillay, Cristiano Ronaldo, and Usain Bolt to keep herself upbeat during her 15-yearlong career in the senior side.

Vandana finished as the most-capped player in the history of Indian women's hockey with 320 international appearances and 158 goals. She called it an emotional decision to hang up her boots. "It was a very hard decision to take. We stay with each other more than a family, so leaving them was an emotional decision. To feel and understand this decision is really difficult. Today I felt too emotional and took the decision to announce my retirement," she told a news agency.

Despite achieving multiple accolades over the years, the



2013 Junior World Cup trifourth-place finish remain umph where she finished as close to Vandana's heart. "There were a lot of highs the team's top-scorer in Monchengladbach, Germany, in my career from winning and the Tokyo Olympics' the bronze medal in Junior

World Cup in 2013 to qualifying for Rio Olympics in 2016 to winning a gold medal in the Asia Cup in 2017 to winning a silver medal in the Asian

Games to missing out on a medal and finishing fourth in the Tokyo Olympics. Among these, the Tokyo Olympics and the 2013 Junior World Cup are the most special moments for me," she asserted. "After Tokyo, it was difficult to forget that heartbreak, but we thought we would cover it up in Paris, as we learned a lot in that tournament. I missed the Paris Olympics Qualifiers in Rachi due to an injury. The team performed well, but I think luck was not on our side. Had we won the match against Germany, then we would have qualified for the Paris Olympics."

The veteran player added that she has learned to give herself more time in training to bring the best out of herself.

"I feel players must be disciplined in their diet, recovery, and fitness. We all train together with our coaches and support staff, but I feel players who give themselves extra time stand out. I've always played with high energy and

kept myself fit throughout my career," she said.

When asked about her longevity in the sport and her favourite athletes, Vandana credited international stars including Ronaldo and Bolt as playing a role in her career. "I'm a fan of Dhanraj Pillay as he was also a forward and also followed (Cristiano) Ronaldo and Usain Bolt a lot in my life. Players are very disciplined these days and are ready for the high-performance requirement of the Indian team," she revealed.

She further highlighted the impact of the Women's Hockey India League in uplifting the confidence of youngsters for future tournaments. "The Women's HIL was much-needed as it boosts the personal confidence of players. Even players other than the Indian camp also received an opportunity to prove themselves. We have a strong chance of clinching a medal in next year's World Cup and 2028 Olympics as the team is

doing really well."

"With the rise of hockey over the years, with the help of Khelo India, it is a good career opportunity for upcoming youngsters. The popularity of the game has reached the masses, and there is a good career for them in hockey now," she added.

The 32-year-old is yet to decide on her career ahead, but remains open to taking up a coaching role while confirming her participation in the next HIL as a player.

"I'm completely fit and I'm ready for any opportunity, including coaching (if required) and playing. I've not decided anything yet, nothing is coming to my mind. I will play in the next edition of the HIL. She played for the Shrachi Rarh Bengal Tigers in the inaugural edition earlier this year. Sharing her initial hardship,

Vandana remembered how her journey in hockey started in the fifth standard.

"I used to play kho kho in school in the fifth standard.



My sisters used to play hockey,

and I also joined them, and

that is how my journey started

in the sport. Now, the sport

has given us a lot to live a

healthy life, but I have faced

situations when we struggled

to manage food two times a

day. I have faced a time when

we four siblings had only one

pair of shoes. "When I moved

to Lucknow hostel, I received

a kit, shoes, and proper food.

My father had to sell his cattle,

but he did not tell us. There

were many challenges, but

everything is fine now," she

that her struggles paid off

and got the opportunity to

get inspired by Prime Minister

Narendra Modi's pep talk

before and after the Tokyo

Olympics. "Players' dreams

are never-ending as they push

for more, but after meeting

him (PM Modi), it was very

motivational. He inspires you

so much to perform the best

for the team," Vandana signed

In the end, she is happy

recalled.

off.





Following the eight-wicket win over Lucknow Super Giants (LSG), Punjab Kings (PBKS) skipper Shreyas Iyer expressed happiness with his team's win and how the players executed their roles and plans to perfection. Iver-led PBKS continued to stamp their authority as relentless hitting from Prabhsimran Singh, Iyer and Nehal Wadhera after a measured bowling effort helped them make it two wins in

two matches at the start of the season against LSG

For more updates

THUMBNAILS

Puyol to lead Barcelona, Figo named Real Madrid captain for 'Legends Faceoff': Carles Puyol will lead the Barcelona Legends while Luis Figo will lead the Real Madrid Legends as the squads for the 'Legends Faceoff' between the two Spanish giants were announced on Wednesday. This clash is scheduled to take place on 6 April at the DY Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai, bringing back some of football's most iconic rivalries in front of an energised crowd. "The 'Legends Faceoff' is going to be special. I am really excited to play in India for the first time. The passion of the fans here is incredible, and I can`t wait to experience it first-hand," Puyol said. Xavi Hernandez added, "Barcelona vs. Real Madrid is the biggest rivalry in football, and I am excited to be part of this historic match. Mumbai, get ready for a footballing spectacle like no other!" "The love for football in India is growing every day, and it`s a privilege to bring this legendary rivalry to the fans in Mumbai. This will be a match to remember!" said Figo. John Zaidi, CEO and co-founder of The Sports Front, said, "The 'Legends Faceoff` has sparked tremendous interest among fans."

IPL 2025: Knight Riders take on Sunrisers, aim for first 'home' win

Kolkata host Hyderabad amid controversy over Eden Gardens pitch and lack of home advantage

TRIDIB BAPARNASH KOLKATA, 2 APRIL

that aids KKR's spin-heavy attack, comprishe stage is set for a rematch of last IPL ing Sunil season's final with Narine,

the defending champions Kolkata Knight Riders gearing up for a league encounter against Sunrisers Hyderabad at the Eden Gardens on Thursday. Both teams come into the contest having lost two of their last three games, adding extra urgency to their campaigns. With KKR already expressing disappointment over the Eden pitch, tensions are high, setting the scene for an intense showdown.

The controversy over the Eden pitch erupted after the home side suffered a sevenwicket defeat to Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the season opener. Former KKR opener Phil Salt and Virat Kohli took the home attack to the cleaners, stitching a 95-run stand off just 51 balls in a one-sided chase of 175. According to reports, Eden curator Sujan Mukherjee had declined KKR's request for a spin-friendly track in their opening match. However, after facing backlash, the Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) has been under team's composition has been pressure to produce a track far from impressive in the season so far, despite Ajinkya Rahane's side managing to win their match against Rajasthan Royals in Guwahati before being mauled by Mumbai Indians at the Wankhede in the third game

C Kolkata

Xnight Riders

Sunrisers

Hyderabad

excellent form in the first 10 days of the IPL. To rub 'Salt' to their wounds, Phil has already proved his worth for RCB.

Starc,

who

KKR's retained players — Venkatesh Iyer, Rinku Singh, Andre Russell, Sunil

> Narine, Harshit Rana, and Ramandeep Singh are yet to set the stage on fire. On the other hand, SRH's ultra-aggressive batting approach did seem to work in their season opener but have struggled to breach the 200-run mark in their last two games. Their high-risk cricket has completely backfired against Lucknow Super Giants (190/9) and Delhi Capitals (163 all out).

has been far from impressive

while Anrich Nortje remains

sidelined with a back injury.

Jaiswal parts ways with Mumbai, likely to captain Goa in 2025-26 season

BHUBANESWAR THURSDAY 03 APRIL 2025

TheStatesman /



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

In a surprising move, Yashasvi Jaiswal has shifted his domestic cricket allegiance from Mumbai to Goa. It has been learnt that the young India opener has already secured a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the Mumbai Cricket Association, making the transition official. Jaiswal's sudden move from domestic cricket powerhouse Mumbai has surprised many,

I can complete the formalities required to register with Goa CricketAssociation. Please let me know if any further steps are needed from my end to facilitate this process."

Jaiswal last played for Mumbai against Jammu and Kashmir in their Ranji Trophy Group A league round match from January 23-25 following the strict implementation of the BCCI directives that all India players should play domestic cricket if not on national duty.

In that game, Jaiswal had



Moeen Ali and Varun of the season. Chakravarthy. In fact, the The core of the IPL-wincalls for a pitch favouring ning unit of 2024, including former skipper Shrevas Iver the home side grew louder after Chakravarthy, one of (moved to Punjab Kings) KKR's key spinners, leaked his deputy Nitish Rana (RR) 45 runs in the opener. and pace spearhead Mitchell But beyond the pitch, the Starc (DC), have displayed



returned a career-best 5/35 for Delhi Capitals against Sunrisers Hyderabad in their last outing, could be the biggest miss in the KKR bowling attack that lacks the sting. His Aussie counterpart Spencer Johnson

resulting in consecutive defeats. Going in to Thursday's match, Pat Cummins and the leadership group will have to reassess their batting approach. Leading the bowling attack, the skipper and his new ball partner Mohammed Shami could be a potential threat to the struggling KKR batting at the Eden.

IPL: After KKR, CSK, now LSG disappointed with home pitch

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

After Kolkata Knight Riders and Chennai Super Kings, Lucknow Super Giants became the latest Indian Premier League (IPL) franchise to have expressed their dissatisfaction with their home pitch after the Zaheer Khan-mentored side suffered an eight-wicket hammering at the hands of Punjab Kings in Tuesday's match played at the Ekana Stadium in Lucknow.

Visibly frustrated with the outcome, the former India left-arm quick said it seemed the Punjab Kings had brought their own curator to prepare the pitch as the tourists romped home with 22 balls to spare. "What was a little disappointing for me here," Zaheer said at the press conference. "Considering it's a home game and in IPL you've seen how teams have looked at taking a little bit of home advantage, from that point of view you've seen the curator is not really thinking that it's a home game. I think maybe it looked like, you know, it was Punjab curator out here. So that's something which we will figure. It's a new set-up also for me, but I hope that this is the first and the last game when it comes to that. Because you



are disappointing the Lucknow fans as well. They've come up with so much expectations of winning the first home game here. As a team, we are confident. We accept that we've lost the game, and we have got to do whatever it takes to make that impact in the home leg. We still have six more games to go here, and this team has shown in the season so far, whatever little cricket is played, that we have the right outlook and the mindset to look at the IPL. What you can expect is

innovation, out-of-the-box thinking, the fight, the hunger, and that sums us up as a team."

Arshdeep Singh, who starred with a three-wicket haul for Punjab Kings, acknowledged the help from the pitch, while expressing his disappointment at leaking in excess of 40 runs during LSG's innings. Besides Arshdeep, PBKS used the conditions well by employing their seam-bowling arsenal, comprising the likes of Lockie Ferguson, Marco Jansen and Marcus Stoinis to good effect.

In contrast, the home side, plagued by injuries to key players, mostly their pacers, had probably anticipated a slower surface, and thus went in with two seamers—Shardul Thakur and their lone overseas pacer Shamar Joseph.

On being asked if they might have misread the pitch in their first home game, Zaheer agreed, saying, "That's what we are saying. We will go according to what the curator tells us. We are not using this as an excuse. We have seen during the last season

that it's not like batters don't have to struggle here at times. All these things go on in cricket. But the way the home team should get support, everyone needs to know this is our home team that is playing in Lucknow and what can we do to help them win? Everyone's contribution is important. We will find a way anyway to win matches..."

At the post-match presentation, LSG skipper Rishabh Pant also spoke of his side expecting a 'slow wicket', while explaining his decision to go in with an extra spinner in M Siddharth instead of pacer Prince Yadav.

"The idea was to get a slower wicket. We felt it's a home game, it's going to stop a little bit. I think the slower ones, when bowled into the wicket, were still sticking in but we weren't good enough on the day. We have got to learn and move forward. It is our first home game. Still assessing the conditions," he said.

LSG have now lost two of their first three matches this season, with their home record slipping to just 7 wins in 15 completed games at the Ekana Stadium. They now await Mumbai Indians on 4 April, hoping to get their campaign back on track.

Arjun Bhati aims for **Olympic glory after** receiving National Youth Award: Indian golfer Arjun Bhati, who was recently honoured with the National Youth Award, expressed his gratitude and reflected on his journey in the sport. The young golfer, who has been playing for over a decade, considers this recognition a significant milestone in his career, and is now aiming for Olympic gold. "I'm very grateful for this award, and it is a very big thing for my family and me. My efforts have borne fruit," Bhati told he media.

but it has been learnt that the Goa Cricket Association (GCA) has offered him the captaincy of the side, a position that many in MCA feel cannot be easily handed over to Jaiswal, considering the presence of several stalwarts in the Mumbai outfit. Currently, Ajinkya Rahane (red ball) and Shreyas Iyer (white ball) are the captains of the Mumbai side.

"I have had the privilege of representing Mumbai in domestic cricket and have immensely benefited from the opportunities provided by the association. However, after careful consideration of my career aspirations and personal circumstances, I have decided to seek a transfer to Goa to continue my domestic cricket journey," Jaiswal wrote to the MCA. "I assure you that this decision is made in good faith and with due respect to the association that has supported my development. I am willing to comply with all necessary formalities as per the BCCI's player transfer regulations and will ensure a smooth transition. I kindly request you to process my NOC at the earliest so that

made his sole appearance in the Ranji Trophy 2024-25 season scoring 4 and 26 as Mumbai lost by five wickets to Jammu and Kashmir for the second time in the tournament's history.

Jaiswal is the third cricketer from Mumbai in recent times to have moved to Goa after Arjun Tendulkar and Siddhesh Lad. Lad and Tendulkar had moved to Goa ahead of the 2022-23 season. Of late, the 23-year-old has been struggling for runs in the IPL, and his poor form is evident in his numbers —34 runs in three matches at an average of 11.33 and a strike rate of 106.25, with a highest score of 29 (scores: 1,29,4). He has played 36 first-class games for Mumbai and scored 3712 runs at an average of 60.85, having made his first-class debut in 2019. Jaiswal has been India's firstchoice opener since making his Test debut against the West Indies in July 2023 and since then he has played 19 games, cementing himself with stellar performances on the biggest stage.

Scott Boland aiming to leave his mark at World Test Championship 2025 final

AGENCIES NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

The ICC World Test Championship Final is on the horizon and South Africa and Australia have started to gear up for the one-off Test at Lord's.

Scott Boland, one of Australia's key pacers, spoke of his ambitions of making it to the side heading to the World Test Championship Final 2025 against South Africa.

"I've had my eye on that game since we qualified in January, so yeah I'll be doing everything I can over the next two or three months to make sure I'm right for that game on June 11," Boland said, according to ICC website.



Kiwis clinch series against Pakistan, eye whitewash in final ODI

AGENCIES

up a strong batting performance, finishing with 292/8. Openers Rhys Mariu (18) and Nick Kelly (31) provided an aggressive start before Kelly fell with the score at 54/1 in 6.2 overs. The Kiwis reached 100 in 15.3 overs but lost Daryl Mitchell (18) in the same over. Henry Nicholls (22) followed soon after, making it 102/4 in 16.5 overs. Captain Michael Bracewell (17) was dismissed by Mohammad Wasim, leaving New Zealand in a tricky position at 132/5. However, Muhammad Abbas and Mitchell Hay steadied the innings with a crucial 77run partnership. Abbas was eventually dismissed by Sufiyan Muqeem for 41. Mitchell Hay played a sensational knock, ensuring New Zealand reached a competitive total. He remained unbeaten on 99 off 78 balls, hitting seven boundaries and seven sixes. His efforts earned him the Player of the Match award.

HAMILTON, 2 APRI

New Zealand secured the series against Pakistan with an emphatic 84-run victory in Hamilton on Wednesday. The Kiwis will now head to Mount Maunganui for the final ODI on Saturday, aiming for a clean sweep.

The hero of the second innings for them was arBen Ses, who delivered a stunning performance, claiming a fivewicket haul in just his third ODI. After going wicketless in his first two games, Sears emerged as the standout bowler, leading New Zealand to victory with figures of 5/59.

Chasing a target of 293, Pakistan suffered an early collapse. Will O'Rourke struck first, dismissing Abdullah Shafique for just a single. Soon after, Babar Azam followed, falling to Jacob Duffy for 1. Imam-ul-Haq also perished to Duffy, leaving Pakistan reeling at 9/3 in just 5.3 overs. Things only got worse as Salman Agha (9) departed, making it 31/4 in 11.1 overs. Captain Mohammad Rizwan failed to anchor the innings, managing 5 runs off 27 deliveries before being dismissed. Tayyab Tahir (13) fell to Nathan Smith, while Mohammad Wasim (1) became Sears' victim. Akif

Javed was later removed by Duffy, giving the pacer his third wicket. Faheem Ashraf and Naseem Shah provided some resistance, stitching together a 60-run partnership. Ashraf played a counterattacking knock of 73 off 80 balls, while Naseem Shah contributed a fighting 51 off 44. However, it wasn't enough

to rescue Pakistan from the damage inflicted by New Zealand's bowlers.

Sears led the charge with 5/59, while Duffy claimed 3/35. Will O'Rourke and Nathan Smith picked up a wicket each as Pakistan were bundled out, handing New Zealand a commanding win. Earlier, New Zealand put

The 35-year-old featured for Australia in the World Test Championship Final in 2023, when they got their hands on the mace for the first time. Boland was a vital cog in that team, as he picked five wickets across two innings.

He produced a brilliant spell in the second innings with figures of 3/46, which included the key wickets of Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli and Ravindra Jadeja, and helped guide Australia to a memorable win at The Oval.

He has been instrumental for Australia in difficult situations, especially in the most recent Border-Gavaskar series at home, where he stepped up in the absence of Josh Hazlewood, who was ruled out due to injury after two games. Boland finished the series as the third-highest

wicket-taker in the series with 21 wickets despite only playing three Test matches.

This performance included a memorable 6/45 in the second innings of the final Test in Sydney as Australia secured a 3-1 series win, getting their hands on the Border-Gavaskar Trophy after more than a decade.

Boland has been nursing an injury to his knee sustained during the Sheffield Shield but is on the road to recovery for a busy period of cricket ahead.

"I think it's just working out what's working and what doesn't. I've only had this knee injury for eight to 10 months. I think we're going about it the right way. I'll have a little break now. But once I do get up and going, I'm hoping to just go really smoothly and if everything goes well, I'll be right to go

for that one Test in England and those three Tests in the Caribbean. And then after that, have another break again, and then sort of built my strengths and bowling loads again before the huge summer cricket next year, ' Boland added.

Boland will be competing with fellow pacers Josh Hazlewood, Pat Cummins and Mitchell Starc for a spot in the side for the final.

The aforementioned trio missed out on the Champions Trophy earlier this year due to injury and personal reasons following an action-packed summer of cricket, but have since made their return in the Indian Premier League. Australia will be looking to defend their title and retain their status as the best Test side in the world against first-time finalists, South Africa.

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