

# Pakistan implodes with Balochistan explosion

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES** ■  
 New Delhi/Karachi

Five people, including three Frontier Corps (FC) personnel, were killed and 30 others injured in a terrorist attack by suspected Baloch militants in Pakistan's restive Balochistan province on Sunday. Four terrorists, including the suicide bomber, were killed in counter-operations in Noshki district of the province. The Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) claimed responsibility for the attack, and said 90 military personnel had been killed. Earlier last week, in the same province, the BLA militants ambushed the Jaffar Express, carrying 440 passengers, near the mountainous terrain

of Gudalar and Piru Kunri in Bolan district on March 11. The militants killed 21 passengers and four paramilitary soldiers before the Army eliminated all 33 terrorists on March 12. As regards the latest incident, a suicide attacker rammed an explosive-laden vehicle into a convoy of Paramilitary Frontier Corp (FC) on the Nushki-Dalbandin National Highway; chief of the local police station Zafarullah Sumalani said adding that the initial investigations suggested that it was a suicide attack. Sumalani also said evidence from the site of the attack suggested that a suicide attacker rammed an explosive-laden vehicle into the FC convoy. Soon after the attack, security forces launched an immediate counter-

operation, killing four terrorists, including the suicide bomber, newspaper Express Tribune said. It also quoted security sources to say that the attack was carried out by militants from the banned BLA. Claiming that a total of 90 Pakistani military personnel were killed in the attack on their convoy on Sunday, a statement by the BLA said, "The Majeed Brigade, the Fidayee unit of the Baloch Liberation Army, targeted a convoy of the occupying Pakistani military a few hours ago in a VBIED Fidayee attack near Rakhshan Mill on the RCD Highway in Noshki. The convoy consisted of eight buses, one of which was completely destroyed in the explosion." It added, "Immediately after the attack,

the Fateh Squad of the BLA advanced and completely surrounded another bus, systematically eliminating all military personnel on board, bringing the total number of enemy casualties to 90." Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti all condemned the attack and expressed sorrow over the loss of lives. **Immediately after the attack, the Fateh Squad advanced and surrounded another bus, systematically eliminating all military personnel on board** — BALOCH LIBERATION ARMY

Sharif, in a statement, said, "Such cowardly acts cannot shake our resolve against terrorism." He also directed that the injured be provided with the best possible treatment. "Those who play with the peace of Balochistan would be brought to a tragic end," Bugti said in an official release. Minister Naqvi condemned the blast and extended condolences to the victims' families and wished a swift recovery for the injured. Denouncing the attack as an act of brutality, Naqvi emphasised that anti-state elements are attempting to destabilise the country and asserted that such cowardly acts would not shake the nation's resolve, according to a statement shared by the Ministry of Interior on social media.

Balochistan government spokesperson Shahid Rind also condemned the attack "targeting innocents." Balochistan has witnessed an uptick in terrorist attacks over the past year. Bordering Iran and Afghanistan, Balochistan is home to a long-running violent insurgency. Baloch insurgent groups frequently carry out attacks targeting security personnel, government projects and the \$60 Billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects in this oil and mineral-rich province. In the past, the railway tracks in this area have been attacked by Baloch militants using rockets or remote-controlled bombs, and the BLA claimed responsibility for most of the attacks.

## PM bemoans lack of will and wisdom in Islamabad

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE** ■ New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said that every attempt to foster peace with Pakistan was met with hostility and betrayal and hoped that wisdom would prevail on the leadership in Islamabad to improve bilateral ties. In a podcast with Lex Fridman released on Sunday, Modi recalled that he had specially invited his Pakistan counterpart Nawaz Sharif for his swearing-in ceremony in 2014 with the hope that the two countries could turn a new leaf.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a podcast with Lex Fridman in New Delhi

"Yet, every noble attempt at fostering peace was met with hostility and betrayal. We sincerely hope that wisdom prevails upon them and they choose the path of peace," the Prime Minister said in his over three-hour interaction. Modi said he believed that even the people of Pakistan long for peace because they also must be tired of living in strife, unrest and relentless terror where even innocent children are killed and countless lives are destroyed. The Prime Minister said

his first attempt at improving bilateral relations was a gesture of goodwill. "It was a diplomatic gesture unlike any in decades. The very people who once questioned my approach to foreign policy were taken aback when

they learned I had invited all SAARC heads of state and our then President Pranab Mukherjee beautifully captured that historic gesture in his memoir," Narendra Modi said. "This was a testament to how clear and confident India's foreign policy had

become. This sent a clear message to the world about India's commitment to peace and harmony, but we didn't get the desired outcome," he said. To a question on how he now view the 2002 post Godhra riots and its aftermaths, Modi said the discourse was an attempt to create a false narrative and his political opponents in power at the Centre wanted him to be punished but the courts cleared his name. Modi said there were many involved in misinformation to target him. "If you review the data from before 2002, you will see that Gujarat faced frequent riots. Curfews were constantly being imposed somewhere. Communal violence would erupt over trivial issues such as kite flying contests or even bicycle collisions," Modi said. Modi said the riots in Gujarat in 1969 lasted for more than six months and that was an era when he was nowhere on the political horizon. He said the Godhra train burning incident took place barely three days after he was elected as a legislator of the Gujarat Assembly.

## BJD slams govt over murders



**BJP retaliates**  
**PNS** ■ BHUBANESWAR

BJD legislator Arun Sahoo on Sunday severely criticised the State Government over alleged law enforcement failures resulting in as many as five murders during Holi celebrations across the State. Sahoo stated, "Wherever there are 'Maha Nagars' (meaning-major cities), there have been 'Maha Murders' (meaning gruesome murders)." "When the criminals are seeing that a feeble government is now in power, they are gaining courage to commit the

crimes," Sahoo told reporters. In a counter-allegation, Urban Development Minister Krushna Chandra Mahapatra hit back at the BJD, suggesting that issues prevalent during their (previous BJD-led government) leadership remain a burden today. He cited acute crunch in the police force and questioned accountability, suggesting ongoing governance shortcomings. "We (current government) are dealing with the consequences of the BJD-led government's ineffectiveness. Police personnel recruitment process has recently started to fill up the existing vacancies."

## Spy camera used to film Srimandir interiors

**Accused detained**  
**PNS** ■ PURI

In a startling incident, police on Saturday detained a youth for reportedly filming the interiors of the Jagannath Temple in Puri using a hidden spy camera. The accused, identified as Bhaskar Samant, was detained by the Singhadwar police. Notably, filming or even carrying a mobile phone is strictly prohibited inside the premises of the temple. Sources also added that police seized the spy camera from Samant and found video footage of the temple's interior in the memory storage. Till the last reports, he was placed under further interrogation with a detailed investigation ongoing. Authorities, however, have not commented on the matter yet. The incident has raised concerns regarding security measures in the temple with recent similar incidents having been reported. In early March, videos taken inside the premises of Srimandir had gone viral on social media, leading to widespread outrage. According to police reports, the videos were shared by a young woman and showcased various areas, including the west gate near the Nrusingha Temple. The clips also highlighted prominent landmarks such as the Puri railway station and the nearby beach.

## 5 murders, including 2 in BBSR, reported

**Violence mars Holi celebrations in State**  
**PNS** ■ BHUBANESWAR

Widespread violence rocked Odisha during Holi celebrations on Saturday as five murders were reported from different parts of the State, including two in the capital city Bhubaneswar. Despite several measures taken by police to maintain law and order during Holi, the brutal murders have raised serious questions over effective policing. In Bhubaneswar, a youth, identified as Gopi Guli, was stabbed to death at Shantipalli slum under the Saheed Nagar police station. Guli had an altercation with four youths. The verbal brawl soon took a violent turn and miscreants stabbed Guli to death. The deceased's wife also sustained serious injuries in the attack and was admitted to hospital.

In another incident, a person was killed in the Samegadia area under the Mancheswar police station in the city. The deceased was identified as Anshuman Pati, who was chased by the miscreants and stabbed to death on the road. "The miscreants who killed my nephew are anti-socials. They are involved in many criminal activities. We demand immediate justice," a relative of the deceased said while raising questions on the effectiveness of the Commissionerate police. In another incident, a youth was stabbed to death in Sahoo Colony in Sambalpur town during Holi celebrations. The deceased was identified as Aditya Salma. One Sahul Singh called Salma from his house to play Holi and stabbed him. Past enmity is suspected to be the reason behind the murder. Sambalpur Additional SP Ajay Mishra said, "Salma sustained serious injuries after be-

ing stabbed by Singh. He was immediately rushed to the District Headquarters Hospital where he was declared brought dead. We have arrested the accused and seized the weapon used in the murder. Further investigation is ongoing." At Lanjipalli Chanakyanagar in Brahmapur, a contractor was fatally stabbed over an alleged past rivalry. He was rushed to the MKCG Medical College Hospital but succumbed to his injuries during treatment. In yet another incident, a youth was brutally attacked and killed at Nakhara Sahi in Angul. The victim was rushed to District Headquarters Hospital in a critical condition but succumbed to his injuries. Initial reports suggested that the murder was a result of past enmity. The Town police have launched an investigation to identify and apprehend the culprits involved in the crime.

## Odisha to set up 35 Poshan Kendras

**By adopting Gujarat model: Minister Patra**  
**PNS** ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha Government is set to introduce 'Poshan Kendras' based on the successful Gujarat model, announced Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Krushna Chandra Patra on Sunday. These centres will provide essential commodities at subsidised rates to both

economically weaker sections and middleclass families. Items such as rice, pulses, flour and cooking oil will be made available at these Poshan Kendras. To ensure affordability, both the Central and Odisha Governments would jointly provide subsidies for the initiative. As part of the pilot project, 35 Poshan Kendras would be set up initially. If successful, the government plans to extend the initiative to every panchayat across the State, informed Patra.

In preparation for the large-scale rollout, a dedicated team of officials would visit Gujarat to study the implementation model and gather insights. The government is expected to finalise the necessary policies and take a conclusive decision on expanding the programme in the near future, the minister said. The distribution of ration and essential supplies would continue with the combined support of the State and Central Governments.

## Heat wave warning issued for State

**PNS** ■ BHUBANESWAR

Odisha is all set to experience a severe heat wave, hot and humid and warm night conditions during March 16 to 19, said the India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Sunday. As per the Regional Office

of the IMD here, maximum temperature was markedly above normal by about 5 to 7 degrees Celsius at a many places over the districts of interior Odisha, above normal by about 3 to 5 degrees at one or two places over the districts of above normal by about 2 to 3 degree at a many places over

the districts of coastal Odisha in the past 24 hours. Several parts the State are currently reeling under intense heat wave conditions for the past few days. There seems to be no respite as the IMD has issued a Red warning for heat to severe heat wave conditions in coming days.

## 5 arrested for BBSR double murders

**1 minor detained**  
**PNS** ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Commissionerate police on Sunday arrested five persons along with the prime accused and detained one more in connection with two separate murders which occurred on Saturday during Holi celebrations in Bhubaneswar. The prime accused along with a minor has been arrested in connection with the Saheed Nagar murder case. City DCP Jagmohan Meena

said the main accused, Baba Guni, was apprehended from a place under the Pipili police station in Puri district. A minor boy has also been detained in connection with the case. The murders occurred following a heated argument during Holi celebrations. There was no prior enmity between the victim and the accused. The altercation escalated, leading to the fatal attack. Similarly, four persons have been arrested for their alleged

involvement in the Macheswar murder case. Meena said four persons, including one Tanmay Behera, were arrested in connection with the case. Investigations revealed that the killings were not premeditated but stemmed from sudden disputes. "During the arrest, Behera attempted to evade the police by consuming a wild fruit. He was taken to Mangalpur CHC for treatment and is now in police custody. Further investigations are underway," said the DCP.

## Uproar as BMC uploads tax defaulters' list, later deletes

**PNS** ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) posted a list of holding tax defaulters on social media but deleted it soon after, sparking controversy. Mayor Sulochana Das stated the list was outdated, but concerns remain over transparency and accountability. During a press meet on March 12, BMC Mayor Sulochana Das clarified that the uploaded list was one week old and was mistakenly shared. However, questions remain as to why an updated list has not yet been uploaded. Furthermore, concerns have been raised regarding the ac-

countability of those responsible for the erroneous upload. The original post, made on March 11, mentioned the name of the defaulters. From the North, South-East, and South-West zones, a total of 31 institutions and individuals were mentioned, who had outstanding holding tax dues exceeding Rs 1 crore and between Rs 50 lakh to Rs 1 crore. The total outstanding amount was over Rs 45 crore. In the list of those with dues exceeding Rs 1 crore, six names were from the North Zone, including SJ Charitable Trust, KIMS, Aditya Birla Fashion & Retail, and Shree Bharat Motors. Meanwhile,

five names each were listed from the South-East and South-West zones. Similarly, in the category of dues between Rs 50 lakh and Rs 1 crore, there were seven names from the North Zone, three from the South-East Zone, and five from the South-West Zone. Not just on social media, the BMC public relations officer had also shared this information on media groups. However, surprisingly, after extensive coverage and publication by multiple media houses, BMC suddenly made a U-turn on the matter. Adding to the confusion, the Mayor stated that some institutions had paid their

dues partially or promised to clear the remaining balance by the end of March. However, questions remain on whether this partial payment option is available to all taxpayers or just select organizations. "The information which was shared yesterday was uploaded mistakenly. This was one week old data. Some organizations that have more than Rs 1 crore due, have made some payment. Those who have paid half or one-third of the dues, have said that they will pay the rest amount within 8-10 days. We will upload the latest data today," BMC Mayor Sulochana Das had said. Meanwhile, citizens and experts are now demanding transparency from BMC. If the original list was outdated, why has a corrected version not been released yet? Was the deletion a mere mistake or a result of influence from major defaulters? Also, what action, if any, has been taken against the officials responsible for this blunder? "The Odisha government should interfere in the matter and strengthen the municipal corporation so that they can collect the tax," said Piyush Rout, an urban planner. With no further clarification from BMC yet, the holding tax issue continues to raise doubts and concerns among the public.

# 'Establish NGMA branch in BBSR' CM can now approve up to Rs 100-cr grant

Proposes Aparajita to Union Culture Minister  
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR



Bhubaneswar MP Aparajita Sarangi has written to Union Culture and Tourism Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat for establishment of a branch of the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) in Bhubaneswar.

population and the State as a whole. A branch of the NGMA in Bhubaneswar would serve as a major attraction for tourists, both domestic and international.

tutions dedicated to various fields of study including fine arts. Currently, there is no NGMA branch in eastern part of the country, making Bhubaneswar an ideal location for expanding the gallery's presence.

would ensure easy accessibility for the various visitors from the region.

Financial powers also modified for Mins, Secys  
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Odisha has revised financial sanction limits, allowing the Chief Minister to approve up to Rs 100 crore. Ministers and bureaucrats also get modified caps.

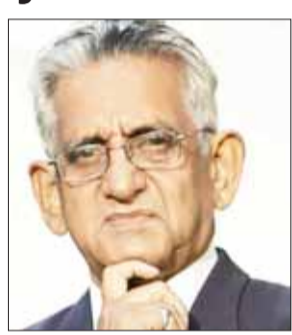
consultancy, and outsourcing services. However, proposals exceeding this cap would require Cabinet approval.

purchases of goods between Rs 25 lakh and Rs 10 crore, consultancy services between Rs 5 lakh and Rs 1 crore, and outsourcing contracts within the same range.

crees in land acquisition cases and arbitral awards linked to contracts, provided budgets permit, without prior Finance Department clearance.

## Poet Ramakanta Rath passes away at 91

Renowned poet Ramakanta Rath passed away at his Kharvel Nagar residence here on Sunday. He was 91.



Born in Cuttack, Rath obtained his MA in English Literature from the Ravenshaw College before joining the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) in 1957.

1998 and its the President from 1998 to 2003. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi expressed deep sorrow over Rath's demise, saying, "He will always be remembered for his contribution to the Indian civil service as well as the world of literature."

## Conclave on menstrual health to be held

To be hosted by IIT Bhubaneswar  
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bhubaneswar is gearing up to host a conclave on the Menstrual Health and Hygiene Day to be observed on May 28.



The conclave will be jointly organised by IIT Bhubaneswar Research and Entrepreneurship Park (IITBBS REP), UNICEF, ActionLab 2050 (AL2050) Foundation and the Odisha Menstruation Health and Hygiene (OMHH) Alliance.

March 8. Through this initiative, the organising institutions aim to build a sustainable and inclusive ecosystem that connects academic research, commu-

## No abrupt cancellation of ration cards

Says minister  
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State Government would not cancel any ration card abruptly, informed Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Krushna Chandra Patra while providing key updates on the ongoing e-KYC process and ration card distribution on Sunday.

dynamic platform for sharing knowledge, fostering discussions and driving action towards improving menstrual health and hygiene practices. It will bring together a diverse group of experts, advocates, healthcare professionals, social workers and individuals directly affected by menstrual health issues to collaborate on practical solutions for enhancing education and access to menstrual hygiene facilities.

ensure that all eligible beneficiaries receive their due entitlements without unnecessary disruptions. In terms of new ration card applications, 6.35 lakh people have already applied through the online portal, and the survey process to verify their eligibility is currently underway.

## Amid rising heat Govt considering morning school

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha Government is considering shifting school timings to mornings due to rising temperatures. School and Mass Education Minister Nityananda Gond stated that discussions with the Revenue and Disaster Management Department would determine the final decision.

cording above-normal heat levels. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted further escalation in temperatures in the coming weeks, raising concerns over student safety during school hours.

## BMS demands increase in minimum pension

To hold demos at dist headquarters on March 18  
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) units across Odisha will hold demonstrations at all district headquarters and key industrial towns on March 18 demanding an increase in minimum pension from Rs 1,000 to Rs 25,000.



Currently, around 76 lakh EPS-95 pensioners receive a minimum pension of Rs 1,000. Most of them are former private sector employees and other workers.

But the government has yet to take a decisive step in this regard. Apart from pension-related concerns, the BMS has also highlighted the long-pending demands of Scheme Workers and Contract Workers in various sectors.

dia organising secretary B Surendran, all India secretary Anjali Patel and State general secretary Pruthiraj Panda said, "Since 1975, Anganwadi Workers have been classified as Scheme Workers. BMS demands that the government recognise them as government employees and extend all ben-

efits applicable to government staffs." They said many industries and establishments continue to exploit contract workers by keeping them in temporary employment for decades. These workers lack job security, fair wages and proper benefits.

## In Cuttack Bizman shot dead in drunken brawl

Accused held; gun seized  
PNS ■ CUTTACK

A businessman was shot dead at Shree Krishna Vihar under the Bayalis Mouza police station in Cuttack district during Holi celebrations on Saturday.

the incident. "The accused and Mohanty together consumed liquor in the room, following which they had an altercation. In a fit of rage, the accused opened fire at Mohanty resulting in his death. We have detained the accused and seized the firearm," Cuttack DCP Khilari Rishikesh Dnyandeo said.

## Training on bee venom extraction held

By KVIC Bhubaneswar  
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR



The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) State Office, Bhubaneswar, organised a skill development training programme on bee venom extraction and bee pollen collection. This event, held under the Ministry of MSME, Government of India, marked the first-time such advanced training was conducted in Odisha.

health, pharmaceutical and cosmetic industries. The programme was conducted under the expert guidance of Dr Bikash K Patra, a renowned bee scientist. Dr Patra has trained numerous beekeepers in Odisha, India and abroad.

## Lithium deposits found in Nayagarh dist

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Nayagarh district has emerged as a potential game-changer after preliminary surveys by the Geological Survey of India (GSI) in January hinted at significant lithium deposits. This "white gold" find could reduce India's reliance on imports, which currently meet 100% of its lithium demand for electric vehicle (EV) batteries.

# Lithium deposits found in Nayagarh dist

The discovery aligns with national goals to achieve 30% EV adoption by 2030 and positions Odisha, already India's top mineral producer, as a critical player in the clean energy transition.

notably missing dedicated refineries. In addition, mining in sensitive ecological zones raises environmental concerns. Local communities risk displacement, and natural habitats could suffer if mining is not carefully managed.

output, but tapping into lithium's full potential will require overcoming these hurdles. Environmentalists warn of water pollution and deforestation, citing past issues in regions like the Kopili river basin, where unregulated opencast coal mining has acidified the river, rendering sections of it lifeless and ecologically damaged.

Additionally, refining lithium domestically remains a technical hurdle, requiring foreign collaboration or significant R&D investment. Odisha's lithium reserves offer a chance to redefine its economy and India's EV ambitions. Yet, success hinges on sustainable practices and infrastructural upgrades, say experts.

# Twin tragedies cast shadow on Holi fest in Ganjam

Student drowns, contractor stabbed to death  
RAJEEV RATHAN ■ BRAHMAMPUR

Holi celebrations in Ganjam district were marred by two tragic incidents: one involving the drowning of a 10-year-old student in the sea and the other a fatal stabbing of a contractor in Lanjipalli here on Saturday.

In the first incident, a festive gathering at Podamapeta village under Rambha police limits turned into a nightmare when a young boy drowned while washing off Holi colours. The deceased, identified as B Chandan, son of fisherman B Babaji, had gone to the sea around at noon with his friends after playing Holi. However, he lost balance and was swept away by strong waves. Despite efforts by local youths to rescue him, he was de-

clared dead upon arrival at the Chhatrapur Sub-Divisional Hospital. Chhatrapur MLA Krushna Chandra Nayak reached the hospital and facilitated immediate post-mortem procedures. In a separate incident in Lanjipalli's Chanakya Nagar, contractor T Ramachandra Patra was stabbed to death in a post-Holi altercation. The accused, identified as Papun Sabat, reportedly attacked Ramachandra with a

## In Ganjam Scooter-borne man dies in OSRTC bus mishap

Sister seriously injured  
PNS ■ BRAHMAMPUR

A road accident near Panchabhuti village under the Jagannathprasad police station in Ganjam district claimed one life and left another critically injured on Sunday morning. The deceased was identified as Deepak Nayak, a resident of Chadeiyapalli village, while the injured Yashoda Nayak was reported to be his sister. Sources reported that the accident involved an Odisha State Road Transport Corporation (OSRTC) bus and a scooter in a head-on collision.



The bus was travelling from Cuttack to Balliguda when it lost control before crashing into the oncoming scooter. The impact was so severe that the scooter was completely

mangled. Deepak Nayak succumbed to injuries on the spot while Yashoda was rushed to the Jagannathprasad Community Health Centre for urgent

medical attention. Following the accident, enraged locals blocked the road demanding immediate action against the bus driver and better road safety measures, urging stricter traffic regulations to prevent further mishaps. The situation escalated until police intervened, pacified the agitated crowd and cleared the blockade. Police seized the body of the deceased and sent it to Bhanjanagar for postmortem. Meanwhile, an investigation was underway to determine the exact cause of the accident and ascertain any possible negligence on the part of the bus driver.

## In Angul Missing minor girl's body recovered

Forensic team to probe allegation of rape  
BIJAY MISHRA ■ ANGUL

When people were celebrating Dola and Holi, a most sensitive brutal murder of a five-year-old girl at Kankarei Pidhakhman village of Nisha Police Station in Angul has created widespread resentment among the people. After reported missing of the girl on last Friday, Nisha police recovered the body of the deceased near the village. Police were interrogating were suspected persons.

Doctors from Department of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology (FMT) at SCB Medical College and Hospital are coming to Angul for conducting post mortem of the body to ascertain on allegation of rape of the minor girl. Woman activist and Congress leader Sashmita Behera rushed to the spot and expressed concern over the matter, condemned the heinous crime and stated that "the law and order situation at Chhendipada in particular and Angul in general has completely collapsed and police are instructed to serve the corporate interest."

# 60K Lakhpati Didis created in Angul dist

DHIRAMOHAN RAY ■ TALCHER

The State Government is implementing several schemes to empower women. Efforts are being made to make them financially independent through women self help groups. And for this, more than 60,000 millionaire women have been created in Angul district. While the target was to make 1 million women millionaires in the district, efforts have been made to make them economically viable by involving them in various government schemes. There are a total of 22, 516 self help groups in Angul district. While there are 2,43, 608 members, the government is

implementing various schemes to make them financially self-reliant. In various government schemes, more importance is given to the women self-help groups. Efforts have been made to strengthen their financial condition by providing loans to the women. Through this, 60,726 lakhpati didis have been created in Angul district. This means that the families of these women are earning more than lakhs of rupees per year. Earning lakhs of rupees a year without doing any job is said to be a big achievement for these women. On the other hand, a total of 1,06,143 women in the district have been planned to be

made Lakpati Didis. The income of these women is now between Rs 60,000 to Rs 1 lakh. Efforts have been started at the government level to increase their income by training them and adding them to various schemes to increase their income, especially in goat farming, poultry farming, increasing the participation of women in vegetable farming, fruit farming and fish farming. Training is given to women on how to take advantage of these schemes. Further, it is said to help women in the district to become self-reliant. Various departments of the government have been given responsibility for this. They will explain various

government schemes to the women and how they can benefit from them. The aim is to sensitize women and involve more and more women in government schemes. According to district programme coordinator of Mission Shakti, Lambodar Baske, 60,608 lakhpati Didis have been created in Angul district till date. Further, 1,06,143 women have been targeted to become millionaires. It is planned to increase their income by providing financial assistance to them. He said that women are being involved in various government schemes to make them self-reliant and strengthen their economic conditions.

## Himadri to begin ops at Birla Tyres soon

PNS ■ BALESWAR

Himadri Speciality Chemical Limited (HSCL) is placing Odisha at the center of its ambitious growth strategy. In collaboration with Dalmia Bharat Refractories Limited (DBRL), Himadri is embarking on commencing and modernising operations at the Birla Tyres plant in Baleswar. With a vision to restore Birla Tyres to its former glory, Himadri aims to modernize the manufacturing facility in Baleswar, enhancing its product offerings, that align with the market demands of today and the future. It will be commencing operations with a capacity of 30 TPD and over the next 24 to 36 months, the company plans to ramp up production capacity from 30 TPD to 400 TPD, utilizing advanced technology and innovative processes. The Birla Tyres plant in Baleswar has remained non-operational since March 2021, following the commencement

of insolvency proceedings. After an extended shutdown, the facility is now gearing up to resume operations, providing a fresh economic lifeline to the region. The reopening of the tyre plant in Baleswar, a key industrial hub in Odisha known for its manufacturing and defense industries, is expected to generate significant employment opportunities and substantially contribute to the State's economy. The production capacity expansion includes a structured plan for workforce development at the Baleswar manufacturing unit in Odisha with Phase 1 to begin with the onboarding of around 600 employees, a blend of experienced workers from the industry and fresh graduates from local technical institutions. The number is projected to grow to over 3,000 over the coming years as the company expands its operations at the plant, providing crucial employment opportunities to the local diaspora.

## CUO holds Classical Language Day for Odia language



PNS ■ KORAPUT

The Central University of Odisha (CUO) here observed the Shashtriya Bhasa Divas (Classical Language Day) for Odia language on March 11. On this day in 2014, Odia language was declared as sixth classical language by the Government of India. In a message, Vice-Chancellor Prof Chakradhar Tripathi said, "We should cherish our

glory as Odia being recognised as an old language." The meeting was graced by dignitaries including Prof NC Panda, Dean, School of Language and Literature, as chief guest, Prof Bharat Kumar Panda, Professor of Education, as chief speaker, Prof Rathikanta Kumbhar as guest of honour and Dr Pradosh Kumar Swain as president of the meeting. Prof Panda said language is

humanity and Odia language is well-appreciated and accepted by all the people irrespective of their own language. Due to the pure culture of Odia people and due to the worldwide acceptance of Lord Jagannath, Odia language is cherished everywhere. Prof Kumbhar said Odia language would be more accepted if it is popularised among non-Odia-speaking people.

## In Udala Man bitten by cobra reaches hosp with snake in hand

His condition critical  
PNS ■ BARIPADA

In an unprecedented incident, a man bitten by a cobra arrived at the hospital while bringing the reptile along with him. The case was reported from Udala in Mayurbhanj district. The man has been identified as Ajit Karmakar, who rushed himself to seek medical care while also bringing along the dead body of the snake that bit him. Sources reported the snake bit Ajit three to four times just outside his house in Nagpal village under Udala police station limits. Caught off guard, he became agitated and killed the snake before packing its carcass in a plastic bag. Reports also stated that the man arrived at the hospital with grave symptoms of snakebite and was rushed for primary care. The animal was seized from him by hospital staff. Meanwhile, doctors stated that since Karmakar



had brought the snake with him, it was easier for them to identify the species and administer appropriate treatment. The snake was identified as a cobra. "We noticed the fang marks and confirmed the snake bite. The man had bleeding in the bite regions of his body and dilated pupils, which are typical symptoms in such cases. Since he brought the snake

with him, we were able to quickly identify that it was a cobra. He was administered appropriate neurotoxins," stated Dr Rajkumar Nayak of Udala Medical. However, sources maintained that the man's condition remained critical, and he was subsequently transferred to Baripada, where he is currently undergoing further treatment.

## 3 of family die as truck hits bike in Champua

PNS ■ CHAMPUIA

In a shocking incident, three of a family including a man, his wife and his son, died after a truck rammed into their bike in Dolita square in Champua of Keonjhar district, on Saturday. The deceased have been identified as Aiban Pradhan, wife Mathamani and their son Mangal. The trio was going in their bike to visit their married daughter on the occasion of holi, when the tragic incident happened. The mishap occurred right in front of their

daughter's house. While Aiban died on the spot, Mathamani and Mangal died while under treatment in hospital. The truck driver fled the spot soon after the mishap. Following the accident irate locals staged a protest and blocked NH 20. The local Tehsildar, DSP and IIC rushed to the spot and tried to console the agitators. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi expressed deep grief over the incident, who announced an ex-gratia of Rs 4lakh for the families of the deceased.

# In Ganjam NREGS bungling slur leads to murder bid on ex-sarpanch

Incident fuels political tensions  
RAJEEV RATHAN ■ BRAHMAMPUR

A murder bid on former sarpanch of Gada Gobindpur panchayat and representative of Brahmampur MP Dr Pradeep Kumar Panigrahy, K Haribandhu Reddy, due to his involvement in MGNREGA corruption, escalated political tensions in the region. The attack took place on Saturday late night. According to reports, Haribandhu was conversing with his associates, Nilanchal Sahu and Jagya Reddy, near the Narasimha temple in Gada Gobindpur village when a group of his

opponents arrived. They initially attacked Nilanchal and Jagya, and when Haribandhu intervened, he was assaulted. In retaliation, Haribandhu and his supporters confronted Kalia Pradhan from the group. Villagers rescued Haribandhu and shifted him to Chikiti CHC before transferring him to MKCG, Brahmampur, due to the severity of his injuries. Kalia Pradhan, also was injured in the clash and was admitted to CHC. Upon receiving information, K Nuagaon police station and Nuapada police outpost team reached the spot, conducted a preliminary investigation, and detained two accused

allegedly involved in the incident. Sources indicate that RTI activist Nilanchal Sahu, had recently filed a complaint with the State Lokayukta, alleging misappropriation of Rs 2 crore under the MGNREGA scheme in Gada Gobindpur panchayat over the past three years. Following this, a notice was issued for investigation, allegedly triggering threats from the sarpanch's supporters. Haribandhu himself was reportedly under scrutiny for financial irregularities in MGNREGA projects, which fueled tensions among political factions. He had previously sought protection from the Ganjam district

Collector, prompting K Nuagaon police IIC to investigate and recommend action. Haribandhu stated that the rival group was attempting to suppress dissent through violence. Based on Haribandhu's complaint, K Nuagaon police registered a case against sarpanch Kishore Kumar Samal and four others. Despite the unrest in the village, police assured that the situation was under control, Nuagaon police officer Jagbandhu Barala said. Meanwhile, sarpanch Ranjan Kumar Sahu denied all accusations, asserting that no MGNREGA irregularities occurred during his tenure. He

claimed that Haribandhu, frustrated after his panchayat election defeat, made an RTI query. The sarpanch also alleged that on Saturday morning, a group of youths, allegedly instigated by a retired engineer, had threatened his faction during a Holi procession. However, the matter was settled amicably. He further asserted that he had no role in the attack on Haribandhu. With political and developmental issues entangled in the incident, the police continue their probe into the attack. The case has intensified political friction in Digapahandi Constituency, with both factions holding firm to their claims.

## 14 boats gutted in Paradip harbour fire

Overcrowded harbour lets fire cause bigger damage  
KAHNU NANDA ■ JAGATSINGHPUR

At least 14 fishing boats anchored at Paradip harbour were gutted after a fire erupted in a boat on March 8. The fire spread rapidly to other boats nearby. The fire was controlled after a few hours' struggle by local fire brigades and fire tenders of the industrial houses of the Paradip area. The fire led to the destruction of 7 big fishing boats while in addition 7 small boats were damaged partially. The fishing vessels had no insurance. Meanwhile, fishermen's body, the Odisha Marine Fish Producers Association



[OMFPA] Paradip and affected boat owners have claimed that the loss incurred would be over Rs 10 crore due to the mishap and urged the State government to compensate the affected fleet owners, besides renovation of Paradip fishing harbour. Presently, the harbour remains overcrowded with 1,000 mechanized and motorized boats which is three times more

than its capacity, said OMFPA president Srikanta Parida. The fire started while the crew members were cooking food on board. The fishermen untied the fire-engulfed boat and sent it to adrift to prevent others from catching fire, but wind and waves pushed the boat back into the other boats anchored there. As a result, fire spread unabated, sources informed.





**Editor's TAKE**

### From SAGAR to MAHASAGAR

**Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to Mauritius bolsters Indo-Mauritius relations**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent state visit to Mauritius marks a significant step in reinforcing the historical and strategic ties between the two nations. Received with warmth and enthusiasm by Mauritius' Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam, Modi's visit underscores the mutual commitment to fostering greater collaboration in infrastructure, defence, economic growth, and cultural exchange.

India and Mauritius share a long-standing relationship shaped by cultural ties, historical connections, and strategic interests. As a major partner in India's Indian Ocean Region (IOR) strategy, Mauritius plays a crucial role in regional stability and economic cooperation. Modi's visit, which comes a decade after his previous trip in 2015, aligns with Mauritius's National Day celebrations, reinforcing the historical linkage between the two nations. Mauritius, strategically positioned in the southern Indian Ocean, has traditionally engaged with global powers such as France and the United States. However, with India's growing strategic influence in the region, New Delhi has solidified its role as Mauritius's leading development partner and security provider. While Mauritius has explored economic ties with China, India remains focused on ensuring fair competition for Indian businesses and safeguarding regional security. One of the most significant outcomes of Modi's visit was the announcement of an upgraded partnership framework—transitioning from the SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) doctrine to MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions). This enhanced partnership is designed to promote trade-driven development, capacity-building for sustainable growth, and mutual security, benefiting both India and Mauritius while strengthening regional collaboration. Mauritius holds a key position as the host of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Secretariat and is an active participant in the Indian Ocean Commission and the Colombo Security Conclave. This trilateral engagement ensures that Mauritius remains a pivotal player in the broader Indo-Pacific strategy, with India playing an instrumental role in its economic and strategic development. India views Mauritius as a vital neighbour with deep cultural and political ties. The recent political shift in Mauritius, with Ramgoolam's Alliance du Changement securing a decisive victory in the November 2024 general elections, necessitates a recalibration of bilateral relations. While former Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth's administration had closely aligned with India, Ramgoolam's previous tenure saw an exploration of other global partnerships, including closer economic engagements with China. Modi's swift visit following Ramgoolam's return to power signifies India's proactive approach in ensuring Mauritius remains within its strategic fold. This move is particularly important given the evolving geopolitical landscape in the Indian Ocean, where India has faced challenges from external players like China in neighboring Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

Modi's visit brought a renewed focus on several key areas of cooperation. India continues to support Mauritius through grants and concessional loans for major infrastructure projects, including the Metro Express, smart cities, and digital connectivity initiatives. The security partnership includes maritime surveillance, joint naval exercises, and enhanced intelligence-sharing to combat transnational threats in the Indian Ocean. Both nations are working on deepening trade relations through preferential trade agreements, investment in fintech, and capacity-building in key economic sectors. Given the significant Indian diaspora in Mauritius, cultural and educational collaborations remain a key pillar in bilateral relations, ensuring the preservation and promotion of shared heritage. Modi's visit to Mauritius marks a renewed commitment to strengthening Indo-Mauritian ties.

## Religious supremacism in Pakistan

What began as a tool of political manoeuvring during the Zia-ul-Haq era has now morphed into an all-encompassing force, blurring the lines between faith and performance

Muhammad Ali Jinnah may have wished, "Religion should not be allowed to come into Politics...Religion is merely a matter between man and God", but reality proves that religion is not just allowed, but insisted, in everything that Pakistan does. It is an unleashed genie that is eating the sovereign from within. Hindsight suggests that it was perhaps inevitable given the dalliance with inherent supremacism in the sovereign idea that is predicated on the "land of the pure" ie, Pakistan, the only country in the world to be created in the name of religion.

Pakistan watchers would confirm that religion got truly valorised, accelerated, and institutionalised in the national bloodstream during the Shariaisation years of the Zia-ul-Haq dictatorship (1978-88). Geopolitics of the times (read, Afghanistan's Mujaheddin war) aided Zia's regressive project. The byproduct of creating the mujaheddin ecosystem in the '80s subsequently bred the phenomenon of the Taliban (and its various offshoots that were either India-facing or sectarian) and an accompanying air of religious extremism that was amplified by all subsequent governments. No so-called educated, moderate or well-travelled politicians could extricate themselves from the curse of invoking religion, and so even an Oxford-educated, married to a Westerner (Jewish to be precise), and self-proclaimed reformist, ultimately morphed to Taliban Khan ie, Imran Khan.

The surrender to religious fundamentalism was similarly mirrored in the realm of Pakistani cricket. Once the playing ground of flamboyant playboys who played hard and partied even harder with the likes of Imran Khan, Zaheer Abbas, Majid Khan, Asif Iqbal et al, took a U-turn to displayed piety and persona that reflected the nation's obsession with Puritanism. Beyond optics of sporting long beards, prying on pitches, and prefixing all public utterances with religious invocations like "bismillah rahman raheem" (In the name of Allah, the most gracious and the most merciful) and contextualising all situations with "inshaallah" (God willing) etc, — the postured fervour became highly religiously charged.

By itself, faith is perfectly healthy and can give the impetus for living life to the fullest, but when it spills out from a personal or private matter to a public insistence, the danger of enforced religiosity or even proselytisation is usually consequential. It could then distract from the task, in this case, cricket, to be secondary to religious pandering.

Like many of Jinnah's suggestions towards secularism (even if often contradictory), the invisibility of the same is mirrored in the



E Suresh

Pakistani dressing room. The '90s saw the sudden advent of Tableeghi Jamaat (Party of Preachers) stressing the 'authentic Islamic lifestyle' that went beyond a private/individual matter and became a matter of team routines. Pakistani cricket also got mired in embarrassing cricketing scandals (e.g., match-fixing), which led to the appropriation and demonstration of religiosity as a means of suggesting otherwise.

Soon accusations of only those who were visibly adherent getting selected saw the 'coincidental' conversion of Christian-born Yuusuf Youhana to a bearded and pious Mohammad Yousuf, diminishment of the career of Danish Kaneria (only Hindu in the squad) etc. But all this turn towards religiosity wasn't helping cricketing results (as was the case in the national narrative on all other fronts). In the moments of rare success against India, it took the Interior Minister to incredulously attribute the same as "Victory of Islam" and say that "Muslims all over the world are rejoicing".

In another instance a fast bowler, Waqar Yonus said that the sight of watching Rizwan kneeling in namaz "in front of Hindus was very special to him" — basically, the entire

country was caught in a vortex and normalisation of bigotry.

Not satisfied with their transformation, Pakistani players took to proselytising foreign players. Ahmed Shezad was infamously caught on camera during a Pak-Sri Lanka telling Tillakaratne Dilshan, "If you are a non-Muslim and you turn Muslim, no matter whatever you do in your life, straight to heaven" and after Dilshan's inaudible retort, Shezad responded, "Then be ready for hell fire" (incidentally, Pakistan lost the match).



BHOPIINDER SINGH

Soon the depressing performances on the field led a slew of people like the then President Parvez Musharraf, PCB Chairman Shahryar Khan, coach Bob Woolmer to media manager PJ Mir all call out to curb overt religiosity as it was distracting and leading to poor performance.

Recently, Danish Kaneria who was also

one of the many Pakistani players accused of spot-fixing reiterated the discrimination that he faced when he accused, "Shahid Afridi was the main person telling me to convert, and he did a lot of times".

While guilty of corruption, he perhaps was singled out for a harsher treatment vis-a-vis other players, even though he took 261 wickets in Test cricket to just 48 for Shahid Afridi. Danish's career was cut prematurely with no hope for a return. The fourth-highest wicket-taker was on a roll and as he said, "PCB didn't support me because I was Hindu, and I would break all the records. They could not drop me based on my performance. They knew I could break all the records, and Pakistan has never had a Hindu rising through the ranks".

The accusation does not seem unreasonable. To think that there is no excess space, consideration and toxic naturalness for religiosity in the Pakistani dressing room is to live under a rock, and the resultant performance is only collateral.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. Views expressed are personal)

### Leaderspeak



I do have tendencies to kind of go overboard. I have never shied away from that. For a lot of people, it might not have been something that they are able to process. But for me, it always comes from the right place. My competitiveness has not gone down. You can still be aggressive in your mind, but you do not necessarily need to express it out there every now and then out of frustration, which I have. I mean, in the recent past as well, I do not feel great about those things myself.

VIRAT KOHLI, INDIAN CRICKETER



## AI-powered LASIK: The future of vision correction

SECOND Opinion



MAHIPAL S SACHDEV

In an era where technology is reshaping health-care, ophthalmology is experiencing a paradigm shift with artificial intelligence (AI)-driven advancements in vision correction. The latest milestone in this evolution is the integration of FORESIGHT technology with the AMARIS 1050RS laser system—ushering in a new era of unprecedented precision, safety, and speed in LASIK surgery. With the capability to correct vision in under 10 seconds per eye, this innovation is poised to redefine the treatment of refractive errors. Myopia (nearsightedness) is emerging as a global health concern, with projections indicating that nearly half of the world's population could be affected by 2050. As dependence on digital screens increases, the demand for precise, safe, and minimally invasive vision correction solutions has never been greater.

While traditional LASIK surgery remains highly effective, it has continued to evolve to meet these growing demands—leading to the development of AI-assisted laser vision correction. At the core of this breakthrough is FORESIGHT, an AI-driven predictive system that enhances surgical precision. By analysing thousands of data points unique to each eye, FORESIGHT customises laser correction plans, allowing surgeons to predict surgical outcomes before the procedure even begins. This AI integration ensures unmatched accuracy through real-

time eye tracking and adaptive treatment planning, minimising potential complications by adjusting treatment based on real-time corneal analysis. The result is a safer, more effective procedure with faster recovery and superior visual outcomes. For the first time in Asia, FORESIGHT is available in India, along with AMARIS 1050RS—the world's fastest and safest refractive surgery technology. With this advancement, cutting-edge vision correction solutions such as CustomEyes and SmartSurf ACE have also been launched. CustomEyes offers a highly personalised approach to LASIK, tailoring treatment to the unique characteristics of each eye for superior results. Meanwhile, SmartSurf ACE provides a completely touch-free, blade-free LASIK experience, enhancing patient comfort and ensuring faster healing. These innovations mark a significant leap forward in refractive surgery, offering patients safer and more effective alternatives to traditional laser vision correction.

While LASIK remains the gold standard for refractive correction, AI-driven solutions are also revolutionising the management of complex corneal conditions like keratoconus. FORESIGHT-powered treatments such as Topography-Guided Removal of Epithelium for Keratoconus (TREK) and Topography-Guided Custom Ablation Treatment (TCAT) are bringing new hope to patients with irregular corneas. These techniques provide customised corneal reshaping for improved vision and reduced dependency on specialised contact lenses. Furthermore, their minimally invasive nature enhances safe-

ty and optimises patient outcomes, making them a game-changer in corneal treatment.

The continuous evolution of refractive surgery, driven by AI and next-generation laser technology, is setting new benchmarks in ophthalmology. Centre for Sight has been at the forefront of pioneering refractive techniques, from bringing Small Incision Lenticule Extraction (SMILE) to India to leading clinical trials for Smooth Incision Lenticule Keratomileusis (SILK). Today, with the adoption of AI-enhanced LASIK through FORESIGHT and AMARIS 1050RS, vision correction is entering an era of unparalleled precision and safety. The integration of AI into laser vision correction represents more than just technological progress—it signifies a commitment to patient-centric care. With faster procedures, enhanced safety, and optimised outcomes, individuals suffering from refractive errors now have access to the most advanced solutions available.

As technology continues to evolve, so does the promise of a future where perfect vision is within reach for all. The next decade will witness even greater strides in laser eye surgery, further solidifying technology's role in transforming lives through vision. With myopia on the rise, these advanced LASIK laser correction technologies are set to redefine vision correction by providing safer, faster, and more effective solutions to reduce dependence on glasses or contact lenses.

(The author is an eye surgeon, Chairman, and Medical Director of Centre for Sight. Views expressed are personal)

## Letters to the Editor

### Festival of Colours or Divisive Tool?

Madam — In a display of outright arrogance, Uttar Pradesh Cabinet Minister and Niral Indian Shoshit Hamara Aam Dal (NISHAD) party president Sanjay Nishad shot his mouth off when he said that "those who have a problem with Holi colours should leave the country." Such a calculated push to divide communities through religious festivals is being increasingly used by BJP leaders.

In fact, another BJP leader had gone a step further, saying that Muslim men should wear tarpaulin hijabs if they wished to avoid Holi colours. And it is all the more regrettable that UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath defended a police officer who told Muslims to stay indoors if they did not wish to be smeared with colours, rather than condemning such open communal bias.

His words further reinforced the idea that India's religious minorities are expected to either assimilate into the dominant narrative or be excluded from public spaces. Holi, the festival of colours, has always been a celebration of joy, togetherness, and the breaking down of social divisions.

However, in recent years, political rhetoric has sought to distort this spirit, turning moments of harmony into flash-points of communal tension. The increasing use of festivals to push a divisive agenda has exposed the extent to which India's secular fabric is under threat.

### Stuck in space no more

Madam—NASA and SpaceX have launched a joint mission to bring back veteran astronauts Sunita Williams and Barry Wilmore stranded in the international space station (ISS) and replace them with new crew. What has been originally scheduled to be an odyssey for eight days has now stretched past 285 days. The NASA duo (both 'Butch' and 'Sumi' are now household names) has garnered a lot of sympathy around the world. It is a matter of great relief that the countdown to the splashdown off the Florida coast is all set to begin.

The saga of the expedition has shown the risks involved in space travel and exploration. Professional astronauts venture into space and push back the frontiers of science and the boundaries of human knowledge despite being conscious of the fact that human space flight is inherently risky. Technical glitches are always possibilities. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. Findings from experiments and research help to broaden our horizons. Imagining ourselves as the astronauts stuck on the remote orbital outpost is an exercise in self-evaluation and an appreciation of their resilience, adaptability, grit, agility, will power and courage.

The pair has rejected the adjectives 'stranded' and 'stuck' to describe their state and maintained that it is all 'fun' for them and they have enjoyed their time in space.

### Vote for transparency

Madam — Apropos of the headlines 'EPIC Aadhar link on cards' (March 16), the absolute transparency of voter list and complete linking of the remaining 33 Crore Voter ID-Aadhar linking are imperative at the earliest possible. The political controversy on fake voters should be set at rest by eliminating the fake voter IDs.

Rather, a step further, like banks and Income Tax Department, Voter ID should also be linked with the PAN and mobile numbers to rule out any possibility of fake voter ID even in future and new voters should be registered with the multiple linking of Aadhar, PAN and mobile numbers.

In fact, broad based roll reforms should be considered by the Government and the Election Commission barring culprits and corrupt from contesting elections, making it mandatory to exercise franchise to vote and incorporating facility to vote from remote and distant locations through online voting facility for the voters outside their constituencies on the voting day.

The EC should make necessary arrangements for online voting facility from all the district headquarters in the country. The Opposition politics is still around caste and religion divide in the society and is likely to remain so in the distant future too. The aspirational youth of the young country should decide the future of the country.

## The global race for resources in the Arctic

The Arctic is emerging as a critical frontier in the race for mineral wealth, fossil fuels, and geopolitical dominance. As ice continues to melt at alarming rates, new trade routes are opening, intensifying competition among global powers

FIRST  
Column

There has been increasing competition and conflict in the Arctic region for the exploitation of mineral wealth and fossil fuels. It has environmental consequences such as pollution, habitat destruction, impacts on wildlife and indigenous communities. In the warming world, the melting of ice in the Arctic Sea has been opening many new routes for trade in the region and the use of high-fuel oil in ship propulsion is becoming increasingly common. Diesel vehicles, open biomass burning and the use of high-fuel oil for engine propulsion in shipping are the largest global sources of black carbon, which consists of pure carbon in many linkages and is produced by incomplete combustion of fossil fuel and biomass by wildfires.

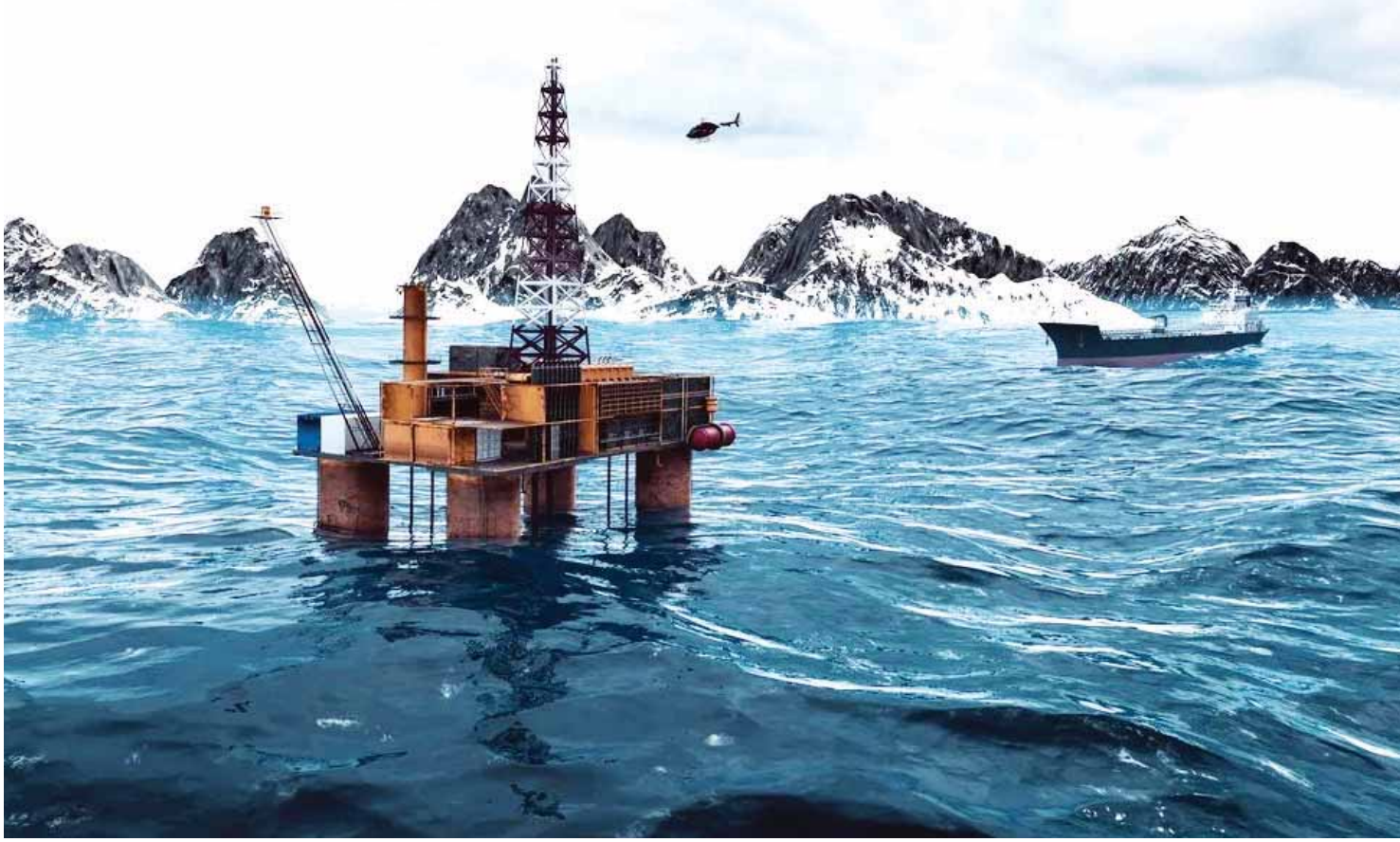
It can generate sufficient energy only next to carbon dioxide and its proximity around ice/snow sheets and glaciers of Arctic and Antarctica regions can extend the period of snow melting and can result in environmental catastrophes caused by the melting of glaciers and the rise in sea level. Eventually, it contributes to the warming of the planet.

South of the treeless Arctic region, we have the world's largest forests known as boreal forests covering large portions of Alaska, Canada, Scandinavia and Siberia. These forests have stored huge quantities of carbon and have protected the planet from further warming. Forests are rich in biodiversity and house numerous species of mammals, fish, plants of coniferous and broad leaved species, insects and birds. Studies have revealed that the warming of Arctic and Antarctic regions is three to four times higher than that of equatorial and tropical regions. Boreal forests are thus experiencing more warming than the global average, which in turn is adversely impacting its growth and regeneration.

The northern part of the forests is slowly expanding towards the Arctic region where ice has melted. Studies in Alaska's Brooks Range have also found that spruce trees have grown and established north of the tree line. Once inaccessible, the southern part has been kept open for commercial logging. The Anthropogenic pressure and wildfires have been causing the degradation of forests considerably. The gain in northern boreal forests is far too low as compared to the loss in the south.

Nearly 15 million hectares of Canadian forests, constituting approximately four per cent of the geographical area of the country burned in 2023 and researchers found that it released 2371 megatons of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. This caused a jump in Canada's ranking of global emissions from 11th in 2022 to fourth in 2023, behind China, the US and India. The new trade routes due to melting ice in the Arctic are seen as an opportunity, which in turn boosts the use of high-fuel oil in ship propulsion causing further warming.

Portuguese-flagged Solong cargo ship collided



BK SINGH

recently with MV Stena Immaculate in the North Sea off eastern England setting both vessels ablaze and despite great firefighting efforts, it took two days to control the blaze. It caused oil leakage and such incidents have severe environmental consequences, especially threatening aquatic biodiversity.

Ever since February 24, 2022, Russian aggression in Ukraine began, decade-long cooperation between Russia and other Arctic countries on biology and nature conservation has been paused. The suspension of data across the boundary has made it difficult to understand how wildlife and ecosystems are changing during unprecedented warming. 2023 has been the warmest year recorded on the planet and 2024 has further broken this record and registered an average rise in global temperature by 1.56 degrees Celsius above the preindustrial temperature.

Data are also not available to find the impact of permafrost thaw that contains two and half times more carbon than what is already available in the atmosphere.



TRUMP ALSO REPEATEDLY BROUGHT OUT THAT THE US HAS PROVIDED \$350 BILLION WORTH OF DEFENCE EQUIPMENT DURING THE LAST THREE YEARS TO COUNTER RUSSIAN AGGRESSION, HOW UKRAINE WOULD PAY IT BACK?

The critical and rare earth minerals have applications in over 200 high-tech consumer products namely electric and hybrid vehicles, computer hard

drives, flat screen monitors and TVs, cellular telephones, and defence applications like electronic displays, guidance systems, lasers, submarines, radars sonar systems etc. The quantity used in some of the applications is insignificant, yet it is critical for the functioning of the technology. The magnets made have a relatively insignificant volume of the element as compared to the volume of the product but it is needed for the functioning of spindle motors, and voice coils of desktops and laptops.

Neodymium magnets are made of Neodymium, iron and boron which have the highest strength and can withstand 230 degrees Celsius temperature. Magnets are used in automobiles, computer hard disks and digital cameras. Lanthanum is used for digital and cell phone cameras and also in petroleum refining and steel making. Erbium is used in optical fibre and laser repeaters. Cerium is used in water purifiers and its alloys with other elements are useful for making catalytic converters. Europium, Terbium and Yttrium are used in phosphors that emit luminescence.

The traditional mining of these elements was labour-intensive; with lower wages and duly relaxed environmental laws, China proceeded and devel-

oped the infrastructure for extraction and processing of the minerals in a big way leaving the US far behind. China built mines to magnet industries and high-tech countries like the US and Japan had to depend on it. The territorial conflict between China and Japan in 2010 led to China using it as a weapon and putting an embargo on the sale of the minerals to Japan. China dominated the supply chain and even today major chunk of these elements mined outside China also continue to be shipped back to China for separation, refining and magnet production. To bring the US back to dominate the supply chain of rare and critical minerals Donald Trump in his second term as US President has moved to rename the Gulf of Mexico as the Gulf of America, expressed taking over the Panama Canal from Panama and purchasing Greenland from Denmark for strategic reasons.

He has also vowed to end Russian aggression in Ukraine and stop the years-old war early. US Vice President D Vance asked why Ukraine was not thanking the US for billions of dollars in tax-payer-funded aid. Trump also repeatedly brought out that the US has provided \$350 Billion worth of defence equipment during the last three years to counter Russian aggression, how Ukraine would pay it back? Though Ukraine President Zelensky was initially hesitant, he has come forward to sign the rare earth deal with the US to pay back the military aid already provided by the Biden administration. Greenland has voted for the central right democratic party vocal against Trump.

The Arctic island holds large reserves of critical and rare earth minerals. It is also home to a US air-base and straddles a strategic route to the North Atlantic. Though Greenland wants independence, Trump has been outspoken about his desire to control the island. In his address to Congress recently he said, "he thought US is going to get Greenland one way or the other."

In an exclusive conversation with NATO's Secretary General recently, Trump reiterated that Greenland would be annexed to the US. It is an island of 56,000 people, whose ancestors were colonized 300 years ago by Denmark. Since 2009, the island has been on the path to independence and Denmark controls only foreign and defence policies. Trump has an eye on Greenland's oil and rare earth resources.

All these moves in the Trump 2.0 regime are to gain the upper hand in supply chain dominance of rare earth minerals. Russia is also expanding exploration and extraction of oil and gas in Western Siberia and opening new trade routes by cutting the ice, yet to melt in the ocean. The race in the Arctic region will surge greenhouse gas emissions at an unprecedented scale.

(Writer is a retired Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Head of forest force, Karnataka. Views expressed are personal)

## Maha Kumbh: Sacred togetherness in the world's largest gathering

The Maha Kumbh Mela, a pilgrimage that draws over 450 Million people, is often hailed as the world's largest human gathering. Yet, beneath its spiritual significance lies a sociological marvel—a transient civilisation where hierarchies dissolve, altruism flourishes, and time itself seems to bend. This grand spiritual event holds immense religious significance, attracting not only devotees from across India but also pilgrims from around the world. Maha Kumbh is considered the ultimate confluence of all major Hindu rituals and traditions.

At first glance, the Kumbh Mela may appear to be a ritualistic pilgrimage, a momentary pause where millions immerse themselves in the holy rivers to wash away sins and attain spiritual liberation. However, beyond this sacred act lies a deep-seated cultural narrative. The event is an ancient ritual encapsulating centuries of collective memory, myths, and legends—a continuous reminder of India's quest for meaning in a chaotic world. Sociologists observe that the act of congregating at the confluence of sacred rivers transforms personal spirituality into a communal experience—a shared ritual of rebirth and renewal that transcends individual belief systems.

### The suspension of social stratification

The Maha Kumbh Mela functions as a dynamic arena where India's social fabric is both displayed and redefined. In the temporary cities that spring up along the riverbanks, traditional hierarchies are simultaneously challenged and reaffirmed. The festival becomes a melting pot where age-old caste distinctions, regional identities, and modern socio-economic divides are momentarily blurred. Here, the paths of the pious ascetic, the devout seeker, and the curious traveler intersect.

Anthropologist Victor Turner's concept of "liminality"—a transitional phase where societal norms are suspended—finds vivid expression at the Kumbh. For weeks, the mela transforms into a liminal space where caste, class, and creed merge. A CEO and a farmer bathe in the same waters, a Dalit and a Brahmin share meals in community kitchens (langars). Turner termed this egalitarian bonding communis, a temporary but transformative unity. In this sacred space, the rigid hierarchies of everyday India dissolve, revealing a latent potential for radical equality.

The Kumbh Mela also offers a unique opportunity to meet various saint groups, such as the Naga Babas, Moni Babas, Kabootar Babas, and Manchan Wale Babas. Observing their daily routines, including their methods of prayer, deep meditation, and spiritual discourses, provides insight into the diverse spiritual practices within Hinduism. The mela is a place where every-

one is immersed in a sense of collective unity. The Gift Economy: Altruism as Social Currency

Marcel Mauss's theory of the gift economy—where exchanges foster social bonds—comes to life at the Kumbh. Volunteers serve millions of free meals, ascetics offer blessings without expectation, and strangers share resources. This is not mere charity but a ritualised reaffirmation of interdependence. The mela's economy operates on trust rather than transactions, challenging modern capitalism's transactional ethos. In a world fractured by inequality, the Kumbh models a society where giving is sacred.

At the Kumbh Mela, people enthusiastically extend help-offering water, food, or prasad from saints. Receiving prasad through the Ganga is considered a divine blessing. This culture of generosity fosters an environment devoid of bias, where individuals unite in a shared spirit of giving.



BABITA CHAUDHARY

### A living tapestry of India's soul

Émile Durkheim's notion of "collective effervescence"—the electric energy of communal rituals—pulsates through the Kumbh. The synchronised bathing rites, devotional chants, and grand processions generate a transcendent solidarity. Pilgrims shed individual identities to become part of a cosmic whole, mirroring Durkheim's idea that religion is society worshipping itself. This collective energy is not just spiritual, it acts as a social glue, bridging the divides of a diverse nation.

To reach the Kumbh, pilgrims walk for miles, yet their faith and devotion energise them, making fatigue an afterthought. Wrapped in saffron, a color symbolising peace and devotion, they forget their individual identities and merge into a harmonious collective.

### Cyclical Time and Social Renewal

The Kumbh's 12-year cycle mirrors India's ancient rhythms of renewal. Unlike linear time, which progresses toward an uncertain future, the Kumbh's cyclicity offers a ritualised "reset." Communities fragmented by modernity reunite, and generational stories are retold. This periodicity is not nostalgia but a sociological balm, healing temporal fractures and reaffirming continuity in a rapidly changing world.

Beyond its religious significance, the Kumbh Mela is a space where societal renewal unfolds daily. As millions journey to the sacred waters, they seek not just personal salvation but also a

symbolic cleansing of societal ills. The sheer scale of the event demands meticulous coordination and cooperation—elements that mirror the broader workings of democracy in action. In a country characterised by its diversity and complexity, the Kumbh Mela serves as a microcosm of India's pluralistic society, where order emerges from chaos through an intricate balance of tradition and modern administrative ingenuity.

Gender and Quiet Subversions Historically, both men and women have held esteemed positions in Hindu traditions. In the Vedic period, religious ceremonies were considered incomplete without the participation of women. Even in Hindu worship, the names of goddesses are inseparably linked with deities, such as Lakshmi-Ganesh, Sita-Ram, and Radha-Krishna. Just as men uphold Hindu traditions, women play an equally vital role in preserving and practicing them at the grassroots level.

This devotion is clearly visible in the Maha Kumbh of 2025, where women have participated with great enthusiasm alongside men. Female religious leaders have taken part in rituals such as the Shahi Snan and Akhara processions with the same fervor as their male counterparts. Pilgrims have sought blessings not only from male saints but also from female Mahatmas, demonstrating a shift from traditional social barriers. The high number of participants in the Kumbh can also be attributed to the active involvement of women, symbolising their empowerment and societal progress.

### Conclusion

The event culminates on the auspicious occasion of Mahashivratri, dedicated to Lord Shiva, who shares equal reverence with Goddess Parvati. The Maha Kumbh Mela is not just a religious festival—it is a celebration of faith, equality, and the timeless spiritual essence of India.

The true miracle of the Kumbh Mela is not its sheer scale but its social vision—a blueprint for harmony in a divided world. It serves as a reminder that societies can momentarily choose cooperation over competition, shared purpose over self-interest. As climate crises and polarization threaten global stability, the Kumbh's ephemeral utopia whispers: "Another world is possible, even if only for 42 days."

The Kumbh Mela is more than a pilgrimage; it is India's subconscious dreaming aloud. In its chaos, we find order, in its transience, permanence. To study it is to glimpse the soul of a civilisation—not in its temples, but in its people's capacity to imagine, however briefly, a society built on sacred togetherness.

(The author is an assistant professor Maitreyi college University of Delhi. She works on gender issues. Views expressed are personal)

## The five causes of action in the Bhagavad Gita

We all wish to be in control. Yet, we fail miserably because control is never truly in our hands. Lord Krishna explains in the Bhagavad Gita:

"The place of action, the doer, various instruments, different efforts, and the fifth—providence—are the five factors of action." (Bhagavad Gita 18.14)

The Lord further states: "Whatever action a person initiates through body, speech, and mind, these five are its causes." (18.15)

Are we not constantly engaged in actions through our bodies, speech, and minds? Speech and mind are mentioned separately because our words have a profound impact on our lives. Speech is not just another sense—it can shape outcomes significantly. For example, consider an accident where both parties are at fault. If they apologise, the matter is resolved amicably. However, if they resort to harsh words, a fight ensues. Similarly, our thoughts operate on a subtler level than our physical senses, yet they wield immense influence over our lives.

### The five causes of action

What are these five causes?  
1. The Place of Action (Circumstances):

Our circumstances significantly impact our actions, yet we have no control over them. Are we in a scorching summer in Delhi or a freezing winter in Toronto? Are we raising a newborn in a nuclear family or a joint family? Such external factors shape our experiences, but they remain beyond our control.

2. The Doer (The Individual): While we assume we are in control, the truth is that our nature governs us. Are we truly in command of our emotions and reactions? Hardly. In the same accident scenario, an aggressive person will likely escalate the situation, while a calm individual will seek resolution. Our inherent nature dictates our responses, often beyond our conscious control.

3. The Instruments (Resources Used): The tools we have at our disposal also play a role. A person with a modern smartphone can communicate and function more efficiently than someone with an outdated or non-existent device. The availability and quality of resources impact our actions.

4. The Effort (Personal Endeavor): Even our efforts are influenced by factors beyond our control. Our health, energy levels, and circumstances determine how much effort we can put in. While we may wish to exert ourselves fully, our limitations often dictate otherwise.

5. Providence (Divine Will):

This is the most decisive factor, and it is entirely beyond human control. Our past karmas (actions) shape our present outcomes. Success and failure are not solely determined by our present efforts but are deeply intertwined with the results of past actions (karmaphalas).

### Are we in control?

Not at all. Control ultimately rests with God. Let's examine God's role in the five causes:

"Circumstances are under God's control, as He is the Creator of all situations. "The Doer (soul), though possessing free will, is bound by past karmas and thus remains under divine governance.

"Instruments and resources originate from God, as He is the ultimate source of everything. "Efforts are permitted by God, as He determines what we are able to do.

"Providence is part of God's justice, ensuring the consequences of past actions unfold accordingly.

### The path forward

Understanding that God is the ultimate controller should inspire us to seek His guidance and refuge. As Lord Krishna advises:

"In all respects, take shelter in Me alone. By My mercy, you will attain supreme peace and the eternal abode." (Bhagavad Gita 18.62)

By surrendering to God's will, we can find true peace and liberation, rather than struggling to control the uncontrollable.

### Conclusion

In our quest for control, we often overlook the deeper truth—true control lies with God. The Bhagavad Gita teaches that our actions are shaped by five factors: circumstances, the doer, instruments, effort, and providence. While we may influence some aspects, ultimate control remains beyond us.

Recognizing this should not lead to helplessness but to surrender and faith. Instead of resisting the inevitable, we can align ourselves with divine wisdom. By cultivating awareness of our nature, utilising our resources wisely, and making sincere efforts, we can act with greater clarity. However, accepting divine providence helps us navigate life with peace, rather than frustration.

As Lord Krishna assures, taking refuge in Him leads to supreme peace (Bhagavad Gita 18.62). True liberation lies not in control but in surrender—trusting that God's will is perfect and that every experience serves a higher purpose.

(The writer is a spiritual teacher. Views expressed are personal)











# Adaptation to Seasonal Changes

Due to changing weather patterns and increased exposure to environmental toxins, our skin and hair confront particular challenges when the seasons change



vent split ends and maintain hair vitality.

Similarly, hair tends to become dry and brittle due to pollutants. Using leave-in conditioners or oils can create a protective barrier for the hair and scalp.

### Holistic Care

Beyond topical treatments, overall wellness plays a significant role in skin and hair health.

● **Hydration:** Drinking plenty of water helps maintain skin elasticity and hair strength.

● **Balanced Diet:** Consuming a diet rich in vitamins and minerals supports overall skin and hair health.

● **Adequate Rest:** Proper sleep allows the body to repair and rejuvenate, reflecting positively on skin and hair.

If you eat a well-balanced diet, drink plenty of water, and get plenty of rest, it will automatically show on your skin and hair. Maintaining their health requires modifying your skincare and hair care regimens to coincide with seasonal shifts and celebratory events.

— BY DR KARUNA MALHOTRA, AESTHETIC PHYSICIAN & COSMETOLOGIST

### SEASONAL CHANGE

Indian summers (March–June) bring intense heat and humidity, leading to various skin and hair concerns. Excessive sweating and increased oil production can cause acne, clogged pores, and sunburns. Prolonged sun exposure also results in tanning, dehydration, and pigmentation. Skin tends to become dull and sensitive, requiring lightweight, oil-free moisturizers, sunscreen, and regular hydration. Hair also suffers in summer, becoming greasy, frizzy, and prone to dandruff due to sweat and humidity. The scalp may feel itchy, and excessive washing can strip natural oils, leading to dryness and breakage. UV exposure can further weaken hair, causing color fading and split ends. To combat these issues, it is essential to use mild, sulfate-free shampoos, hydrating hair masks, and protective hairstyles. Drinking plenty of water, maintaining a balanced diet, and using cooling skincare ingredients like aloe vera and cucumber help keep skin and hair fresh, healthy, and nourished during summer.

Due to changing weather patterns and increased exposure to environmental toxins, our skin and hair confront particular challenges when the seasons change, especially during this time of the year. To properly handle these changes, we must modify our skincare and hair care regimens. These professional tips and advice can help you keep your skin and hair healthy throughout these periods.

### Skincare Adjustments

● **Gentle Cleansing:** With increased exposure to pollutants, it's essential to cleanse your skin thoroughly to remove impurities. Use a gentle cleanser twice daily to prevent clogged pores and breakouts.

● **Antioxidant Protection:** Pollutants can lead to free radical damage, causing premature aging. Incorporate antioxidant-rich serums into your routine to combat this effect.

● **Moisturization:** Despite the humidity, maintaining skin hydration is crucial. Opt for lightweight, non-comedogenic moisturizers to keep your skin supple without clogging pores.

● **Sun Protection:** Even during festive seasons, applying a broad-spectrum sunscreen is vital to shield your skin from harmful UV rays and prevent premature aging, sunburns, hyperpigmentation, and long-term skin damage.

● **Cleansing is crucial:** Use a gentle cleanser twice daily and apply an antioxidant-rich serum to protect your skin from free radical damage. Moisturizing and using a broad-spectrum sunscreen, even indoors, is essential.

### Understanding Seasonal Impacts

A change in the weather frequently occurs over the holiday season, increasing humidity and exposing people to toxins from things like fireworks. The health of both skin and hair may be negatively impacted by these variables.

The change in weather, paired with makeup, pollutants, and erratic schedules, can take a toll on your skin, leaving it dull and tired. Excessive sweating and increased oil production can cause acne, clogged pores, and sunburns.



### Hair Care Adjustments

● **Protective Measures:** Exposure to pollutants can make hair dry and brittle. Using leave-in conditioners or oils can create a protective barrier for the hair

and scalp. ● **Gentle Handling:** Avoid excessive heat styling and frequent shampooing during festive periods to prevent further dryness and damage.

● **Regular Trimming:** Keeping hair ends healthy through regular trims can pre-

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## Survivors Join Hands to Stop TB

Before 2025 World TB Day, I spent a day accompanying TB-affected street activists (TASA) in Delhi, women who assist homeless women and female migrant workers in finding TB services. It was an intense experience, connecting with women battling gender inequalities and surviving. Homelessness or migrant status significantly increases TB risk and gender-based suffering.

### TB and Gender Inequalities Affect Both: Career and the Person Being Cared For

I recall a powerful encounter with a TB-affected woman supporting others through treatment. Her story highlights the importance of advocacy and community support for homeless women, empowering them to act against TB and assert their rights. As Samantha Power said, "All advocacy is, at its core, an exercise in empathy."



### Empathy Binds Women to Stop TB

Jyoti's story is one of resilience. Daughter of a vegetable vendor, she graduated from Delhi University and is pursuing further education while working. She experienced TB firsthand when her sister suffered from it in 2019, navigating misdiagnosis and expensive treatment.

"We spent INR 1.5 lakh (about USD 1721) on her treatment with borrowed money. But we could save her life, and she was cured of TB."

### Never Say Die Attitude

Jyoti faced immense challenges, particularly after her mother's death in 2022. Despite financial hardship, she began working while continuing her education, determined to fulfill her mother's dream.

"When she was gone, our lives were broken. We are now slowly coming to terms with her loss. Right after completing my class 12, I started working in

### THE POWER OF COLLECTIVE SUPPORT

Reena, living in a threatened Delhi slum, was diagnosed with TB in 2010, interrupting her treatment due to neglect. After 14 years, her symptoms returned severely in June 2024. Fortunately, she met Jyoti, a TASA with Humana People to People India, during a "Saheli Support Group" meeting.

Jyoti recognised Reena's symptoms and took her to government clinics. Despite initial negative test results, Jyoti persisted, securing a positive diagnosis and initiating treatment. She also helped Reena access financial support through the "Nikshay Poshan Yojna."

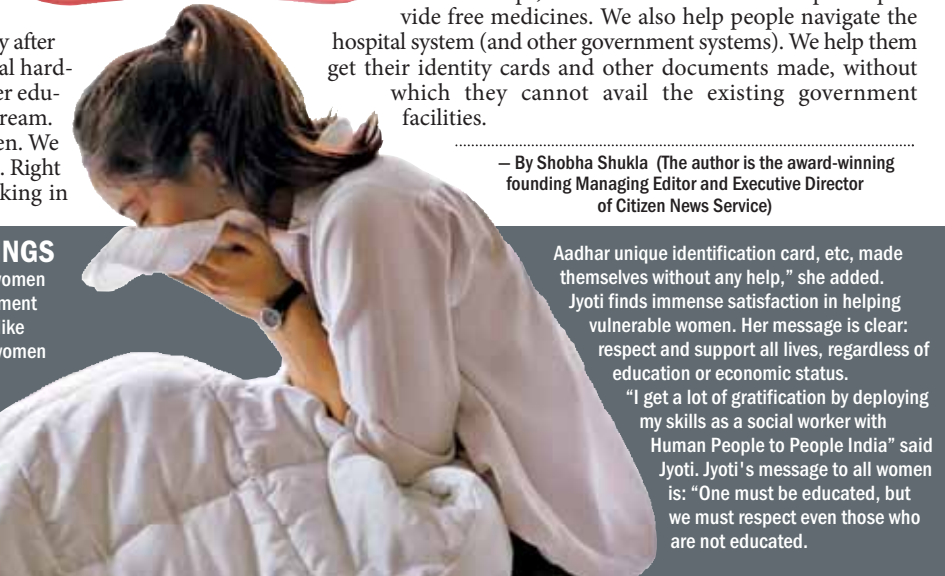
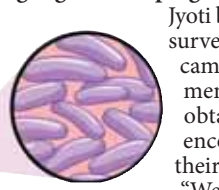
a call centre as our financial condition was not good. My father had said that if I wanted to study, I would have to bear the expenses myself. But come what may, I was determined to fulfil my mother's dream of becoming a teacher. Currently I am the sole bread winner of the family," Jyoti shared with me.

### Finding Light in Helping Others

Jyoti became a TASA in August 2024, surveying areas, organising health camps, and assisting with government procedures. She helps people obtain essential documents and encourages them to take control of their lives.

"We TASAs do survey work in our allotted areas, looking for homeless people with TB symptoms and also asking the people about their needs. We hold health camps to mobilise the homeless persons of our area. In these health camps, doctors do free health checkups and provide free medicines. We also help people navigate the hospital system (and other government systems). We help them get their identity cards and other documents made, without which they cannot avail the existing government facilities.

— By Shobha Shukla (The author is the award-winning founding Managing Editor and Executive Director of Citizen News Service)



### SAHELII SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS

Weekly Saheli Support Group meetings educate women on TB and other health issues, fostering empowerment and knowledge sharing. They address challenges like unequal wages and discrimination, encouraging women to advocate for their rights.

"These meetings have yielded good results by way of general empowerment and knowledge sharing among the homeless and migrant women. They are now capable of getting birth certificate,

Aadhar unique identification card, etc, made themselves without any help," she added. Jyoti finds immense satisfaction in helping vulnerable women. Her message is clear: respect and support all lives, regardless of education or economic status.

"I get a lot of gratification by deploying my skills as a social worker with Humana People to People India" said Jyoti. Jyoti's message to all women is: "One must be educated, but we must respect even those who are not educated."

## The Need for Early Detection and Prevention

With nearly 2 lakh new cases of kidney failure diagnosed annually in India, Chronic Kidney Disease is a growing health concern, writes ABHI SINGHAL



Nearly 210000 new cases of kidney failure are diagnosed annually in India highlighting the growing burden of Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD). A research paper 'Journey of a Patient with CKD in India' published by Kidney 360, a Nephrology Journal reveals that CKD is often diagnosed late in India. This delay stems from a lack of awareness and the absence of noticeable symptoms particularly with higher incidences of interstitial nephritis and CKD of unknown origin.

Our kidneys the silent workhorses of the body play an important role in filtering waste and maintaining overall health. World Kidney Day observed on March 12th every year, serves as a crucial reminder of their importance and the need to combat the growing prevalence of kidney disease.

Recently marking this significant day medical professionals highlighted the critical need for proactive kidney care. Dr Vikas Agarwal, Director & HOD - Robotic Urology, Kidney Transplant, Uro Oncology, Andrology & Male Infertility Kidney Transplant, Akash Healthcare speaking on the occasion emphasised that kidney health through exercise, hydration, and a vegetarian diet while avoiding junk food and preservatives. Early signs include swelling and fatigue, but routine kidney function and urine tests ensure early detection, especially for diabetics and hypertensives.

Dr Vikas Agarwal said, "If you talk about Indian transplant numbers, it goes around fifteen thousand per year, and most of them are living-related donors. If we talk about kidney health, we need to exercise daily, have a routine walk, and drink a lot of water to stay hydrated. We should decrease the amount of salt and sugar in our diet, consume more vegetarian food, and avoid junk food and preservatives.

**Early Signs** - If we talk about the early signs of kidney issues, swelling may occur, such as feeling your ring becoming tight or experiencing swelling in your legs, hands, or fingers. Other signs include early tiredness, low energy, and urine-related issues like frothy urine or microscopic abnormalities in a urine test.

**Precautions** - Diet and hydration play a crucial role in preventing kidney diseases. Proper hydration helps flush out waste and excess salt, reducing the risk of kidney stones and ensuring proper kidney function. A vegetarian diet rich in fresh fruits and vegetables helps prevent kidney disease, while junk food, soft drinks like Coca-Cola, and alcohol should be avoided.

Most kidney diseases are diagnosed late due to a lack of awareness. Since we have two kidneys, they continue functioning until more than 50% of their capacity is lost, leading to late symptoms. The best way to detect kidney disease early is through a kidney function test and a urine routine test. Otherwise, symptoms appear only when significant damage has occurred, such as swelling around the eyes or extreme fatigue."

McLaren's Lando Norris wins Australian Grand Prix

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Melbourne

McLaren's Lando Norris has won a chaotic rain-affected Australian Grand Prix, his first at Albert Park, with the Brit just managing to stay ahead of Red Bull's Max Verstappen following a third safety car late in Sunday's race.



final safety car and tire stops. Mercedes' George Russell closed out the top-three. "I knew I had a good pace, but I made one mistake in turn six and he got me in the DRS and the DRS around here is probably like a second or something so that allowed it to keep staying within that second," said Norris, who scored McLaren's 12th win in Australia to steal the outright record from Ferrari.

Aston Martin's Lance Stroll also made the best of the chaotic conditions to move up from 13th to sixth, ahead of Sauber's Nico Hulkenberg, bringing home eight points in what has been a difficult weekend for the green team with its car uncompetitive in dry running.

New Zealand beat Pakistan by nine wickets

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Christchurch

A new era for Pakistan white ball cricket got off to a rough start on Sunday with a nine wicket loss to New Zealand in the first of five Twenty20 internationals. First time captain Salman Ali Agha-led a new look team into the match which followed Pakistan's poor performance at home in the 50-overs Champions Trophy and began its buildup to the 2026 T20 World Cup.

areas and there was swing and seam for them as well. "But out batting wasn't up to the mark. We have won day before the next game and we will try to gather ourselves and be better in the next game."

soil," said Jamieson who bowled 18 dot balls. "We had some pretty favorable conditions which I'm sure me and (Duffy) would take most places around the country. "It was nice to have those and just try to cash in as much as we could."

Bayern held to 1-1 draw at Union Berlin

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Munich

A mistake by young goalkeeper Jonas Urbig meant Bayern Munich dropped points for the second Bundesliga game in a row with a 1-1 draw at Union Berlin.

Champions League, beating Leverkusen 5-0 over two legs to reach the quarterfinals, its Bundesliga form has dipped. The draw with Union follows a 3-2 loss last week against Bochum.

racked up 26 total shots in the game, but a mix of strong goalkeeping by Leipzig's Peter Gulacsi, poor finishing and bad luck three shots hit the crossbar or post prevented a comeback.

Early wickets of Shafali, Lanning turned match for us: Edwards

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

Mumbai Indians head coach Charlotte Edwards said the early wickets of Delhi Capitals' skipper Meg Lanning and opener Shafali Verma helped her team win the Women's Premier League final here.

competitive total. "She's been really calm. She's deeply competitive, so clearly she wanted to win another title here, and she did everything in her power to do that with the innings she played. She's great around the group, she brings out the best in our young players, and works brilliantly with all our overseas and experienced players," she said.

Having family around helps player to recover from on-field disappointments, says Kohli

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Bengaluru

Star batter Virat Kohli supported the presence of players' families on tours, saying he would always prefer having personal support around him to deal with tough and intense days on the field, instead of sulking alone in his hotel room.



you come back to your house, you're with family, and absolutely normally in your house and normal family life goes on.

over what's going on are brought into conversations and put out at the forefront of that, 'oh, maybe they need to be kept away.' "And if you ask any player, do you want your family to be around you all the time? You'll be like, yes," he said.

Real Madrid 2-1 win over Villarreal in Spanish League

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Barcelona

After a slow start to his Real Madrid career, Kylian Mbappe has already surpassed one of the club greats.



even more so if we win La Liga, the Champions League and the Copa del Rey."

Marcelino Toral said. A one-handed save by Courtois to deny Ayoze led to a corner kick that resulted in Villarreal's eight-minute opener. Juan Foyth swept home a ball that fell to him inside the six-yard box after it had ricocheted off players in a packed area.

Mbappé leveled in the 17th after he teed up teammate Brahim Diaz for a shot that was saved by goalkeeper Diego Conde, and the ball fell to the France striker to rifle home. Mbappé was on the scoreboard again in the 23rd when Villarreal's defense lost track of him at the top of the area.

"This was an important and difficult game against one of the best teams in the league," Mbappé said. "After the game against Atletico and its added time it was very tough today but we knew we had to win. We showed character and that we wanted this win."

AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit Dated 11.03.2025 sworn before the court of the Executive Magistrate, Cuttack; I Himanshi Sharma, D/O-Sanjay Kumar Sharma, At-Kathagada Sahi, PO- Buxi Bazaar, Dist-Cuttack hereby declare that my father's actual name is Sanjay Kumar Sharma. But his name has been wrongly mentioned as Sanjay Sharma in my Passport Vide No- N0802155. So both names Sanjay Kumar Sharma and Sanjay Sharma is one & same person & belong to my father. Sd/- Himanshi Sharma

AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit Dated 12.03.2025 sworn before the Executive Magistrate, Cuttack; I Binod Kumar Agarwal, S/o Sagarmal Agarwal, resident of Nandi Sahi Choudhury Bazar, Purighat Dist.- Cuttack, declare that my name in the Passport has been wrongly mentioned as Binod Kumar 'Agrawal' and I want to change my name to Binod Kumar 'Agarwal'. Henceforth I shall be known as Binod Kumar Agarwal for all purposes. Sd/- Binod Kumar Agarwal

Advertisement for OBCC (Odisha Bridge & Construction Corporation Limited) regarding a tender for the redevelopment of Ravenshaw Girls School in Cuttack. Includes details like No. 2604, Date: 12/03/25, and a table of tender specifications.