

Morning India

National Herald case: ED to seize Rs 661 Cr in Cong-linked assets

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He said the police force worked extensively to prevent any violence, with the intelligence report suggesting problems on Friday.



Mohun Bagan Super Giant team celebrates at the Salt Lake Stadium after winning the ISL Cup.

Jhargram's burning problem: Human hand plays a key role in forest fires

MI News Service, Jhargram: Rising incidences of forest fires in south Bengal districts, particularly Jhargram, have emerged as a threat to wildlife as well as tribal people who depend on the forests for survival. For some indigenous communities, March-April is crucial for collecting Mohua (*Madhuca longifolia*) flowers to brew the country liquor mohua. However, the tradition comes with a mal-practice — deliberately setting fire to the floor of the forest to clear dry leaves that hinder “flower collection”. The fires, though appar-

ently controlled, often go beyond their intended areas, merging with the region’s increasing wildfire crisis. Wildfires are ravaging the forests in and around Jhargram, where at least three major incidents were reported last month alone. The most recent blaze broke out on March 30 at Boriya near Jhargram town. Villages such as Tiyakati, Nayagram, Jamboni and Dharampur have borne the brunt of these fires, with vast stretches of forestland reduced to ashes over the last month.

Despite repeated awareness

campaigns and warnings from the state forest department, the frequency of these fires is on the rise, posing serious environmental threats and endangering local communities. The causes of such fires go beyond flower collection. One of the main reasons is said to be the thick accumulation of dry leaves on the forest floor. The dry foliage catches fire instantly which races with the wind. The problem is compounded by human-induced factors. Garh Salboni villager Ajit Mahato said solely blaming Mohua flower collectors oversimplified the

issue. “What about areas with no Mohua trees? Many of these fires are due to negligence or mischief. People visit forests for picnics and cook meals. After they are done, they do not care to check if the makeshift oven is properly extinguished. Those embers can easily lead to a wildfire.” Others like him also believe reckless human behaviour plays a crucial role. “People, including tourists, often throw bidi or cigarette stubs carelessly, which can trigger massive fires,” said Sumitra Mullick, another Jhargram resident.

Alipurduar: 2 held in petrol pump firing case, hunt on for third

MI News Service, Alipurduar: Police arrested two persons on Friday in connection with the firing that occurred at a petrol pump near Alipurduar town on April 7 night and seized a 7mm pistol and live bullets from them.

One of them, Shankar Das, is the son of a Trinamool member of the local panchayat. The other is his friend Subhankar Pal. Both are from Chechakhata, a locality under Alipurduar-II block. Around 11.30pm on April 7, three persons reached the petrol pump. Subhankar took out a firearm and shot at Ajoy Mandal, an employee there, the police said. Mandal, who got a bullet in his head, was critically injured. He is under treatment at a private nursing home in Siliguri. However, the motive behind the crime is not clear, police sources said. On Saturday, the duo were produced in a local court which ordered police custody for seven days.

The police are in search of the third person who was present with Shankar and Subhankar. TMC leaders have distanced themselves from Shankar. “Our party never shelters any offender,” said Paritosh Barman, the Trinamool president of Alipurduar-II block.

Minimum wage advisory committee meeting at Siliguri

MI News Service, Siliguri: A meeting of the minimum wage advisory committee of the tea industry held at the state guest house in Siliguri on Saturday. Moloy Ghatak, the state labour minister, said the committee was formed to fix the minimum wage rate of tea workers serving in Bengal. “So far, 20 meetings of the committee have been held, but no decision has been reached. We hope there will be some positive development tomorrow,” said Ghatak.

Representatives of tea planters and trade unions, and officials of the labour department will attend the meeting.



On the 326th Khalsa Sajna Diwas (Baisakhi) in front of the Shaheed Minar at Maidan, Minister Aroop Biswas offered a Chadar (Rumala Sahib) on behalf of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in Kolkata on Sunday.

We are neither action-shy nor trigger-happy: DGP Rajeev Kumar amid Murshidabad violence

MI News Service, Kolkata: Bengal’s director general of police Rajeev Kumar on Saturday said the force was not “action shy” and was prepared to deal strongly with the violence arising out of waqf protests and appealed to everyone to stop spreading rumours in Murshidabad. “No hooliganism will be tolerated. We are dealing with the situation very strongly. Police use minimum force first to control the situation, but it doesn’t mean we are action-shy,” Kumar said. As the police had been criticised for not playing a more proactive role to control the violence in a few areas of Murshidabad, the DGP said: “We are fighting a situation where we all need to be together.

It is a fight between good and bad people. The rumours have to stop. We will deal with hooligans and mischievous people very, very strongly.”

Several vehicles were torched and NH12 was blocked for several hours on Friday following violent protests that rocked parts of Murshidabad. A battery of senior police officers of the rank of additional director generals of police and others from the state police directorate have reached the bordering district of Bengal, where Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) has been clamped to prevent public disturbance. Internet services

have been shut down, and the BSF has joined the police for patrolling.

“The phone numbers of police stations and control rooms have been provided. If there is anything, call the police,” Kumar said while addressing the media. “But people are not allowed to take the law into their own hands. This is unacceptable. The lives of people and their properties are at stake. We will deal with them as strongly as possible.” The top cop, who reached trouble-town Samsarganj on Saturday evening, said the Bengal police wasn’t a “trigger-happy” force and that the immediate priority of the force was to stop the violence. However, a senior police officer confirmed that three persons had lost their lives in the violence.

“At the moment, the rumours have to stop. If we keep addressing rumours, it is a waste of time and energy of the officers on the ground and that of our resources,” said Kumar. The DGP said a firing took place on Friday and people were injured, but there was no death. He also spoke about an “unfortunate incident” on Saturday morning of someone falling to bullets, only to be told later that he received a bullet injury on his leg. “This has to stop. I request your help and cooperation,” Kumar said. “We are here to protect lives and properties. Rumours have to stop.”

Dooars tea workers protest PF default under banner of TMC Cha Bagan Sramik Union



MI News Service, Dooars: Hundreds of tea garden workers from across the Dooars congregated in front of the regional provident fund office in Jalpaiguri under the banner of the Trinamool Cha Bagan Sramik Union (TCBSU) on Friday to protest against the failure of a section of companies to deposit labourers’ provident fund (PF). The protesters also alleged that the Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO), a central government entity, was not doing enough to ensure the PF deposits. “Some tea planters are deducting the PF contribution from the workers’ wages, but are not depositing the amounts in the EPFO. This is unacceptable, and the PF authorities should take steps. That is why we demonstrated here today,” said state labour minister Moloy.

“Middlemen approach tea garden workers and assure them of PF disbursement against cash. If middlemen approach workers, they should immediately

inform union leaders. We will take legal steps against such people,” he added. Ritabrata Banerjee, the state president of the INTTUC, the trade union of the Trinamool Congress, said the party would continue to hold different programmes in the Dooars and the Terai over tea workers’ issues till next year’s Assembly elections. “PF is a statutory benefit which the tea workers receive. Yet, they are unsure if their PF deposits are made by the companies. The PF authorities cannot evade their responsibilities,” he said.

“On our part, we will organise camps on every tea estate to find out the amount of PF dues,” added Banerjee, a Rajya Sabha member. A delegation of TMC leaders went to the PF office at Dinabazar and submitted a memorandum to officials. “We have submitted the memorandum to the PF authorities and sought a response to our demands within 20 days,” said Sanjoy Kuzur, a TMC leader.

Man gets life for murdering neighbour

MI News Service, Asansol: A fast track court in Asansol has sentenced a person to life imprisonment in a murder case of his neighbour in presence of his mother about three years ago. On 18 January 2022, one Fajal Imam of Charbi Mohalla in Rahamat Nagar, under Hirapur police station was murdered. His neighbour Mohamed Ali alias Sonu stabbed him repeatedly with a knife in his abdomen in front of his mother due to an old rivalry. To ensure his death he also slit his throat with the knife and later snatched a scooter from a passerby from the lane in broad daylight and fled away. He was taken to nearby hospital in profusely bleeding condition and was pronounced dead by the doctor. On the same evening, his mother had lodged an FIR against Mohammed Ali at Hirapur police station. Hirapur PS arrested him and trial started at the Fast Track Court in Asansol, in which 22 witnesses were produced before the court including the attending doctor of the hospital. Binayananda Chatterjee, the government pleader said that all the witnesses had recorded secret statements before the judge and within three years the order had been passed in this murder case.

3 dead in separate incidents

MI News Service, Shamsheganj: At least three people have lost their lives in separate incidents across the district since Friday. In Shamsheganj, a father and son duo, identified as Hargobind Das and Chandan Das, were brutally murdered at their residence, local sources said. However no official communication was available regarding the identities of the deceased. According to local sources, a group of miscreants broke into the duo’s residence with the intent to loot. When the duo tried to resist, they were reportedly hacked to death with sharp weapons.

Simultaneously, violent protests escalated in other parts of the district, including Dhulian and Suti, over the controversial Waqf Amendment Act. On Friday, three persons, including a minor, were shot at during clashes. One of them died later. The deceased, a teenager, succumbed to bullet injuries in Murshidabad Medical College and Hospital after being injured in Suti’s Sajur More area. Meanwhile, fresh allegations have emerged against BSF personnel for opening fire on civilians.

Darjeeling MP visits Khoribari accusing police of inaction

MI News Service, Darjeeling: At a time when communal tensions have been rising in the region—before Eid, during Ram Navami, and amid protests against the amended Waqf Act—Darjeeling MP Raju Bista, along with BJP MLAs from Siliguri and Dabgram-Fulbari, visited the Khoribari police station in the Phansidewa Assembly constituency of Darjeeling district on Saturday. The visit followed a disturbing incident of desecration at a temple ahead of Ram Navami. Miscreants allegedly vandalised the Maa Kali Mandir in Vivekananda Pally, Chakkarmari, Bhanjanpur, under the jurisdiction of Khoribari police station, leaving the local community shocked and outraged. “It has been more than 12 days since the incident happened, yet the police have failed to identify or apprehend the culprits responsible for this heinous act,” said Raju Bista. He also claimed that this was the third such instance of sacrilege in local temples, with no conclusive action taken in any of the cases.



Union Minister and State BJP President Sukanta Majumdar, Opposition leader Suwendu Adhikari with other BJP leaders took part in a protest rally against the West Bengal Government in Kolkata on Sunday.

Voices Rise for Pension Justice



Tapash Roy: A massive rally and convention were held on April 10 at the Community Hall in Dum Dum Estate, organized by the employee union of the Ordnance Factory Dum Dum. The union, affiliated with INTTUC, invited Shri Vijay Kumar Bandhu, National President of the National Movement for Old Pension Scheme (NMOPS), as the chief guest for the event. The program witnessed participation from employees of various central government organizations, all of whom have been adversely affected by the implementation of the National Pension System (NPS), effective since January 1, 2004, and the upcoming Unified Pension Scheme (UPS), set to be launched on April 1, 2025. The primary objective of the rally and convention was to voice strong opposition to both NPS and

UPS, while demanding the reinstatement of the Old Pension Scheme (OPS) for central government employees. The gathering reflected growing discontent among employees and reinforced the call for secure and guaranteed post-retirement benefits. The event was graced by several prominent leaders and representatives, including NMOPS National President Vijay Kumar Bandhu, Defense Coordinator Prem Sagar, Sub-Coordinator Uttam Biswas, OFDC Employees Union President Ravi Shankar Basak, General Secretary Chayan Bhattacharya, OFDC Coordinator Hamid Saha, along with other key representatives such as Ved Prakash Pandey, Soumik Modak, Khristorooop Khanda, D.S. Upadhyay, Gauranga Chandra Nayek, and Sanjay Ray Majumdar.

Siliguri Municipal Corporation crackdown on plastic carry bags

MI News Service, Siliguri: The Siliguri Municipal Corporation (SMC), the largest civic body in north Bengal, has decided to tighten the screws on the use of plastic carry bags and thermocol (polystyrene). The decision was taken at the civic body’s environment committee meeting on Friday. Gautam Deb, the mayor, who was present at the meeting said: “We will launch an extensive campaign and drive against the use of plastic carry bags and thermocol. The drive will be conducted to prevent storage, selling, and use of these items.” The use of plastic carry bags is banned in the Siliguri civic area and Darjeeling district as a whole. However, such bags continue to be used across the city. Thermocol is also a major cause of pollution, particularly in the water bodies of the city.

Along with an awareness campaign, SMC will conduct raids with Siliguri

Metropolitan Police at all entry and exit points of the city to prevent the entry and use of plastic carry bags and thermocol products in Siliguri. In the current fiscal, the civic board has sanctioned ₹3 lakh for the campaign. The SMC also plans to spend a sum of ₹10 lakh for planting around 10,000 saplings to increase the green cover in Siliguri, a source said. “We have already relocated 180 trees under the replantation programme, we could save 130 of those trees,” said a source. The mayor added that they will hold talks with Credai (Confederation of Real Estate Developers’ Association of India), one of the largest realtors’ association, to maintain an eco-friendly environment at construction sites. “At the construction sites, there should be rainwater harvesting, and trees would be planted in such locations. We will discuss those issues with Credai,” said Deb.

Bengal government to tap experts on minimum tea wage

MI News Service, Kolkata: The Bengal labour department will approach the State Productivity Council and seek a report on the minimum wage for tea garden workers.

The decision was made at a meeting of the minimum wage committee here on Saturday. The panel was constituted by the Mamata Banerjee government in 2015 to recommend the minimum wage for the tea workers. “Around 20 meetings of the committee have been held so far, but tea planters and trade unions

could not reach a consensus on the minimum wage. That is why state labour minister Moloy Ghatak today (on Saturday) proposed that the matter be referred to the State Productivity Council,” said Ritabrata Banerjee, a Rajya Sabha member who was present at the meeting.

“The council will be asked to prepare a report on the minimum wage. Once the report is ready, further discussions would be held on the minimum wage,” added Banerjee, who is also the state president of the INTTUC.

State govt envis-
ages more buses
on EM Bypass

MI News Service, Kolkata: The state government wants to run more buses on EM Byass and has sought the Kolkata Police's opinion on whether it will pose challenges in traffic management. Senior transport department officials and city police officers discussed the challenges that may arise if more buses are allowed on the Bypass.

"The legalities of this decision were discussed, and a final decision would be made after we get feed-back from the police," transport secretary Saumitra Mohan said. A state government notification issued on February 11, 2005, had imposed restrictions on the "plying of state carriage buses" through the Bypass from the Hudco crossing in Ultadanga to the Garia station road-EM Bypass crossing. The notification said the number of buses plying on the Bypass would be restricted to the permits issued by the regional transport authorities. The permits would be granted for "stage carriage or contract carriage," the notification said.

"Only the regional transport authorities of North and South 24-Parganas and Howrah could issue permits to buses to ply through the Bypass, and not the state transport authority (STA), which issues permits for buses across the state," a senior transport department official said. "We want to do away with this notification and make new provisions wherein the STA would be empowered to issue bus permits on the Bypass," said the official.

US tariff re-
lief: Exports
of iPhone,
laptop now
20% cheaper
than China

From PG 1
major players, especially Apple, alongside Dell, Samsung, TSMC, AMD, Nvidia, and the broader semiconductor and hardware industry. "Whether an olive branch or a pragmatic reset, the move helps reduce friction in a highly interconnected global electronics supply chain. That said, the broader trajectory of US-China trade policy remains uncertain," Ram said. Counterpoint Research Vice-President for Research Neil Shah said he believes that moving manufacturing and supply chains to the US by charging higher tariffs is not practical and in turn hurts the most valuable American companies such as Apple, NVIDIA and others. "Bringing back the manufacturing of smartphones, especially iPhones, is going to be a marathon not a sprint if the US government is serious about it. And, if really serious, it could mean now is not the time and will need a very different strategy and multi-year incentive scheme," Shah said.

Mamata's Nobo Borsho gift: Get ready to walk at Kalighat skywalk



Kalighat Sky Walk is all set for a grand inauguration.

MI News Service, Kolkata: The Kalighat skywalk, which has been in the making for over four years, will be inaugurated on Monday. The trunk of the 435m-long skywalk takes off at the SP Mukherjee Road-Kali Temple Road intersection and ends outside the gates of the Kalighat temple. A 30-metre arm of the skywalk starts near the Kalighat fire brigade intersection and merges with the trunk near Kalighat police station. There are five points of entry or exit: from SP Mukherjee Road; outside the Kalighat temple; on Sadananda Road; at the Kalighat fire station intersection; and from the second floor of the new Kalighat Hawkers' Corner. The skywalk,

which is standing on 50 portals or goal-post shaped structures supporting it from below, is 6.5 metres above the road. "Chief minister Mamata Banerjee will open the skywalk on the eve of Poila Boishakh," said a KMC official. A senior engineer of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC), which built the skywalk, said that along with the construction of the skywalk, the road underneath has seen a transformation.

Kali Temple Road had multiple encroachments before the construction of the skywalk began. "The encroachments have been removed. One can now take the Kali Temple Road that is 25m wide from its intersection with SP Mukherjee Road and

drive past the temple. That was unimaginable earlier," said the engineer. The footpath along Kali Temple Road has been renovated, too, with newly laid paver blocks. "We have widened the footpath. Earlier, it was between 6ft and 7ft wide. Now the footpath is 12ft wide. We have demarcated space for hawkers on the footpath, leaving two-thirds of the width free for pedestrians following the street vending rules," said the engineer. The construction of the skywalk and the sprucing up of the pavement and roads have cost ₹100 crore, said an engineer. The construction of the skywalk began in October 2021 with an 18-month deadline. Several new deadlines were set and missed. KMC engineers and officials said multiple challenges had to be overcome. "We had to shift a brick box-drain, high tension electricity lines and three water supply lines. Their shifting on such a cluttered and busy road took time. A redundant gas supply line had to be removed, too."

"There were severe restrictions on when we could work. We had to stop our work every year for 15 days around Poila Boishakh, during the Gangasagar Mela and again between Durga Puja and Kali Puja because of the rush of devotees. Restricted work could be done on Tuesdays and Saturdays, and also during monsoon," an engineer said.



326th Khalsa Sajna Diwas & Baisakhi celebration at Sahid Minar maidan in Kolkata on Sunday.

Dating app racket: Kolkata Police arrests couple

MI News Service, Kolkata: Kolkata Police have arrested a couple and unveiled a dating app racket operating in the city and surrounding areas. One of the accused is a restaurant manager and his accomplice, a young woman, created fake profiles on popular dating sites like Boo and Tinder to catfish unsuspecting suitors. "They would target specific individuals on the app, befriend them. Once the courtship progressed and a level of trust established, the female would suggest a dinner at the restaurant where her accomplice worked," said a senior police officer of the cyber-crime branch. "Once the victim was honey-trapped they would extort money through various means including inflated bills." The cybercrime branch is trying to find out the total victims the duo had entrapped and the money they raised using various nefarious means. "We suspect there

could be more people involved in the racket. The two are being interrogated," an officer said. Online dating scam describes attempts to manipulate an individual's vulnerabilities by establishing a romantic and sexual relationship. Once the victim is in their trap shared photographs and texts are used to blackmail the victim. "The victims get blindsided by their emotions and want to fulfil every wish of the other person without realising they are bleeding money. By the time they become aware it is already too late," said a police officer. The fake profile created could be either of a man or a woman and the targets are from both the genders.

Cybersecurity experts say one of the steps people with fake profiles use is quick expression of love and at the same time avoiding a meeting. "If a person you have met online keeps giving excuses to meet in person, then

most likely he or she is not who they are claiming to be," said a police officer. The cops advise those new to the dating apps to make a reverse image search of the person they have started dating online. "Those running dating scam rackets keep making new profiles. Those interested in online dating should be wary of new profiles," said an officer. Sextortion racket started in Rajasthan's Bharatpur and has since spread to different parts of the country including Kolkata. Some of the cybercriminals arrested in other cities either trace their roots to Bharatpur or were trained by those running sextortion rackets in the Rajasthan town.

"While chatting online personal details should not be shared. Most of these times most of the scammers are targeting multiple victims, and it can become difficult for them to keep track of their stories. Look for the loopholes" said an officer.



Preparations for the Lakshmi & Ganesh idols are underway in full swing for occasion of 'Poila Baishakh'.

Police nab man
trying to rob bank
with toy gun

MI News Service, Kolkata: A 31-year-old man was arrested in Kolkata's Survey Park area after he was caught while allegedly attempting to rob a bank using a toy gun, police said. Dalim Basu, an employee of the Department of Post, went to the nationalised bank around 3 pm on Friday and showed the toy gun, asking the customers and the bankers to hand him everything they had, a police officer said. Basu, himself a customer of the bank, was under stress for failing to repay his home loan and meet other expenses, he said. The bank manager and customers caught him from behind after realising that he was holding a toy gun, the officer said. He was handed over to the police and subsequently arrested. Besides the toy gun, a knife was recovered from his possession, police said.

SC order on SSC:
Teacher transfer plan
goes to cold storage

MI News Service, Kolkata: The state government has cancelled its decision to transfer teachers in government-aided secondary and higher secondary schools because the en masse termination of teachers' jobs by the Supreme Court has plunged many institutes into crisis. An order signed by a deputy secretary in the school education department, sent to the school service commission, says: "The undersigned is directed to state that the previous Memo... of this department is hereby cancelled till further order and the transfer of the teachers in terms of those orders is withdrawn."

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From PG 1
major playe including the first family of the Congress led by Sonia Gandhi, her MP son Rahul Gandhi, apart from late Congress leaders Motilal Vora and Oscar Fernandes and also Suman Dubey, Sam Pitroda and private company Young Indian for alleged involvement in a money-laundering scheme related to the fraudulent takeover of properties valued over ₹2,000 crore belonging to the A.J.L. "The legal proceedings against the accused have faced challenges but have been upheld by both Delhi High Court and the Supreme Court, allowing the investigation to proceed," the ED said. Sonia and Rahul are majority shareholders of Young Indian, with 38 per cent shares held by each. Earlier, both of them were questioned for hours by the ED in this case. The ED claimed its investigation has "conclusively" found that Young Indian, which was "beneficially owned" by Sonia and Rahul, "acquired" A.J.L. properties worth ₹2,000 crore for a mere ₹50 lakh, significantly undervaluing its worth.

'Nobo Borsho' Bonanza for Bengal in Football

MI News Service, Kolkata: What more the football crazy Bengalis can expect in 'Nobo Borsho', i.e in the Bengali New Year. It is a triple bonanza for the Bengalis whose unarguable love and passion for football is widely known.

Mohun Bagan shows why it is super Giant

Mariners once again showed that why they are implausibly tagged as 'Super Giant' when they proudly lift the Indian Super League Cup (ISL Cup) for the season 2024-25. Mohun Bagan Super Giant were stretched to the limit before staging off Bengaluru FC's remarkable challenge and winning the ISL-XI Cup final 2-1 in extra time at the jam-packed Salt Lake Stadium on Saturday.

Bagan thus became the second team after Mumbai City FC to do an ISL double. They had already won the League Shield in February and Saturday's win exorcised the ghost of last summer when they missed out on a double delight after stumbling in the Cup final at the same venue. Bengaluru FC, who were the better team for most of the 90 minutes, took the lead through an own goal by Bagan defender Alberto Rodriguez four minutes after the change of ends. Jason Cummings scored the equaliser by converting a penalty in the 72nd minute and then Jamie Maclaren made it 2-1 in the 96th minute. The moment referee Senthil Nathan S blew the final whistle, the stadium erupted into unbridled euphoria. Fire cracklers, chants in the stands, the Bagan bench rushing onto the ground to join the party... No one, perhaps, was happier than owner Sanjiv Goenka, who had a super Saturday as his cricket franchise, Lucknow Super Giants, won earlier in the evening. Hugging the players, basking in the glory in front of nearly 60,000 spectators, Goenka was beaming. Success on the field gives a high. Ever since he invested in football, ATK, ATK Mohun Bagan and Mohun Bagan Super Giant have returned with trophies. Critics may cringe at the way Mohun Bagan Super Giant splurge on players, making the transfer market topsy-turvy, but with the results coming and fans over the moon, there's no point raising a finger at them. Have it, flaunt it. To give credit to Goenka, he has been pumping money into football since 2014 — the year ISL was born — without thinking about the monetary returns. The way Bagan supporters celebrated on Saturday was probably the No. 1 — the number on the shirt he wears during Bagan matches — for him.

East Bengal wins Indian Women's League

Twenty-one years after an East Bengal team last won a league title in Indian football, the club's women's outfit sealed the Indian Women's Football League (IWL) trophy with a 1-0 victory over defending champions Odisha FC. Soumya Guguloth scored the all-important goal in the 67th minute. With this loss, Odisha FC stood on the verge of relegation and their fate is not entirely in their own hands with just one game left. The last title East Bengal had won was the National Football League -- the predecessor of I-League -- when its men's team lifted the trophy in the 2003-04 season. Other national titles the men's team has won over the years were either in knock-out or league-cum-knock-out tournaments. The men's team had also won the ASEAN Club Championship in 2003.

Diamond Harbour's 'Abhishek' in I- League

Diamond Harbour Football Club enters I-League football league and eventually becomes 4th Bengal-based club to have played in prestigious Indian football league. Diamond Harbour Sports Club (DHFC) enters I-League after the club beat Sports Academy Tirur 2-1 in I-League 2 to win the I League -2 and secure I-League promotion. The West Bengal-based club became the fourth team to play in the league after East Bengal, Mohun Bagan and Mohammedan Sporting, all of whom now play in the Indian Super League (ISL). Taking to X, Abhishek Banerjee, who owns the team, stated that it was due to the discipline of their players that they could make it to the I-League.

He wrote, "It is a moment of immense pride and joy — not just for me personally but for every single member and supporter of the Diamond Harbour Football Club family. Our qualification for the I-League stands as a testament to the discipline of our players, the unwavering commitment of our coaches and the entire squad, the belief and support of our sponsors and, above all, the unbreakable love and passion of our people." "Our rise through the ranks — from the CFL First Division to the CFL Premier Division, then I-League 3 champions, I-League 2, and now the I-League — in just three years is nothing short of extraordinary. It's a story of grit, vision and belief that will inspire millions of footballers and fans across the country," Banerjee added. DHFC still remains unbeaten after 14 matches. Diamond Harbour FC won the I-League 3 title earlier this season to qualify for I-League 2, and if Diamond Harbour get a point against second-placed Chanmari FC, they will be crowned the I-League 2 champions. League leaders Diamond Harbour are currently on 34 points with 10 wins and four draws.

City pays a joint tribute to Tagore & Gulzar

MI News Service, Kolkata: The intellectual and cultural capital of India, Kolkata recently hosted a programme show casing the brilliance of the iconic legend Rabindranath Tagore and the lyrical genius Gulzar. Celebrated elocutionist Satyajit mesmerized the audience with his magical voice as he presented a unique pot-pourri of the works of these two legends through their diverse works.

Satyajit mentioned, "Gulzar, a die-hard Tagore fan has many times expressed that how his works reflects the direct influence of Tagore on him. Gulzar's classical works of Gulzar, a direct or passive influence of Tagore on Gulzar's mind and heart can well be read in the essence of his creation." The show was a captivating tribute to Rabindranath Tagore and Gulzar that recently



enthralled audiences of Kolkata. The performance, by renowned elocutionists Satyajit Biswas creatively blended the timeless poetry of the two legends, offering a unique and emotional experience to the viewers. Satyajit reflected

on Tagore's lifelong impact on Gulzar's work. According to Satyajit, "Gulzar is neither a name nor an adjective. Gulzar is a space that has nourished our sensibilities for six decades. He has uplifted cinematic images with his imagination

and resonance as well as given a new rhetoric to Hindi poetry." In the show, Satyajit reflected a comparative analysis of Gulzar's works in Hindi taken inspiration from Tagore's works, both in terms of Tagore's philosophy and psychoanalysis of human's thought process. He mentioned, "Gulzar has an interesting connect with languages and he uses it in the most distinct manner in his poetry. One finds him blending different languages in the same poem and he explains this by claiming all languages as his very own. His criterion to use words has been not only the meaning but also on the sound and its connection with the readers. He has always candidly mentioned that how his works are so much influenced by the literary and philosophical treasures of Tagore."

Lost bag returned to a Metro commuter

MI News Service, Kolkata: On 10.04.2025, at 10:40 hrs, an on-duty RPF staff posted at Netaji Metro station while conducting a routine patrolling recovered an unclaimed bag from the platform and deposited it to the Station Master's Office of the station. After opening the bag, some valuable items were found therein.

Thereafter, Station Master made repeated announcements requesting the owner of the bag to collect it from the Station Master's Office and a control message was also communicated to all the stations.

After sometime, a male commuter came to the Station Master's Office of Netaji Metro station and claimed the ownership of the recovered bag and the items containing therein. After proper verification and fulfilling all official formalities, the bag along with all other items were handed over to him.

He expressed his heartfelt gratitude to Metro Railway authorities for helping him to get back the lost bag along with all other items.

Nirmala Sitharaman welcomes RBI rate cut

MI News Service, New Delhi: India finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said her country's economy - hit by U.S trade tariffs - will need help from the Reserve Bank of India and the government as she welcomed Wednesday's interest rate cut by the central bank.

India's Monetary Policy Committee cut its repo rate for a second consecutive time by 25 basis points to 6.00% as it seeks to boost a sluggish economy in the face of U.S. trade tariffs.

The central bank started lowering rates with a quarter-point reduction in February, its first cut since May 2020.

"I welcome it with a sense of joy," Sitharaman told reporters during a trip to London about the interest rate cut, adding that "growth is of great importance."

She added that India "will need every support, both from the central bank and from the ministry."

Rs 4382 Cr project: MCPI-IOC JV in Polyester yarn



MI News Service, Kolkata: MCPI has entered into a landmark joint venture with Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL), investing Rs. 4,382 crore in a polyester yarn manufacturing facility in Bhadrak, Odisha. The plant will house a 900 TPD CP unit, producing FDY, DTY, and polyester chips. These initiatives are poised to create thousands of additional jobs, catalyze regional industrial growth, and deepen India's textile manufacturing ecosystem.

Dr Purnendu Chatterjee, Chairman, MCPI said, "MCPI celebrates its Silver Jubilee with pride. MCPI has transformed into a future-ready, agile organization by embracing a 'Talent First' approach, digital innovation through MCPI 4.0, and best-in-class safety and ESG practices. Our strategic forward integration—from PTA to synthetic fibres and B2C through Garden Vareli—has positioned us for long-term growth. MCPI's strength lies in combining Japanese operational excellence with Indian adaptability, making it a company built not just for today, but for the future."

With state-of-the-art manufacturing facilities in Haldia, West Bengal, MCPI operates at a robust capacity of 1.27 million tons per annum (MTPA) of Purified Terephthalic Acid (PTA). Leveraging proprietary Japanese technology, the plant is a model of energy efficiency, environmental compliance, and operational excellence. MCPI's PTA is a vital raw material for polyester, powering downstream applications across textiles, packaging, and industrial uses—placing the company at the heart of India's growing manufacturing economy.



Special Drive at Ballygunje to apprehend offenders who are littering on Railway track.

Awareness Programme on National Safe Motherhood Day Organized at Divisional Railway Hospital, Malda

MI News Service, Kolkata: To mark National Safe Motherhood Day, an awareness programme was held at the OPD complex of Divisional Railway Hospital, Malda on April 11, 2025, focusing on maternal health and well-being.

Healthcare staff and OPD patients actively participated in the session, which featured an interactive discussion led by Dr. Rahul Chowdhury, Additional Chief Medical Superintendent. Dr. Chowdhury emphasized the importance of preconception care, including essential health screenings like hemoglobin, blood sugar, thyroid function, and weight checks.



He also highlighted the role of nutritional supplements, balanced diet, and a healthy lifestyle as part of the SAM-POORNA Swasth Janm Abhiyan, aimed at empowering women for a safe and healthy motherhood.

The session concluded with a unified message: "Let's empower her, together. Support the SAM-POORNA Swasth Janm Abhiyan. Empower every mother — because she is SAMPURNA."

Kaliganj by-election with 100 percent EPIC and photo in list

MI News Service, Krishnanagar: The by-election at Kaliganj constituency in Nadia is going to take place with hundred percent of electros issued EPIC and each of whose photographs appear in Rolls, said DM, Nadia S. Arun Prasad on Sunday. The camp visits by officials started on Sunday. Bulan Bhattacharya, Deputy CEO, West Bengal, also visited the Special Summary Revision camp with Nadia DM.

The demise of Kaliganj MLA Naseruddin Ahmed on February 2 this year, has caused to develop the situation of arranging the by election here.

However the total electros are 254878 including



4 third genders. While the male electros are 131603, the rest are females.

While there are 312 new inclusion of electors after final publication of January 6, 2025, total correction took place for 896 cases. There are also 328 deletion, the DM added.

There is a toll free number and it is 1950. It will be

functional at the district office to address the queries of citizen on SSR and other related issues.

However, the district magistrate and district election officer Nadia S. Arun Prasad visited the booths. The special summary revision which started on Sunday, will take place April 13, 19 and 20.

HC restrains FCTWEI from interfering with director's work

MI News Service, Kolkata: The high court has restrained the powerful technicians' federation in Tollygunge from interfering with the independent functioning of a director.

"The respondent no. 5 (Federation of Cine Technicians and Workers of Eastern India (FCTWEI) is restrained from interfering with the independent functioning of the petitioner in performing work and none of the fundamental right to life and livelihood and the right to carry on business, trade and profession shall be interfered with," said an order by Justice Amrita Sinha, issued recently.

The federation is headed by Swarup Biswas, brother of Aroop Biswas, a top leader of the Trinamool Congress and a senior minister in the state cabinet.

An association of directors, including some leading names in the industry, has for long accused the federation of "ruining" their work environment and threatening the future of the industry by imposing its diktats.

The original petition was

filed by Bidula Bhattacharjee, a 38-year-old filmmaker. The case came up for hearing first on March 20.

The petition alleged "extreme highhandedness on the part of the federation, not allowing the petitioner and similarly placed members of the Directors Association of Eastern India to perform their work independently".

On April 3, Justice Sinha allowed Bhattacharjee to file a "comprehensive representation highlighting all grievances" before the secretary of the information and cultural affairs department of the state government.

Justice Sinha directed the secretary to hear all "the necessary parties" and pass a "reasoned" order within four weeks from the date of filing of the representation. On April 3, another similar petition was filed by 14 other filmmakers, including Parambrata Chattopadhyay, Anirban Bhattacharya, Sudeshna Roy, Indranil Roychowdhury and Kingshuk Dey.

Some of the members of the directors' guild have been allegedly denied health

insurance benefits because the applications are routed through the federation, the petition said.

The federation also discriminated among members on the basis of unique identity cards, the petition said. People without the cards find it very challenging to get work, it said.

The counsel for the federation admitted before the court that a code of conduct that governed the functioning of the industry was effective from May 1, 2012, to April 30, 2015.

Though the code is invalid now, the federation insists on going by the same, the petitioners alleged.

Justice Sinha directed that the health insurance applications would be considered by the Film Directorate, which is headed by an additional secretary, without "routing" them through the federation.

"Non-production of the Unique Card will not affect any of the rights of the petitioner to perform his profession, trade or business independently," the order said.

The matter will be heard next on May 19.

SEBI tightens norms for SME maiden offers

MI News Service, New Delhi: SEBI has notified a stricter regulatory framework for small and medium enterprise (SME) IPOs by introducing a profitability requirement and capping a 20 per cent limit on an offer-for-sale (OFS).

The reforms aim to provide SMEs with a sound track record an opportunity to raise funds from the public while protecting investor interests.

This move follows a rise in SME issues, which has driven significant investor participation.

On the profitability criteria, Sebi said SMEs planning to launch an initial public offering are required to have a minimum operating profit (earnings before interest, depreciation and tax or EBITDA) of ₹1 crore for at least two out of the three previous financial years.

The OFS component by selling shareholders in

SME IPOs has been capped at 20 per cent of the total issue size. Additionally, selling shareholders will not be allowed to offload more than 50 per cent of their existing holdings, Sebi said in a notification.

Further, promoters' shareholding over the Minimum Promoter Contribution would be subject to a phased lock-in period. Half of the excess holding would be released after one year, while the remaining 50 per cent would be unlocked after two years.

The allocation methodology for non-institutional investors (NIIs) in SME IPOs would be aligned with the approach followed in main-board IPOs to ensure uniformity.

"Sebi has increased the minimum application size for SME IPO to two lots, making entry stricter, to avoid unnecessary speculation in SME IPOs. This

would help protect the interests of gullible investors who generally invest looking at the escalating share price," Makarand M. Joshi, founder and partner of corporate compliance firm MMJC and Associates, said.

The amount allocated for general corporate purposes in SME IPOs has been capped at 15 per cent of the total issue size or 10 crore, whichever is lower.

SME issues will not be permitted to use IPO proceeds to repay loans taken from promoters, promoter groups, or related parties, whether directly or indirectly.

The Draft Red Herring Prospectus for SME IPOs must be made available for public comments for 21 days. Issuers will be required to publish announcements in newspapers and include a QR code for easy access to the DRHP.

Alert ticket checking staff caught a thief red handed in Duronto express

MI News Service, Kolkata: In a commendable display of alertness and efficiency, Chief Inspector of Tickets (CIT)/Sealdah Sri Manash Adhikary on train number 12260 successfully apprehended a miscreant attempting to rob a passenger.

On April 12, 2025, an unidentified individual entered in coach B/10 and snatched mobile sets, a purse, and a Gold necklace from Mrs. Swarnalata Joshi (F/45), who was occupying berth number 05. The swift alarm raised by the passenger was immediately responded to by the vigilant TTE present in the vicinity.

Driven by a heightened sense of responsibility and motivation, instilled through the Sr. DCM Sealdah Sri Jasram Meena's consistent and positive counselling sessions, CIT/SDAH acted swiftly and decisively with the assistance of fellow passengers, coach attendant, and



checking staff, the miscreant was successfully apprehended within the coach.

This prompt action not only prevented the accused from escaping but also ensured the immediate recovery of the stolen belongings, which were subsequently returned to a relieved Mrs. Joshi. The successful apprehension is a direct testament to the increased motivation

and dedication among front line railway staff, fostered by the Sr. DCM/Sealdah Sri Meena's leadership and emphasis on maintaining a secure and passenger-friendly environment. His focus on positive reinforcement and instilling a sense of duty has demonstrably contributed to a more vigilant and passenger-centric workforce.

The accused was handed over to the Government

Eastern Railway combines strict enforcement and kind gestures to promote cleanliness

MI News Service, Kolkata: Eastern Railway is making concerted efforts to ensure cleanliness at station premises and maintain waste-free railway tracks across its network. While the task remains challenging—especially in suburban stations with high passenger footfall—the Railway is resolute in its mission to create a cleaner, safer, and more pleasant travel environment.

One of the major hurdles faced is the prevalent practice among some passengers and rail users of indiscriminately spitting and littering on platforms and station premises. This behaviour not only hampers the station's aesthetic appeal but also poses serious environmental and operational concerns.

To combat this issue, Eastern Railway has launched a series of comprehensive awareness campaigns at various stations, aimed at educating passengers and rail users about the importance of cleanliness. These campaigns are conducted on a regular basis with active involvement from Health Department personnel, Railway Protection Force (RPF), and station staff.

The initiative focuses on promoting responsible waste disposal, discouraging littering, and reinforcing the prohibition of spitting in public areas. As part of the drive, station facilities were assessed thoroughly, and officials directly engaged with the

railway community—including passengers, vendors, and staff—to emphasize the critical role each individual plays in maintaining hygiene and sanitation.

In a firm move to curb littering and spitting, a total of 31,576 individuals were penalized over the past three months i.e. from January to March 2025, resulting in the collection of Rs. 32,31,740 as fines. These measures aim not only to enforce discipline but also to instil a long-term change in behaviour.

The intensive drive is continuing at different stations e.g. on Saturday (12.4.2025) a special cleanliness drive conducted at Ballygunje to curb spitting/littering / smoking at Rail-

way premises including Railway stations, platforms and even on Railway track. About 15 people were apprehended from Ballygunje on that day for littering at platforms or railway track.

In a heartening gesture, passengers and vendors who exhibited exemplary cleanliness habits were recognized and encouraged with the distribution of rose flowers, symbolizing appreciation and the positive impact of individual action.

Eastern Railway remains committed to upholding cleanliness standards and urges all rail users to join hands in keeping the stations and tracks clean—for a healthier, more dignified rail journey.

7 from Bengal in Rugby Premier League

MI News Service, Kolkata/ Mumbai: Seven young athletes from Murshidabad. At the April 4 auction, Saha was sold to Delhi Redz, fetching ₹2.75 lakh to become one of the highest-paid Indians.

He lost his mother when he was two and was raised in an orphanage before being spotted by Paul Walsh, a former British diplomat and the mentor-leader of Khelo Rugby.

Saha started playing rugby when he was 10. By 18, he represented the Indian senior rugby team. Saha, who can play as a scrum-half, fly-half, centre and a hooker, has represented India in Japan, England and Wales, Indonesia, South Africa and Singapore.

"For me, the best part of RPL is to be able to play with some of the global superstars of the game, people I have grown up admiring. Playing in the same team as Jordan Conroy (the Irish Rugby Sevens star and one of the top names in the circuit) is a dream come true. I could not have asked for more," said Saha. Apart from Conroy, the international list comprises some of the biggest names in the sport like Perry Baker, Rosko Spekman and Harry McNulty.

Specman, the 35-year-old South African superstar, will play alongside

Arjun Mahato for Kalinga Black Tigers.

Mahato, who will turn 20 next month, grew up in a colony in Taratala, gateway to the southwestern fringes of Kolkata. His father passed away when Arjun was two months old.

His mother worked at a factory that baked biscuits, cookies, rusk and cakes. He came under the fold of Khelo Rugby when he was eight.

"It is going to be hard not to be intimidated by his presence. But I will do my best," said Mahato, who has played for the India under-18 team. He fetched 50,000 at the auction.

Future Hope is an NGO that runs a school for street children on Rowland Row in Ballygunge. For nearly 40 years, it has made a difference to the lives of hundreds of girls and boys, many of whom were left abandoned on the streets or their parents were too poor to get them educated. They found a home in Future Hope and built their lives afresh.

Apart from Saha and Mahato, the other Future Hope players in the tournament are Akash Balmiki, Sukumar Hembrom, Arpan Chhetri, Karan Rajbhar and Sumit Kumar Roy.

Balmiki went to Mumbai Dreamers for ₹90,000; Hembrom and Roy went to Hyderabad Heroes for

₹60,000 and ₹1.25 lakh, respectively. Rajbhar was sold to Bengaluru Bravehearts for ₹80,000 and Chhetri went to the same team for ₹60,000.

The money is not much, especially compared to the astronomical amounts some players get in cash-rich cricket or other sports leagues.

The difference is that players like Saham Balmiki, Roy and Mahato are amateurs. This league has the potential to transform them into professional rugby players.

Walsh put things in perspective. "When they go into an India camp, they get an allowance.

When they leave the camp, the allowance is gone. When they play for Future Hope, we look after them. We make sure they can travel to tournaments. We give them food and kits. Some of them get scholarships to go to college. Nobody gets a salary for being a rugby player," he said.

The RPL, which will be broadcast live, will increase rugby's exposure.

"More people will be excited by the game. It will have a long-term impact on the game across the country. People will want profit, but at the same time, they need a good product. So, the investments will hopefully go into Indian players," Walsh said.

Tariff effect: Apple airlifts 600 tons of iPhones from India

MI News Service, New Delhi: Tech giant Apple chartered cargo flights to ferry 600 tons of iPhones, or as many as 1.5 million, to the United States from India, after it stepped up production there in an effort to beat President Donald Trump's tariffs, sources told.

The details of the push provide an insight into the U.S. smartphone company's private strategy to navigate around the Trump tariffs and build up inventory of its popular iPhones in the United States, one of its biggest markets.

Analysts have warned that U.S. prices of iPhones could surge, given Apple's high reliance on imports from China, the main manufacturing hub of the devices, which is subject to Trump's highest tariff rate of 125%.

That figure is far in excess of the tariff of 26% on imports from India, but which is now on hold after Trump called a 90-day pause this

week that excludes China.

Apple "wanted to beat the tariff," said one of the sources familiar with the planning.

The company lobbied Indian airport authorities to cut to six hours the time needed to clear customs at the Chennai airport in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, down from 30 hours, the source added.

The so-called "green corridor" arrangement at the airport in the Indian manufacturing hub emulated a model Apple uses at some airports in China, the source said.

About six cargo jets with a capacity of 100 tons each have flown out since March, one of them this week just as new tariffs kicked in, the source and an Indian government official said.

The packaged weight of an iPhone 14 and its charging cable come to about 350 grams (12.35 oz), Reuters measurements show, implying the total car-

go of 600 tons comprised about 1.5 million iPhones, after accounting for some packaging weight.

Apple and India's aviation ministry did not respond to a request for comment. All the sources sought anonymity as the strategy and discussions were private.

Apple sells more than 220 million iPhones a year worldwide, with Counterpoint Research estimating a fifth of total iPhone imports to the United States now come from India, and the rest from China.

Trump consistently increased U.S. tariffs on China, to stand at 125% by Wednesday, from 54% earlier.

At the 54% tariff rate, the \$1,599 cost of the top-end iPhone 16 Pro Max in the United States would have surged to \$2,300, calculations based on projections by Rosenblatt Securities show.

In India, Apple stepped up air shipments to meet

Railway Police (GRPs) at Sealdah (SDAH), with GD No. 568 dated 12.04.2025 has been registered regarding the incident.

DRM Sealdah Sri Deepak Nigam stated that this incident serves as a shining example of how proactive counselling and strong leadership can significantly enhance the effectiveness and responsiveness of railway personnel and prioritize passenger safety and security has further supported such positive outcomes.

Sealdah Division applaud the exemplary conduct of the CIT/Sealdah Sri Manash Adhikary and the collaborative efforts of all involved, which not only led to the apprehension of the culprit and recovery of stolen goods but also reinforced the commitment to ensuring a safe and secure journey for all passengers and the Lady also expressed her thanks to railways for quick recovery of her lost property.

Actor Vijay moves Supreme Court against Waqf Act

MI News Service, Chennai: Tamilaga Vettiri Kazhagam (TVK) president and actor Vijay has filed a petition in the Supreme Court challenging the Waqf (Amendment) Act 2025.

Several petitions were filed in the apex court challenging the Act, contending that it was discriminatory towards the Muslim community and violated their fundamental rights.

The Rajya Sabha passed the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025, on April 4 with 128 votes in favour and 95 against. The Lok Sabha had earlier cleared the Bill following a lengthy debate, with 288 members voting in favour and 232 opposing it.

President Droupadi Murmu gave her assent to the Bill on April 5, making it a law.

Among those who have moved the court against the Waqf (Amendment) Act are All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM), MP Asaduddin Owaisi,

Congress MPs Mohammad Jawed and Imran Pratapgarhi, AAP MLA Amanatullah Khan, and Azad Samaj Party chief and MP Chandra Shekhar Azad.

Others include Samajwadi Party MP from Sambhal Zia Ur Rehman Barq; Maulana Arshad Madani, President of Jamiat Ulema-i-Hind; the Kerala-based Sunni scholars' body Samastha Kerala Jamiatul Ulema; the Social Democratic Party of India; the Indian Union Muslim League; and the NGO Association for Protection of Civil Rights.

The All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIM-PLB) has also challenged the Act, saying it strongly objected to the amendments passed by Parliament for being "arbitrary, discriminatory and based on exclusion".

Rajya Sabha MPs Manoj Jha and Faiyaz Ahmad from Bihar's Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) have also challenged the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025, arguing that it facilitates

large-scale government interference in Muslim religious endowments. RJD MLA from Bihar Muhammad Izhar Asfi also challenged the Act.

Tamil Nadu's ruling party DMK has also joined the legal challenge. Its MP A Raja, who was a member of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on the Waqf Bill, has approached the apex court.

Intervention applications have been filed in the Supreme Court in support of the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025, stating that the amendments are in consonance with the scheme of the Constitution of India, and that there is no violation of any right of any member of the Muslim community.

The Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025, seeks to focus on improving the management of waqf properties, empowering relevant stakeholders, improving the efficiency of survey, registration, and case disposal processes, and developing waqf properties.

Chandrababu Naidu orders probe after six dead in explosion in Andhra Pradesh's Anakapalli

MI News Service, Amaravati: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu ordered a detailed investigation after six workers died in an explosion in Andhra Pradesh.

The incident occurred on Sunday at a firecracker manufacturing unit in the Kotavuratla area of Anakapalli district.

Following the incident, Naidu spoke to the District Collector, SP and Home Minister Anita about the incident and instructed officials to submit a detailed report.

In a post on X, CM Naidu said, "I spoke to the District Collector, SP and Home Minister Smt. Anita about the incident and ordered that better medical services be provided to those injured in the accident. I inquired about the number of workers present in the factory at the time of the accident and their current condition. We will support the affected families. I urge them to be brave. I have ordered officials to conduct an investigation into the in-

cident and submit a report."

Meanwhile, former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister and YSR Congress Party chief YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has expressed deep sorrow over the tragic fire accident.

He has also urged the state government to extend full support to the victims and their families.

Jagan conveyed heartfelt condolences to the families of those who lost their lives and those seriously injured in the incident. He directed YSR Congress Party leaders to stand by the affected families and offer all necessary assistance during this difficult time.

He also urged the state government to take all necessary steps to provide proper medical treatment to the injured and to assist the affected families in every possible way to help them recover.

Upon learning about the tragedy, Jagan instructed the party leaders to visit the accident site and offer all necessary support to the victims and their families.

PM Modi brought significant changes to cooperative movement in just 3.5 years: Amit Shah in Madhya Pradesh

MI News Service, Bhopal : Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has brought significant changes to the cooperative movement in just a span of three and a half years.

Addressing the State Level Cooperative Conference in Bhopal, Shah said, "After 75 years of independence, PM Modi established the cooperation ministry and made me the first minister. In just three-and-a-half years, PM Modi has brought significant changes to the cooperative movement."

Shah who is also the Union Minister of Cooperation said that the cooperative movement in India had become uneven, speeding up in some states and dying in others where efforts were not made to make the required laws.

"If we look at the cooperative movement in India at a glance, it had become uneven. In some states, it had sped up... it was governmentalised in some states, and it had died in

some states... The main reason behind this was that the changes required in the laws were not made with time. Efforts were not made to make the required laws. There was no common thought at the central level as there was no cooperation ministry," the union minister said.

Shah said Madhya Pradesh has great potential in agriculture, animal husbandry, and cooperation, but much work is needed to fully realize these possibilities.

"In Madhya Pradesh, there are many possibilities in the fields of agriculture, animal husbandry, and cooperation. And I believe that to fully realise these possibilities, a lot of work needs to be done," he said. "PACS (Primary Agricultural Credit Societies) are now working in more than 20 areas. Today, we have granted PACS the license to sell the affordable medicines introduced by Modi ji. PACS will also be involved in the distribution of water. More than 300 government schemes are now available to the computer operators of PACS,"

Odisha to construct stadiums in all 314 blocks of state

MI News Service, Keonjhar : Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi said the state government will construct stadiums in all 314 blocks of the state to strengthen sports infrastructure at the grass-roots level.

The state government has allocated over Rs 4,000 crore for construction of stadiums of various categories from village and block to district level. In every block, a stadium will come up on around 8 to 10 acres of land, Majhi said here.

He said apart from popular games like cricket, hockey and football, the state government was encouraging sports like Kho Kho, Kabaddi and handball.

Over 1.14 lakh children suffering from malnutrition in JK: Reports

MI News Service, Jammu: More than 1.14 lakh children suffering from malnutrition have been identified in Jammu and Kashmir for making special interventions to improve their situation, a senior government officer said on Sunday.

Sanjeev Verma, the social welfare department commissioner secretary, said 9,14,031 (9.14 lakh) persons were being covered under a supplementary nutrition scheme and Aadhaar verification of 99 per cent of the total beneficiaries had been achieved, thus plugging any chances of pilferage or malpractice.

Verma was briefing a meeting convened by Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo to review the impact and reach of several beneficiary-oriented schemes being run by the department across Jammu and Kashmir, a spokesperson said.

Bihar govt reshuffles IAS officers

MI News Service, Patna: The Bihar government on Sunday undertook an administrative reshuffle by transferring and giving additional charge to several senior IAS officers.

According to an official notification, Harjot Kaur Bamhra (IAS-1992), currently holding the post of additional chief secretary (ACS), Social Welfare Department and chairman-cum-managing director, WCDC, has been transferred to the Department of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (DEFCC) as ACS.

Bandana Preyashi (IAS-2003), who was holding the charge of industries and DEFCC, as secretary, has been transferred to

the Social Welfare Department. She has also been given additional charge of chairman-cum-managing director of the Women & Child Development Corporation (WCDC).

Harjot Kaur Bamhra (IAS-1992), currently holding the post of additional chief secretary (ACS), Social Welfare Department and chairman-cum-managing director, WCDC, has been transferred to the Department of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (DEFCC) as ACS.

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India demonstrates "Star Wars" capability to shoot down fixed-wing drones, swarm drones using high-power laser weapons

MI News Service, Kurnool: In a major success for the country, India today joined the select League of Nations, including the US, China and Russia, with the capability of shooting down fixed-wing drones and swarm drones using a high-energy 30-kilowatt laser beam.

The successful trial of the Mk-II(A) Laser-Directed Energy Weapon (DEW) system was showcased at the National Open Air Range (NOAR), Kurnool, mastering the technology of disabling missiles, drones and smaller projectiles, Defense Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) officials told ANI here.

Success has put India in the exclusive and limited club of nations that possess the high-power Laser-DEW.

Speaking with ANI, DRDO Chairman Samir V Kamat said, "As far as I know, it is the United States, Russia and China that have demonstrated this capability. Israel is also working on similar capabilities, I would say we are the fourth or fifth country in the world to demonstrate this system."

Kamat said that this is just the 'beginning of the journey', adding that DRDO is working on a number of technologies "that will give us Star Wars capability."

"This is just the beginning of the journey. The synergy that this lab has achieved with other

DRDO labs, industry and academia, I am sure we will reach our destination soon... We are also working on other high energy systems like high energy microwaves, electromagnetic pulse. So we are working on a number of technologies that will give us Star Wars capability. What you saw today was one of the components of Star Wars technologies," Kamat said.

Indigenously designed and developed Mk-II(A) DEW system was demonstrated in its entire spectrum of capability by engaging the fixed-wing drones at long range, thwarting a multiple drone attack and destroying enemy surveillance sensors and antennae.

The lightning speed of engagement, the precision and the lethality delivered to the target within few seconds made it the most potent Counter Drone System. DRDO's Centre for High Energy Systems and Sciences (CHESS), Hyderabad, developed the system along with LRDE, IRDE, DLRL and academic institutions and Indian industries.

Once detected by a radar or by its inbuilt Electro Optic (EO) system, laser-DEW can engage targets at the speed of light and use an intense beam of powerful light (Laser Beam) to cut through the target, leading to structural failure or more impactful results if the warhead is targeted.

This type of cutting-edge weaponry has the potential to revolutionize the battlespace by reducing the reliance on expensive ammunition while also lowering the risk of collateral damage.

The proliferation of unmanned aerial systems (UAS) and the emergence of drone swarms as asymmetric threats are driving the demand for directed energy weapons with counter-UAS and counter-swarm capabilities. The DEW will soon be replacing traditional kinetic weapons and missile defence systems due to its ease of operation and cost-effectiveness. The requirement for cost-effective defence solutions to offset the low-cost drone attacks is driving the adoption of DEWs by military organisations worldwide. The cost of firing it for a few seconds is equivalent to the cost of a couple of litres of petrol. Therefore, it has the potential to be a long-term & low-cost alternative to defeat the target.

Today's demonstration of the DEW System was witnessed by Secretary DDR&D and Chairman, DRDO. He congratulated the DRDO team and said that the inclusion of DEW Mk-II(A) in the services will boost their layered air defense capability. The Director General (ECS), along with the Directors and officers of DRDO Labs, were also present during the trial.

Congress always insulted BR Ambedkar: Union MoS Nityanand Rai

MI News Service, Patna: Union Minister of State (MoS) Home Nityanand Rai on Sunday hit out at Congress for "insulting" Babasaheb Ambedkar. He said that Dr Ambedkar was "insulted" so much that he had to resign from Jawaharlal Nehru's cabinet.

On the eve of Ambedkar Jayanti, he said Prime Minister Narendra Modi was working to fulfil Dr Ambedkar's dreams to ensure no one stays hungry or homeless. Rai added that 125 crore people have come out of poverty. "BR Ambedkar, who is the father of India's Constitution...he wanted a poverty-free country..PM Modi is working to fulfil BR Ambedkar's dreams. Congress always insulted BR Ambedkar and defeated him in the election; he was insulted so much that he had to resign from Nehru's cabinet... today, under PM Modi's leadership, we are working day and night to ensure that no

one stays hungry and homeless, we can see the results of it. In India, 125 crore people have come out of poverty," Rai told ANI.

Earlier in the day, Union Labour Minister Mansukh Laxmanbhai Mandaviya paid tributes to Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar in Patna and commenced the 'Jai Bhim Padayatra' program.

Bihar Deputy Chief Ministers Samrat Choudhary and Vijay Sinha were also present at the event to pay homage to Babasaheb Ambedkar and Bharat Mata. Dilip Jaiswal, Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) state unit president, and BJP MP Ravi Shankar Prasad also paid tributes to the architect of the Indian constitution and participated in the Padayatra event.

The program comes a day ahead of Ambedkar Jayanti, which is scheduled to be celebrated on April 14 across the country.

Mandaviya, while addressing the 'Jai Bhim Padayatra'

program on Sunday, said that the youths were the future of the country and further urged them to respect the constitution and fulfil the goal of Viksit Bharat by 2047.

"Youth is the future of the country. Dr BR Ambedkar wrote the constitution and, through it, gave equal rights to the people of the country. The youth must move forward with these rights, respect the constitution and fulfil the goal of Viksit Bharat..." Mandaviya said, addressing the event.

The event commemorates the birth anniversary of Dr BR Ambedkar. 'Jai Bhim Padayatra' honours his legacy and 10,000 MY Bharat Youth Volunteers.

"PM Modi has resolved to establish Viksit Bharat in 2047 when the country completes 100 years of independence. This padayatra has been organized so that crores of youth become a part of this resolve," added Mandaviya.

Attack on Hindus: BJP MP seeks AFSPA in Bengal distrs

MI News Service, Kolkata: BJP's Purulia MP Jyotirmay Singh Mahato has written to Union Home Minister Amit Shah urging the Centre to declare select bordering districts of West Bengal as "disturbed areas" under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA), alleging repeated attacks on the Hindu community.

In his letter dated April 13, Mahato alleged that districts such as Murshidabad, Malda, Nadia and South 24 Parganas have witnessed violence against Hindus, with the state administration turning a "blind eye" due to what he called the ruling Trinamool Congress' "appeasement" politics. He claimed that over 86 Hindu homes and shops were looted or destroyed in Murshidabad dis-

trict recently and that civilians, including a man named Hargobindo Das and his son, were murdered. In Jhaubona village, he said, betel leaf plantations were set ablaze in what he described as "targeted economic sabotage".

These are not isolated incidents. Similar unrest has unfolded across bordering districts, leaving the "Hindu population vulnerable and voiceless", the MP said.

Referring to violence that broke out over the Waqf (Amendment) Act, Mahato alleged that mobs attacked Hindu homes, public property and even police forces. The Calcutta High Court had to intervene and order central armed police force deployment, highlighting the "state's administrative failure", he added.

Drawing a parallel with

the 1990 exodus of Kashmiri Pandits, the BJP MP warned that a similar situation could emerge in Bengal if immediate steps were not taken.

"I most respectfully urge you to consider declaring AFSPA in the bordering districts of West Bengal," he wrote, adding that such a move would help restore law and order, deter future violence and assure Hindus that they are not abandoned.

Mahato concluded the letter with a plea for "decisive action to ensure justice, security and the rule of law." Meanwhile, Ranaghat BJP MP Jagannath Sarkar also wrote to Shah and urged the Union Home Minister to intervene urgently in the light of the "deteriorating" law and order situation in Murshidabad district of West Bengal.

"Situation fully under control": Bengal DGP Rajeev Kumar

MI News Service, Murshidabad: Days after violence erupted in West Bengal's Murshidabad, DGP Rajeev Kumar said that the "situation is under control."

"The situation is fully under control," West Bengal DGP Rajeev Kumar told reporters on Sunday.

Three people were killed in the Murshidabad district following violent clashes linked to protests against the Waqf (Amendment) Act 2025, the police said on Saturday.

Meanwhile, Jangipur SP Ananda Roy said that the condition in the area is improving.

Jangipur SP Ananda Roy told ANI, "In Suti, 71 people were arrested, while 67 arrests have

been made in Samserganj. The condition is better, things are improving. There have been many rumours, I request everyone not to go by rumours. We arrested many people yesterday and the process is going on. We will arrest the rest of the miscreants too."

West Bengal Police have arrested 150 individuals in connection with the Murshidabad violence. According to a police statement, adequate police forces have been deployed in Samserganj, Dhulian, Suti, and other affected areas to maintain order.

BJP MP from Purulia Jyotirmay Singh Mahato has written to Union Home Minister Amit Shah,

urging the imposition of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) in Malda, Murshidabad, Nadia, and South 24 Parganas districts of West Bengal, citing a deteriorating security situation and alleging targeted violence against the Hindu community.

In a letter sent this week, Mahato requested that Malda, Murshidabad, Nadia, and South 24 Parganas be declared 'disturbed areas' under AFSPA.

"For the last many days, a 'Jammu & Kashmir type' situation - when Hindus were forced to migrate in the 1990s - has been created, especially in these four districts of Bengal," Mahato said while speaking to ANI.

Pirzada Sawban Siddiqui called for protecting democracy at Haji Ishaq Huzur's meeting



Nurul Islam Khan
We have faced an existential crisis. Not only Muslims were cheated by passing the new Waqf Bill, but the Constitution of India has also been attacked. Some unscrupulous forces want to erase the name and mark of the people's fundamental rights, democratic secularism and pluralism of India. People of all walks of life with good sense need to take up democratic struggle and movement. On Saturday, Pirzada Maulana Sawban Siddiqui delivered the following speech at the 71st annual Mahfil of Hazrat Pir Allama Shah Sufi Haji Ishaq Siddiqui Huzoor at Uluberia, Howrah. On this day, as usual, he spoke as a main patron of the Isa-e-Sawab and Mahfil-e-Waz for the development of Pir Haji Ishaq Darul Uloom Siddiquia Senior Madrasa, Residential Hostel and Hifz Department. He said that we have to organize a continuous movement to get rid of all the dangers related to Waqf. Our struggle will continue until the Central government withdraws this black bill. He inspired thousands of people present at the meeting by giving a mes-

sage that the bill must be withdrawn. At that time, the rare scene of the meeting place was worth seeing. The combined slogans and scenes of everyone's voices attracted millions of people. He also said that no unrest should be created on the streets over this bill. No trouble should be created in the work of police. He called for a peaceful movement involving all levels of the people. He urged everyone to attend the historic gathering at Brigade Parade Ground on April 26. The founder of this largest gathering in the state is the Gaddishin Pir Hazrat Baro Huzur of Furfura Sharif, Haji Sahib was the cousin of Pir Dada Huzur of Furfura Sharif in the time of Mujaddid. That is why he was entitled to all the Kamaliyat including Khilafat. Baro Huzur established an educational center in a small shed 71 years ago. That educational institution is in the pages of history today. He established 2-3 educational centers in each district of the state. Then, by properly managing Dada Huzur's vast empire, he himself gave birth to hundreds of educational institutions, makhtabs, khanqahs, Ei-

dgahs, mosques and many social activities which have regained their lives with the help of the government. Then the eldest sons of Pir Ansar Siddiqui and Pir Abu Ibrahim Siddiqui have taken up the important responsibility of all those works. Two more brothers were present. Pir Hazrat Omar Siddiqui gave a sermon in the meeting. Pir Hazrat Abdullah Siddiqui prayed for the people of the state and the whole world. Pirzada Mujahid Siddiqui, Mohammad Ali Yusuf Sambil, Maulana Aminul Ambia, Maulana Ziaul Haque and Minister Pulak Roy were present in the Mahfil. The recitation of the Holy Quran by the famous reciter Mr. Ashiq Billah has impressed everyone. This traditional meeting is celebrated in the second week of the month of Chaitra every year. The date was changed due to Ramadan.

The sincerity of all the members of the Isaale Sawab Committee, including Mr. Baijul and Mr. Li-aquat, was commendable. The Khanqah of Pir Abu Ibrahim Siddiqui Huzoor's dream will be built within the next month. The committee made that promise in the public meeting.

Event held in Rishra under title of "Fikr-e-Taleem"



MI News Service, Hooghly: Iqbal Ahmed organized two events in one day at Ramakrishna Road PK Das Lane in Rishra. A blood donation camp was held wherein Trinamool Congress district leaders, workers and supporters were invited, and in the evening, an event was held under the title of "Fikr-e-Taleem" in which the special guests were Wali Rehmani, the spiritual leader of "Umeed Foundation", ASP Dr. Busra Bano of Hooghly Gramin Police,

besides school children, guardians, teachers, literary, religious, social and respected personalities. During this event, a competitive mind quiz (civil service and other exams) was held that had an age limit of eighteen to thirty years for which a team of two members was formed. Along with this, an easy writing competition was also held. Along with this, an honorary ceremony was held for the people of Rishra shirampur, who have got jobs in govern-

ment departments. In this event, Wali Rahmani told the children involved in the event about the importance of getting higher education one by one and its continuances. He also shed light on what knowledge is and how many intellectuals have gone through to get knowledge today. At the same time, Dr. Busra Bano, who was appointed as ASP in Hooghly District Rural Police a few months ago, also shed light on the field of knowledge and the aspects of getting it in a very detailed manner. At the same time, other guests also shed light on getting higher education and its preparations. It was a great event in Rishra. Iqbal Ahmed warmly welcomed all the participating guests at the event and thanked all the guests, the local people and his entire team for making the event a success.

BreakingtheHabit: Lenskart Launches FreeLens Replacement Program to Address Vision Neglect

A significant number of Indians continue to wear outdated eye-glass prescriptions-not by choice, but because replacing lenses is often perceived as costly and inconvenient. However, eye health professionals warn that postponing lens updates can lead to chronic eye strain, headaches, blurred vision, and reduced productivity.

For individuals over 40, the risks increase with age. Many begin developing presbyopia-a natural, age-related condition where the eye's lens loses flexibility, making it harder to focus on nearby objects. Left uncorrected, presbyopia can subtly impact daily performance and quality of life.

Prescription updates are often delayed because new lenses and frames are expensive which can cost up to ₹1,500 to ₹5,000. In response to address this overlooked issue of eye health care, Lenskart has launched a Free Lens Replacement Program-a first-of-its-kind initiative designed to make essential vision care more accessible to millions. Available across



Lenskart's 2000+ stores nationwide, the program offers free replacement lenses for any brand of frames, with professional fitting at just ₹199. Customer scans simply with a kintony Lenskart store with their current frames and receive new lenses on the spot. A variety of lens options

- are available to suit different needs:
- Basic vision correction
 - Blue-light filtering lenses for screen users
 - Photochromic lenses that adapt to changing light conditions
 - Anti-glare coatings for mirrors

proved visual clarity. By removing cost and convenience as barriers, this initiative bridges a critical gap in eye care.

India's optical care landscape. It encourages people to prioritize eye health through regular prescription updates without financial strain.

The program has already seen enthusiastic uptake among students and working professionals, who often delay lens replacements due to affordability issues. Now, they view this as an easy, affordable opportunity for a much-needed upgrade.

India faces a pressing vision health crisis, with an estimated 50% of the population living with refractive error. Alarmingly, a large number of these are also children. Experts emphasize that early detection and timely treatment are essential to reduce preventable blindness and vision loss.

With the Free Lens Replacement Program, Lenskart is championing a consumer-first, preventive approach to eye care, making clearer vision more attainable for every Indian.

West Bengal's Pranjal Nadhani's Cautio bags Rs 11 Cr, months after Rs 6.3 Cr raise

Kolkata : Cautio, an AI-powered video telematics startup dedicated to making India's roads the safest in the world, has raised Rs 11 crore as part of its ongoing seed round. The round saw participation from 9 Unicorns, Venture Catalysts, Antler India, Infynite.club, Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) through PIEDS - BITS Pilani and CARS24 Founders - Gajendra Jangid and Vikram Chopra. The raise also saw strong backing from early customers and industry leaders who believe in technology's life-saving potential and Cautio's mission.

Every day in India, millions of families wait anxiously for their loved ones to return home safely. For commercial drivers, fleet operators, and logistics companies, road safety isn't just a checkbox - it's a matter of survival. Understanding the need of the hour, Cautio is on a mission to help reduce accidents proactively, prevent financial losses for fleet operators, and ensure everyone returns home safely.

"We often hear about accidents and incidents, but what we don't hear are the voices of those who suffer - families who lose their only breadwinner, children who wait for parents who never return, and drivers who are blamed for incidents beyond their control," said Pranjal Nadhani, Co-founder & CTO at Cautio. "With AI-driven video telematics, we are changing this narrative. We are giving fleet operators, drivers, and passengers a chance to be safer, more responsible, and more accountable on the road," added Pranjal.

With its advanced video telematics platform, Cautio has enabled over 3 crore kilometers of safe travel and safeguarded 16 lakh trips, reducing risks, enhancing accountability, and optimizing operations. Trusted by top mobility

ty and logistics providers like Shoffr, Euro Cars, Namma Yatri, HTS, Cityflo, etc., Cautio ensures safer and more efficient journeys daily. Operating in 35+ cities across India, Cautio has also delivered over 50 crore location data points through its APIs - thus equipping businesses with real-time insights for smarter, data-driven fleet management.

"For fleet operators and drivers, every trip carries responsibility



ty - not just for the safety of the passengers and the cargo but also for the lives of the drivers and the pedestrians on the road. With Cautio, we help them ensure that every journey is not just completed but completed safely," added Ankit Acharya, Co-founder & CEO of Cautio. Dr. Apoorva Ranjan Sharma, Co-founder & Managing Director, 9 Unicorns & Venture Catalyst said- "At 9 Unicorns and Venture Catalyst, we believe in backing visionary startups that leverage technology to solve real-world challenges. Cautio is addressing one of India's most pressing concerns - road safety - by integrating AI-powered video telematics into mobility solutions. Their approach has the potential to significantly reduce accidents, improve fleet efficiency, and save lives. We are excited to support their journey as they scale and bring safer roads to millions."

Nitin Sharma, Partner at Antler, emphasized the critical role of AI in transforming road safety: "As investors, we are excited to support founders like Ankit and Pranjal, who are leveraging cutting-edge AI to make road safety more accessible and cost-effective. Cautio goes beyond just data

collection - it transforms insights into action, improving driver behavior, enhancing safety, and laying the foundation for autonomous mobility. Road safety in India is a massive challenge, with uncertainty and risk affecting millions daily. Cautio's AI-driven technology empowers fleet operators and drivers to proactively take control of safety rather than merely react to accidents. We are proud to back their mission to make Indian roads safer."

Vikram Chopra and Gajendra Jangid, Co-Founders, CARS24, said: "Most tech chases efficiency. Cautio is chasing something harder, consequence. In India, road safety isn't broken because we lack vehicles or infrastructure. It's broken because accountability is invisible. Cautio's AI makes it visible, in real time, where it actually changes how people drive. We believe this is a big lever for impact. At CARS24, we believe better drives lead to better lives. Cautio is building the kind of system that makes both possible. We are excited to see a (safer) road ahead."

Ankita Tandon and Joylita Saldanha - Founders, Infynite Club said: "Cautio's founders aren't just building technology; they're solving a massive infrastructure gap - making Indian roads safer with AI at the wheel. Their ability to blend video telematics, behavioral insights, and proactive safety measures is exactly the kind of purposeful innovation we love to back at Infynite Club."

With this funding, Cautio aims to expand its technology across India, strengthen its AI capabilities, and work closely with fleets to build a culture of proactive safety. Every step taken towards preventing accidents today means fewer tragedies tomorrow - and that is the mission Cautio is dedicated to achieving.

UK govt takes over day-to-day running of British Steel from Chinese owner Jingye

London : The UK government took effective control of Britain's last remaining factory that makes steel from scratch from its Chinese owners, after lawmakers approved an emergency rescue.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer summoned lawmakers for the unusual Saturday sitting, only the sixth since World War II, to back a bill primarily aimed at blocking British Steel's Chinese owners, Jingye Group, from closing the two massive blast furnaces at its Scunthorpe plant in the north of England that are key in the steel-making process. The bill, which was debated over several hours and which is now law after being given royal assent by King Charles III, gives Business Secretary Jonathan Reynolds the power to direct the company's board and workforce, ensure its 3,000 workers get paid and order the raw materials necessary to keep the blast furnaces running. Jingye has said the Scunthorpe plant is losing 700,000 pounds (\$910,000) a day as a result of challenging market

conditions and increased environmental costs. The recent decision by US President Donald Trump to impose a 25% tariffs on imported steel hasn't helped. After the House of Commons passed the bill on a voice vote, Starmer arrived in Scunthorpe to meet workers, who were clearly relieved that the town's steelmaking heritage, which stretches back around 150 years, has been preserved. "You and your colleagues for years have been the backbone of British Steel, and it's really important that we recognize that," Starmer said. "It's your jobs, your lives, your communities, your families." The relief in the town was evident during the interval of Scunthorpe United's soccer match, where the crowd at the Attis Arena cheered on a few dozen steelworkers on the field of play. The team is known as "The Iron," a fond reflection of the town's identity.

Starmer had been under pressure to act after Jingye's recent decision to cancel orders for the iron pellets used in the blast fur-

naces. Without them and other raw materials, such as coking coal, the furnaces would likely have to shut for good, potentially within days, as they are extremely difficult and expensive to restart once cooled. That would mean the UK, which in the late 19th century was the world's steelmaking powerhouse, would be the only country in the Group of Seven industrial nations without the capacity to make its own steel from scratch rather than from recycled material, which uses greener electric arc furnaces rather than blast furnaces. The repercussions would be huge for industries like construction, defence and rail and make the country dependent on foreign sources for so-called virgin steel, a vulnerability that lawmakers from all political parties balked at. "We could not, will not and never will stand idly by while heat seeps from the UK's remaining blast furnaces without any planning, any due process or any respect for the consequences."

India needs 'nuclear energy renaissance' US ready to help: Holtec CEO Kris Singh

New York : India needs a "nuclear energy renaissance" and the US is interested in helping the country develop a nuclear infrastructure as both nations have a vital shared interest in this area, Holtec CEO Dr Kris Singh has said, voicing optimism that things will move forward under Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"India and the US have shared strategic interest in clean energy... Nuclear power should be a unifier and India should naturally take the lead there. For that, India needs to have an exportable technology," Singh told PTI in an exclusive interview at the sprawling Krishna P Singh Technology Campus in Camden, New Jersey.

Holtec International is a diversified energy technology company recognised as the leading technology innovator in the field of carbon-free power generation, specifically commercial nuclear and solar energy.

In September last year, Singh had met PM Modi here during the Prime Minister's visit for the UN General Assembly high-level session and they had discussed Holtec's plan to expand manufacturing in India and the potential for boosting cooperation in the field of civil nuclear energy.

The company had last month announced that the US Department of Energy has granted a specific authorisation to Holtec International, with the Indian government's concurrence, to sell the company's flagship small modular reactor SMR-300 for deployment in India.

The authorisation names three Indian companies - Larsen & Tubro (Mumbai), Tata Consulting Engineers (Mumbai), and the company's own subsidiary Holtec Asia (Pune) - as eligible entities with whom Holtec can share necessary technical information to execute its SMR-300 program, Holtec had said in a statement.

Following the significant development, Singh, who personally led Holtec's drive to win the acceptance of both governments, had said in the statement that "we are thrilled that the US and India are authorising the introduction of the pressurized water reactor (PWR) technology to India which, after 80 years of extensive operational experience, has emerged as the de facto global standard for commercial

reactors that has been adopted by every major nuclear energy producer country in the world".

Singh had said that Holtec's SMR-300 "checks every box relevant to India's needs and circumstances, such as a standardized design that is seismically competent to be deployed anywhere in India, one that requires only 25 acres (and no exclusion zone) of land to house two reactors (600 MWe power output), one that can be operated using air (in lieu of water) as the "waste heat sink" in a water-challenged region, and one that can be substantially shop manufactured requiring minimal field erection effort. In the interview with PTI, Singh emphasised that Holtec has



received the authorisation to manufacture, collaborate with Indian companies in India and here in the US in a collaborative arrangement that has been approved by the US.

"So quite clearly, the United States is interested in helping India develop a nuclear infrastructure that can help India and the neighbourhood. India is also trying, and I think under Prime Minister Modi, things will happen," he said.

Holtec has said that the specific authorisation granted to it to build its SMR-300 reactors in India with the participation of eligible Indian companies shows the US and Indian governments' shared interest in boosting India's nuclear energy output.

India's nuclear energy output, which, presently at 8.5 GW, must be increased multi-fold by 2047 - when India will commemorate the centennial year of its independence and by when PM Modi has vowed that the country's economic prosperity would reach the level of

the world's leading developed economies, he added. Singh said the US has done its part, taken away barriers for "our reactor to be deployed in India and we have to thank the Trump administration for making it happen", and added that "India now is working hard to do their part." He said it is his understanding that India is working to get the legislation, likely in the monsoon session of Parliament, when bills could be introduced that will amend the prior Acts that constrain private companies from building SMRs in the country.

"I think those laws will be passed and at that point, India's nuclear law will be harmonised with the rest of the world," he said.

"I envision India tomorrow to have hundreds of our SMR-300 reactors all over the country. The country has clean energy. There's no pollution to the environment and power is locally generated, and power is cheap. That is my vision," Singh said.

He underlined that both the US and India have a "vital shared interest in the growth of nuclear energy in India and by extension, the neighbouring countries in South Asia, Southeast Asia, Middle East and North Africa."

From American businesses to other big global players, "We need to allow external investors to come in, invest and make money in India," the CEO said.

"Nuclear energy sector in India will take off. The US has a vested interest in it. India has a critical interest in it. The country needs a nuclear energy renaissance and that will happen only if we stop endless debates and get on with things," Singh said. He noted that India today is "self-assured" and is "doing marvelous things in space, drones. In every sector of modern technology, India is in a leadership role and that is wonderful." Making a reference to May 1974 when India had conducted its first nuclear test, Singh said, "India was unfairly excluded for decades and India had to develop its own (nuclear power) which was a matter of great credit to the people who did it. But today's circumstances are different."

"Today, India is a major power, major economic power. India is not excludable like it was back in 1974. The country cannot be excluded from the world."

As tariffs put trade between China US in peril Chinese businesses ponder future

Washington : When the first two rounds of 10% tariffs hit, Zou Guoqing, a Chinese exporter, groaned but didn't find the barriers insurmountable. He gave up some of his profits and offered his client, a snow-bike factory in Nebraska, price cuts ranging from 5% to 10%. It seemed to work: The factory agreed to a new order of molds and parts.

But when President Donald Trump announced an additional 34% universal tariff on Chinese goods on April 2, Zou, who's been exporting to the U.S. for more than a decade, was incredulous.

"There's not a thread of feasibility," said Zou, who does business in the eastern Chinese city of Ningbo. "It looks like I would have no choice but give up trading with the US."

Then came 50% more from Trump, followed by another hike - pushing the universal tariff on Chinese goods to the sky-high 145%, and Zou said he now could only hope that the two leaders can communicate. "We are pausing the shipments," he said, "until the leaders talk."

The 145% tariff from the United States and the retaliatory 125% tariff from China are putting businesses doing trade between the U.S. and China on edge. They're fretting not only about their next orders, but also the viability of their business if there's no quick relief. Experts are worried the decades-long trade ties that have underpinned the relationship between the world's two largest economies could be unraveling.

Trade ties are tested
If the high tariff is sustained for the next six months or longer, "that would actually lead to a real effective decou-

pling between the American and Chinese economies," said Chen Zhiwu, professor of finance at Hong Kong University Business School.

Josh Lipsky, senior director of the Atlantic Council's GeoEconomics Center, said the sky-high tariff, if kept in place, amounts to "almost a trade embargo," making it impossible for China to export low-value items such as apparel to the US. It also would force US businesses to source elsewhere, away from China, if there should be alternatives, he said.

In China, the central tariff office flat-out declared there was "no possibility for market acceptance" of US goods exported to China "at the current tariff level."

"Everyone's pretty worried," said Hu Jianlong, founder of Brands Factory, a consultancy that works with Chinese companies trying to break into overseas markets. "At this point in time, there's no good way forward. This situation has not resolved ... there's no final number. And so everyone's still waiting to see how this will develop."

The high-stakes tariff war has come more than 20 years after China - with the help of the United States - joined the World Trade Organization and began to see its economy soar on luring foreign investments and exporting to the U.S. and other Western markets.

By last year, China-US trade was \$582 billion, but tensions have flared over China's widening trade imbalance with the US that led to the first tariff skirmish during the first Trump term.

The trade deficit has since narrowed but stayed stubbornly high, at a time when the US and other Western



markets have also grown concerned about another onslaught of Chinese products such as electric vehicles.

Decouple or de-risk?

During his four-year term, former President Joe Biden stressed that the U.S. was not trying to decouple from China but to "de-risk." He took the "small-yard, high-fence" approach, under which his administration put up barriers in targeted sectors such as advanced chips, artificial intelligence and quantum computing that have national security implications. Now, Trump is declaring universal tariffs on all Chinese goods but has said he's also willing to talk with Beijing. It remains

unclear what his goals might be. "What are they looking for in those negotiations? How much is it possible to reduce these tariffs? What are the other demands apart from China removing its retaliatory tariffs that the United States wants to put forward. We don't know what that would be," said Greta Peisch, who served as the general counsel for the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative in 2021-2024.

The message from China's leadership is loud and clear. It will talk only when the U.S. stops "maximum pressure and capricious and destructive behavior," said Lin Jian, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson.

Li Cheng, professor of political science at the University of Hong Kong, said the Chinese leadership is upset over being singled out by Trump when the U.S. president paused "reciprocal" tariffs for 90 days for all other countries. Beijing wants to make sure that "Donald Trump not state one thing in the morning and say other things in the evening," Li said, and that Trump's policies on China are not hijacked by his anti-China, hawkish advisers.

With no leadership-level negotiations in the immediate future, businesses are exploring their options.

Lisa Li, who works in sales for an athletic wear manufacturer in the northern Chinese province of Hebei, said her business was negotiating with clients over whether they could split the increased costs. It's too early to say if her company is to give up on the U.S. market, she said, but it will "definitely expand other avenues for sales," such as in Australia or Europe.

Differing views, but optimism is sagging

In the eastern Chinese city of Wenzhou, a manufacturing hub, a holiday lights maker was less optimistic. Bo, who shared only his surname out of concern for retaliation, said he could "only give up" if the tariff hikes were here to stay because other markets might not work.

"In the past few years, the European market has been in a slump," Bo said. "So we had wanted to try and develop our business in the United States."

In Hong Kong, Danny Lau, who runs an aluminum-coating factory in

the nearby southern Chinese city of Dongguan, said one of his U.S. clients would keep buying from him for an ongoing project but was unsure about the next project. Another client told Lau that the chances are slim to strike a deal when tariffs are so high. Lau has been exploring other markets, but he says it's not easy because some may find his high-quality products too expensive.

At a port in the Chinese city of Shanghai, ships heading to the U.S. had almost vanished by Thursday, the day after Trump's tariff on China took effect, according to a report by the financial news site Caixin. Major shipping lines were drastically cutting back on trans-Pacific routes, the report said.

For the longer term, the tariff war is likely to prompt Chinese businesses to diversify their supply chains and move part of their manufacturing capacity outside of China, and even to the United States, said Hu, the consultant.

Some might follow in the footsteps of the Tianjin steelmaking business, which gave up trading with the US after both Trump and Biden raised tariffs on Chinese steel. "The best plan is to not come into contact," said David Yu, who works in the company's foreign sales department.

However, not everyone is ready to give up on the US market. Zou, the exporter in Ningbo, describes the US market as "reliable and without finicky demands."

"It's the best market on Earth," he said. "I am waiting for the rainbow after the storm."

12 more arrested in violence over Waqf Act

MI News Service, Murshidabad:

Twelve more individuals have been arrested in connection with the recent violent protests over the Waqf (Amendment) Act in West Bengal's Murshidabad district, bringing the total number of arrests to 150, police officials reported on Sunday. The protests, which erupted on Friday, resulted in the deaths of three people and left at least 18 policemen injured.

Authorities confirmed that no new incidents of violence were reported on Sunday. Security forces remain on high alert, maintaining a strong presence across the district, particularly in sensitive areas like Suti, Dhulian, Samserganj, and Jangipur.

Prohibitory orders under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) have been enforced in violence-hit zones, and internet services have been suspended to prevent the spread of misinformation and further unrest.

A senior police officer said that vehicles are being thoroughly checked on major roads, and patrolling has been intensified in vulner-



able localities. "The investigation into the violence is ongoing. More arrests are likely," the officer added.

The protests turned violent on Friday as mobs set several vehicles, including police vans, on fire, pelted stones at security forces, and blocked roads in various parts of Murshidabad. While the district witnessed some flare-ups on Saturday, the situation has largely stabilized since then.

In a tragic turn of events, the bodies of a father and son—Harogobindo Das and Chandan Das—were discovered with multiple stab wounds at their home in Jafraabad, Samserganj, on Sat-

urday. In another incident, 21-year-old Ijaz Momin succumbed to bullet injuries sustained during Friday's clashes at Sajur More in Suti.

Director General of Police (DGP) Rajeev Kumar visited Samserganj on Saturday night to assess the situation. He held a high-level meeting with senior officials to review law and order in the district. Authorities have vowed to continue their crackdown on those involved in the violence and ensure peace is maintained.

Security operations and arrests are expected to continue in the coming days as the investigation progresses.

Israel strikes Gaza's al-Ahli Hospital; IDF claims hospital housed Hamas control centre

MI News Service, Tel Aviv: Israel on Sunday launched missiles at Gaza's al-Ahli Hospital, causing damage to its emergency unit and putting the only remaining operational hospital in northern Gaza inoperative, Al Jazeera reported.

Health officials evacuated patients, with some, including those in critical condition, being evacuated under a prior warning issued by the Israeli military before the strike.

The Palestinian Civil Defence in Gaza in a statement on Sunday said that the air strike came "minutes after the army's warning to evacuate this building of patients, the injured and their companions. The bombing led to the destruction of the surgery building and the oxygen generation station for the intensive care units."

Condemning the Israeli missile strikes as a "heinous and filthy crime," Gaza's Government Media Office said Israel "deliberately destroyed and rendered out of service 34 hospitals as part of a systematic plan to dismantle what remains of the healthcare sector in the Gaza Strip," Al Jazeera reported.

Meanwhile, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) stated that al-Ahli Hospital housed a Hamas command and control centre, which was being used by Hamas operatives to plan and carry out attacks against Israeli civilians and IDF forces.

In a post on X, the IDF wrote, "Hamas Command and Control Center inside Al Ahli Hospital. The compound was used by Hamas terrorists to plan and execute terror attacks against Israeli civilians and IDF troops."

"Despite the IDF repeatedly stating that military activity within medical facilities in Gaza must stop, Hamas continues to blatantly violate international law and abuse the civilian population. Prior to the strike, steps were taken to mitigate harm to civilians or to the hospital compound, including issuing advanced warnings in the area of the terror infrastructure, the use of precise munitions, and aerial surveillance," the post added.

Muslim youth killed in police firing during Waqf protest

MI News Service, Murshidabad: A 21-year-old Muslim man, Ijaz Momin, died after being shot by police during protests against the Waqf (Amendment) Act at Sajur More in Suti, Murshidabad, on Friday. He succumbed to his injuries on Saturday evening at Murshidabad Medical College and Hospital.

Three others—Golam Muddin Sheikh, Hasan Sheikh, and an unidentified man—were injured and admitted to Jangipur Hospital. Violent clashes since Friday have left over a dozen protesters and 15 police personnel injured. Authorities have arrested 118 people so far.

The unrest was sparked by the recent passage of the Waqf (Amendment) Bill in Parliament. In response, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee urged for peace, assuring the public that the law would not be implemented in the state. The Calcutta High Court has ordered central forces to stay deployed in Murshidabad until Thursday to prevent further violence.

In a separate but alarming incident in Samaherganj, a father and son—Hargobindo Das (72) and Chandan Das (40)—were hacked to death on Saturday. While police suspect a link to the protests, local residents claimed the killings were unrelated. The motive remains unclear. A relative, Prosenjit Das, told Indian Express that a mob stormed their home, looted belongings, and murdered the two men while he hid nearby.

State DGP Rajeev Kumar stated that police used minimal force and blamed "rumour-mongering" and "hooliganism" for the escalation of violence, which reportedly took on a communal tone. He said the situation was now under control.

Prohibitory orders and internet shutdowns are in effect in parts of Murshidabad. Mobs have ransacked the homes of TMC MLA Manirul Islam and MP Khalilur Rehman. Protesters also blocked railway tracks, disrupting train services in the region.

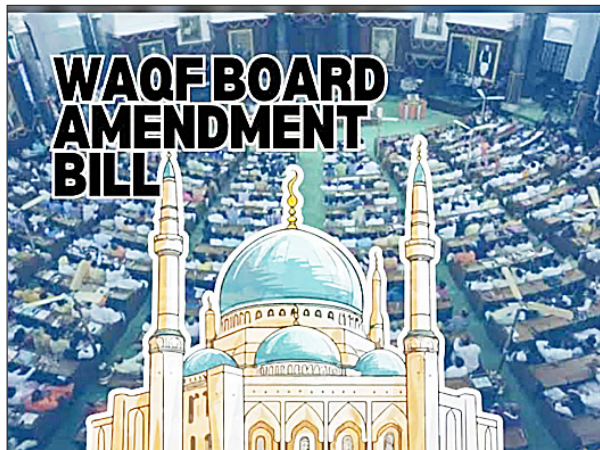
Dargah probe to investigate Waqf property claims

MI News Service, Sambhal: The district administration has launched an investigation into alleged financial irregularities and land encroachment related to a dargah located in Janeta village panchayat of the Baniyakheda development block in Chandausi, officials confirmed on Saturday.

The inquiry, initiated by District Magistrate Rajender Pensiya, will focus not only on the financial dealings connected to the dargah but also on verifying the ownership and status of the land it occupies. A central issue is whether the land in question is officially recognized as Waqf property, as claimed by the complainant.

According to the complaint filed by a local resident, Javed, the dargah of Dada Mouazmiya Shah, which he claims is situated on Waqf land, has been under the unauthorized control of a man named Shahid Mian. Javed alleged that Shahid not only took control of the site without proper authority but has also been running an unlicensed medical clinic on the premises.

The land, reportedly



without an appointed 'mutawalli' (caretaker) since 2019, has been vacant on official records. However, Shahid has allegedly continued to host the annual Urs festival and generate significant income from it, raising concerns over transparency and legality.

Chandausi Tehsildar Dharendra Pratap Singh acknowledged that similar complaints regarding the dargah have been received in the past. He confirmed that the property is not listed as Waqf land in the current revenue records, which casts doubt on the validity of claims that the land belongs to the Waqf

board. This discrepancy will be a major area of focus in the ongoing probe.

"The lack of official recognition as Waqf land raises important questions that need answers," said Singh. He added that Shahid Mian has been asked to submit all relevant documents pertaining to his claim over the property, and some have already been received. "Further action will be taken based on a detailed review of these records," he said.

The investigation aims to clarify both the legal status of the land and the financial activities conducted at the dargah since 2019.

Russian missile strike on Ukraine's Sumy leaves 21 dead, 83 injured

MI News Service, Kyiv: A Russian missile strike on the northeastern Ukrainian city of Sumy has resulted in the deadliest attack of the year, leaving at least 21 people dead, CNN reported, citing local authorities.

The assault occurred as residents were attending Sunday church services.

Ukraine's Interior Minister reported that at least 83 individuals were injured in the attack, including seven children, marking it as the most severe attack on Ukrainian civilians since 2023.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy condemned the strike and expressed his condolences.

In a post on X, Zelen-

skyy wrote, "A horrific Russian ballistic missile strike on Sumy. Russian missiles hit an ordinary city street, ordinary life - residential buildings, educational institutions, cars on the street... And that's on the day when people go to church - Palm Sunday, the feast of the Lord's Entry into Jerusalem. According to preliminary information, dozens of civilians were killed and wounded. Only filthy scum can act like this - taking the lives of ordinary people. My condolences to the families and loved ones. A rescue operation is underway. All necessary services are working at the scene."

The post further reads,

"The world must respond firmly. The United States, Europe, everyone in the world who wants this war and these killings to end. Russia wants exactly this kind of terror and is dragging this war out. Without pressure on Russia, peace is impossible. Talks have never stopped ballistic missiles and aerial bombs. What's needed is an attitude toward Russia that a terrorist deserves. I thank everyone who stands with Ukraine and helps us defend life."

Meanwhile, Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrii Sybiha said that Russia has rejected a US-backed proposal for a complete ceasefire for the second consecutive month.

China privately admitted to US infrastructure cyber attacks: Report

MI News Service, Washington, DC: In a previously undisclosed meeting held last December, Chinese officials privately acknowledged responsibility for a series of cyberattacks on US infrastructure, according to individuals familiar with the discussions, as cited by The Wall Street Journal.

The meeting, which took place in Geneva, added depth to the growing tensions between Washington and Beijing.

According to The Wall Street Journal, the confidential summit was attended by representatives of the outgoing Biden administration. During the meeting, the Chinese delegation implied that the cyber intrusions - targeting US ports, water systems, airports, and other critical infrastruc-

ture, were connected to Washington's increasing support for Taiwan.

This marked a departure from China's usual stance of denial, where such attacks were often attributed to criminal groups or dismissed as exaggerated claims.

The cyber campaign, identified by security researchers as Volt Typhoon, had already triggered significant concern among American officials last year. According to US intelligence, the effort was linked to China's military and aimed at embedding itself in American systems to enable swift, destructive attacks in the event of a future conflict. The Wall Street Journal reported.

Though the Chinese officials' comments were

vague, US representatives took them as a veiled admission of responsibility and a warning related to US-Taiwan relations, a former official said. Since the December meeting, ties between the two countries have continued to deteriorate, exacerbated by an ongoing trade war. In response, senior members of the Trump administration have vowed to initiate more aggressive cyber operations targeting China, the report said.

Meanwhile, lawmakers and US officials told The Wall Street Journal that Beijing has continued to exploit American telecom systems through a separate cyber campaign known as Salt Typhoon, attributed to another Chinese hacking group.

US: One person dead after small plane crashes near New York's Copake

MI News Service, New York: One person died after a plane crashed in a field near the town of Copake, New York, on Saturday, The New York Times reported, citing the Columbia County Sheriff's Office.

Two passengers were on-board the plane, a Mitsubishi MU-2B heading to Columbia County Airport near Hudson, New York, which crashed a little after noon, the Federal Aviation Administration said in a statement.

While addressing a news conference on Saturday afternoon, Undersheriff Jacqueline Salvatore said that the aircraft came down near Two Town Road and did not cause damage to any structure. She did not reveal how many people had been killed

or if there were any survivors. The two passengers have not been identified yet.

According to the tracking site Flightradar24, a private aircraft of the same model departed from Westchester County Airport in New York's White Plains shortly after 11:30 am, flying north toward Hudson before turning east at about noon. A few minutes later, the plane disappeared from the site near Copake, The New York Times reported.

According to FAA records, the plane was registered to a company based outside Boston. Salvatore said that in addition to the sheriff's officers, personnel from the New York State Police and a local fire department also responded to the incident.

She said that law enforcement officials received a 911 call about the crash at around noon.

Salvatore said that snow and moisture on the ground were impacting response efforts. She said, "It's in the middle of a field and it's pretty muddy, so accessibility is difficult." It was not immediately clear what had caused the plane to crash.

She stated that local law enforcement planned to conduct interviews in the neighbourhood to learn more about the incident. According to the aviation agency's statement, the FAA and the National Transportation Safety Board are conducting an investigation into the crash. The New York Times reported.

Hamas releases video of Israeli-American hostage

MI News Service, Gaza: Al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, released a video of Israeli-American hostage Edan Alexander, who has been held in the Gaza Strip since October 7, 2023.

In the video, released on Saturday, Alexander appeared physically and mentally distressed. "Why am I here and not at home with my family and friends?" he asked.

Alexander, who turned 21 while in captivity, was born in the Israeli city of Tel Aviv and grew up in the US state of New Jersey. After graduating from high school in 2022, he returned to Israel to enlist in the army. On October 7, 2023, he was abducted by Palestinian militants during their surprise attack on southern Israel, Xinhua news agency reported.

In the video, Alexander shared his struggles and expressed concern about his safety amid ongoing Israeli military operations in Gaza. He also blamed the Israeli government for failing to secure his release.

Following the video's release, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said in a statement that he had spoken with Alexander's family and assured them that intensive efforts were ongoing to secure the release of all hostages.

The first six-week phase of a ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas expired on March 1, and negotiations on the second phase remain stalled.

Of the 251 hostages taken during the October 7, 2023 attack, 59 remain in captivity in the Gaza Strip. Israel believes that 24 of them are still alive.

Nearly 100,000 people rally against Israel in Bangladesh's capital

MI News Service, Dhaka: Tens of thousands of protesters rallied in Bangladesh's capital on Saturday to condemn Israel's actions in the Gaza Strip.

The protesters, estimated at some 100,000, gathered at the Suhrawardy Park in the Dhaka University area. They carried hundreds of Palestinian flags and chanted slogans such as "Free, Free Palestine."

Many among them beat the images of US President Donald Trump, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, accusing them of backing Israel. Symbolic coffins and effigies representing civilian casualties were carried during the rally.

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party, headed by former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, and Islamist groups and parties expressed their solidarity with the rally.

Bangladesh, a Muslim-majority nation of 170 million people, maintains no diplomatic relations with Israel and it officially supports an independent Palestine

Katz urges Gazans: Topple Hamas and free the hostages

MI News Service, Tel Aviv: Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz called on the people of Gaza to "remove Hamas and release all hostages" before the IDF expands its operations, especially in the southern part of the Strip.

Following the IDF's announcement that it now controls the entire Morag corridor between Rafah and Khan Younis, the minister issued a statement to the population, noting that after this latest development, which has effectively cut off one town from the other and surrounded Rafah, "those interested will also be able to move voluntarily to various countries around the world, in accordance with the vision of the US president, which we are working to implement."

Senator Buledi accuses government of abusing Baloch human rights

MI News Service, Balochistan: Senator Jan Muhammad Buledi, a senior political figure from Balochistan, has strongly criticised the Pakistani government, accusing it of widespread political, economic, and human rights violations in the region, as reported by the Balochistan Post.

Speaking at a seminar titled "Issues and Solutions for Balochistan" organised by the Leader Media Group at the Lahore Press Club, the senator claimed that women and children in Balochistan are being subjected to abuse and unlawful detention amidst growing unrest, the Balochistan Post reported.

Addressing an audience that included veteran journalists, Mujeeb-ur-Rehman Shami and Imtiaz

Alam, Senator Buledi described the federal government's approach to Balochistan as colonial in nature. He said the province's resources are being exploited while its population continues to suffer from poverty and neglect.

According to the Balochistan Post, he criticised the exclusion of Baloch representatives from decisions regarding the province's mineral wealth, noting that resources are being promoted and sold at international events in Islamabad without any local input. Additionally, Buledi accused the government of deliberately understating the province's population by eight million in the recent digital census, arguing that the manipulation serves to limit Balochistan's influence in national affairs.

Senator Buledi also drew attention to the issue of enforced disappearances, labelling it as the region's most pressing concern. He alleged that the state now operates beyond legal and constitutional boundaries, with corruption infiltrating public institutions and government positions being openly sold.

The senator emphasised the role of Baloch women and children in peaceful protests for the recovery of missing persons and condemned what he described as the state's violent and punitive response. He highlighted that the mistreatment of women is particularly egregious given the respect they hold in Baloch society, the Balochistan Post reported.

Pak: TTAP opposition alliance to launch protest rally in Islamabad

MI News Service, Islamabad: The opposition alliance operating under the banner of Tehreek-e-Tahaffuz-e-Ay-een-e-Pakistan (TTAP) has announced the launch of its protest campaign, beginning with a public rally in Islamabad on April 20, the Express Tribune reported.

The move signals the start of a renewed political showdown with the ruling PML-N-led coalition.

According to TTAP spokesperson Akhunzada Yousafzai, the rally will be hosted by the Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimleen

(MWM) and held in the G-9 sector of the capital.

Yousafzai confirmed that key opposition leaders, including Ishaq Dar and Pashatunkhwa Milli Awami Party chief Mahmood Khan Achakzai and senior figures from Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), will address the gathering. He also said that invitations would be extended to other opposition parties to join the event.

This announcement comes just weeks after the conclusion of a two-day multi-party opposition conference that laid the foundation for the

protest drive.

The conference ended with a joint declaration calling for the supremacy of the Constitution, the immediate release of political prisoners, fresh elections, and the repeal of what the alliance described as "unconstitutional amendments" introduced by the government, reported the Express Tribune.

Despite the growing momentum, internal disagreements persist within the alliance--most notably the reluctance of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JUI-F)



to formally join the protest movement. JUI-F leader Maulana Fazlur Rehman has withheld support, citing concerns about PTI's leadership structure in the absence of its jailed founder, Imran Khan.



Virat Kohli joins David Warner to become second player to complete century of half-centuries in T20s

JAIPUR : Royal Challengers Bengaluru batting maestro Virat Kohli toppled a massive record while pulling off his chase masterclass against Rajasthan Royals and became just the second batter to complete a century of half-centuries in the T20 format.

In the ongoing 18th edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2025, Virat played the anchor role for the Royal Challengers during their pursuit of a competitive 174-run target. While Salt went berserk at one end, Virat maintained his composure to keep the scoreboard ticking with his commanding strike rotation.

Virat joined the former flamboyant Australian opener for the record in the 15th over after dispatching the ball past the boundary rope to register his 100th fifty in the T20s. He put on his dancing shoes and took the aerial route by converting the in-drifter into half volley to loft the ball handsomely over long-on for a maximum.

The Indian stalwart entered the exclusive club, which solely featured Warner as its sole member. The former Australia star boasts a staggering 108 half-centuries in the T20 format.

During RCB's one-sided chase, Virat certainly had fortune on his side. On the first delivery of the fourth over, Virat ambled down the track and skewed it high in the air off Sandeep Sharma. Riyan Parag,



with sunglasses on, sprinted towards the landing zone of the ball, got a hand on it, but eventually split it.

After receiving an early lifeline, Virat punished Rajasthan's loose deliveries by targeting the boundary rope. With the 92-run opening stand broken after Phil

Salt returned with his explosive 65 from 33 deliveries, Virat raised an unbeaten 83-run partnership with Devdutt Padikkal for the second wicket to steer Bengaluru to a comfortable 9-wicket triumph.

The 'Chase Master' returned to the dressing room with an

unbeaten 62 from 45 deliveries and his third fifty in the ongoing edition of the IPL. His sizzling 62 was laced with four boundaries and two maximums. Following its fourth win in the season, RCB moved to the third spot with eight points behind Delhi Capitals and Gujarat Titans.



Security personnel try to stop a pitch invader, who entered the ground during the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2025 match between Rajasthan Royals and Royal Challengers Bengaluru, at Sawai Mansingh Stadium, in Jaipur on Sunday. (ANI Photo)

"We have much younger side, but lots of positives about it": RR captain Sanju Samson

JAIPUR : Just when Rajasthan Royals (RR) seemed to be picking up form with two wins last week, they suffered a heavy 58-run loss to Gujarat Titans (GT) on Wednesday, once again highlighting some weaknesses in both their batting and bowling departments. The team has a younger look this season, especially in the batting line-up, but skipper Sanju Samson believes the players are experienced enough to deliver, as per ESPNcricinfo. "It's a good question to start with," Samson told reporters, as quoted from ESPNcricinfo. "I feel yes, this time we have a much younger side but there are lots of positives about it," he added. "I think they look very young on the age front, but if you look at their match experience, I think most of them have played lot of international cricket and they have played reasonable amount of IPL also. I don't think they are young in cricketing aspect," he said.

He continues to back young talents like Yashasvi Jaiswal, Dhruv Jurel, Riyan Parag, and Shubham Dubey, hoping they'll step up in the remaining matches. Samson also mentioned that with the squad looking different this year, he's had to adapt his own playing role, which is not the same as his role in India's T20I team. He added that Rahul Dravid is the ideal coach for helping these youngsters grow. "But as you said my role definitely has changed," Samson said, as quoted from ESPNcricinfo. "It definitely changes in every team you play. When I play for the India team we are batting deep and we are expected to go hard from ball one, but here our team combination is such where we need to actually play a different kind of role," he added.

"I think I am experienced enough to do that as well. And I think I am also experienced enough to take care of a young unit also. So I think we are definitely in the right hands with Rahul sir being there," he noted. Samson didn't shy away from the possibility of making bold decisions, including changing the team combination if needed. He said the players on the bench are capable of stepping in if form or team balance demands it. "We have taken them to give them a chance," Samson noted. "Eventually the franchise owner wants to build a team which can win the trophy. They want you eventually to be the champion. Whether you play juniors, inexperienced players, experienced players. So definitely we play to win. No matter how big or small the players are, definitely they all are in the team to win every game we play."



James Vince shatters massive milestone, becomes third-fastest centurion in PSL history



KARACHI : Karachi Kings top-order batter James Vince scripted a massive milestone in the ongoing Pakistan Super League (PSL) after blazing his way to a rollicking century against Multan Sultans at the National Bank Stadium.

Vince hammered a ton in just 42 deliveries to open Karachi's win account as the Kings gunned down a mammoth 235-run target to trounce Multan in a run-scoring fest. After putting up a swashbuckling display, Vince became the third-fastest centurion in PSL's history.

The record for the fastest century in Pakistan's premier T20 tournament belongs to Usman Khan, who breezed past the three-digit mark in just 36 deliveries. South Africa's Rilee Rossouw follows in next with a 41-ball hundred. The entertaining and gripping affair in Karachi began with the Sultans' skipper Mohammad Rizwan leading his side from the front and mesmerising the spectators with an exquisite 105* from 69 deliveries. With nine boundaries and five towering maximums, Rizwan found support from Kamran Ghulam and Michael Bracewell's quick-fire contributions towards the end. In his short-lived 36 from 19 cameos, Ghulam opened his arms and displayed a wide array of shots.

In the aftermath of his dismissal, Bracewell joined hands with Rizwan and took the brunt of scoring runs with aggression, firing an unbeaten 44 from 17 deliveries to propel Multan to a daunting 234/3. In reply, Tim Seifert set the tempo of the chase with a swift 32 from 16 after skipper David Warner's early dismissal. Vince went straight down the business and dealt with boundaries, unfazed by the events unfolding on the other end.



Shrivalli, Ankita and Prarthana create history to help India qualify for the playoffs of the Billie Jean King Cup 2025

PUNE : Team India confirmed their playoff berth in the Billie Jean King Cup 2025, after bagging second place at the Billie Jean King Cup Asia-Oceania Group 1. The hosts progressed to the next round after registering a 2-1 win against Korea Republic in their final game of the tournament at the Mahalunge Balewadi Tennis Complex on Saturday in Pune, according to a release from Billie Jean King Cup 2025. This is only the second time that India have qualified for the playoffs of the Billie Jean King Cup, previously doing so in 2020. Along with the hosts, it was New Zealand who secured top spot at the tournament organized by MSLTA in association with ITF, AITA, and PMDTA. It was a dream debut at the Billie Jean King Cup for Shrivalli Bhamidipaty, as she maintained her unblemished record in the tournament. Playing against 248-ranked, Sohyun Park, Shrivalli surrendered a hard-fought first set, before taking charge to storm a comeback. The youngster from Hyderabad registered her fifth consecutive win, sealing the deal with a scoreline of 5-7, 6-3, 7-6 (7-5) in 2 hours and 52 minutes. Heading into the second singles match with a one-nil lead for India, Sahaja Yamalapalli took centre court to play against Dayeon Back. The Indian player showed resolve and determination despite suffering an early setback in both sets. Trailing 1-5 in the second set, Sahaja fought till the end but eventually fell short by a scoreline of 3-6, 4-6, in an hour and 45 minutes. With all to play for and a playoff spot at stake, India's vastly experienced doubles duo of Ankita Raina and Prarthana Thombare stepped up when it mattered most, helping the team over the line against Sohyun Park and Dabin Kim.

Sundays on Cycle: India Pedals Forward with 300+ Events Nationwide on April 13



NEW DELHI : India witnessed yet another vibrant edition of the 'Fit India Sundays on Cycle' Sunday with over 300 cycling events conducted simultaneously across the country. Sujata Chaturvedi, Secretary of Sports, flagged off the national capital's edition at New Moti Bagh, energizing the crowd and reinforcing the national momentum towards fitness. Communities, athletes, police departments, and residents across the nation pedalled with purpose-celebrating fitness, fun, and environmental awareness under the campaign led by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. New Moti Bagh Club played host to an energetic rally with around 350 residents from various Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) pedalling in unison. Today's event, a collaboration between local RWAs and Fit India, focused on fighting obesity and encouraging healthier habits among city dwellers.



Amorim drops under-fire Andre Onana for Manchester United's Premier League clash against Newcastle

NEWCASTLE : Manchester United's first-choice goalkeeper, Andre Onana, has been dropped from the squad for their Premier League fixture against Newcastle United on Sunday, according to Sky Sports.

Onana made two crucial errors against Lyon in the first leg of the UEFA Europa League quarter-final on Thursday, as Manchester United were agonisingly held to a 2-2 draw.

Since arriving at Old Trafford in 2023, the Cameroonian international has played every minute of Manchester United's Premier League matches. However, for their upcoming fixture, Onana hasn't travelled to Tyneside and is set to be replaced by Altay Bayindir, who has only featured six times to date this season and is in line to make his Premier League debut.

According to Sky Sports News, Red Devils head coach Ruben Amorim wants Onana to rest after his turbulent period on and off the field. Apart from his costly mistakes against Lyon in the mid-week, Onana's wife endured a traumatic experience when she was the victim of a robbery outside a restaurant in Manchester in March. It is expected that Onana could be recalled for the second leg against Lyon on Thursday.