

Dumani Mail

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Counting of Ornaments and Valuables in Srimandir Ratna Bhandar Resumes Under Tight Security



Puri : The counting process of ornaments and valuable items stored in the Ratna Bhandar (treasury) of Srimandir has resumed today, Wednesday, April 8, 2026, under strict security arrangements.

As per the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) approved by the state government, the counting work had initially begun on March 25, 2026, at an auspicious time

of 12:09 PM. The Ratna Bhandar was opened in the presence of a magistrate, maintaining all sanctity and security protocols. Today, authorized members assembled at the Srimandir office conference hall at the scheduled time. The Chief Administrator briefed them—especially the newly inducted members—on maintaining confidentiality regarding Ratna Bhandar-related information. All members

submitted declarations to uphold secrecy. Under the leadership of Chief Administrator Dr. Aravind Padhee and the Chairman of the high-level committee formed for the Ratna Bhandar, along with the District Collector, Superintendent of Police, senior officials, representatives of Chhatisha Nijog, sub-committee members, and other staff, the team entered the temple premises at around 10:30 AM. Before entering the Ratna

Bhandar, all members wore traditional attire and were instructed to leave behind any metallic objects. They followed temple traditions and sought blessings from Maa Bimala, Maa Bhuvaneshwari, Maa Bedha Kali, and Maa Lakshmi. After security checks through metal detectors near the Beharan gate, they entered the treasury area.

In the presence of a magistrate, the Ratna Bhandar

was opened at 11:55 AM. The counting process of ornaments used in temple rituals was conducted systematically by authorized goldsmith members, gemologists, and weighing officials. The items were verified, photographed, videographed, and digitally catalogued (E-catalogue), following the same procedures as on the first day. After completion of the day's work, the Ratna Bhandar was closed and sealed again in the

Delhi LG Taranjit Singh Sandhu and CM Rekha Gupta conduct joint inspection at Vasudev Ghat



New Delhi : Delhi Lieutenant Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu and Chief Minister Rekha Gupta conducted a joint inspection at Vasudev Ghat on Wednesday to assess the city's preparedness for the upcoming summer and rainy seasons. During the visit, the LG and CM reviewed various aspects of the ghat's maintenance, including boat operations and the condition of the iron bridge. Speaking to reporters, LG Taranjit Singh Sandhu emphasised a collaborative Delhi administration approach to address the capital's civic challenges. "You can see the challenges of Delhi; everyone is aware of them. We are working with a 'whole of Delhi administration' approach. We have discussed with the Chief Minister, the entire cabinet, and the administration that everyone will be involved in this effort," the LG said. He further said that he, along with the Chief Minister, will continue to conduct these inspections to ensure a constant focus on challenges in the summer and rainy seasons. "We are here to assess the challenges for the summer and rainy seasons, along with issues like cleanliness. The Chief Minister and I will continue to conduct these inspections to ensure constant focus on these issues," Sandhu added. Underscoring Delhi's significance in the national vision, the LG said that the capital plays a critical role in the Prime Minister's vision of a 'Viksit Bharat'.

"Delhi is the capital, and it plays a critical role. We hope that if not revolutionary, then incremental changes will keep happening," he remarked. Meanwhile, on Tuesday, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta lauded the

central government for regularising Delhi's unauthorised colonies on an "As Is, Where Is" basis under the Pradhan Mantri-Unauthorised Colonies in Delhi Awas Adhikar Yojana (PM-UDAY) scheme, noting that the new framework allows for the regularisation of 1,531 colonies without requiring layout plan approval. Furthermore, she mentioned that all plots and buildings within these colonies will be treated as residential.

Addressing a press conference at the National Media Centre, she mentioned that joint surveys will be conducted by revenue officials under strict timelines. The DDA-GIS survey will be completed within 7 days, resolve deficiencies within 15 days, and issue conveyance deeds within 45 days. She also noted that out of 1,731 unauthorised colonies, 511 are being regularised immediately.

"... In 2019, the Government launched the PM-UDAY scheme for unauthorised colonies in Delhi. Under this, residents were granted ownership transfer and mortgage rights. So far, around 40,000 conveyance deeds and authorisation slips have been issued, though technical problems slowed progress, particularly with layout plan approvals. Thanks to the intervention of the Prime Minister and the Urban Ministry, a major step has now been taken. Delhi has about 50 lakh residents in unauthorised colonies, about 10 lakh families. The new scheme allows regularisation of 1,531 colonies, without requiring layout plan approval. All plots and buildings will be treated as residential," said CM Gupta.

No exit polls from 7 am of April 9 till 6.30 pm of April 29: EC

New Delhi: Exit polls can neither be held nor disseminated from 7 am of April 9 till 6.30 pm of April 29 for the five assembly elections taking place this month, the Election Commission has said. It has also cautioned that conducting or broadcasting exit polls in the period is violative of section 126A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 and is "punishable with imprisonment up to a period of two years, or with fine or both". While Kerala, Assam and Puducherry going for assembly polls on April 9, the electoral exercise will be held in Tamil Nadu on April 23.

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The schedule for this year's Chandan Yatra has been approved in a meeting of the Chhatis Nijog

Puri: The schedule for this year's Chandan Yatra has been approved in a meeting of the Chhatis Nijog (traditional servitor groups) and the Niti Sub-Committee of the Shri Jagannath Temple.



Key Dates and Events: 20th - Akshaya Tritiya 24th - Niladri Mahodayashtami April 30 - Narasimha Janma May 9 - Bhauri Yatra

(morning offering) 1:10-4:30 PM - Bhoga Mandap 3:00 PM - Start of Dwadasha Yatra

3:00-4:30 PM - Second Bhoga Mandap 12:00 Midnight - Entry of Lord Narasimha

Followed by Pana Bhoga and return procession (Bahuda) of Chandan Thakur Other Arrangements: During Chandan Yatra, Narasimha Janma, and Bhauri Yatra:

Allegation of Illegal Encroachment on 40-Foot Public Road in Sipasurubali Mouza

Puri: According to government records under Brahmagiri Tahasil and Puri Consolidation, Sipasurubali Mouza contains valuable land assets.



As per available information, based on an investigation report submitted by the concerned RI to the Additional Sub-Collector (Consolidation), Puri, the land in Sipasurubali Mouza under Sabik Khata No. 145, Plot No. 312/425, with an area of 182 decimals, is recorded as a public road.

As per available information, based on an investigation report submitted by the concerned RI to the Additional Sub-Collector (Consolidation), Puri, the land in Sipasurubali Mouza under Sabik Khata No. 145, Plot No. 312/425, with an area of 182 decimals, is recorded as a public road.

However, it is reported that some individuals owning land adjacent to this public road have forcefully encroached upon it and started construction work.

This act is completely illegal. Due to the construction of the boundary wall by occupying 20 feet of the road, the road has become narrow, causing inconvenience to the general public.

breaking it into pieces despite significant public expenditure on its construction. It is alleged that since Radha Shyam is an influential person, no action is being taken against him despite complaints.

8th day of the Odia Paksha celebration, a blood donation camp was organized



Puri: On the 8th day of the Odia Paksha celebration, a blood donation camp was organized today by the Puri District Administration and the Red Cross branch at the conference hall of Gopabandhu Ayurveda Mahavidyalaya.

Mahavidyalaya, Dr. Bipin Bihari Khuntia; Deputy Collector Anushrava Gantayat; former administrator Padmanabha Panda; Deputy Director of Information and Public Relations Santosh Kumar Sethi; Blood Bank Officer Dipak Kumar Sahu; editor of the social organization Samarpan, Jayanti Mahapatra; Soumendra Das; Sukanta Kumar Dash; Baidhar Mahapatra, and others, who helped manage the camp.

Puri: A special day dedicated to folk art will be celebrated at Pipili on the upcoming 10th of this month. On the occasion of "Odia Pakhya," the Department of Odia Language, Literature, and Culture has made arrangements for this event.



government for deciding to organize a state-level festival at Pipili to encourage folk artists. He advised that the event should be conducted successfully with everyone's cooperation and also inspected the venue, giving various suggestions.

of hanging electric and cable wires, ambulance services, healthcare arrangements, and wide publicity of the event. At the beginning, Additional Secretary of the Culture Department, Smita Mohanty, welcomed everyone and discussed the program schedule, concluding with a vote of thanks.

participate in traditional attire and perform cultural programs. On this occasion, a massive cultural rally representing folk arts from all districts of Odisha will begin at 4:00 PM from Jawahar School Sports Ground and conclude at Pada Ground, where the main program will start at 6:30 PM.

Among others present at the meeting were Pipili BDO Saroj Kumar Rout, District Culture Officer Hemanta Behera, Deputy Director of Public Relations Santosh Kumar Sethi, and several other officials who participated in the discussion. Later, all officials, along with MLA Pattanayak, visited the venue.

Workshop on Solid Waste Management, Sanitation and Hygiene for Bomaloi Panchayat



Sambalpur-07/04(DMS) workshop on solid waste management, sanitation and hygiene for Bomaloi Panchayat was organized at the Aditya Aluminium Project Office "Gyandhara" with the joint support of Aditya Aluminium, Lapanga and its partner NGO NIWCYD.

Pradhan, Samiti Member, Ward Members, CRPs, MBKs, Anganwadi and ASHA workers, SHG members and other community representatives. Representatives from NIWCYD, Smt. Subhadra Mahapatra and Shri Jitendra Kumar Sahu, shared details about the "Lighthouse Project," which aims to strengthen waste segregation, collection and recycling systems in the Panchayat.

Illegal encroachment in Mochigaon, PWD department wrote to Tahasil

Keonjhar: The Department of Public Works has written a letter to the Keonjhar Tehsil and Keonjhar Municipal Executive Officer to identify and evict the encroached land on the side of National Highway 20 near the Mochigaon flyover near Dhrupadain Sadar Tahasil.



deity land in Dhrupada and Mochigaon area near Keonjhar town. While agricultural land is being sold at high prices at homestead land price, the land mafias construct roads in government land illegally and prepare passage to the agricultural land to be sold.

Malliposhi Chhack on National Highway No. 220. Due to this vehicle movement on Dhenkikote-Patna-Karanja road has been stopped. Hundreds of vehicles are stuck due to the blockade of the highway.

place, there will be a waterlogging problem in the city in the coming days. Due to the encroachment of the drain, there is a problem in water drainage" local complained. After the complaint in March last year, a technical team of the Urban Development Department went to the spot to inspect and verify the truth.

Earlier the PWD department has written letters to the Sadar tahasil, but no action has been taken that hurt the locals. Apart from this, a notice has been issued again for illegal road construction on the land along the road. "If the road is built by blocking the drain in the said

Ratna Bhandar Inventory at Shree Jagannath Temple to Be Completed Before Snana Yatra

Bhubaneswar, 09 April (H.S.): The ongoing inventory of precious ornaments and valuables stored in the Ratna Bhandar of Shree Jagannath Temple is set to be completed ahead of the annual Snana Yatra, Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan said on Wednesday.

According to the minister, the next phase of the inventory process will commence on April 13, following the second phase

scheduled from April 8 to April 11. The April exercise is expected to span approximately 10 to 12 days. Additional phases are planned for May and June to ensure the entire process is concluded before the Snana Yatra, also known as Deva Snana Purnima—the ceremonial bathing festival of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, and Devi Subhadra. Highlighting the use of modern

technology in the process, Harichandan said that officials are verifying current records against the 1978 audit data. Each item in the Ratna Bhandar is being digitally photographed to ensure accuracy and transparency. He further noted that once the inventory is completed, the government will take a decision regarding long-term preservation and management of the temple's valuables



SSB Releases Schedule for CPET 2026

Bhubaneswar, 09 April (H.S.): The State Selection Board (SSB) has announced the schedule for the Common PG Entrance Test (CPET) 2026. The examination is scheduled to be conducted from 5th May to 16th May 2026 across the state.

The CPET will cover admissions for 50 postgraduate subjects and will be held in two sessions each day: the first session from 10:00 AM to 11:40 AM and the second session from 3:00 PM to 4:40 PM. On the first day, 5th May, candidates



appearing for Commerce, Biotechnology, Sociology, Environmental Science, Education, and Anthropology (Arts) will take the exam. A total of 58,708 students have applied for 31,915 postgraduate

seats. Admit cards will be available for download from 30th April 2026 on the official SSB website <https://ssbodisha.ac.in>. Admission to postgraduate courses will be based solely on marks obtained in the CPET examination.

Protest Held in Bhubaneswar Over LPG Shortage and Alleged Consumer Exploitation

Bhubaneswar, 09 April (H.S.): Members of the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Bikshubha Krushak Mazdoor Union (BKMU) staged a protest in the city on Tuesday, demanding immediate resolution of the ongoing cooking gas shortage and alleging large-scale inconvenience to consumers.

The protestors claimed that despite repeated assurances from the Prime Minister, the Odisha Chief Minister, and the State Food Supplies Minister that there is no shortage of LPG, consumers continue to face difficulties in accessing cooking gas. They alleged that even after a stipulated waiting period of 24 days for booking, cylinders are not being delivered. The situation has particularly affected small



roadside food vendors, hostel residents, students, and daily wage workers who rely on smaller cylinders. Protestors pointed out that 5-kg cylinders are not readily available in the open market, further aggravating the crisis. They also criticized the state

government's recent directive requiring consumers to produce documents such as residence certificates, income certificates, and identity proof to procure LPG cylinders. According to the demonstrators, these conditions have complicated access,

especially for students and migrant workers, raising concerns about whether individuals should prioritize standing in queues or their daily responsibilities.

The organisations further alleged that the state's public distribution system has become dysfunctional, indirectly encouraging black marketing. They accused authorities of failing to regulate supply effectively, leading to exploitation of consumers. The protest march began from the CPI office and saw participation from several party leaders and members, including former MLA N. Narayan Reddy, state assistant secretary Jayant Das, BKMU state secretary Sura Jena, and other local leaders, who expressed strong dissatisfaction over the prevailing situation.

Odisha Plans Stringent Law to Curb Obscene Language on Social Media

Bhubaneswar, 09 April (H.S.): The Odisha government is set to introduce a stringent legal framework to curb the use of obscene and abusive language on social media platforms, Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan announced on Wednesday. He warned that strict action would be taken against individuals engaging in such behaviour online.

The proposed legislation will not be limited to digital platforms but will also cover the use of abusive language in public spaces, bringing such conduct under regulatory scrutiny. The move comes amid growing concerns over the increasing misuse of language in both online and offline environments.

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According to the minister, the Law Commission has already submitted a proposal, and the government is preparing to implement a Prevention of Hate Speech and Hate Crime Act to address the rising instances of offensive and derogatory expressions. "Social media standards are declining, and people must maintain mutual respect, especially as users from all age groups access these platforms.

implement a Prevention of Hate Speech and Hate Crime Act to address the rising instances of offensive and derogatory expressions. "Social media standards are declining, and people must maintain mutual respect, especially as users from all age groups access these platforms. The space is becoming increasingly toxic, with instances of indecent behaviour seen among

both common users and those from political backgrounds," Harichandan said. Emphasising the need for timely intervention, he noted that the proposed law aims to ensure accountability and discipline in public discourse, particularly on social media. The minister added that the growing trend of abusive language reflects a concerning mindset and requires corrective measures at the earliest.

IAS Probationers Gain First-Hand Exposure to Urban Governance in Bhubaneswar

Bhubaneswar, 09 April (H.S.): As part of their administrative training and orientation, IAS probationers participated in a comprehensive programme organized by the Housing & Urban Development Department on Wednesday. The initiative combined high-level interactions with field visits to provide practical insights into urban governance and service delivery systems.

During the session, Additional Chief Secretary Usha Padhee, along with Director of Municipal Administration Shri Arindam Dakua and other senior officials, briefed the probationers on key achievements, flagship schemes, and priority areas of the department. The interaction offered a detailed understanding of institutional frameworks, policy implementation strategies, and the functioning of various agencies involved in



urban development.

The programme also facilitated an exchange of ideas, enabling probationers to gain clarity on administrative coordination, programme execution, and emerging challenges in the urban sector.

As part of the field exposure, the probationers visited Buddha Vihar to observe affordable housing projects being implemented under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY). The visit provided them with first-hand experience of

Further, the group toured the Odisha Urban Academy, a Faecal Sludge Treatment Plant (FSTP), and a Water Treatment Plant (WTP). Officials at these sites explained treatment processes, operational mechanisms, infrastructure management practices, and service delivery frameworks related to urban sanitation and water supply systems.

beneficiary-centric approaches and on-ground execution of housing initiatives.

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Odisha Approves Direct Recruitment for 1,363 Junior Revenue Assistant Posts

Bhubaneswar, 09 April (H.S.): The Odisha government has approved the direct recruitment of 1,363 Junior Revenue Assistant (JRA) posts to further strengthen the state's revenue administration. The decision was taken in a committee meeting chaired by the Principal Secretary of the Finance Department.

In this regard, Dr. Arbind Padi, Additional Chief Secretary of Revenue and Disaster Management Department, has written to all District Collectors with detailed instructions. The recruitment process will be conducted across all 30 districts of the state through direct selection.

The letter specifies that reservation will be ensured for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, socially and educationally backward classes, women,



persons with disabilities, ex-servicemen, and sportspersons in accordance with the number of vacancies in each district. District Collectors have been directed to coordinate with the Odisha Subordinate Staff Selection Commission (OSSSC)

to facilitate prompt online application submissions. The Revenue Secretary expressed confidence that this initiative will enhance the efficiency of revenue administration and expand public service delivery across the state.

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APP Infighting

ALL is not well within the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). The rift between Rajya Sabha MP Raghav Chadha and the Arvind Kejriwal-led top brass bodes ill for the party, especially in Punjab, which goes to the polls in less than 12 months. The high command has removed Chadha from the post of AAP deputy leader in the Upper House, presumably because of its perception that he deviated from the party line in Parliament. The decision has prompted him to hit back with the defiant



remark that he has been "silenced, not defeated". Senior AAP leaders such as Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, former Delhi CM Atishi and Delhi unit president Saurabh Bharadwaj have trained their guns on Chadha, accusing him of remaining silent on the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls and other key matters concerning the party and the Opposition.

Ironically, Chadha has been quite vocal both inside and outside Parliament, raising issues such as surge pricing by airlines, the plight of gig workers and anomalies in mobile data recharge plans. However, his apparent reluctance to confront the Modi government and take part in Opposition walkouts has not gone down well with the AAP leadership. A telltale sign was evident when Chadha kept mum on the discharge of Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia and other AAP leaders by a Delhi court in the excise policy case over a month ago. He was also conspicuous by his absence from a rally addressed by Kejriwal at JantarMantar on March 1.

Having lost Delhi last year, AAP cannot afford to let infighting weaken its desperate bid to retain Punjab. The anti-incumbency factor and the presence of multiple rivals - the Congress, BJP, Shiromani Akali Dal, Akali Dal (Waris Punjab De) - are making things tougher for the ruling party. The onus is on AAP to reach out to disgruntled leaders and keep its flock together - before it's too late.

MSP Problems

DIGITISATION was meant to simplify farm procurement. In Haryana, it is doing the opposite. It is turning access to the minimum support price (MSP) into a maze of portals, passwords and procedural traps. Recent reports in The Tribune from mandis across the state reveal a pattern. The now mandatory portals for selling crops - e-Kharid and MeriFasalMeraByora (MFMB) - have been plagued by crashes, data mismatches and verification failures. In several districts, farmers have been denied gate passes because records did not match or servers failed at critical moments.

The consequences are immediate and harsh. Produce is ready for sale, but it is denied entry into mandis. Thus, many farmers are forced to turn to private traders, who offer lower prices but instant payment. In some places, government agencies have lifted only a fraction of arrivals, exposing a gap between promise and preparedness. The most damning evidence, however, is numerical. Notably, Haryana's quiet cut in wheat procurement from 80 lakh to 72 lakh tonnes denies farmers about Rs 2,068 crore at MSP. The unprocured grain flows to private traders at Rs 400-500 below MSP. It is a silent transfer of farmers' income, undermining the very purpose of MSP.

To be sure, digitisation has a logic: transparency and efficiency. But a system that works only when the server does and only for those who can navigate it. It excludes the very people - small and poor, illiterate farmers - it claims to serve. Worse, there is no fallback. When portals fail, procurement stops. MSP is meant to be a safety net. If access to it is filtered through fragile digital systems and shrinking targets, it ceases to be a guarantee. Technology should ease the farmer's path to the mandi, not block it.

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Counting the Nation, Shaping the Future

In the quiet yet profound act of counting its people, a nation rediscovers itself. The forthcoming Census 2027 is not merely an administrative exercise; it is a democratic mirror, reflecting the diversity, aspirations, vulnerabilities, and strengths of India. As the country prepares to embrace a more technologically driven model of enumeration—one that allows citizens to provide their own data through an online portal—the census enters a new phase, where participation becomes both a civic duty and a moral responsibility.

The census, historically, has been the backbone of governance. From the earliest systematic efforts in colonial India to the post-independence decennial exercises, it has shaped public policy, resource allocation, electoral boundaries, and social welfare schemes. It is through the census that the state understands how many children need schools, how many households require electricity, where healthcare infrastructure must expand, and which regions demand urgent attention. Census 2027, however, arrives at a time when India is navigating rapid urbanization, digital transformation, migration, and demographic shifts. This makes the exercise not only more complex but also more consequential.

One of the most significant features of Census 2027 is the introduction of self-enumeration through a digital portal. This innovation signals a shift from a purely enumerator-driven model to a participatory framework where citizens actively contribute

to nation-building. The portal, designed to be user-friendly and accessible, allows individuals to fill in their demographic, socio-economic, and housing details directly. This move is expected to enhance accuracy, reduce logistical burdens, and empower citizens with a sense of ownership over the data they provide.

Yet, with this empowerment comes responsibility. The accuracy of census data depends fundamentally on the honesty and diligence of respondents. In a country as vast and diverse as India, even minor discrepancies can lead to significant distortions in planning and policy outcomes. Overreporting, underreporting, or misrepresentation—whether intentional or inadvertent—can skew the data landscape, affecting everything from subsidy distribution to infrastructure development. Therefore, the act of self-enumeration must be guided by a strong ethical commitment to truth and transparency.

The operational dimensions of Census 2027 are equally noteworthy. The process is expected to be conducted in two phases: the House Listing and Housing Census, followed by the Population Enumeration. The first phase focuses on the condition of housing, availability of amenities, and assets, while the second phase captures individual-level data such as age, gender, education, occupation, and migration status. Enumerators will still play a critical role, especially in areas with limited digital access, ensuring inclusivity and completeness. The integration



Madhusudan Mishra

of digital tools, geospatial mapping, and real-time data validation mechanisms marks a significant advancement in census methodology.

However, the success of this hybrid model depends on bridging the digital divide. While urban populations may find it convenient to access the portal, rural and marginalized communities may face challenges due to limited internet connectivity, digital literacy, or awareness. It is imperative that the government undertakes extensive awareness campaigns, provides assistance centers, and ensures that no individual is left out of the process. Inclusivity must remain the cornerstone of the census, for a partial count is, in essence, an inaccurate count.

Another dimension that merits attention is data privacy and security. In an era where data breaches and misuse of personal information are growing concerns, citizens may be apprehensive about sharing sensitive details

online. The authorities must, therefore, ensure robust cybersecurity measures, transparent data usage policies, and strict legal safeguards to build public trust. The assurance that personal data will be used solely for statistical purposes and not for surveillance or punitive actions is crucial to encourage honest participation.

Beyond its administrative utility, the census carries a deeper philosophical significance. It is an exercise in collective identity. Each entry in the census register represents a life, a story, a contribution to the nation's tapestry. By participating sincerely, citizens affirm their presence in the national narrative. They assert their rights while acknowledging their responsibilities. In this sense, the census is not just about counting people; it is about making people count.

The academic and policy implications of Census 2027 are vast. Researchers, economists, sociologists, and planners rely heavily on census data to analyze trends, identify disparities, and propose interventions. Whether it is studying urban migration patterns, gender ratios, literacy rates, or occupational structures, the census provides the foundational dataset. High-quality data enables evidence-based policymaking, which is essential for achieving sustainable development goals and inclusive growth.

At a time when India aspires to become a developed nation, the importance of accurate demographic data cannot be

overstated. Visionary initiatives, infrastructure projects, and welfare schemes must be grounded in reliable statistics. Census 2027, therefore, becomes a critical instrument in shaping the trajectory of the nation's future. It informs not only where we stand today but also where we are headed tomorrow.

Public response to the census will ultimately determine its success. Citizens must view participation not as an obligation imposed by the state but as a contribution to the collective good. Educational institutions, civil society organizations, and community leaders have a vital role to play in fostering awareness and encouraging responsible participation. The narrative must shift from compliance to commitment, from enumeration to engagement.

In conclusion, Census 2027 stands at the intersection of tradition and transformation. It retains the fundamental purpose of counting every individual while embracing modern tools to enhance efficiency and participation. The introduction of self-enumeration through a digital portal is a progressive step, but its success hinges on the integrity, awareness, and cooperation of the people. As India prepares to undertake this monumental exercise, it must remember that the strength of a census lies not merely in numbers but in the truth those numbers represent. In counting ourselves honestly, we lay the foundation for a more equitable, informed, and prosperous nation.

(The writer is a retired IAS officer)

Alone in a Crowd: The Truth About Modern Friendships

Dr Vijay Garg

In today's hyper-connected world, friendship has taken on a new form—one that is shaped by screens, notifications, and digital interactions. We are more "connected" than ever before, with hundreds or even thousands of online contacts just a click away. Yet, paradoxically, many people feel more isolated and emotionally distant than ever. This contradiction defines the reality of modern friendship: connected, yet alone.

The rise of social media platforms has revolutionized how friendships are formed and maintained. Distance is no longer a barrier; people can stay in touch across continents in real time. Old schoolmates reconnect, long-lost relatives find each other, and new friendships blossom in virtual communities. On the surface, it appears that human connection has reached unprecedented levels.

However, beneath this digital closeness lies a deeper emotional gap. Online interactions often lack the depth and authenticity of face-to-face communication. A "like," a quick comment, or a short message cannot fully replace

the warmth of a genuine conversation, the comfort of shared silence, or the empathy conveyed through a simple touch. As a result, relationships may become shallow, sustained more by habit than by true emotional bonding.

Another challenge is the illusion of companionship. Social media creates a curated version of reality, where people present only their happiest moments. This can lead to unrealistic comparisons and feelings of inadequacy. Seeing others constantly surrounded by friends and joy can make individuals feel lonelier, even when they are not. The presence of many connections does not necessarily translate into meaningful friendships.

Moreover, the quality of time spent together has diminished. Even when friends meet in person, they are often distracted by their devices. Conversations are interrupted by notifications, and attention is divided between the real and the virtual world. This gradual erosion of presence weakens the foundation of genuine relationships.



Modern lifestyles also play a role. Busy schedules, career pressures, and geographical mobility leave little time for nurturing friendships. As people prioritize professional success, relationships sometimes take a backseat. Over time, this leads to emotional distance, even among close friends.

Yet, it would be unfair to view technology as entirely negative. It has also enabled support networks, especially for those who feel isolated in their immediate surroundings. Online communities can offer a sense of belonging, encouragement, and understanding. The key lies not in rejecting technology but in

using it mindfully.

To bridge the gap between connection and loneliness, individuals must consciously invest in meaningful relationships. This means prioritizing quality over quantity—fewer but deeper friendships rather than a large network of superficial ones. It involves being present, listening actively, and making time for real conversations. Small efforts, such as meeting regularly, sharing experiences, and expressing genuine care, can strengthen bonds significantly.

In conclusion, modern friendship exists in a complex space where digital connection coexists with emotional isolation. While technology has brought people closer in terms of communication, it has also distanced them in terms of true intimacy. The challenge of our time is to balance these two realities—to remain connected without losing the essence of what it truly means to be a friend.

Dr Vijay Garg Retired Principal? Educational columnist Eminent Educationist street kour Chand MHR Malout Punjab

“Moon’s Secret Reservoirs Power the Next Space Journey”

Dr Vijay Garg

For decades, the Moon was considered a barren and dry world. But recent scientific discoveries have dramatically changed this perception. The detection of water on the lunar surface has not only reshaped our understanding of Earth's closest neighbor but has also reignited global interest in returning humans to the Moon.

The presence of water on the Moon was first strongly confirmed through missions like Chandrayaan-1 and later observations by NASA. Scientists found that water exists in multiple forms—frozen as ice in permanently shadowed craters near the poles and even as molecules trapped in sunlit soil. This discovery challenged the long-held belief that the Moon was completely dry.

More recently, space agencies have intensified efforts to locate and map these water deposits. Missions such as NASA's Lunar Trailblazer and upcoming rover-

based explorations aim to identify where water is concentrated and how it behaves on the lunar surface. These efforts are not just scientific—they are strategic.

Water is the key to sustainable space exploration. It can be used for drinking, producing breathable oxygen, and even creating rocket fuel by splitting it into hydrogen and oxygen. This means future astronauts may not need to carry all essential resources from Earth, significantly reducing mission costs and complexity.

The Moon's south pole has emerged as a particularly important region. Deep craters there remain in permanent shadow, preserving ice deposits that may have existed for billions of years. These frozen reserves could support long-term human presence and serve as refueling stations for missions to Mars and beyond.

Beyond practical uses, the discovery of lunar water also holds

scientific significance. Studying it can provide clues about the origins of water on Earth and the history of the solar system. Scientists believe lunar water may have come from comet impacts or chemical reactions involving solar wind particles. As a result, the Moon is no longer just a destination of past glory—it is becoming a gateway to the future. International collaborations, including efforts by NASA, ISRO, and JAXA, highlight a shared vision of building a sustained human presence on the Moon.

In conclusion, the discovery of water has transformed the Moon from a lifeless satellite into a promising hub for exploration and innovation. It is this vital resource that is fueling humanity's return to the lunar surface—this time, not just to visit, but to stay. Dr Vijay Garg Retired Principal? Educational columnist Eminent Educationist street kour Chand MHR Malout Punjab

Lack of Experts: How to Get Kids Ready for AI

Dr. Vijay Garg

Criterion intelligence in the modern era is rapidly changing every sector including education, health, agriculture, industry and employment. But with this change comes a bigger challenge—the cost of money. When technology advances, human resources are not developed at the same speed. The biggest question in SE: Are we preparing our children for an AI future? Why the shortage of experts?

AI is a high-level field that requires knowledge—understanding of math, logic, data, and programming. But there is a growing lack of experts for several reasons:

- the still-old curriculum in schools
- The paucity of practical and experiential learning
- Lack of equal access to technology
- Lack of teacher training
- The need to prepare children

for AI

Many jobs in the future will be related to AI. So kids will have to learn not only book knowledge, but also thinking and problem-solving skills.

(Critical Thinking) (creativity) (digital literacy). (adapting to change) The Role of Schools

Schools have to make changes in their education system:

- New curriculum
- Covering topics such as AI, coding and data science.
- Practical Education
- Not just theory, but learning through projects and experiences.
- Teacher training
- Making teachers aware of new technology. The role of parents
- Parents also play a vital role in preparing children for AI:
- Making children aware of technology motivating them to ask questions and learn new
- Maintaining a balance of screen time.

Janakpuri incident: Police files charge-sheet; court fixes April 30 hearing

New Delhi, 9/4 (H.S.): The Delhi Police has filed a chargesheet in the Janakpuri case involving the death of a motorcyclist who fell into an uncovered pit belonging to the Delhi Jal Board on Dwarka Court premises. Judicial Magistrate First Class Harjot Singh Aujla has directed that the chargesheet be heard on April 30. The court has summoned the investigating officer and the station house officer (SHO) for appearance on April 30. In the chargesheet, the Delhi Police has invoked charges of criminal conspiracy and causing death by negligence, alleging that the uncovered pit was left dangerously open. Under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (Indian Penal Code equivalent), the police has invoked clauses 05, 238A, 238(B), 61(2), and 340(2) in connection with the case. The chargesheet names three accused, including Rajesh Kumar Prajapati and Yogesh Prajapati, posing as contractors allegedly linked to the site. The prosecution contends



that their alleged negligence in cordoning off or covering the pit directly led to the fatal accident. Court refuses interim bail, rejects custody claims. On April 8, the court rejected the interim bail plea of contractor Rajesh Kumar

Prajapati, who had sought release on the grounds of illegal detention. Prajapati had alleged that he was being held in illegal custody at the police station. However, the judge observed that CCTV footage from the gate opposite the station, the

arrest memo, general diary entries, and call details collectively established that the accused had not been detained illegally. The court, therefore, declined to grant him interim bail, underscoring that due process had been followed during his arrest and remand. Between the night of February 5 and 6, Kamal Dhyani, an employee working at a private bank, was returning home when the incident occurred. The police allege that the Delhi Jal Board had left a deep excavation pit open and unmarked, creating a serious hazard on the road. Dhyani, riding his motorcycle, reportedly fell into the uncovered pit along with his bike, sustaining fatal injuries that led to his death at the spot. The case has since triggered public outrage over urban safety norms and the accountability of municipal and utility agencies in safeguarding road users. The April 30 hearing is expected to address the framing of charges against the accused, the evidentiary record, and any further directions on the investigation and trial schedule.

IndiGo and BIAL conclude IATA-backed contactless international travel trial at Bengaluru airport

New Delhi, 9/4 (H.S.): IndiGo, India's leading budget carrier, and Bengaluru International Airport Limited (BIAL) have successfully completed a technical trial of a contactless international travel project in collaboration with the International Air Transport Association (IATA). The demonstration was conducted at Kempegowda International Airport Bengaluru, encompassing the entire travel flow from ticketing and booking management through to a biometric-enabled airport journey. IndiGo described the exercise as the first initiative of its kind in India within IATA's global campaign aimed at validating proof-of-concepts (PoCs) for contactless international travel in key international markets. The trial at Bengaluru airport integrated digital identity and biometric technology to enable passengers to move through the airport with minimal physical touchpoints or document handling. From check-in and security to boarding, the process was designed to rely on digital credentials and biometric

verification rather than conventional paper-based or manual checks. IndiGo stated that this PoC marks a significant step toward a fully implemented contactless travel environment and signals the beginning of the next phase of digital air travel in India. Earlier this year, IndiGo and the Digital Travel Foundation had already deployed an advanced self-sovereign identity (SSI)-based ecosystem at the airport, using biometric technology for contactless processing of passengers. Building on that success, the airline and the foundation have now extended the same model to international travel in partnership with BIAL and IATA. The trial showcased the scalability and functional utility of the technology, demonstrating how seamless, biometric-enabled journeys can be extended beyond domestic routes to cross-border flights. As part of the initiative, IndiGo implemented an app-to-app integration that allows boarding passes to be shared easily between its mobile

applications, streamlining the passenger experience and reducing the need for multiple physical or emailed tickets. The airline noted that this integration, when combined with biometric identity verification, simplifies the boarding process and enhances security by reducing impersonation and document-fraud risks. Nitin Chopra, IndiGo's Chief Digital and Information Officer, said the airline remains committed to shaping the future of travel through innovation and customer-centric solutions. "These successful technical trials clearly demonstrate the potential—and scalability—of using digital identity and biometric technologies to deliver a smooth, contactless experience at airports," he said. "We are pleased to have taken this initiative from a conceptual stage to a live trial in partnership with IATA, Digital Travel and BIAL, and we hope it will play a key role in the evolution of global air travel."

NCP leader Parth Pawar takes oath as Rajya Sabha member

New Delhi, 9/4 (H.S.): Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Parth Pawar has taken oath as a member of the Rajya Sabha, India's Upper House of Parliament. The oath-taking ceremony took place in the Parliament House on Thursday, with Vice-President and Rajya Sabha Chairman C. P. Radhakrishnan administering the oath to the 35-year-old lawmaker. The event was attended by senior leaders, including Union Health Minister and NDA floor leader Jagat Prakash Nadda, NCP leader and Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar, NCP working president Praful Patel, and other party functionaries. Sunetra Pawar, who is also Parth's mother, has recently moved into the Maharashtra state cabinet, vacating her own Rajya Sabha seat and paving the way for her son's induction into the Upper House. Parth Pawar, son of the late NCP stalwart Ajit Pawar, had earlier contested the 2019 Lok Sabha election from the Maval constituency but was defeated in his

first direct electoral contest. His entry into the Rajya Sabha marks a significant elevation within the party's leadership echelon and is widely seen as part of the Pawar family's strategy to consolidate the NCP's presence in both central and state politics. Parth's Rajya Sabha seat became available after his mother, Sunetra Pawar, resigned from the Upper House upon assuming the role of Deputy Chief Minister of Maharashtra, a decision that triggered a broader leadership-transition narrative within the NCP. Observers note that Parth Pawar's swearing-in deepens the family's footprint in legislative bodies and reflects a deliberate effort to sustain Ajit Pawar's political legacy even after his demise in an air accident on 28 January. With his formal induction into the Rajya Sabha, Parth Pawar now joins the ranks of national lawmakers as he begins his parliamentary career on the NCP-BJP-led opposition benches in the House.

Collective chanting of Navkar Mantra is supremely relevant for world peace": Amit Shah

New Delhi, 9/4 (H.S.): Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah has described the collective recitation of the Navkar Mantra as "highly meaningful and relevant" for global peace, at a time when the world is locked in struggles to impose ideological dominance. Speaking at the Vishva Navkar Mahamantra Diwas organised by the Jain International Trade Organisation (JITO) in the capital, he underlined that the present era urgently requires peace, camaraderie and mutual understanding, all of which, he said, can be strengthened through such spiritual initiatives. Spiritual basis and universality of Navkar Mantra Shah highlighted India's rich spiritual heritage, noting that the country is home to diverse religions and traditions, each of which places special emphasis on the power of mantras and their inner potency. He observed that mantras, when chanted with faith and concentration, lend a positive direction to human life, awaken consciousness and fortify auspicious resolutions. The Home



Minister stressed that when people chant the same mantra in unison, its impact does not remain confined to the individual; it radiates outward, influencing society, the nation and ultimately the world. He described the Navkar Mantra as a completely formless, neutral and universal prayer, free of any discrimination and not limited to any particular caste, religion, region or time. Shah explained that the Sanskrit word

"Namo" in the mantra signifies complete surrender, fostering the shedding of ego and encouraging the practitioner toward inner purification. The very act of bowing, he said, begins the gradual erosion of arrogance and sets the aspirant on a path of spiritual uplift. He elaborated on the internal enemies—anger, pride, illusion and greed—against which true victory must be won, and termed the person who overcomes

these as an Arihant, the spiritually triumphant being extolled in Jain scriptures. Similarly, he described the Siddha as the soul that has transcended the cycle of birth and death and attained the highest state of liberation. Shah pointed out that the Navkar Mantra also pays homage to Acharyas, Upadhyayas and Sadhus—the Acharya as the head of the community and guide of discipline, the Upadhyaya as the scholar-teacher of scriptures, and the Sadhu as the ascetic who pursues self-purity through austerity, restraint and renunciation. Together, these five categories are known as the Panch Parmeshthi—the five supreme beings. The Home Minister emphasised that the core essence of the mantra lies in assimilating the qualities of these Panch Parmeshthi into one's life. He noted that a total of 108 attributes are embedded in these five ideal beings, all of which are collectively remembered and venerated through the chanting of the Navkar Mantra. Shah recalled that the Navkar Mantra tradition has

been passed down for thousands of years, with the 24 Tirthankaras and their followers making a profound contribution to its preservation. Initially transmitted orally, the mantra later found its place in inscriptions and canonical texts, underscoring its enduring spiritual stature. Addressing youth, he urged them to continue the regular practice of the mantra even if its deeper meaning is not immediately grasped. Over time, he said, its layers can be unravelled under the guidance of Acharyas and learned saints, leading to a deeper experiential understanding. In the context of today's turbulent world, Shah asserted that when a climate of unrest and tension prevails, the collective chanting of the Navkar Mantra can help purify the environment and restore inner tranquillity. He held that such spiritual exercises also nurture goodwill, empathy and mutual cooperation in society, reinforcing the values of non-violence and unity that are central to Jain thought and, more broadly, to India's civilisational ethos.

Assembly polls: Assam logs 59.63%, Kerala 49.70%, Puducherry 56.83% turnout by 1 p.m.

New Delhi, 09 April (H.S.): Voting is underway across all Assembly constituencies in Assam, Kerala and the Union Territory of Puducherry, with the Election Commission reporting a turnout of 59.63 per cent in Assam, 49.70 per cent in Kerala and 56.83 per cent in Puducherry by 1 p.m. on polling day. Polling began at 7 a.m. across the three regions and will continue until 5 p.m. in Assam and 6 p.m. in Kerala and Puducherry. Steady rise in voter turnout. By 11 a.m., Assam had recorded 38.92 per cent turnout, Kerala 33.28 per cent and Puducherry 37.06 per cent, indicating a steady build-up of voters as the day progressed. At 9 a.m., the figures stood at 17.87 per cent in Assam, 16.23 per cent in Kerala and 17.41 per cent in Puducherry, reflecting strong early participation despite inclement weather in parts of Assam. In Assam, turnout varied across districts, with several recording around the 40 per cent mark by mid-afternoon, underscoring broad-based engagement in the state-wide contest. In Kerala, the pace of voting remained broadly balanced across districts, with turnout clustering between

roughly 31 and 35 per cent by 11 a.m. Polling in Puducherry also witnessed energetic voter turnout, with residents turning out enthusiastically at booths across the UT. Electoral magnitude and security measures. The Election Commission has made extensive arrangements to ensure free, fair and peaceful polls, deploying thousands of police personnel and central forces at sensitive locations. Webcasting and drone-based surveillance are being used in vulnerable areas to monitor polling-day activities, while special support has been provided for first-time voters, senior citizens and differently-abled electors. Voters above the age of 85 have been offered home-voting facilities, and transport arrangements have been made to help them reach polling stations if they choose to vote in person. In all, the three regions together have 296 Assembly seats and over 5.3 crore registered voters, including a large number of first-time voters and women. Contest in Assam, Kerala and Puducherry. Assam's 126 Assembly seats are seeing a multi-cornered contest



involving 722 candidates from 41 parties, including 59 women candidates. The state's electorate numbers around 2.5 crore, and the poll is being held across 31,490 polling stations. This is the first major Assembly election in Assam following the 2023 delimitation, with the BJP seeking to retain power and the Congress attempting a comeback after a period of decline. Kerala. In Kerala, the 140-seat Assembly vote is shaping up as a triangular contest between the CPI-M-led Left Democratic

Front (LDF), the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) and the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA). The LDF, under Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, is aiming for an unprecedented third consecutive term, while the UDF and NDA are vying to capitalise on anti-incumbency and shifting voter preferences. Puducherry. Puducherry's 30 Assembly seats are witnessing a battle among 294 candidates, with the ruling alliance headed by the All India N. R. Congress (AINRC)

under Chief Minister N. Rangasamy, which enjoys the support of the BJP. A total of 1,099 polling stations have been set up in the Union Territory, with EVMs, control units and VVPAT machines fully deployed along with contingency machines kept in reserve to handle any technical failures. The day's turnout pattern so far signals robust voter enthusiasm in all three regions, setting the stage for a closely watched verdict in one of the key Assembly elections of the 2026 cycle.

Rajkot ends manual sewer cleaning by deploying sewage-robot operators

Rajkot, Gujarat / New Delhi, 9/4 (H.S.): In a significant step toward eliminating manual scavenging, the Rajkot Municipal Corporation in Gujarat has deployed a "robot operator" system to carry out sewer cleaning, effectively banning the practice of sending workers into manholes by hand. The Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs noted that with this move, the direct manual removal of waste from sewers will gradually be phased out, and sanitation workers will now operate robots instead of physically entering hazardous underground networks. The municipal corporation has adopted robotic sewer-cleaning technology at an estimated cost of ₹2.29 crore, with the system designed to undertake cleaning in locations where it was previously considered too dangerous to send human workers. The robots are equipped to inspect and clear clogged drains and manholes, removing sludge and debris remotely while the operator stays above ground, thereby minimising exposure to toxic gases, asphyxiation risks and other life-threatening hazards. Rajkot's experience is part of a broader push in Gujarat to mechanise sewer maintenance; similar robotic systems, such as the Bandicoot-based units, have already been deployed in other cities like Ahmedabad under municipal-level waste-management upgrade projects. These initiatives align with central government schemes such as Swachh Bharat and NAMASTE, which seek to eradicate manual scavenging and replace it with end-to-end robotic or mechanised sanitation solutions. Complementing the technological shift, the Rajkot Municipal Corporation has also constructed a modern community hall dedicated to sanitation workers on the outskirts of the city, designed to benefit more than 5,000 sanitation-worker families. The facility includes a wedding and event hall, kitchen, dining area and parking, providing a dignified social and cultural space where workers and their families can host gatherings, thereby enhancing their social status and living conditions. In the district of Bharuch, the local municipal body marked International Women's Day by organising a special health camp exclusively for women sanitation workers. One hundred and eight female workers underwent medical check-ups, received free medicines and were counselled on nutrition and hygiene, reinforcing the state-level emphasis on combining technological upgrade with social-welfare measures. Taken together, these initiatives signal that Gujarat is attempting to construct a balanced, sustainable model of sanitation—one that integrates robotics, infrastructure, and welfare, not only to make sewer work safer but also to restore dignity and long-term well-being to those who have historically borne the burden of the most hazardous tasks in urban sanitation.

Vance's Attendance in Doubt as Trump Flags Security Risks for Iran Summit

Washington, 9/4 (H.S.): President Donald Trump has disclosed that Vice President JD Vance's participation in imminent U.S.-Iran peace negotiations in Pakistan remains in doubt amid heightened security risks, casting a shadow over diplomatic momentum following a fragile two-week ceasefire. Trump, speaking in a recent interview with the New York Post, outlined a potential U.S. delegation that could include Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner alongside Vance — "maybe JD, I don't know" — while stressing the "question of safety, security" in Islamabad. The remarks underscore the precarious environment surrounding the talks, scheduled as early as Friday, where Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has positioned his nation as a neutral host. Analysts note that such threats could limit high-level



engagement, potentially complicating efforts to translate the truce into a durable accord. The negotiations stem from a ceasefire agreed upon Tuesday, halting escalating hostilities and partially restoring

access to the Strait of Hormuz, a vital chokepoint for global oil transit. Sharif has hailed the pause as a triumph of back-channel mediation, expressing optimism for "sustainable peace" via the "Islamabad Talks" on social media.

Israel Unleashes Deadliest Day of Airstrikes on Lebanon, Threatening Fragile US-Iran Ceasefire

Beirut, 9/4 (H.S.): At least 182 people have been killed and more than 890 wounded in a massive wave of Israeli airstrikes across Lebanon, including a direct assault on central Beirut, underscoring how the newly brokered US-Iran ceasefire has done little to shield the country from escalating violence. The strikes, delivered in rapid succession over roughly ten minutes, have turned what many Lebanese hoped would be the beginning of a de-escalation into one of the deadliest single days of the renewed Israel-Hezbollah war. Lebanon's Ministry of Health reported that the casualties included men, women, and children struck in residential neighborhoods, commercial strips, and displacement hubs in Beirut, the southern suburbs, parts of southern Lebanon, and the eastern Bekaa Valley. Witnesses in downtown Beirut described columns of black smoke rising from the central Corniche al-Mazraa district, where apartment blocks, shops, and streets were reduced to rubble and vehicles were left charred. Israeli officials said they had hit more than 100 Hezbollah "military" targets, including missile launchers, command nodes, and intelligence infrastructure, while accusing fighters of operating in mixed, non-Shiite areas. Local officials and residents in the affected districts, however, insisted there were no visible military installations in the immediate vicinity, framing the strikes as disproportionately destructive to civilian life. Many of those killed and wounded were among the internally displaced, who had already fled from southern and eastern Lebanon to the comparative safety of Beirut and coastal cities such as Sidon. A government-appointed health official told reporters that roughly half of Lebanon's displaced population is now concentrated in Beirut, increasing the risk that any future Israeli campaign will inflict even graver humanitarian costs. In displacement camps along Beirut's waterfront, families voiced a mix of exhaustion and despair. Some who had begun packing to return to their homes earlier in the day now feared a return to serial flight, with one resident describing life in tents—without proper showers or stable shelter—as unsustainable. As of late April 8, more than 1 million people in Lebanon had been displaced by the war, according to UN and Lebanese officials. The strikes came hours after the United States and Iran announced a two-week ceasefire meant to pause hostilities following weeks of direct conflict between the two countries. US President Donald Trump later told PBS NewsHour that Lebanon and the war with Hezbollah were not included in the agreement, citing the group's role in cross-border attacks.

Iran Delivers Ultimatum to Washington: "Choose Between Ceasefire and War"

Tehran, 9/4 (H.S.): Amid escalating tensions across West Asia, Iran has struck a markedly harder tone toward the United States, warning that Washington must choose clearly between a genuine ceasefire and continued warfare. Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said in uncompromising terms that a situation in which both ceasefire and military action coexist is no longer tenable, sharpening the pressure on Washington as regional hostilities flare. Addressing the current regional crisis, Araghchi stated that the existing conditions do not allow "ceasefire and war" to run side by side. He argued that if the United States genuinely wants a conflict pause, it must implement such a ceasefire in full and without exception.

Conversely, he added, as long as Israel continues carrying out military operations under the umbrella of U.S. backing, what is being called a ceasefire cannot be treated as such. The minister directed attention to the ongoing violence in Lebanon, where fresh Israeli strikes have killed scores



of civilians, underscoring what he described as a double-speak in Western diplomacy. Araghchi insisted that the entire world is watching, and the time has come for Washington to stand by its stated commitments and adopt a clear, unambiguous stance instead of allowing proxy actions to continue. Araghchi's remarks come at a moment when the

Middle East's security landscape is exceptionally fragile. On one side sits a publicly announced U.S.-Iran ceasefire, brokered under intense international mediation; on the other, Israel's sustained bombardment of Lebanon and adjacent areas continues, with attacks that have killed more than 180 people in a single day in recent episodes. This

Nepal's Ex-PM Oli, Former Home Minister Lekhak Granted Bail in Deadly Shooting Probe

Kathmandu, 9/4 (H.S.): Nepal's former Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli and ex-Home Minister Ramesh Lekhak were released on bail by police today, following a Supreme Court directive amid an investigation into their alleged negligence during a fatal 2025 shooting incident. Kathmandu Police SSP Ramesh Thapa confirmed the release, executed per court instructions, with Oli handed over to his wife Radhika Shakya and Lekhak to his spouse Yashoda Lekhak. The court emphasized expediting the probe given Oli's serious health concerns, noting their arrests on March 28 after a probe commission implicated them in failing to halt gunfire that killed protesters on September 8, 2025. Justices



Vinod Sharma and Sunil Kumar Pokhrel ruled the extended five-day detention lawful but mandated a prompt decision on prosecution. The duo faced charges under Nepal's Muluki

Criminal Code Sections 181 and 182 for negligence causing death—punishable by 3-10 years imprisonment and fines from NPR 30,000 to 100,000—based on a

commission report led by Gauri Bahadur Kharki. Implemented post-Balendra Shah's premiership, the report faulted officials including Oli for inaction during the violence. All statements and evidence collection stand complete; former Chief District Officer Chhabil Rijal was also freed conditionally for potential testimony. Should no charging decision emerge within the stipulated timeframe, the court directed invoking Section 15 of the code for release while sustaining the inquiry. This development underscores tensions in Nepal's political landscape, balancing accountability for security lapses against procedural fairness in high-profile cases.

Trump Floats New Front Over Greenland, Warns NATO Amid Iran Ceasefire

Washington, 9/4 (H.S.): President Donald Trump has reignited his long-standing campaign to bring Greenland under U.S. influence, even as he escalates pressure on NATO over the alliance's limited role in the Iran war. In a fresh jab at the bloc, Trump signaled on Wednesday that he may reconsider America's membership if NATO members continue to withhold military or political backing in Washington-led operations, while at the same time reasserting his desire to secure the Arctic island from Denmark. The remarks came hours after Trump held a closed-door meeting with NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte at the White House, where the two leaders discussed the alliance's support—or lack thereof—during the recent U.S.-Iran conflict. The American president has repeatedly criticized European allies for refusing to back Washington's strategy in the Persian Gulf, particularly after Iran effectively shut down the Strait of Hormuz and dramatically tightened global energy flows. In a post on Truth Social, Trump laid out his frustration bluntly: "When we needed them, NATO was not there,



and if we need them again, they will not be there. Remember Greenland, a big, poorly run, freezing piece of ice!!!" The reference underscored that, in Trump's view, the Iran crisis has exposed what he sees as NATO's strategic unreliability, even as he simultaneously eyes territorial influence in the Arctic. Greenland is an autonomous territory of Denmark, a NATO member, and its status has long been a sensitive geopolitical issue. Earlier this year, Trump renewed his push for greater U.S. control or influence over the island, citing its strategic location and rich mineral and energy

resources, but later stepped back from that stance after Rutte warned that forcing such a move would fracture transatlantic relations. Now, Trump appears to be re-opening the front, using Greenland as both a symbol and a bargaining chip. By linking the island's fate to NATO's conduct, he is signaling that Washington may demand a far more transactional security relationship with its European allies—one that could include territorial or basing advantages in exchange for military support. Trump's threat to exit NATO Trump's broader criticism

of NATO dates back to his first term, when he repeatedly claimed presidents had the unilateral right to withdraw the United States from the alliance. In 2023, during the Biden administration, Congress passed legislation requiring the president to obtain congressional approval before any formal withdrawal from NATO, effectively tightening the legal leash on a possible exit. Despite that constraint, Trump has continued to argue that NATO members are not bearing an adequate share of the defense burden and that Washington should be free to recalibrate its commitments—up to and including a partial or full disengagement—if European partners fail to align with U.S. security priorities. His latest comments, wrapped around the Hornum shutdown and Iran-related tensions, suggest that the Iran war has become a test case for that doctrine. Formed in 1949 to counter the Soviet threat, NATO is built on the principle of collective defense: an attack on one member is treated as an attack on all. The alliance now counts 32 member states, with the United States contributing the largest share of military and financial resources.

Yet, as the Trump administration has emphasized, several European capitals have expressed reservations about being drawn into a U.S.-led war with Iran, limiting the alliance's practical involvement in the current conflict. Trump's warnings on both Greenland and NATO withdrawal highlight a broader shift in Washington's posture: one in which the president is willing to openly question long-standing alliances, introduce new territorial gambits, and demand that partners either commit fully to American strategy or accept the possibility of a shrinking U.S. footprint in European security. For now, NATO leaders are responding cautiously, reaffirming their commitment to the alliance while quietly seeking to decouple the Iran issue from the broader transatlantic security framework. But if the Trump administration continues to treat the Iran crisis as leverage pairing demands for military support with territorial ambitions in the Arctic, the future of NATO and U.S. European defense ties may depend less on statutes and more on the outcome of a high-stakes diplomatic standoff between Washington and Brussels.

Tibetan activists launch 90-hour hunger strike outside UN against China's oppression

New York.: Tibetan activists affiliated with the Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC) chapters in New York and New Jersey have begun a 90-hour hunger strike outside the United Nations Headquarters, seeking urgent global attention to the worsening conditions in Tibet. The protest started on April 6 and is set to conclude on April 10, as reported by Phayul. According to Phayul, Lobsang Tsering, president of the regional TYC chapters, said the demonstration is part of the 19th instalment of the group's "10th Day Movement," a monthly campaign initiated by its 18th executive committee. Since August 2024, the campaign has been marked through consistent actions, including marches, relay runs, and protests outside the Chinese Consulate, regardless of turnout or weather conditions. Tsering expressed concern over limited participation from the wider Tibetan diaspora, despite an estimated population of 15,000 Tibetans in New York and New Jersey. He said only a small group continues to sustain the hunger strike, urging broader community involvement through participation, funding, or solidarity efforts. The protest aims to spotlight what activists describe as a critical situation inside Tibet and to warn that continued global inaction could undermine the Tibetan struggle for cultural preservation and political rights. Tsering emphasized that the United Nations remains a crucial platform for raising awareness and demanding accountability. Among the key demands is the immediate release of the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, who was detained by Chinese authorities in 1995 at the age of six and has not been seen publicly since. Protesters have also called for an end to policies they claim suppress Tibetan identity, including state-run boarding schools accused of erasing language and culture, as highlighted by Phayul. Environmental concerns were also raised, with activists opposing Chinese projects such as mining, dam construction, and deforestation on the Tibetan Plateau, citing ecological risks. Additionally, demonstrators urged China to stop interfering in the recognition of Tibetan Buddhist reincarnations and to repeal laws they say enforce assimilation.

choice—either a real truce or open escalation—Iran appears to be testing the limits of U.S. willingness to rein in Israel's conduct in Lebanon and the wider region. Behind the bluntness, the subtext is clear: Tehran is not willing to accept a ceasefire that only partially binds its adversaries while allowing military operations to continue through intermediaries. Officials close to Iran's leadership argue that unless hostilities in Lebanon and neighboring zones are halted, Tehran will not rule out taking more assertive measures of its own, including potential retaliatory strikes or renewed support for allied armed groups. At the same time, Araghchi's warning is widely seen as part of a broader pressure campaign aimed at nudging Washington toward stronger de-escalation steps, including direct leverage on Israel and a more coherent regional security understanding. For now, the spotlight has shifted to Washington and its next diplomatic or military signal.

dissonance has raised hard questions about the credibility and enforceability of the ceasefire framework. Analysts suggest that Iran's hard-line language is deliberately calibrated both to signal resolve to domestic audiences and to push Washington into a more constrained diplomatic corner. By framing the crisis as a binary

Om Power Transmission IPO Opens for Subscription at 166-175; Tentative Listing on April 17

New Delhi, 9/4 (H.S.): Om Power Transmission Ltd., a key player in power transmission infrastructure via EPC and O&M services, launched its ₹150.06 crore IPO today, open for bids until April 13. Allotment is slated for April 15, with shares crediting demat accounts on April 16 and tentative listing on BSE and NSE on April 17. Priced at ₹166-175 per share (face value ₹10), the lot size is 85 shares, requiring a minimum retail investment of ₹14,875 (1 lot) or up to ₹1,93,375 for 13 lots (1,105 shares). Employees receive an 8% discount per share. The issue comprises a fresh issuance of 75.75 lakh shares (₹133 crore) and an offer-for-sale of 10 lakh shares. On April 8, anchors like Morgan Stanley Asia (Singapore), Kraftt Emerging Market Fund PCC-Elite Capital Fund, Kraftt Emerging Market Fund PCC-Citadel Capital Fund, and Sunrise Investment Trust-Sunrise Investment Opportunities Fund subscribed to 25.72 lakh shares at ₹175, raising ₹45.01 crore. Reservations: 50% QIBs, 35% retail, 15% NIIs;



book-running lead manager: Belain Capital Advisors Pvt. Ltd.; registrar: MUFG Intime India Pvt. Ltd. Om Power Transmission, founded in 2011, has shown robust growth. Net profit surged from ₹6.23 crore (FY23) to ₹7.41 crore (FY24), ₹22.08 crore (FY25), and ₹23.37 crore (9M FY26). Revenue climbed from

₹121.71 crore (FY23) to ₹184.39 crore (FY24), ₹281.65 crore (FY25), and ₹276.50 crore (9M FY26). Debt fluctuated: ₹25.57 crore (FY23), ₹26.23 crore (FY24), ₹18.90 crore (FY25), ₹38.47 crore (9M FY26). Net worth rose from ₹43.36 crore (FY23) to ₹119.84 crore (9M FY26); reserves/surplus from

₹42.76 crore to ₹93.17 crore; EBITDA from ₹11.93 crore to ₹34.24 crore (9M FY26). Order book stands at ₹744.6 crore as of Dec 31, 2025. Post-issue market cap: ~₹599 crore at upper band. Capitalizing on India's power grid expansion, the IPO funds growth amid surging demand for transmission lines and substations.

World Bank Lifts India's GDP Growth Forecast to 6.6% for FY 2026-27

New Delhi, 9/4 (H.S.): The World Bank has revised its GDP growth projection for India upward to 6.6% for fiscal year 2026-27, up from an earlier estimate of 6.3%, underscoring the institution's belief in India's resilience despite intensifying global uncertainties, particularly the ongoing West Asia crisis. The latest forecast features in the bank's April 2026 South Asia Economic Update, which highlights India as the region's primary growth engine even as broader regional momentum shows signs of cooling. According to the World Bank, India's economy is expected to expand at 7.6% in FY 2025-26, up from 7.1% in FY 2024-25, driven by robust domestic demand and a resilient export outlook. The institution argues that sustained consumer spending, supported by policy-driven initiatives including cuts in Goods and Services Tax (GST) rates, will boost private consumption in the early months of FY 2026-27. However, the report also warns that disruptions stemming from the West Asia conflict and elevated energy prices could weigh on

inflation and gradually slow the pace of growth thereafter. The bank's April update notes that South Asia as a whole will see a slowdown in underlying growth this year, but India will continue to outpace the region, anchored by strong internal demand, manufacturing-linked investment, and an improving trade-performance backdrop. India's central bank, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), has taken a marginally more optimistic stance in its own assessment. In its first Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) review of FY 2026-27, the RBI retained its projection for real GDP growth at 6.9% for the current fiscal, slightly above the World Bank's 6.6% estimate. Analysts observe that both institutions attribute the upward revision in India's growth outlook primarily to strong household demand and a relatively healthier export performance compared with many other emerging-market economies exposed to volatile trade and energy markets. Still, the RBI's higher number reflects a more benign assumption on the fiscal and external balance than the World Bank, which

explicitly flags the Middle East-linked energy-market volatility as a key downside risk. The World Bank's decision to raise India's FY 2026-27 growth forecast signals that global institutions continue to view the country as a relative bright spot in an otherwise uncertain global environment. Even as conflicts in West Asia, fluctuating oil prices, and tighter financing conditions weigh on other emerging economies, India's expanding middle-class-driven consumption, infrastructure-focused capex, and digital- and services-led exports provide a buffer against external shocks. At the same time, the bank's caveats about GST-related demand spikes and Middle East-induced disruption suggest policymakers will need to remain vigilant on inflation, fiscal discipline, and energy-security strategies. For markets, the upward revision offers a reassurance that India's growth trajectory remains on a solid footing, even if the pace of expansion moderates slightly from the heady rates of the past two fiscal years.

Bullish Momentum in Bullion Bazaars: Gold Jumps 3,670-4,000/10g, Silver 10,200/kg Across Major Cities

New Delhi, 9/4 (H.S.): Domestic sarrafa markets opened with robust gains today, as 24-carat gold surged ₹3,670 to ₹4,000 per 10 grams from Wednesday's early trade, while silver climbed up to ₹10,200/kg. Prices reflect heightened physical demand amid festive anticipation and global cues, pushing 24K gold to ₹1,53,830-1,54,920/10g and 22K to ₹1,41,010-1,42,010/10g nationwide. Silver in Delhi spot traded at ₹2,60,100/kg. Delhi saw 24K at ₹1,53,980/10g (22K ₹1,41,160); Mumbai 24K ₹1,53,830 (22K ₹1,41,010); Ahmedabad 24K ₹1,53,880 (22K ₹1,41,060); Chennai peaked with 24K ₹1,54,920 (22K ₹1,42,010); Kolkata 24K ₹1,53,830 (22K ₹1,41,010); Bhopal 24K ₹1,53,880 (22K ₹1,41,060); Lucknow and



Jaipur both 24K ₹1,53,980 (22K ₹1,41,160); Patna 24K ₹1,53,880 (22K ₹1,41,060). Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and Bhubaneswar aligned at 24K ₹1,53,830/10g (22K ₹1,41,010). This uptick,

consistent across Karnataka, Telangana, and Odisha hubs, signals jeweler restocking ahead of Akshaya Tritiya and wedding seasons, bolstered by rupee weakness and safe-haven buying despite MCX futures dips.

Indian Stock Markets Plunge Amid Geopolitical Tensions and Profit-Taking

New Delhi, 9/4 (H.S.): India's benchmark stock indices suffered a sharp decline today, erasing gains from five consecutive sessions of robust performance, primarily due to uncertainty surrounding the Middle East ceasefire, surging crude oil prices, rupee depreciation, and widespread profit booking. The Sensex plummeted by as much as 1,251 points during trading, while the Nifty dropped 314.55 points at its nadir, though both indices clawed back some losses in late-session buying. Market experts attribute the rout to feeble global cues, sustained foreign investor sell-offs, and a spike in the India VIX volatility index, which climbed to 20.29, signaling heightened investor trepidation. Profit-taking intensified after Wednesday's nearly four percent rally, with domestic investors cashing in on recent advances. Sectors like IT and banking bore the brunt, as the Nifty IT index fell 1.3 percent before partial recovery, while banking stocks faced relentless selling pressure. Uncertainty over the US-Israel-Iran ceasefire fueled global jitters, exacerbated by Israel's strikes on Lebanon and US



dismissal of Iran's terms as "absurd and childish," prompting investors to adopt a risk-off stance. Prashant Dhani, Vice President at Dhani Securities, noted that this ambiguity recreated a climate of fear across world markets. Compounding the pressure, Iran's renewed threat to close the Strait of Hormuz propelled crude prices higher, with Brent crude surging to \$98.85

per barrel and West Texas Intermediate (WTI) to \$99.69 per barrel. The oil spike boosted dollar demand, weakening the rupee to 92.94 against the dollar before a modest rebound. Rajiv Dutta, CEO of Capex Gold and Investments Private Limited, highlighted how ceasefire delays cast a pall over global sentiment, dragging Asian markets like Kospi, Hang Seng, Straits Times, and

Shanghai Composite into the red, which rippled into Gift Nifty and domestic bourses. Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) continued offloading positions to safeguard capital amid the suspense. This confluence of factors underscores the markets' vulnerability to international flashpoints, with analysts urging caution until geopolitical clarity emerges.

Crude Oil Surges as Hormuz Blockade Persists Amid Ceasefire Fears: Brent Up 2.5%, WTI Over 3.5%



New Delhi, 9/4 (H.S.): Global crude benchmarks rebounded sharply today amid mounting doubts over the US-Iran ceasefire, with fears of Hormuz Strait closure reigniting supply crunch anxieties. Brent crude climbed over 2.5% to \$97.28 per barrel (up \$2.53, +2.67% at 10:30 AM IST), hitting intraday highs of \$97.89 after opening \$2.22 higher at \$96.97. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) soared more than 3.5%, trading at \$97.72/

barrel (up \$3.31, +3.51%) from an open of \$96.90 and peak of \$98.38. Tensions escalated hours after the truce announcement: The US dismissed Iran's terms as "absurd and childish," while Israel hammered Lebanon targets Wednesday, killing ~250 and prompting Tehran's renewed threat to mine Hormuz—vowing to sink any passing vessel for ceasefire violations. The strait, now stalled again, chokes 20-30% of

global oil and gas flows, compounded by Iranian missile strikes on US bases in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, UAE, and Israel. Finrex Treasury Advisors' Anil Bhandari warns a ceasefire collapse could devastate West Asia, with US threats of infrastructure strikes met by Iran's retaliation vows, disrupting production and transit. Two-week truce prospects dim, stoking energy crisis fears and propelling prices.

Markets Reel Amid Fears of Collapsing US-Iran Ceasefire, Asia Slips into Risk-Off Mode

New Delhi, 9/4 (H.S.): Global financial markets are once again under pressure as renewed rhetorical hostilities between Iran and the United States threaten to derail a fragile US-Iran ceasefire in the Middle East. With Tehran warning it could close the Strait of Hormuz yet again and Washington dismissing Iran's demands as "unreasonable," investors have shifted to a cautious, risk-averse stance, pushing bond yields and safe-haven assets higher while equities sag across Asia and beyond. Sentiment turned sour after both sides issued fresh warnings, underscoring the fragility of the Pakistan-brokered ceasefire that had briefly lifted stocks in prior sessions. Iran has reiterated that it may shut the Strait of Hormuz if it perceives a violation of the truce, while the US administration has hit back, calling Iran's conditions on the ceasefire "absurd" and vowing

not to be held hostage by energy-route threats. Such jockeying has revived fears of renewed supply disruptions and a broader regional flare-up, clouding the outlook for energy-sensitive markets and growth-linked assets. Recent data from financial platforms already show that Asia-Pacific equities have lost their recent momentum, with the broad regional index moving in a flat-to-negative band as doubts deepen over the durability of the ceasefire. Oil prices have edged higher, reinforcing the sense that traders are hedging against the risk of another major shock emanating from the Persian Gulf. The uncertainty is particularly striking given the sharp risk-on rally in US and European markets just one session ago, when the initial ceasefire announcement briefly lifted sentiment. The S&P 500 soared about 2.5%, closing at 6,782.89 points, while the Nasdaq jumped roughly 2.8% to 22,635 points, as investors

priced in a de-escalation of the US-Israel war with Iran. Yet that optimism appears to be fading. Futures on the Dow Jones are now hovering fractionally lower at 47,897.02 points, reflecting a cautious tone ahead of the new-day cash-market open. Similar whiplash is evident in Europe, where the FTSE 100 closed up about 2.45% at 10,608.88, the CAC 40 surged 4.3% to 8,263.87, and the DAX leapt nearly 4.8% to 24,080.63 after the ceasefire news—but where the underlying mood is now more fragile as perils in the region resurface. The most immediate fallout is being felt in Asian markets, where the prospect of a failed ceasefire has triggered a broad-based sell-off. Out of nine major indices tracked in the region, eight are trading in the red, with only one in the green, as investors rotate out of equities and toward safer assets.

Spot Silver Soars Over 10,000/kg Across India; Futures Tumble Amid Ceasefire Uncertainty

New Delhi, 9/4 (H.S.): Domestic spot silver prices surged dramatically in early trading today, climbing more than ₹10,000 per kilogram from Wednesday's opening levels, while futures markets witnessed a stark reversal. This divergence underscores robust physical demand against global jitters, with spot prices ranging from ₹4,09,800 to ₹4,25,000 per kg across major bullion centers. In Delhi's Bullion Market, silver leaped ₹10,200/kg to trade at ₹2,60,100/kg. Mumbai, Ahmedabad, and Kolkata saw quotes at ₹2,59,900/kg, while Jaipur, Surat, and Pune held steady at ₹2,60,200/kg. Bengaluru reached ₹2,60,400/kg, Patna and Bhubaneswar ₹2,60,000/kg, Hyderabad ₹2,65,000/kg, and Chennai commanded the national peak at ₹2,65,100/kg. Contrasting this bullish spot momentum, MCX futures opened weaker:

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Nora Fatehi skips NCW hearing in ‘Sarke Chunari Teri’ row, given final notice

Nora Fatehi has come under scrutiny over the song ‘Sarke Chunari Teri’ from KD: The Devil after she failed to appear before the National Commission for Women (NCW) on April 6. The commission expressed displeasure and issued a final opportunity for her to appear on April 27. At the hearing, lyricist Raqueeb Alam, director Prem, and production representatives were present. Nora, however, sent her lawyer instead of appearing in person.

NCW chairperson Vijaya Rahatkar raised concerns over the song’s lyrics, stating they undermine women’s dignity and cannot be justified in the name of creativity. Those present accepted the concerns, submitted a written apology, and assured the commission of working towards women’s empowerment for three months. The commission has also summoned Sanjay Dutt to appear for the hearing on April 8.



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