

India goes to poll April 19

It is our promise to deliver a national election in a manner that we remain a beacon for democracy around the world

RAJIV KUMAR
CHIEF ELECTION COMMISSIONER

The wait is over. Ending days of suspense, Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar finally sounded the poll bugle, Saturday. Like 2019, the General Election for 543 Lok Sabha seats will be held in seven phases starting April 19 while the results will be out June 4. Announcing the dates, the CEC put emphasis on dealing with challenges of four 'M's - muscle power, money power, misinformation and Model Code of Conduct violations. Back home, elections to 21 Lok Sabha and 147 Assembly constituencies will be conducted in four phases - May 13, 20, 25 and June 1.

New Delhi, March 16: The seven-phase Lok Sabha polls, the world's biggest election exercise, will kick off April 19 with the counting of votes set to take place June 4. Announcing the election schedule Saturday, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Rajiv Kumar said over 97 crore voters - 49.7 crore males and 47.1 crore females - were eligible to cast their vote in the polling process spread over 44 days and across 10.5 lakh polling booths. The elections will begin April 19 followed by subsequent phases April 26, May 7, May 13, May 20, May 25



CEC Rajiv Kumar along with his associates Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu at the press meet. PIC: CHAMAN GAUTAM

POLL FACTS

12 states have more women voters than men	82 days will take to complete the entire process, longest since first general elections
3.4L Central security personnel along with state forces to be deployed during polls	26 Assembly bypolls across 13 states to be held along with Lok Sabha elections

PERSONS ABOVE 85 AND THOSE WITH MORE THAN 40 PC DISABILITY CAN VOTE FROM HOME

and June 1, Kumar said at a press conference. The model code of conduct has come into effect with the announcement of the elections. "It is our promise to deliver a national election in a manner that we remain a beacon for democracy around the world," Kumar said. The entire election process, from the announcement of polls Saturday to the declaration of results June 4, spans across 82 days. The CEC said the poll authority is prepared to counter the challenges of four 'M's - muscle power, money power, misinformation and Model Code of Conduct violations. Nearly 1.5 crore personnel in-

cluding those on election and security duties will be deployed for the smooth conduct of polls. Drone-based checking at borders, surveillance of non-chartered flights, a crackdown on misleading advertisements and fake news, and 'ruthless' action against poll violence are part of the EC's strategy to deal with the four challenges. Soon after the Election Commission announced the Lok Sabha polls, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in a series of posts on X, highlighted the 'glorious turnaround' India has seen in the 10 years of his government and said the ruling alliance will go to people based on its track record of good governance and service delivery across sectors. Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge said the Lok Sabha elections were "perhaps the last chance to save democracy and our Constitution from dictatorship."

7-PHASE LS POLL

PHASE I	April 19	102 constituencies, 21 states/UTs
PHASE II	APRIL 26	89 constituencies, 13 states/UTs
PHASE III	MAY 7	94 constituencies, 12 states/UTs
PHASE IV	MAY 13	96 constituencies, 10 states/UTs
PHASE V	MAY 20	49 constituencies, 8 states/UTs
PHASE VI	MAY 25	57 constituencies, 7 states/UTs
PHASE VII	JUNE 1	57 constituencies, 8 states/UTs

ODISHA TO VOTE IN FOUR PHASES

PHASE I	MAY 13	28 Assembly seats and 4 Lok Sabha constituencies
PHASE II	MAY 20	35 Assembly seats and 5 Lok Sabha constituencies
PHASE III	MAY 25	42 Assembly segments and 6 Lok Sabha seats
PHASE IV	JUNE 1	42 Assembly seats and 6 Lok Sabha constituencies

2019 SCORECARD

Party	Won	% of votes
BJP	303	37.7
INC	52	19.66
DMK	23	2.33
AITC	22	4.1
YSR Cong	22	2.26
Shiv Sena	18	2.10
JD(U)	16	1.46
BJD	12	1.66
BSP	10	3.63

Cabinet nod to ₹128cr bridge over Mahanadi

Bhubaneswar, March 16: The state government Saturday decided to construct a ₹128-crore bridge over Mahanadi in Cuttack district. This was among the 14 decisions taken at the Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik. "The Cabinet approved a high-level bridge over the Mahanadi river," said Transport and Water Resources Minister Tukuni Sahu after the meeting of the council of ministers. The bridge to be built will be connected to the Brahmanakanda-Sahukheta road in the Salipur block, added the minister. It will also act as an inter-link between Cuttack-Paradip and Cuttack-Chandbali roads and will provide benefits to people residing on both sides of the river. The tender for the project has been approved by the Cabinet in favour of ITL-CCPL (IV) and is targeted for completion within 36 months, the minister said.

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leisure



OLIVIA TOOK BETA BLOCKER TO CALM HERSELF BEFORE 2019 OSCARS WIN

Actress Olivia Colman has revealed that she was very nervous the night she won her Oscar. Colman has shared that she had to take a beta blocker to calm down, revealed that she ordered a high neck dress to hide a huge rash, and states that the rash appears when she is stressed, reports *Mirror.co.uk*.

CRUISE USES HELICOPTER FOR UNINTERRUPTED FILMING

Nothing can stop actor Tom Cruise if he has set his mind to filming some of the most nerve-racking stunts. The actor used helicopters to ensure that the latest *Mission: Impossible* film isn't disrupted by roadworks, as most of the filming is done at M25 in south-east England, reports *Female First UK*.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

Interactive sessions with people who think like you are on the cards. At last you may have an intimate talk with your beloved and you will get a chance to confide your commitment to the relationship, says Ganesha. You may even express your long-term dreams.

TAURUS

Money matters are likely to take up most of your time, this day. Ganesha sees that you will have quite a time handling the difficulties and complexities they pose. You may not find an easy way out of your financial problems and will find it hard to take firm decisions. Your experience and expertise plus your great way of dealing with people will eventually enable you to make correct and profitable investments.

GEMINI

Today will be a day filled with energy and enthusiasm. You will have an optimistic view of life and this will help you attain success. You will be able to exercise your free will and take up tasks to your liking. While the day will be busy, it will also be rewarding, says Ganesha.

CANCER

Today is a day for taking things slowly, especially on the business front. This applies the most to the stockbrokers and also others who invest in stocks or shares on the side. Stars are not so bright today and haste will only worsen the matters. People involved in speculation, chance games and shifty markets may feel frustrated.

LEO

You will be filled with extraordinary self-confidence today. You will be able to take firm decisions when it comes to work related issues. You will not face any difficulties in completing your tasks today, and will achieve success.

VIRGO

Ganesha says don't let setbacks cow you down today as you will emerge stronger from each one of them. It will be your logic and reasoning abilities that will aid you in gaining the perfection in completing your work. You may look forward to spending the evening with your beloved or a special friend.

LIBRA

Ganesha says that any pending legal issues will be sorted out today either in court or through an out of court settlement. Your workload will get eased today and you will be able to find your way out from certain problematic situations.

SCORPIO

You can be fondly called as 'the perfectionist' today. Right from being punctual to following a systematic method for your work, you do it all. All in all, you set an ideal example for the people around you, says Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS

Take it as a piece of advice: tough times don't last; tough people do. The day has a lot of ups and downs in store for you. However, you are the sailor of stormy seas and would sail through all the troubles easily. Take the advice given by your near and dear ones, says Ganesha.

CAPRICORN

It has become difficult for you to bear the heavy weight of responsibilities on your shoulders. But, be prepared for some more; the weight is about to get heavier as more responsibilities are going to be added. You will no longer enjoy the work, and it will bring down your efficiency level to an extent, feels Ganesha. Also, your kind hearted nature will come to the fore as you will lend a helping hand to those in need.

AQUARIUS

You may receive some good news from the foreign shores today. The day will bring on a positive note and it will remain like that for the whole twenty-four hours. You'll be in a mood to merry and it will be transformed to everyone around you, says Ganesha.

PISCES

Those who work hard to move towards their goals will do well today. It is a good day for business. You will be able to do a lot of new things in your job-business today. With Ganesha's blessings you will definitely succeed, but you need to work hard without getting disappointed.

Was forced to go public about my disorder: Sam

New Delhi: In 2022, actress Samantha Ruth Prabhu revealed that she had been diagnosed with an autoimmune condition called myositis, which led her to take a hiatus from the film industry to prioritise her health. However, she recently disclosed that she felt compelled to share her diagnosis with the world due to the impending release of her female-centric film at the time.

At the *India Today* Conclave 2024, she explained, "I was forced to go public about my disorder. At that time, I had my female-centric film due for release. I was very sick back then. It was hard, and I wasn't ready. There was all sorts of speculation going around, and misinformation was being spread. The producers needed me to promote it, otherwise,

the film would just die." "Given a choice, I wouldn't have come out and announced it. I was called a sympathy queen by the public. In my journey as an actor and as a human being, I have evolved so much. Early on in my career, I was anxious and went up online looking for nasty articles and what was being written about me," she said.

"They have forced me to become the person that I can be proud of. When people are going through a lot of pain, they need a portal to project it. And social media is that portal, I guess. I do really think that," she concluded. Currently on a break from work, Samantha's next project is the Indian adaptation of the global series *Citadel*.



Artists of Vagdevi Literature Trust performed the Odia play *Ebam Kie* on the second evening of the festival at Bhanjakala Mandap, Bhubaneswar, Saturday. Written by Pradip Bhowmick, the play was directed by Pabitra Mohanty. The three-day event will conclude Sunday.

Ankita's quest for diverse roles

Mumbai: Actress Ankita Lokhande is set to return to the silver screen after her successful stint on the reality show *Bigg Boss 17* with the upcoming film *Swatantra Veer Savarkar*. In an exclusive interview, she expressed her desire to explore diverse roles that resonate with her persona.

Reflecting on her portrayal of Swatantra Veer Savarkar's wife, she acknowledged the challenges posed by the relatively lesser-known character. Despite the hurdles, she embraced the opportunity to shape the role, drawing from meticulous research conducted by the team.

Transitioning from television to film, the actress attributed her success to her unwavering passion and openness to diverse opportunities. She emphasised her eagerness to explore varied roles, aiming to inspire and entertain audiences. Ankita wrapped up by expressing her desire to embrace a diverse range of roles that ignite her passion and captivate audiences. While she has thrived at portraying powerful characters, she now seeks lighter, more heart-warming roles that allow her to showcase her true self and bring joy to viewers.



Kriti dispels myths about female actors

Mumbai: Actress Kriti Sanon, who is all geared up for the release of *Crew*, shared that the film is not about men bashing, but audiences witnessing that women can do comedy very well.

During the trailer launch, she said, "I think we always get to work with men mostly, and it was very refreshing to actually work with women. Women who are so talented and whom I have admired for years. And I think we all look up to them for what they bring to the table, the fact that they have been reinventing themselves, and how."

"And I think the way this film is written and the way these characters are, there is so much life and so much chemistry between these three. And what people are loving, what I am hearing is the chemistry in general, and that's about the *Crew*," shared the *Mimi* actress.

She concluded, "I feel that whenever a film featuring women or girls releases, everyone thinks it is very serious, or there will be some issue, or there will be men bashing, and all that. So there is nothing like that in this movie. You can see that women can do comedy very well. I really hope you all love it."

DRAMA ROUND-UP

Eight-day national festival from Mar'19

Bhubaneswar: Paradip-based cultural organisation Canmass will organise Canfest-2024, an eight-day national theatre festival, at Jaydev Sadan in Port City from March 19.

Nine plays - *Swaha* (Hindi) by Darpan-Lucknow, *Eka* (Odia) by Ajit-Bhubaneswar, *Nishanga Nayak* (Odia) by Canmass-Paradip, *Jajati* (Hindi) by Hum Theatre-Bhopal, *Ulpi* (Koshali) by Mirror Theatre-Belpahar, *Bhav Nu Abhav* (Sambalpur) by Adrusya Natya Ashram-Sambalpur, *Kya Karega Qazi* (Hindi) by Yuva Rang Mancha-Ranchi, *Aniket Sandhya* (Bengali) by HA-Za-Ba-Ra-La-Kolkata and *Nagmandal* (Hindi) by Black Peart Arts-New Delhi - will be performed during the event.

The organisation will also hold a four-day parallel festival - from March 20 to 24 - at other auditoriums in the city, shared Canmass secretary Sriman Narayan Mishra.



Uttar Purush's Nataka Parikrama-2024

Bhubaneswar: The City's one of the oldest theatre troupes Uttar Purush is set to hold its annual theatre festival here at Rabindra Mandap from March 20.

The three-day event comprises three Odia plays namely *Mrugaya*, *Jaha Kahi Huena* and *Saralara Chithi*.

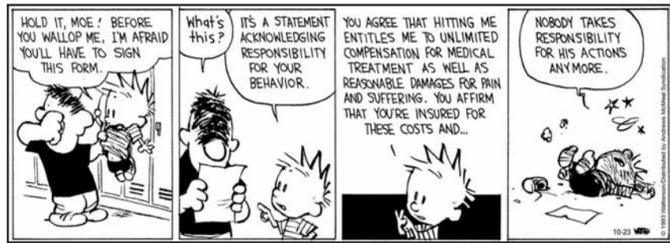
Mrugaya, written by Biswajit Das, will be directed by Nishikanta Nayak and Rashes Patanga, while Narayan Sahoo's *Jaha Kahi Huena* will be staged under the direction of Prasanna Mishra. The third and last play, *Saralara Chithi*, is adapted from Amrita Pritam's original story Dastabej. The play is dramatised and directed by Debadutta Pati.

The organisation's president, Prasanna Mishra, and secretary, Debadutta Pati requested the theatre lovers at a presser held here at Shikhyak Bhawan to turn up in large number to support Odia theatre.

PEANUTS



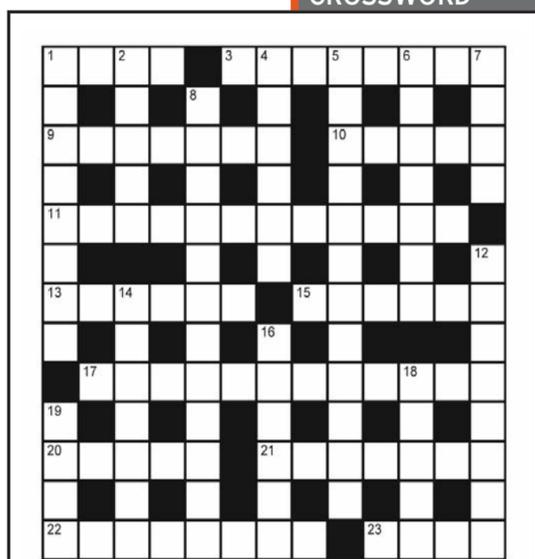
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



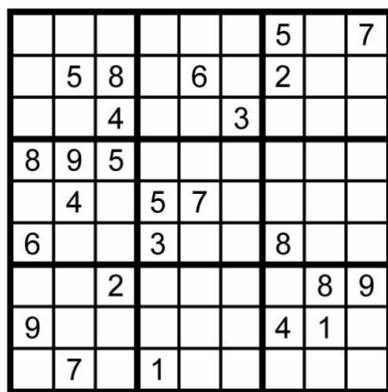
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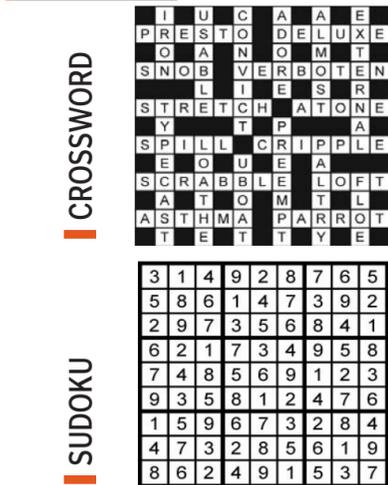
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- Across**
- 1 Facial expression
 - 3 Shipping hazards
 - 9 Thimbleweed, e.g.
 - 10 Rational
 - 11 No longer available
 - 13 Entry
 - 15 Robert Louis Stevenson character
 - 17 Money transport (8,4)
 - 20 Stud
 - 21 Foot pedal
 - 22 Like some degrees
 - 23 Impose, as a tax
 - Down**
 - 1 Angel type
 - 2 Type of conference
 - 4 Coxcombs
 - 5 Nutritionist's advice (8,4)
 - 6 Weak and wobbly
 - 7 Fizzy drink
 - 8 Fuel-efficient transport (5,7)
 - 12 Stormy
 - 14 Procession of sorts
 - 16 Albert Camus, e.g.
 - 18 Befuddle
 - 19 Curved shape

SUDOKU

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, fill in the boxes in such a manner that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.



SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

Youth hacked to death in City

DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

Bhubaneswar, March 16: A 25-year-old man was hacked to death with a sword by a group of five men and a woman near Chintamaniswar Temple, under Laxmisagar police station limits, over an alleged triangular love affair, Friday night.

The deceased has been identified as Anjan Kumar Behera, a native of Bhadrak district, who worked at a catering company here. Officers at the Laxmisagar police station said that the prime accused in the case, Kanhu Charan Pradhan alias Pinku, and his accomplices are on the run.

Police said one Gautam Sahoo, a close friend of Anjan, was into a relationship with a woman. After sometime, the woman started seeing Kanhu. She snapped all her ties with Gautam and even ignored his calls, an officer privy to investigation of the case, said.

Friday, Kanhu allegedly contacted Gautam over telephone, asking the latter to meet him near Chintamaniswar Temple to resolve the 'matter'. Following this, Gautam turned up at the designated place, accompanied by Anjan and two others. Kanhu was already present there along with the woman and four of his friends.

However, during the discussions, an altercation ensued between both the sides. When Anjan intervened, an enraged Kanhu allegedly pulled out a sword and struck sharp blows on the former's arms and chest, leaving him grievously injured. Gautam managed to escape in the melee. Locals took Anjan to Capital Hospital where doctors declared

People of Odisha going to create new record: Naveen

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 16: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Saturday said the people of the state are going to create a new record in the political history of the country in the next Assembly elections.

Patnaik, the ruling BJD president, apparently meant that after winning the Assembly polls to be held between May 13 and June 1, he would become the longest-serving chief minister of India.

The Assembly and Lok Sabha elections will be held simultaneously in the state.

"In a few months, the people of Odisha are going to create a new record in the political history of this country. I always feel profoundly blessed and humbled by the intense faith of the people which also inspires me to work harder," Patnaik said while addressing the last Cabinet meeting of his fifth term in office.

The BJD president is now the second longest-serving chief min-



We will usher in an Odisha with secure roots and powerful wings. With all your blessings, the Juggernaut will roll on

NAVEEN PATNAIK | CHIEF MINISTER

ister in India after former Sikkim CM Pawan Kumar Chamling, who remained in power for 24 years and 166 days from December 12, 1999, to May 27, 2019. Patnaik, on the other hand, has been at the helm of Odisha since March 5, 2000.

"We will usher in an Odisha with secure roots and powerful wings. With all your blessings, the Juggernaut will roll on," Patnaik said.

Noting that the next 10 years

will be decisive for Odisha's future, Patnaik said, "We will herald an empowered Odisha - modern, dynamic and responsive - primarily for our youths, women and children, entrepreneurs, farmers and tribals."

At the Cabinet meeting, Patnaik said he took oath as CM for the fifth time May 29, 2019. On that day, he convened the first Cabinet after the elections where the ruling BJD's manifesto was approved as the government's priority.

"Today as we sit for the last Cabinet of this term, I express my gratitude to the people of Odisha for repeatedly reposing their faith in us. I feel blessed to have been chosen to serve the four-and-a-half crore people of Odisha," he said. The BJD president also recalled how his first term started in the backdrop of a devastated cyclone and the government's empty coffers. Even before he started this term in 2019, he remembered how Odisha faced a rare summer cyclone, the first in 43 years.

KEJRIWAL GETS BAIL IN EXCISE 'SCAM'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 16: A Delhi court Saturday granted bail to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in two complaints filed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) against him for skipping summons in a money laundering case

linked to the alleged Delhi Excise policy scam.

The court of Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Divya Malhotra also allowed Kejriwal to leave the courtroom.

"Offence being bailable, accused Arvind Kejriwal is admitted to bail," it said.

The court further directed the ED to hand over documents related to the complaints to Kejriwal. The ED has filed two complaints before the magistrate court, seeking Kejriwal's prosecution for skipping multiple summonses issued to him in the case.

2 minor girls drown

Kalinganagar: Two minor girls drowned in a pond at Balungabandi village under Jakhapura panchayat and Danagadi police outpost limits in Jajpur district, police said Saturday. The deceased cousins were identified as Gurubari, 4, daughter of Ranjan Nayak and Sukumari, 3, daughter of Arjun Munda of Mayurbhanj district. Two families from Mayurbhanj were working in a farmhouse in Jajpur district. As usual, they were playing near the pond Friday evening and it is suspected that they might have slipped into the waterbody and drowned.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I know a way to put pressure on the Supreme Court. Let's transfer all their bank accounts to the SBI

WEATHER	
	BBSR CTC
Max Temp	33.0°C 33.2°C
Min Temp	25.6°C 25.0°C
Humidity	68% 57%
Rainfall	Nil Nil
FORECAST	
CLEAR SKY MAINLY	

21 power transmission projects get approval

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 16: The state Cabinet, chaired by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, Saturday approved a proposal for construction and upgradation of 21 transmission projects by Odisha Power Transmission Corporation Limited (OPTCL) within five years.

The upgradation of the transmission project will be taken up under Phase II of the Odisha Transmission System Strengthening Programme (OTSSP) with 30 per cent equity support from the state government which will be a part of the Chief Minister's Power Development Programme (CMPDP) from FY 2023-24 to 2027-28.

With several new power-intensive industries coming up in the state and growth in overall power demand, the necessity of creation of a new grid substation and upgradation of the existing transmission infrastructure was felt, official sources said. OPTCL will take up eight projects which are fi-

nancially non-remunerative under Phase I of the OTSSP.

To ensure steady and reliable power supply to upcoming industries like Paradeep Plastic Park, Angul Aluminium Park, Bhadrak Textile Park and Neulapoi Industrial Estate and to augment the existing infrastructure in line with present demand, OPTCL has come up with a proposal to take up six grid sub-stations, upgrade existing grid sub-stations and transmission lines and implement SAS (Substation Automation System) which are financially remunerative under Phase II of OTSSP.

The Cabinet also approved a proposal of the Revenue and Disaster Management department to sanction leasing of 2.5 decimal of government land at Chauliaganj in favour of DAV SCB Medical Public School.

It also decided to exempt a premium of ₹5.06 crore for the lease of government land at Chandrasekharpur in favour of Utkal Yadav Mahasabha for the construction of Yadav Bhawan.

Mice causing extinction of seabirds

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Cape Town, March 16: Mice accidentally introduced to a remote island near Antarctica 200 years ago are breeding out of control because of climate change, and they are eating seabirds and causing major harm in a special nature reserve with "unique biodiversity."

Now conservationists are planning a mass extermination using helicopters and hundreds of tons of rodent poison, which needs to be dropped over every part of Marion Island's 115 square miles to ensure success.

If even one pregnant mouse survives, their prolific breeding ability means it may have all been for nothing. The Mouse-Free Marion project — pest control on a grand scale — is seen as critical for the ecology of the uninhabited South African territory and the wider Southern Ocean. It would be the largest eradication of its kind if it succeeds.

The island is home to globally significant populations of nearly 30 bird species and a rare undisturbed habitat for wandering albatrosses — with their 10-foot wingspan — and many others. Undisturbed, at least, until stowaway house mice



arrived on seal hunter ships in the early 1800s, introducing the island's first mammal predators.

The past few decades have been the most significant for the damage the mice have caused, said Dr. Anton Wolfaardt, the Mouse-Free Marion project manager. He said their numbers have increased hugely, mainly due to rising temperatures from climate change, which has turned a cold, windswept island into a warmer, drier, more hospitable home.

"They are probably one of the most successful animals in the world. They've got to all sorts of places," Wolfaardt said. But now on Marion Island, "Their breeding season has been extended, and this has resulted in a massive increase

in the densities of mice."

Mice don't need encouragement. They can reproduce from about 60 days old and females can have four or five litters a year, each with seven or eight babies.

Rough estimates indicate there are more than a million mice on Marion Island. They are feeding on invertebrates and, more and more, on seabirds — both chicks in their nests and adults.

A single mouse will feed on a bird several times its size. Conservationists snapped a photo of one perched on the bloodied head of a wandering albatross chick.

The phenomenon of mice eating seabirds has been recorded on only a handful of the world's islands.

The scale and frequency of mice preying on seabirds on Marion has risen alarmingly, Wolfaardt said, after the first reports of it in 2003. He said the birds have not developed the defence mechanisms to protect themselves against these unfamiliar predators and often sit there while mice nibble away at them. Sometimes multiple mice swarm over a bird.

Conservationists estimate that if nothing is done, 19 seabird species will disappear from the island in 50 to 100 years, he said.

BJD has edge in Odisha: SWOT analysis of parties

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 16: The political landscape in Odisha presents an interesting dynamic with Biju Janata Dal (BJD), led by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, maintaining its stronghold over the state for more than two decades.

Despite challenges from its former ally, the BJP, which has expanded its influence, and the Congress, which is currently in third place, BJD remains the dominant force.

Elections to the 21 Lok Sabha and 147 Assembly constituencies in Odisha will be held in four phases - May 13, 20, 25 and June 1.

Here is Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis of parties.

Biju Janata Dal (BJD) STRENGTHS

CM Naveen Patnaik's popularity and clean image despite ruling for over 24 years is the biggest strength of the regional outfit. Patnaik's charisma still remains active and he has been increasing his popularity for his simplicity.

Of the 4.5 crore population of the state, BJD has a membership of over one crore and a dedicated cadre.

Patnaik's women empowerment activities have already created a solid vote bank for the party.

WEAKNESSES

Patnaik is also the weakness of the party because he is the sole attraction of people.

The party has over 100 MLAs, but not a single leader can manage the party's affairs in the absence of Patnaik.

BJD's soft tilting towards BJP-led NDA government at the

FIGURES SAY IT ALL

Total Electors: 3,34,73,561
Male: 1,69,55,369
Female: 1,65,14,754
Transgender: 3,438
18-19 years: 7,99,334
Senior Citizens (85+): 3,02,273
Polling stations across Odisha: 37,809

Centre is also considered a weakness.

OPPORTUNITIES

Being Odisha's biggest political party, BJD hopes that it will continue to rule the state as long as the 'mothers' (women) continue to bless the party.

THREATS

BJD is its own threat as it has created many dissidence leaders.

There are dissidents or rebel leaders in all the 147 Assembly and 21 Lok Sabha seats. As many as 10,000 aspirants have applied for party tickets for 168 seats (147 Assembly seats and 21 LS seats).

Alleged corruption and discrimination in the implementation of welfare schemes may also cause problems for the party.

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)

BJP has remained a politically non-performer for around a decade after its electoral ties with BJD ended in 2009. It is now gradually creating its base with the rise in the popularity of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It is now the main opposition party in the state. However, the possible alliance between the two parties could upset the political spectrum in Odisha.

STRENGTHS

BJP's strength in Odisha is Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Several opinion polls have concluded that Modi is the most popular national leader in Odisha.

His able leadership and pro-Hindu measures, particularly the opening of the Ram Temple at Ayodhya, has strengthened the party base in the state.

WEAKNESSES

BJP does not have a leader in the state matching the image and stature of Naveen Patnaik. Its leaders are mostly limited to certain constituencies.

The party lacks connection with the RSS cadre and ABVP members across the state. The infighting among senior leaders is also a major weakness.

OPPORTUNITIES

The party sees a lot of opportunities in Odisha because the anti-incumbency factor has started hitting the ruling BJD.

As a section of people want to see new faces, the alternative in the state is the BJP and not the Congress, which is struggling for its existence in Odisha.

THREATS

BJP's threat is that its leaders are mostly urban-centric and party connect with the grassroots is less. There is no programme for the village-level leaders which keeps them politically idle.

As the party has not been able to take Modi government's welfare schemes to the people, it may not get the required benefits.

Congress

The party hasn't been in power in Odisha for over 24 years. The party, which was struggling in the No. 2 position till the 2019 elections, has further gone down. However, the party sees hope if there is an electoral alliance between the BJD and the BJP.

STRENGTHS

The party does not need an introduction. The people across the state are acquainted with

the Hand symbol of the oldest party. Though the party has suffered a lot during the last two decades in Odisha, its people are still there in all the 314 blocks of the state.

The party's strength lies in the unpopularity of rival parties.

WEAKNESSES

The main weakness of the party is lack of unity among leaders and the prevailing crab culture in the party. Though the party is out of power for over two decades, the leaders continue to fight against each other for a post.

The party has no such financial backing for which many good candidates fear to fight elections against the BJD and the BJP.

The party has no backing from its national pool as its leader Rahul Gandhi does not give much importance to Odisha.

OPPORTUNITIES

The party is the natural opposition choice for people as the ruling BJD and opposition BJP walk in the same direction whether in alliance or not. As both parties work in tandem, people naturally support Congress as the only alternative.

The party can grow in the event there is an alliance between the BJD and the BJP.

THREAT

For remaining out of power for a long time, the party faces a strong resource scarcity. Though about 3,000 people have applied for party tickets for 168 seats (both LS and Assembly), many of them face funds shortage.

Both Modi and Patnaik, being at the height of popularity, could also work against the Congress's electoral prospects.

WHERE & WHEN

Odisha will vote for 21 Lok Sabha and 147 Assembly seats in four phases and the counting of votes will be held June 4. Here is the poll schedule:

PHASE	PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY	ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCY
Phase I (May 13)	Nabarangpur, Koraput, Berhampur and Kalahandi	Nuapada, Khariar, Umerkote, Jharigam, Nabarangpur, Dabugam, Lanjigarh, Junagarh, Dharmgarh, Bhawanipatna, Narla, Chhatrapur, Gopalpur, Berhampur, Digapahandi, Chikiti, Mohana, Paralakhemundi, Gunupur, Bissam Cuttack, Rayagada, Laxmipur, Kotpad, Jeypore, Koraput, Pottangi, Malkangiri and Chitrakonda
Phase II (May 20)	Aska, Kandhamal, Bolangir, Bargarh and Sundargarh	Padampur, Bijepur, Bargarh, Attabira, Bhatli, Brajarajnar, Jharsuguda, Talsara, Sundargarh, Biramitrapur, Raghunathpali, Rourkela, Rajgangpur, Bonai, Birmaharajpur, Sonepur, Loisingha, Patnagarh, Bolangir, Titlagarh, Kantabanji, Baliuguda, G Udayagiri, Phulbani, Kantamal, Boudh, Daspalla, Bhanjanagar, Polasara, Kabisuryanagar, Khalikote, Aska, Surada, Sanakhemundi and Hinjili
Phase III (May 25)	Sambalpur, Keonjhar, Dhenkanal, Puri, Bhubaneswar and Cuttack	Kuchinda, Rengali, Sambalpur, Rairakhol, Deogarh, Telkoi, Ghasipura, Anandapur, Patna, Keonjhar, Champua, Karanjia, Dhenkanal, Hindol, Kamakhyanagar, Parjanga, Pallahara, Talcher, Angul, Chhendipada, Athamallik, Baramba, Banki, Athagarh, Barabati-Cuttack, Choudwar-Cuttack, Cuttack-Sadar, Puri, Brahmagiri, Satyabadi, Pipili, Jayadev, Bhubaneswar (Central), Bhubaneswar (North), Bhubaneswar (Ekamra), Jatani, Begunia, Khurda, Chilika, Ranpur, Khandapada and Nayagarh
Phase IV (June 1)	Mayurbhanj, Balasore, Bhadrak, Kendrapara, Jagatsinghpur and Jajpur	Jashipur, Saraskana, Rairangpur, Bangripasi, Udala, Badasahi, Baripada, Morada, Jaleswar, Bhograi, Basta, Balasore, Remuna, Nilgiri, Soro, Simulia, Bhandaripokhari, Bhadrak, Basudevpur, Dhamnagar, Chandabali, Binjharpur, Bari, Barachana, Dharmasala, Jajpur, Korei, Sukinda, Niali, Salipur, Mahanga, Patkura, Kendrapara, Aul, Rajanagar, Mahakalapada, Paradip, Tirtol, Balikuda-Erasama, Jagatsinghpur, Kakatpur and Nimapara

Dental check-up at Genesis Healing Centre

Phulnakhara: Keeping in mind that dental care is fairly an uncharted area of concern in a rehabilitation centre and in general, a free oral screening camp was organised by the Department of Oral Medicine and Radiology, Hi-Tech Dental College and Hospital at Genesis Healing Centre-Drug and Alcohol De-addiction Centre, Patia wherein 42 in-house patients were screened. The camp was conducted by the joint efforts of Dr Debjyoti Bardhan, head of the department of Oral Medicine and Radiology and Biswajit Panda, managing trustee of Genesis Healing Centre. It was a delight interacting with the patients at the rehabilitation centre. Among the patients who were screened, a variety of dental conditions including those of dental caries, missing teeth, mobile teeth, dry mouth as well as some precancerous lesions like oral submucous fibrosis and leukoplakia were spotted owing to their history of consumption of tobacco and smoking.

CLASSIFIED

AFFIDAVIT

By an affidavit before Notary Public, Koraput, vide No. 733 Dtd. 12.03.2024 I, Ramakrishna Surdev, S/o. Late Narayana Surdev, Vill.: Dabuguda, P.O.: Parli, P.S.: Borigumma, Dist.: Koraput declare that now onwards I will be known as Ramakrishna Surdeo for all future purposes.

My name was Mohini Una. I have changed my name to MOHINI VOONA. Henceforth I will be identified as MOHINI VOONA.

ACCOMMODATION

Free Accommodation for Senior Citizens and Mentally ill person with all Facilities. Contact- 9337160036, 7325991853.



PROMOTING INCLUSIVITY: Visitors browsing through a photo exhibition organised on the 4th anniversary of 'Art for Autism' at Lalit Kala Akademi in Bhubaneswar, Saturday

IMD predicts rain for next five days

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 16: Thunderstorms with lightning accompanied by gusty surface wind speed reaching 30-40 kmph is very likely to occur at one or two places over the districts of Odisha during the next five days, India Meteorological Department (IMD) said, Saturday.

As a result of this, day temperature is likely to come down in state by 3 to 5 degree Celsius next week. IMD issued the Yellow Warning in Odisha for the next five days and the Orange Warning only for March 19.

In its mid-day bulletin, the IMD centre mentioned, "Maximum temperatures observed appreciable fall at one or two places over the districts of North Odisha and no large change at elsewhere over the districts of Odisha. They were appreciably above normal at one

or two places over the districts of Interior Odisha, above normal at many places over the districts of Interior Odisha, at a few places over the districts of coastal Odisha and normal at elsewhere over the districts of Odisha."

The MeT office said thunderstorm with lightning accompanied by gusty surface wind speed reaching 40-50 kmph is likely to occur at one or two places over the districts of Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Deogarh, Angul and Jajpur March 19.

No large change will occur in the Maximum (day) temperature during next three days and a gradual fall by 3°C to 5°C at many places over the districts of Odisha in the subsequent four days. Also, there will be no large change in the Minimum (night) temperature during next four days and thereafter gradual fall by 2°C to 3°C at many places over the districts of Odisha.

10K Kandhamal youths get appointment letters

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, March 16: As many as 10,000 unemployed youths from 20 blocks of Kandhamal Parliamentary Constituency received employment letters here recently through an initiative by Kandhamal MP and KIIT & KISS founder Achyuta Samanta.

"The employment letters have been distributed to the selected candidates through the Block Development Officers (BDO), with Samanta also personally handing over letters to selected youths in some locations," informed a KIIT official. Samanta requested all the candidates to join the company where they were recruited at for the happiness of their family members and to advance their careers.

The mass appointments are an outcome of a mega job fair organised at Phulbani for the youths of Kandhamal



Parliamentary Constituency February 21 with the help of KIIT Deemed to be University and the support of Kandhamal District Administration.

"As many as 20,000 unemployed youths from 20 blocks of the

Special Handloom Expo launched at Ekamra Haat

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 16: To help weavers of the state who are part of self-help groups (SHGs) enhance their income, a Special Handloom Expo-2024 was inaugurated here at Ekamra Haat, Saturday.

As per the annual calendar approved by the State Handloom, Textiles and Handicrafts department, the expo is being organized by Sambalpur Bastralaya, with POHI-2023-24 funds, to boost sales of handloom items produced by the weaver communities of the state.

The Expo was inaugurated by Textiles director Pranati Chhotray, in presence of Mamata Nayak, department joint secretary, Binapani Naik, OFS, FA-cum-joint secretary, HT&H department, Debajit Nandy, joint director of textiles,

Hrushikesh Mahali, managing director of Sambalpur Bastralaya and Hemanta Kumar Mishra, marketing officer of Sambalpur Bastralaya.

"The Special Expo will continue till March 31. A total of 34 stalls have been set up in which PWCS/SHGs of Bargarh, Cuttack, Subarnapur, Athagarh, Baripada, Balasore, Patanagarh, Nayagarh, Khurda, Koraput and Boudh zone, including Sambalpur Bastralaya, would showcase and sale their products," said an official.

The official added that the stalls have been allotted to participants free of cost. "This is a common platform where customers will get handloom products from all over the state at a reasonable price with 10 per cent rebate. So, they should participate in large numbers," he added.

employment letters in a single day," said the official.

From the 10,000 youths, companies based in Odisha have employed 3,500 youths. In the next phase, another 3,500 candidates will be given employment letters. The monthly salary of these candidates, as per sources, will be between Rs 12,000 to Rs 35,000.

"It is said to be the first of its kind in India to organise such a mega job fair in a small town like Phulbani, with so many companies participating and so many youths being recruited in one day. Samanta has worked hard for six months to bring so many companies to this mega job fair," said the KIIT official.

On the occasion, Samanta said that this is an effort on his part to fulfill the promise he made during the elections regarding the development of education, health, employment, and tourism for the people of Kandhamal.

FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS

Acharya Vihar-Dayal Agency-9437135727, A.P. Tours and Travel, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur- 9861301598, Aurobindo Market-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, Airport Road-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, Anish Infotech- Tankapani Road-9861341488, Bapuji Nagar- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, Baramunda Rental Colony-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, Baramunda Housing Board Colony-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, Cuttack Road-Alishan Snacks-8984236754, District Center (Chandrasekharpur)-Sai Google Mart-9776056507, Forest Park-DTDC Couriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, IRC Village-Bapi Xerox-9090090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816, Janpath-Krupajal Book Store-7978646669, Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, Jagannath Mobile Point- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-8260697560, Khandagiri- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, KIIT Road-Jugad Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Sagar-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, Lewis Road-Spider Web-7809186415, Metro Satellite City-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, Madhusudan Nagar-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, Maa Santoshi travels- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, Nayapalli- The Cake Room- 7873660137, Near Mayfair Lagoon-Cookiemana-9439491273, Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels-9668284823, Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, Net Square- Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, Priyadarshini Market-Astro Point-9938134346, R.N. General Store-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, Sahid Nagar- Maa Communication- 9437353424, Sahini General Store- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, Satya Nagar-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, Samantapur- Download Point-7504557743, Sailashree Vihar-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, Saheed Nagar-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, Siripur-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-9777682449, Sushree fashion- Jagmara-9938714347, Shree Vision- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, Unit-3-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, Unit-7- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, VSS Nagar-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, XIMB Square-LD Books-9658061373.

Koraput coffee growers in a fix

WHILE COFFEE PLANTATIONS ALL OVER THE WORLD HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY CLIMATE CHANGE, ITS IMPACT HAS BEEN SEEN IN KORAPUT AS WELL

POST NEWS NETWORK

Koraput, March 16: Due to climate change, weather pattern as well as seasonal cycle is getting disturbed across the world. As a result, abnormalities in rainfall, scorching summer temperatures, erratic cold during winters have become usual.

While coffee plantations all over the world have been affected by climate change, its impact has been seen in Koraput as well and the coffee farmers in this district are a worried lot.

Koraput district is situated in the Eastern Ghats at an altitude of 3,000 feet above sea level. The climate, soil and topography of Koraput district have always been favourable for coffee farming.

Every year around the last week of October, the rains stop completely here and the bright sun before the onset of winter helps ripen the coffee fruits.

However, due to last year's irregular rainfall in Koraput region, coffee cultivation this year has been affected, said Sujay Pradhan, a coffee entrepreneur at Brown Valley coffee garden in Chhotaguda village under Dasmantpur block of the district.



Expressing concern, Sushant Panda, an entrepreneur at Saptagiri coffee garden in Rajuguda village, blamed climate change and erratic rains for a 30-40 per cent decrease in coffee harvest. Ayyappa, a special officer of international

company Tata Coffee, said that coffee farmers need to look at how they can adapt to the changing climate and grow the cash crop.

Rajeshwari Reddy, a woman entrepreneur of Madhu Agro Coffee Plantation in Kelar, said Ayyappa has alerted her about how to increase the production by managing coffee plantations in view of the changing climate.

Notably, coffee plantation was first introduced in Koraput by the erstwhile Maharaja of Jeypore Rajbahadur Rama Chandra Deo, in the 1930s.

However, after the abolition of the zamindari system in 1951, the state Soil Conservation department undertook coffee plantations to prevent siltation in the Machhkund basin in 1958.

However, with the support of the state government and the Coffee Board of India, the cash crop cultivation has brought smiles to the faces of tribal people in the district and 'Koraput Coffee' is emerging as a brand name.

Owing to the increased demand, 1,700 hectare land in the district is now under the cash crop cultivation. Furthermore, in the next three to five years, there is a target to cultivate coffee on 5,000 hectare land.

The coffee grown here is a unique blend, consisting of 100 per cent Arabica coffee and has carved a niche for itself in and outside the country for its unique taste and quality.

One satisfied customer will bring 11 new ones: Kumar

The journey that Sridurga Retail started decades ago transformed the way fashion-conscious people of Odisha shopped for themselves and their families. Starting from a single store in Berhampur that stocked the most fashionable garments to a one-stop destination now for men's clothing and women's style wear, Sridurga has emerged as a name that the people of Odisha trust.

Born in a business family, **Kotri Tirumal Kumar**, managing director of **Sridurga Retail Pvt Ltd**, has maintained the customer-centric approach of the store. In a conversation with **Orissa POST**, Kumar shares his entrepreneurial experience. Excerpts...



■ **How has your journey been so far in this competitive market?**

■ There is no smooth transition towards success without competition as it empowers your will and brings excitement to the mind making you explore new ideas. Similarly, while competition is a criterion for business growth, it is a must for business presence and testing your capabilities.

■ **As the garment industry is surging, what is your USP?**

■ Over 50 years have passed since Sridurga started from Berhampur. In the last 10 years, we have opened two stores in Bhubaneswar. It is simply the love and trust of our customers towards us. Similarly, we provide customers with trending styles, unique designs, quality products and services. Sridurga has almost all types of clothing of different designs and brands for men, women and kids as well as affordable home furnishings. Our speciality is best quality unique saree collections as we source them from all over India and make them available in all our stores at reasonable price range.

■ **What are your expansion plans?**

■ Expansion is imperative in order to assert presence in the highly-competitive market and to maintain the status of a popular retail store. This year we have planned to open retail stores and outlets in major cities of Odisha including Bhubaneswar and also in Andhra Pradesh. By

opening branches in all major cities of the country, we hope to expand our brand presence across India.

■ **How important is customer satisfaction?**

■ For us, the customer is God. So we are always committed to fulfilling our responsibilities towards them. Customer satisfaction is a key part in this line of work. According to their preferences and demands, we prioritise transparent service and provide quality products at reasonable prices. One satisfied customer will bring 11 new customers eventually adding to your business.

■ **Are offers required to survive in business?**

■ Manufacturers announce offers through us from time to time even if there is no requirement. As a result, the offers bring both the customer and the company closer together. This also increases the transactions and customers' needs can be fulfilled through the offers.

■ **What about new products and offers this season?**

■ We especially focus on seasonal business. A wide range of new and designer products for both brides, grooms and families are being made available as the wedding season rolls on. Especially in this season we

have given more emphasis on new trending designs of sarees, lehengas, salwar suits, serwanis and kurtas. Also, keeping in view the wedding season, a special offer called 'prestige' has been launched. Through this offer, the customer can get 10% special discount for the year and other benefits on the purchase billing.

■ **What would you say to aspiring entrepreneurs?**

■ Retail business is always good. Today's youth do not have the attitude of tolerance and hard work. But if you work hard, you will get success in business. Especially before starting a business, one requires skilled and experienced human resources, hard work, dedication and patience.



RED REBEL SURRENDERS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir, March 16: A hardcore Maoist cadre identified as Somnath Achala alias Mahesh surrendered before the Inspector General of Police, Northern Range, Sambalpur and the Superintendent of Police, Bolangir, Saturday morning. IG Himnsu Kumar Lal greeted the Red rebel with flowers at the district police headquarters office here.



Mahesh, an Area Committee Member (ACM) of the Barghar-Bolangir-Mahasamund (BBM) division of the banned Communist Party of India (Maoist), is a resident of Kanker district of Chhattisgarh.

Mahesh had his involvement in several violent incidents in both Chhattisgarh and Odisha while working with the banned Left outfit since 2006. He had been active at Gandhamardan area of Bolangir-Barghar districts since 2011.

Mahesh decided to shun violence and leave the Maoist organisation as he was frustrated and disturbed over the continuous unethical activities within the organisation, including sexual harassment of female cadres, extortion of funds, and the lack of public support.

He will be rehabilitated as per the government policy applicable for Maoists who join the mainstream, said Bolangir SP Khilari Rishikesh Dnyandeo.

Maoist camp busted in Kalahandi

HUGE CACHE OF AMMUNITION SEIZED DURING COMBING OPERATION

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhawanipatna, March 16: Security forces busted a Maoist camp and recovered a huge cache of ammunition, Maoist banners among others during an operation in Kalahandi district, police said Saturday.

A joint team comprising CRPF and the Special Operation Group (SOG) personnel seized the items from the Gundi-Jugsaipatna reserve forest area near Manaska village under Bhawanipatna sadar police limits during the anti-Maoist operation March 14, Kalahandi Superintendent of Police (SP) Abhilash G said during a presser held at Bhawanipatna Reserve Grounds Saturday.

The press conference was attended by CRPF Commandant Pankaj Choudhury, Assistant Commandant Balaram and SK Vajpayee of SOG among others.

The seized items include six rounds of ammunition for AK-47 rifles, 42 rounds of ammunition



for SLR rifles, two rounds for INSAS rifles, nine rounds of 303 bullets, 74 gelatin sticks, 10 electric detonators, 36 hand grenades, a battery, 500 grams of gun powder, and 250 grams of iron nails, the police officer said, adding that Maoist uniforms, banners and other materials were also seized. One land mine was destroyed at the scene.

The security personnel also found a Maoist poster calling for revenge against police action in Taparang forest where three of their cadres were killed recently. The members of the banned outfit have also called for halting mining works in the

area in the posters. The joint team carried out a combing operation starting Thursday night after getting a tip-off about the movement of a group of armed Maoists.

The red rebels of Bansadhara-Ghumusar-Nagabali (BGN) division and Kandhamal-Kalahandi-Boudh-Nayagarh (KKBN) division, around 10 to 12 in number, were likely planning to commit something big. However, they escaped from the spot as they saw the security personnel approaching their camp, he said. Combing operations are on to apprehend the Maoists, the SP said.

Poppy plants worth ₹3.10cr destroyed inside Similipal

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, March 16: Karanjia police destroyed a huge plantation of poppy worth around ₹3.10 crore at Jajaguda and Phulabadi areas deep inside Similipal Reserve Forest under Jashipur police limits Saturday.

According to an official press release, as per the instruction of Mayurbhanj SP Suresh an operation was conducted by SDPO Karanjia and IIC Jashipur for the destruction of illegal cultivation of poppy plants (opium) near Jajaguda and Phulabadi villages inside Similipal Tiger Reserve.

Approximately 1,54,980 poppy plants were destroyed from two places by setting

them on fire in the presence of the Executive Magistrate, Forest and Excise department officials and Revenue Inspector. The value of the destroyed opium plants is approximately ₹3.10 crore.

Two cases (No-66/24 and 67/24) have been registered at Jashipur police station under section 18 of the NDPS Act in this connection.

It is worth mentioning that a total of 5,41,000 poppy plants having an approximate value of ₹10.96 crore were destroyed by the police inside the Similipal Tiger Reserve, February 24 and March 10. However, no arrest in this connection has been made by the police.



'Ragi ladoo' finds place in SSD hostel menu

46,666 STUDENTS OF 412 HOSTELS TO BE BENEFITED

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sundargarh, March 16: 'Ragi ladoo' has been included in the menu of the hostels managed by ST & SC Development (SSD) department in Sundargarh district. From now onwards, each student in the SSD hostels will get one ladoo every day throughout the week.

A special programme was organised Thursday in Sundargarh district to mark the development with the participation of more than 350 students. The objective of introducing 'ragi ladoo' is to arrest malnutrition among children and improve their growth. This initiative is supported by the Sundargarh District Mineral Foundation (DMF).

In this launching event, SDC Sundargarh Chairman



Binay Toppo, Zilla Parishad President Sushree Kunti Pradhan, Collector Parag Gavali, and Sundargarh DWO Pabitra Mohan Pradhan were present. The meeting started with Millet anthem and DWO Pradhan welcomed the guests on the dais. Addressing the audience, Collector Parag Gavali informed that the initiative

taken up in Sundargarh district is aimed at reducing malnutrition among children. "We are planning to introduce this 'ragi ladoo' in Mid-Day Meals and among inmates of special schools. This initiative is going to benefit 46,666 students who are staying in 412 SSD hostels in Sundargarh district. Zilla Parishad President Sushree Kunti Pradhan

hailed the initiatives of the Millet Mission. She mentioned that Odisha Millet Mission has helped many women in the state to make a livelihood out of millets and they are becoming entrepreneurs.

Speaking on the occasion, SDC Chairman Toppo said millets are nutritious and have long been a part of tribals' food plate. "This super food was once forgotten but now it has been re-acknowledged by the experts. I am sure this initiative taken by district administration will go a long way in addressing malnutrition issues among children in the district.

Each 'ragi ladoo' serving contains 9.34 kcal and is termed to be highly effective in promoting growth and arresting malnutrition among children.

<p>बैंक ऑफ इंडिया Bank of India</p>	<p>Bank of India Zonal Office: Baripada Bank Of India Building, Lal Bazaar, In front of MKC School, PIN-757001</p>	<p>POSSESSION NOTICE [Rule-8(1)] of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules-2002</p>								
			<p>Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the Bank of India, Balasore Branch under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued Demand Notices calling upon the Borrower/Mortgagor/Guarantor in the loan account given below to repay the amount mentioned in the Notice plus interest & expenses thereon within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said Notice. The Borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower/Mortgagor/Guarantor and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the properties described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules. The Borrower/Mortgagor/Guarantor in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the properties and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the Bank of India, Balasore Branch for an amount mentioned below with interest & expenses thereon. The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of Sub-Section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets.</p>							
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>BALASORE BRANCH / Name & Address of Borrower/Mortgagor/Guarantor</th> <th>Liabilities due as per Notice</th> <th>Date of Demand Notice / Date of Possession</th> <th>Description of the Immovable Property</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Borrower/Mortgagor: Mr. Saroj Kumar Das, S/o.: Gouranga Chandra Das /Guarantor: Mrs. Rina Das, W/o.: Saroj Kumar Das, Both are At: Patrapada, Sunhat, Balasore-756002</td> <td>₹2,63,597.40 + interest & expenses thereon</td> <td>02.01.2024 / 13.03.2024</td> <td>Equitable Mortgage of Land & Residential Property situated at Khata No.: 490/288, Plot No.: 349/1461/2424, Area: Ac.0.040 Dec., Mouza: Patrapada, P.S.: Balasore Town, Dist.: Balasore, Odisha-756002, in the name of Mr. Saroj Kumar Das, S/o.: Gouranga Chandra Das, Bounded by North: Road, South: Plot No.: 347 & 348, East: Plot No.: 355, West: Plot No.: 350 & 347</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	BALASORE BRANCH / Name & Address of Borrower/Mortgagor/Guarantor	Liabilities due as per Notice	Date of Demand Notice / Date of Possession	Description of the Immovable Property	Borrower/Mortgagor: Mr. Saroj Kumar Das, S/o.: Gouranga Chandra Das /Guarantor: Mrs. Rina Das, W/o.: Saroj Kumar Das, Both are At: Patrapada, Sunhat, Balasore-756002	₹2,63,597.40 + interest & expenses thereon	02.01.2024 / 13.03.2024	Equitable Mortgage of Land & Residential Property situated at Khata No.: 490/288, Plot No.: 349/1461/2424, Area: Ac.0.040 Dec., Mouza: Patrapada, P.S.: Balasore Town, Dist.: Balasore, Odisha-756002, in the name of Mr. Saroj Kumar Das, S/o.: Gouranga Chandra Das, Bounded by North: Road, South: Plot No.: 347 & 348, East: Plot No.: 355, West: Plot No.: 350 & 347	<p>Place: Baripada, Date: 16.03.2024</p>	<p>Authorised Officer, Bank of India</p>
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<p>बैंक ऑफ बड़ोदा Bank of Baroda</p>	<p>Regional Office (Sambalpur Region) 1st Floor, G.M. College Chowk, Christian Para, Sambalpur-768001</p>	<p>POSSESSION NOTICE (Immovable/movable Property)</p>												
			<p>(As per Appendix IV read with rule 8(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002)</p> <p>Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the BANK OF BARODA under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued demand notices calling upon the Borrowers to repay the amount mentioned in the notice together with further interest thereon at the contractual rate plus costs, charges and expenses till date of payment within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The Borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrowers and the public in general that the undersigned has taken POSSESSION of the properties described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under Sub-Section (4) of Section 13 of the Act read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest Enforcement Rules, 2002 on the date mentioned below. The Borrowers in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the properties and any dealings with the properties will be subject to the charge of the BANK OF BARODA for an amount stated herein below plus further interest thereon at contractual rate plus costs, charges and expenses till date of payment. The Borrower's attention is invited to provision of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.</p>											
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Let all circumstances, all happenings in life be occasions, constantly renewed for learning more and ever more.

THE MOTHER



NPR, NRC Next?

After CAA, can we expect an NPR and an NRC? That would depend on who in the government one believes. Let's have a look at the real chronology.

After the Shaheen Bagh protests began, the Prime Minister at a rally in Delhi on 22 December 2019 said: "I want to tell the 130 crore people of India that ever since my government came to power in 2014... from then until now... there has been no discussion on NRC anywhere... we only had to implement it in Assam to follow Supreme Court directives."

His claim went against the public statements made by the Home Minister only days earlier. On 10 December, Amit Shah said in Parliament that "Is desh mein NRC hokar rahega"—there will definitely be an NRC in this nation—and "maan ke chaliye NRC aane wala hai" (you must assume that NRC is to come). At an election rally in Jharkhand on 3 December, he had even set a deadline for NRC's completion—2024, saying "each and every infiltrator will be identified and expelled before the next election."

Modi had himself promised to bring the NRC in his 2019 manifesto, which read: "There has been a huge change in the cultural and linguistic identity of some areas due to illegal immigration, resulting in an adverse impact on local people's livelihood and employment. We will expeditiously complete the National Register of Citizens process in these areas on priority. In the future, we will implement the NRC in a phased manner in other parts of the country."

India has no extradition treaty with Bangladesh or Pakistan. Assuming the National Population Register and NRC would locate undocumented migrants the government had no means of sending them anywhere except to detention as it was already doing in Assam.

Two days after that Modi speech, the Union government took the first step towards the NRC. The Cabinet met to approve Rs 8,754 crore for the census to be conducted in 2021 and another Rs 3,941 crore for "update of the National Population Register."

At a press conference, the government underplayed the NPR move. It said that "anyone," including non-citizens, would be counted in the NPR for which "no proof, no document, no biometric" was required because, according to the government, "we trust the public."

The NPR exercise would begin in April 2020 and would conclude in September (COVID halted that). The NPR, the government claimed, would not be used for the NRC. Indeed, Shah specifically stated that the NPR had no relation at all to the NRC: "Iska dur dur tak NRC se kuchh bhi sambandh nahin hai" (It isn't even remotely connected to the NRC). Shah said: "NPR is the database on which policy is made. NRC is a process in which people are asked to prove their citizenship. There is no connection between the two processes, nor can they be used in each other's survey. NPR data can never be used for NRC. Even the laws are different... I assure all the people, specially from the minorities, that NPR is not going to be used for NRC. It's a rumour."

It was not a rumour and the facts came out quite quickly. Twenty-two points of data would be collected in the NPR. The Modi government had added eight new ones. Details would be collected of an individual's Aadhaar, passport, driving licence, mobile number, voter identity card, mother tongue, and the date and birthplace of their parents.

These eight were not in the 2003 Citizenship Rules, which is the legal framework for the NPR, and had been specifically added by the Modi government to some end. What was that end? When reporters pointed this out to then Union minister Prakash Javadekar, he said he had "not seen the form finalised by experts."

Research into the laws and bylaws has showed that the NPR was not only linked to the NRC, it was its very foundation. The NPR list would be scanned by local officials going through it to mark, at their discretion, "doubtful citizens." These individuals would then have to line up and prove their citizenship. Once the list was drawn up and put on display, anyone could complain or name an individual or a family as being "doubtful," even anonymously.

On 24 December 2019, it was reported that NPR was indeed the basis for NRC. Section 14A of the Citizenship Act empowered the government to compulsorily register every citizen of India and issue an identity card and to maintain a National Register of Indian Citizens. The citizenship register would be generated out of this NPR database.

Then someone dug up the 2018-19 annual report of Shah's Home Ministry, in which it had itself said that "the National Population Register is the first step towards the creation of the National Register of Indian Citizens."

On 8 July 2014, then Minister of State for Home Kiren Rijiju said: "It has been decided that NPR should be completed and taken to its logical conclusion, which is creation of a National Register of Indian Citizens by verification of citizenship status of every usual resident in the NPR."

On 26 November 2014, Rijiju told the Rajya Sabha: "The NPR is the first step towards creation of National Register of Indian Citizens by verifying the citizenship status of every usual resident." He made similar statements linking the NPR and the NRC in Parliament on 15 July, 22 July and 23 July of 2014, on 13 May 2015 and 16 November 2016.

COVID is gone. So what is the actual status of NPR and NRC after CAA has arrived? We do not know and that is concerning because it is a serious issue that has become clouded in doublespeak.



Jayati Ghosh

WHILE THE TECHNICAL DETAILS OF INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS MAY SEEM ARCANE OR EVEN TRIVIAL, THEY OFTEN COMMIT GOVERNMENTS TO POLICIES THAT HAVE MAJOR ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES

Research into the laws and bylaws has showed that the NPR was not only linked to the NRC, it was its very foundation

Aakar Patel

FOCUS GLOBAL TAX REFORM

DEVIL IN THE DETAILS



Developing countries must decide between two different subject-to-tax rules, one proposed by the OECD and the other by the United Nations. The UN version is the better alternative, because it would be easier to administer and, more importantly, would enable these countries to generate more revenue

While the technical details of international agreements may seem arcane or even trivial, they often commit governments to policies that have major economic consequences. This is especially true for low- and middle-income countries, which have long been on the receiving end of unfair treaties.

International tax agreements are a case in point. Bilateral tax treaties are rife with inequalities. They tend to be more advantageous for the home countries of multinational companies (MNCs), diverting much-needed resources from developing to developed countries.

Multilateral agreements are not much better. The OECD's Inclusive Framework on Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS), for example, was supposed to ensure that MNCs could be taxed in countries where they operate (as opposed to shifting profits to low-tax jurisdictions). After nearly eight years of tedious negotiations, however, the process has yielded only modest results: a global minimum corporate tax rate of 15 per cent, well below that of most countries. According to the South Centre, developing economies will derive few gains from this global minimum tax, which will benefit mainly tax havens.

And now, developing countries must decide between two different versions of a subject-to-tax rule (STTR), a provision that will be added to existing tax treaties to combat tax-base erosion and profit shifting. The first is from the OECD, with advanced economies leading discussions as part of the BEPS process, while the second is from the United Nations Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters (UNTC).

An STTR is an obvious way to eliminate the "double non-taxation" of certain intra-group payments, including interest, royalties, and fees for services. Most tax treaties restrict the source country's right to apply

a withholding tax to these payments, which are generally deductible from the payer's business income. This in effect erodes the source tax base. MNCs can then channel this income to affiliates that act as conduits and are resident in a country that applies low or zero taxes to such income and, crucially, is a treaty partner with the source country. Including an STTR in all treaties would allow the source country to tax a recipient of such income if the other country does not tax it at an agreed-upon minimum rate.

This may seem like a straightforward solution, but the devil is in the details. According to the BEPS Monitoring Group's comparison of the two agreements, there are crucial differences regarding the degree of complexity and the scope of taxation rights. The OECD's STTR is complex and limited, applying only to specific types of income and to payments between connected legal persons, which could exclude many services in an increasingly automated world. By contrast, the UNTC's model STTR is simpler and gives significantly broader taxing au-

thority to source countries, as it covers all forms of income—including capital gains—regardless of whether it is paid to a related or unrelated entity.

The OECD version further reduces the potential for taxation by requiring thresholds (the UNTC version contains no such requirement). The rules would apply only to connected recipients with aggregate annual covered income of at least €1 million (\$1.1 million) in the jurisdiction, or at least €250,000 if either jurisdiction has a GDP less than €40 billion. It adds a further mark-up threshold, which specifies that the income (other than interest and royalties) must be higher than the direct and indirect costs incurred by the recipient, plus 8.5 per cent. There is no logical—or, indeed, economic—reason for any of these thresholds. They would shrink the tax base and limit revenue potential for the source country, thus serving the interests of MNCs.

Moreover, the OECD's STTR would be more complicated for tax authorities, because it specifies that collection would occur only in the year following that to which the tax applies, based

on tax returns. The UNTC's STTR, however, proposes that the tax could be deductible directly from payments on a current basis. Lastly, the OECD version fixes the minimum tax rate at 9 per cent, taking into account the tax paid by recipients, whereas the UNTC version leaves the rate open to negotiation between countries.

There is no doubt that the UNTC's model STTR would be easier for developing countries to administer and, more importantly, would enable them to generate more revenue. The choice should be a no-brainer, especially because the provision could eventually become part of the multilateral tax convention that is currently under discussion at the UN.

But despite the UNTC version's obvious advantages, the OECD version is already complete and ready for implementation. And the OECD is anxious to get as many countries as possible to sign on to the proposed multilateral instrument at a ceremony planned for mid-2024. Once again, developing countries are coming under pressure to agree to a treaty that appears favourable but, in reality, reduces their potential for revenue generation. Moreover, signing this treaty would effectively prevent governments from adopting a simpler and more effective instrument, like that proposed by the UNTC.

Low- and middle-income countries must be aware of these nuances and their implications. The differences between the two treaties may be technical, but they are not minor. If these countries are to benefit from a more just international taxation framework, they must be willing to fight for the better alternative.

The writer, Professor of Economics at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, is Co-Chair of the Independent Commission for the Reform of International Corporate Taxation.

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SPECTRUM SUSTAINABILITY

India's urban housing challenges



SN Tripathy

BY TACKLING THE HOUSING CRISIS HEAD-ON, INDIA CAN PAVE THE WAY FOR INCLUSIVE URBAN DEVELOPMENT, FOSTERING A HEALTHIER, MORE RESILIENT SOCIETY FOR ALL ITS CITIZENS

Rapid urbanisation in India has given rise to a pressing housing crisis, significantly impacting low-income households. The Technical Group on Urban Housing Shortage, operating under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), has shed light on the severity of the situation. Between 2012 and 2017, the group estimated a staggering shortage of 18.78 million urban houses. This figure alone underscores the magnitude of the housing deficit, revealing the inadequacy of the existing infrastructure to meet the burgeoning urban population's accommodation needs.

Even more alarming is the subsequent revelation by the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations. Their report in 2018 disclosed a disturbing 54 per cent surge in urban housing shortages, catapulting the deficit to a staggering 29 million. This sharp escalation within a relatively short time-frame underscores the urgency for comprehensive and immediate action to address this crisis. The implications of such housing shortages extend beyond

mere numbers; they encapsulate the struggles and challenges faced by millions of low-income families striving for basic shelter. The repercussions encompass the lack of physical dwelling spaces and the associated issues of inadequate sanitation, compromised health conditions, and limited access to education and employment opportunities.

The Interim Budget 2024-25 emphasised the "Housing for All" agenda by launching a scheme to assist deserving sections of the middle class living in rented houses, slums, chawls, and unauthorised colonies in acquiring their own homes. The flagship PMAY-Urban scheme has received a significant allocation of ₹26,170 crore, marking an 18 per cent increase over the previous fiscal year. As of 29 January, 2024, 118.63 lakh houses had been sanctioned under the PMAY-U, with 80.02 lakh houses completed. The scheme comprises four verticals: in situ slum redevelopment (ISSR), credit-linked subsidy for housing (CLSS), affordable housing in partnership (AHP), and enhancement and construction of

beneficiary houses (BLC).

Despite progress, several factors limit the PMAY-U's potential to achieve its goals within the stipulated time frame. ISSR, crucial for addressing slum dwellers' housing needs, faces legislative difficulties, limited private sector participation, and inadequate civil society involvement. Furthermore, the interest rate subvention for housing loans for economically weaker sections (EWS) needs to be increased.

Complications in urban planning, outdated land development regulations, and opaque beneficiary selection processes contribute to inadequate land supply and high land prices. Private sector engagement remains lukewarm, hindering the effective implementation of PMAY-U. Moreover, the lack of local capacity and technical expertise results in the underutilisation of funds.

Urgent steps are needed to unlock PMAY-U's full potential. Legislative hindrances and bureaucratic delays must be addressed, with a focus on slum redevelopment. Subsidy amounts, especially under ISSR, require upward revision. A participatory

approach involving scheme beneficiaries is essential for meaningful implementation. Collaboration with financial sector regulators and planned private sector involvement are crucial. Reflecting on past lessons can guide the development of effective policies to house the growing urban population, particularly those with low incomes.

A multifaceted approach is imperative to mitigate this crisis. Policymakers must consider innovative solutions such as sustainable urban planning, affordable housing initiatives, and community-driven development projects. Collaboration between government bodies, private enterprises, and non-profit organisations is crucial to ensure a holistic and effective strategy. By tackling the housing crisis head-on, India can pave the way for inclusive urban development, fostering a healthier, more resilient society for all its citizens.

The writer is a former Professor of Economics, Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune. Views are personal.

WISDOM CORNER

- Failures, repeated failures, are finger posts on the road to achievement. One fails forward toward success. **CS LEWIS**
- Try to keep your soul young and quivering right up to old age. **GEORGE SAND**
- A life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives. **JACKIE ROBINSON**

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1861:** In Turin, Italy, after more than 10 years of revolution led by such figures as Giuseppe Garibaldi, a parliament assembled and officially proclaimed the unified Kingdom of Italy.
- 1921:** British activist Marie Stopes and her husband opened the first birth control clinic in England—a London facility called the Mothers' Clinic for Constructive Birth Control.
- 1969:** Golda Meir became the fourth prime minister of Israel.
- 1992:** Vote to end apartheid. On this day in 1992, nearly 69 percent of white South African voters backed F.W. de Klerk's reforms—which included the repeal of racially discriminatory laws—and effectively endorsed the dismantling of apartheid.

Personality or party

Sir, With the election dates announced for Lok Sabha and Assemblies there is a frantic exercise of all political parties to declare their candidates. Instead of party symbols, emphasis should be given on the character and integrity of the candidate. The candidate should be honest, truthful, charismatic and faultless. What if, a person with blemishes stands for a popular party? The Parliament is the temple of democracy and the state Assemblies are symbols of democratic values. Personality and not party symbols should be the basis of universal adult franchise.

Violation of order

Sir, This refers to "SC raps SBI for incomplete data" (*Orissa POST*, March 16). It seems that State Bank of India (SBI) is playing hide and seek with the apex court by holding back the desired information relating to the 22217 electoral bonds in spite of the court's explicit order. It is really imperative to know under whose instructions the SBI has kept the apex court in dark. The situation justifiably demands a show cause notice to be served upon the SBI for deliberate violation of the court's orders.

Claim & reality

Sir, The CEO of NITI Aayog has recently made a claim that India's poverty level has fallen below 5% in 2024, based on the findings of the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) 2022-23. His claim would have made the ruling BJP and the mainstream media, which supports the government, to blow the trumpet. But the important question is that how far the claim is close to reality when the CEO's report reportedly didn't substantiate it with any data. Does it make any sense that the poverty level has declined when unemployment in India grew from 10 million in 2011-12 to nearly 38 million in 2022? In fact, the 2023 Multidimensional Poverty Index Report says that a third of all poor people in the world live in South Asia, which is around 389 million, and India contributes significantly to this number, accounting for almost 70% of the increase.

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

Readers of *Orissa POST* are most welcome to contribute letters (200 words), articles and columns (between 750-1250 words). Contributors are requested to send their contact numbers and full postal address/email ID. They may also send in their valuable comments, opinion and suggestions, preferably by email, to: edit@orissapost.com

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B-15, Russagarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Prabhudutt Dash,
BHUBANESWAR

Arun Gupta, KOLKATA

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

History likely to repeat itself in UP

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, March 16: It is a popular understanding that the road to Rainsina passes through Lucknow.

Uttar Pradesh - which has an area of 243,286 sq km sends 80 MPs to the Parliament. The state is pivotal when it comes to forming a government at the Centre.

With the 2024 general elections only a few weeks away, has anything changed in the state since the last election? Is UP poised to repeat history again?

The political scenario is much the same with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's and the BJP's popularity touching a crescendo and a beleaguered Opposition aimlessly trying to wade into the troubled waters.

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) coalition is much the same in 2024 as it was in 2019. The NDA allies then included Apna Dal and Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party. It has now included the Nishad party as well into its fold. The major difference is that in 2019, the state witnessed a three-way contest with the Samajwadi Party (SP) and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) combined pitted



A worker removes posters of political leaders after the Model Code of Conduct was enforced following announcement of the schedule of Lok Sabha elections, in Mirzapur, Saturday.

against the BJP and its allies while the Congress formed the third front in the elections.

The SP-BSP combine was touted as the game changer - mainly on caste arithmetic - but the results proved that the magic

was over. The BSP managed to win ten seats while SP had to remain content with five.

The Congress which had decided to go solo in 2019 saw the debut of Priyanka Gandhi as in charge of east UP while

Jyotiraditya Scindia, then in the Congress, was given charge of western UP. For the optimist, it seemed like a fantastic political

premiere but the results proved to be a disastrous anti-climax. The Congress could win only

one seat - Sonia Gandhi retained her Rae Bareilly seat - and the then party President Rahul Gandhi suffered a humiliating defeat in Amethi at the hands of BJP's Smriti Irani.

The BJP returned to power with 62 seats from UP while its ally, Apna Dal won two seats.

In 2024, the ruling BJP has little to worry about in Uttar Pradesh. The party's promise of Ram Mandir has been fulfilled. The Kashi Vishwanath Dham has undergone a major revamp while the Gyanvapi issue is also inching towards a solution. The Krishna Janambhoomi issue is on the same page.

Besides, the BJP with its welfare schemes has created a massive vote bank that transcends caste and communal lines. The beneficiaries of schemes - mainly free ration - are known as 'lab-harthis' and remain rock solid behind the BJP. Moreover, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's popularity is at an all-time high.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has also strengthened the party with his administrative skills.

The Opposition, on the other hand, is fragmented and frustrated.

BSP vows to regain lost glory

After being voted out of power in 2012, the BSP's downhill journey began and the party has been rapidly losing ground with a section of non-Jatav Dalits opting for the BJP

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, March 16: Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) launched its poll campaign Friday by taking a pledge to bring the party back to power in 2024. The party said that it is planning to mobilise its supporters with a series of programmes and workers' conferences across the state.

A BSP leader said, "The birth anniversary of the party founder will be used to generate enthusiasm among the party cadre. With the Dalit-Muslim-OBC formula, the party is working to increase its tally in the Lok Sabha election."

It is learnt that Mayawati is giving the final touches to the candidates sent by party coordinators and has already named some candidates, the majority of them being Muslims. The BSP has already announced that it will go alone in the upcoming Lok

Sabha polls. In 1971, Kanshi Ram quit a government job to launch the All India SC, ST, OBC and Minority Employees Association (BAMCEF). The aim was to spread the ideals of Bhim Rao Ambedkar among the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and minority communities. In 1981, he launched Dalit Shoshit Samaj Sangharsh Samiti (DS) for social awakening among the Dalits. In 1984, he floated the BSP for their political empowerment. Kanshi Ram also played an important role in the Samajwadi Party-Bahujan Samaj Party alliance in the 1993 Assembly election in Uttar Pradesh. Later, he broke the alliance and formed the BSP government with the support of the BJP in 1995 when Mayawati became Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister for the first time.

After 1995, BSP again formed the government in 1997, 2002 and 2007 in the state. In 2007, Mayawati led a majority government on her own after the demise of Kanshi Ram.

After being voted out of power in 2012, BSP's downhill journey began and the party has been rapidly losing ground with a section of non-Jatav Dalits opting for the BJP. The party, at present, has only one member in the UP Assembly.

Combative Annamalai, resolute DMK and determined AIADMK



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, March 16: The Lok Sabha poll scenario in Tamil Nadu is undoubtedly characterised by the ruling DMK's resolve to continue its winning streak and the main Opposition AIADMK's determination to make a mark under its chief Edappadi K Palaniswami. Alongside the two key Dravidian majors, the BJP in Tamil Nadu, under its state president K Annamalai, is aggressive to graduate from a marginal player into a force to reckon with in the state.

Parliamentary polls will be held in Tamil Nadu April 19, besides Assembly bypolls.

Though the DMK has implemented a slew of promises it made ahead of the 2021 Assembly polls, including fare-free travel for women and Rs 1,000 monthly assistance to women to name only a few, the recent arrest of Jaffer Sadiq by the Narcotics Control Bureau, an expelled DMK office-bearer, appears to have become a poll issue with both the AIADMK and BJP taking to streets and seem to be fixed on raking it up in the run up to polls.

The DMK has been attacking the

AIADMK alleging 'secretive, clandestine' ties with the BJP and missed no chance to blame the Palaniswami-led party for supporting the CAA, which is for sure a key poll issue. Though opposition in the state claim people's disenchantment with the DMK, it remains to be seen if it translates into votes for them.

Corruption allegations against DMK Ministers, matters related to which are pending before courts, and the ruling party's 'family politics' are among other issues that are likely to dominate poll discourse.

The DMK, which is continuing its formidable alliance with Congress, Left parties, Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK), MDMK, IUML and the Kongunadu Makkal Desiya Katchi (KMDK) is keen to win all the 39 LS segments in the state and the lone constituency in Puducherry.

The AIADMK severed its ties with the BJP last year. Although the BJP is yet to conclude seat sharing with allies, its poll campaign is proceeding energetically. While State unit chief Annamalai completed his state-wide En Mann En Makkal (my soil, my people) campaign last month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has visited

the state five times since January this year.

Modi has already addressed rallies in Chennai, Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari and he is set to address a rally and hold a road show as well in the textile city of Coimbatore, also the hub of western Tamil Nadu which has been under the sustained focus of the BJP.

The Prime Minister has already addressed a mega rally in Tirupur, again a key city in western Tamil Nadu. Annamalai has expressed confidence of winning LS seats across the western belt including Tirupur and Coimbatore. Union Minister L Murugan has been carefully nurturing the Nilgiris constituency for a long time now, a seat now held by DMK heavyweight A Raju.

In his rallies, the PM has been at his aggressive best targeting the ruling DMK while heaping praise on AIADMK icons, late J Jayalalithaa and M G Ramachandran, much to the chagrin of AIADMK leaders.

For the AIADMK under Palaniswami, this is the first election following two key developments. One was the ouster of former Chief Minister O Panneerselvam and his supporters from the party and the snapping of ties with the BJP, seen by his party as an impediment to win votes of minorities.

Palaniswami is keen to demonstrate that he is the real mass leader of the AIADMK by winning an impressive number of seats. After severing ties with the BJP, the AIADMK has taken a strong stand against national parties be it the Congress or the BJP, holding that they are against the interests of Tamil Nadu. The AIADMK already has the support of SDPI.

Interestingly, the DMK, AIADMK and the BJP all converge on the point of proving their strength in the western Kongu region, which, for decades, has been a bastion of the AIADMK since its founding in 1972.

OPS writes to ECI, claims 'Two Leaves'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, March 16: O. Panneerselvam, the former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu who has been expelled from the AIADMK, has written to the Election Commission of India (ECI) claiming the 'Two Leaves' symbol of the party.

OPS, as Panneerselvam is popularly known, has already entered into an electoral alliance with the BJP in Tamil Nadu. The senior leader is now expecting a favourable decision from the ECI about allocating the 'Two Leaves' symbol to his group. In his letter to the ECI, OPS requested the poll panel for permission to sign Form A and Form B to authenticate the party candidates and to allocate the 'Two Leaves' symbol to his group.

According to sources close to OPS, the former Chief Minister told the ECI about the several civil suits pending before the Madras High Court regarding the 'Two Leaves' symbol.



OPS also told the poll panel that he was the coordinator of the AIADMK, and even now court cases are pending regarding his expulsion (from the AIADMK) and hence the Commission should consider his request. He also claimed that the party's general council meeting held on July 11, 2022, was 'illegal' and against the party by-law.

"Edappadi K. Palaniswami and his faction have created confusion in the party. They convened an illegal general council meeting on July 11, 2022, and passed several illegal resolutions. Thus he got himself elected

to the post of AIADMK General Secretary. Several civil suits are pending before various courts," OPS said in his petition.

He added that to date, no final verdict has been given by the civil courts about the resolutions, and the consequent election to the post of General Secretary.

OPS in his petition also said that he and Palaniswami were elected as the Coordinator and Joint Coordinator, respectively, as per the by-laws of the party during the AIADMK elections on December 6, 2021, for a tenure of five years till December 6, 2026.

Palaniswami relinquished his post as Joint Coordinator unilaterally June 28, 2022, which has been communicated to the poll panel, OPS said.

The senior politician also informed the Commission that as things stand now, he remains the Coordinator of the party, a post which the Election Commission has approved.

Indian Bank		Zonal Office, Indian Bank Building, B-2 (East), Sahid Nagar, Bhubaneswar- 751007		POSSESSION NOTICE (FOR IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES)	
Whereas, The undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the Indian Bank under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 8 and 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, issued Demand Notice on the date noted against Accounts as mentioned hereinafter, calling upon to Borrowers / Guarantors / Mortgagors to repay the amount within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said Notice.					
The Borrowers / Guarantors / Mortgagors having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the under noted Borrowers / Guarantors / Mortgagors and the Public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the properties described here-in-below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 and 9 of the said rules on the dates mentioned against Accounts.					
The Borrowers / Guarantors / Mortgagors in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the properties and any dealings with the properties will be subject to the charge of Indian Bank for the amount and interest thereon mentioned against account herein below. The borrowers/guarantors attention is invited to the provisions of Sub-Section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the Secured Assets.					
Branch / Name & Address of Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s) / Mortgagor(s)	Description of the Immovable Properties	Date of Demand Notice	Date of Possession Notice	Outstanding Amount	
BHUBANESWAR BRANCH					
Borrower: Mr Arun Kumar Mohanty (proprietor of M/s Arun Kumar Mohanty), LIG-125, Nayapalli Brit Colony, Unit-8, Bhubaneswar-751012. Guarantor & Mortgagor: Mrs Sulata Mohanty, W/o: Mr Gurucharan Mohanty, LIG-125, Nayapalli Brit Colony, Unit-8, Bhubaneswar-751012.	LIG -125, BDA Drawing No.: B -96, over GA Plot No. 1203, 1283, 1286 & 1539, Khata No. 385, Mouza: Nayapalli Brit Colony, Unit-8, PS.: Nayapalli, Bhubaneswar- 751012, Dist: Khurda, Area: 875 Sqft in the name of Mrs Sulata Mohanty, W/o: Late Gurucharan Mohanty, EM Property bounded by: North- House No. LB-126, South- House No. LB-124, East- House No. LB-112, West- Road.	27.12.2023	13.03.2024	Rs.45,26,910/- as on 27.12.2023 with further interest, costs, charges & expenses thereon	
PATIA BRANCH					
Borrowers/Mortgagors: (1) Mr Dibya Chand Shukla, S/o: Mr Naresh Kumar Shukla, At: MIG-83, Ananta Vihar, BDA Phase III, Pokhariput Aerodrome Area, Bhubaneswar, Dist: Khurda, Pin-751020. (2) Mrs Sangeeta Patro, W/o: Mr Dibya Chand Shukla, At: MIG-83, Ananta Vihar, BDA Phase III, Pokhariput Aerodrome Area, Bhubaneswar, Dist: Khurda, Pin-751020.	(1) All the part and parcel of property in the name of Mr Dibya Chand Shukla situated at Plot No. 901/1756, Khata No. 278/212, Sub Plot No. 277, Mouza: Haridamada, PS: Jatni, Thana No. 7, Tahasil/Sub Registrar: Jatni, Dist: Khurda, Area: 0.55 dcm (2400 sqft), RSD No.11081014217, dated 18/06/2010, Boundaries of Plot: North- Sub Plot No.278, South- Sub Plot No.276, East- Road, West- Sub Plot No.270. (2) All the part and parcel of property in the name of Mrs Sangeeta Shukla situated at Plot No.146/1242, Khata No. 418/187, corresponding to Khata No.264, Plot No.146(p) identified as sub Plot No.40, 41, Mouza: Uparbasta, PS: Jatni, Thana No.7, Tahasil/Sub Registrar: Jatni, Dist: Khurda, Area: 3180 Sqft, RSD No.11121203441, dated 09.11.2012, Boundaries of Plot: North- rest part of this plot, South- Road, East- Road, West- Road.	21.08.2023	15.03.2024	Rs.8,12,503.73 with further interest, costs, charges & expenses thereon	
Place : Bhubaneswar, Date : 16.03.2024		Authorised Officer, Indian Bank			

Indian Bank		Zonal Office, Indian Bank Building, B-2 (East), Sahid Nagar, Bhubaneswar- 751007		E-AUCTION NOTICE (see proviso to rule 8(2) & 8(6) Sale Notice for Sale of property/ies under SARFESI Act 2002)	
Sale of Immovable Property/ies mortgaged to Bank under Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (No. 54 of 2002)					
Whereas, the Authorised Officer of Indian Bank has taken possession of the following property/ies pursuant to the notice issued under Sec 13(2) of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 in the following loan accounts with right to sell the same on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS", "AS IS WHAT IS BASIS" and "WITHOUT ANY RECOURSE BASIS" for realization of Bank's dues plus interest as detailed hereunder and whereas consequent upon failure to repay the dues, the undersigned in exercise of power conferred under the said Act proposes to realize the Bank's dues by sale of the said property/ies. The Sale will be done by the undersigned through e-auction platform provided at the website https://www.mstcecommerce.com/auctionhome/ibapi/index.jsp					
Sl. No.	Branch / Name & Address of the Borrowers / Guarantors / Mortgagors	Description of the Immovable / Movabale Properties	Date of Demand Notice/ Date of Possession / Outstanding dues / Nature of Possession	Reserve Price / EMD / Bid Increment Amount	
1.	TEMPLE MARG BRANCH, (Ph.:9795904399) (1) M/s Add On Services, Plot No.5, Baragada Brit Colony, Infront of Jagannath Ashram, Basuaghai, Tankapani Road, Bhubaneswar, (2) Sri Abhijit Nayak (Proprietor/Borrower), S/o: Ajay Ch. Nayak, Plot No.5, Baragada Brit Colony, Infront of Jagannath Ashram, Basuaghai, Tankapani Road, Bhubaneswar, (3) Sri Ratikanta Singh (Guarantor/Mortgagor), S/o: Late Daitari Singh, Plot No. LB 142, Baragada Brit Colony, Tankapani Road, Bhubaneswar, (4) Smt Samistha Srichandan (Guarantor), W/o: Sri Abhijit Nayak, Plot No.5, Baragada Brit Colony, Infront of Jagannath Ashram, Basuaghai, Tankapani Road, Bhubaneswar.	All the part and parcel of Residential land in the name of Sri Ratikanta Singh situated over Plot No.591/1456, Khata No.344/682, Area: Ac.0.036 dec at Basuaghai, Tankapani Road, PS.: Bhubaneswar, Odisha, Dist: Khordha, Odisha, Pin-752038 in the name of Mrs Santilata Behera, Mr Ramachandra Behera, Mrs Hulas Behera, Mrs Kuni Behera, Mrs Sulochana Karada, Mrs Nirupama Behera, Boundaries: North- Banamali Behera, South- C.C Road, East- Muralidhar Pattanaik, West- Banamali Behera	16.11.2023 26.02.2024 Rs.17,06,992/- as on 09.11.2023 plus further interest @ applicable rates till the date of realization and costs, charges and expenses Physical	Rs.19,76,000/- / Rs.1,97,600/- Rs.25,000/-	
2.	BAGHAMARI BRANCH, (Ph.:9861821016) Borrower/Mortgagor: Mrs Santilata Behera, W/o: Mr Ramachandra Behera, Goudapatna, Manibandha, Khordha, Odisha, Pin- 752064, Guarantors & Mortgagors: (1) Mr Ramachandra Behera, S/o: Tareswar Behera, Goudapatna, Manibandha, Khordha, Odisha, Pin- 752064, (2) Mrs Radhamani Behera, W/o: Tareswar Behera, Goudapatna, Manibandha, Khordha, Odisha, Pin- 752064, (3) Mrs Hulas Behera, W/o: Mr Purna Chandra Behera, Jamuna Jharpada, Puri, Odisha, Pin- 752050, (4) Mrs Kuni Behera, W/o: Dolagobinda Behera, Goudapatna, Manibandha, Khordha, Odisha, Pin- 752064, (5) Mrs Sulochana Karada, W/o: Ratnakara Karada, At/PO.: Chhatrapada, Khordha, Odisha, Pin-752038, (6) Mrs Nirupama Behera, W/o: Basudev Behera, Goudapatna, Manibandha, Khordha, Odisha, Pin- 752064.	All the part and parcel of Residential land and building situated on Khata No.7, Plot No.43, 46 and 47, Mouza: Gaudapatana, PS.: Bolagarh, Dist: Khordha, Odisha, Pin-752038 in the name of Mrs Santilata Behera, Mr Ramachandra Behera, Mrs Hulas Behera, Mrs Kuni Behera, Mrs Sulochana Karada, Mrs Nirupama Behera, Boundaries: North- Banamali Behera, South- C.C Road, East- Muralidhar Pattanaik, West- Banamali Behera	07.06.2023 28.02.2024 Rs.7,98,260/- as on 07.06.2023 plus further interest @ applicable rates till the date of realization and costs, charges and expenses Physical	Rs.12,71,000/- / Rs.1,27,100/- / Rs.25,000/-	
DATE AND TIME OF E-AUCTION: 22.04.2024 (Monday) from 11.00 AM to 5.00 PM with unlimited extension of 10 minutes duration					
LAST DATE AND TIME FOR SUBMISSION OF EMD AND DOCUMENTS: ON OR BEFORE 21.04.2024 upto 05.30 PM					
DATE & TIME OF INSPECTION OF PROPERTIES: 15.04.2024 to 20.04.2024 between 10.00 AM to 5.30 PM (with prior appointment from bank) at their expenses					
DETAILS OF ENCUMBRANCES KNOWN TO THE SECURED CREDITOR: Not Known					
TERMS & CONDITIONS:					
(1) For detailed terms & conditions of the sale please refer to the link: https://www.mstcecommerce.com/auctionhome/ibapi/index.jsp and https://ibapi.in . Prospective bidders may also contact the Authorised Officers / Branch as mentioned in above list. (2) This is also a 30 days notice to the borrowers/guarantors/mortgagors of the above said loan about holding of this sale on the above mentioned date. (3) On receipt of the entire sale consideration, the Authorised Officer shall issue the Sale Certificate as per rules. (4) All expenses relating to the stamp duty and registration of Sale Certificate conveyance if any, shall be borne by the successful bidder. (5) The Authorised Officer will not be held responsible for any charge, lien encumbrance, property tax or any other dues to the Government or anybody in respect of the property under sale. (6) The Authorised Officer has the absolute right to accept or reject any bid or adjourn/postpone/cancel the sale without assigning any reason thereof. It may be noted that nothing in this notice constitute or deemed to constitute any commitment or representation on the part of the bank to sell the property.					
STATUTORY 30 DAYS SALE NOTICE UNDER RULE 8(6) OF THE SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT), RULE 2002.					
Borrowers/Guarantors are hereby notified to pay the total dues along with up to date interest and ancillary expenses before the date of E-Auction, failing which the property will be auctioned / sold and balance dues, if any, will be recovered with interest & cost.					
Place : Bhubaneswar, Date :16.03.2024		Sd/- Authorised Officer, Indian Bank			



PEOPLE CONNECT: Congress aspirant Debasmita Sharma and party workers visiting a temple before setting out on a Padayatra in Jaynagar panchayat in East Kanika of Rajkanika block in Kendrapara district, Saturday



MERGER MEETING: Dhamnagar MLA Suryabanshi Suraj and other party leaders at a merger meeting in which the sarpanch and two ward members of Kanpada panchayat under Tihidi block of Bhadrak district left BJD and joined BJP, Saturday

All eyes on Hinjili Assembly segment, Sambalpur and Bhubaneswar LS seats

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 16: With the Election Commission of India (EC) announcing simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly elections in Odisha, all eyes are now on Hinjili Assembly constituency in Ganjam district from where Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik won five times in a row since 2000.

The Lok Sabha and the Assembly elections in Odisha will be held in four phases May 13, 20, 25 and June 1.

The important Lok Sabha constituencies in the state are Sambalpur, Bhubaneswar, Sundargarh, Mayurbhanj, Puri and Koraput while key Assembly seats are Sambalpur, Chandbali, Jajpur, and Jeypore.

Hinjili
Patnaik won the Hinjili Assembly seat five times since 2000. Though Patnaik has been elected from the seat in five Vidhan Sabha polls there has been a decline in his vote share. In the last three polls held in 2009, 2014 and 2019, the BJD's vote share was 76 per cent, 73 per cent and 66 per cent. As Patnaik targets to make a record sort by winning the seat for the sixth consecutive time, all eyes are on the Hinjili Assembly constituency.

Sambalpur



The Sambalpur MP seat is considered important as Sambalpur is the most important town in the western region of the state. This seat was with either BJD or Congress for several decades. However, the BJP captured this seat in 2019 due to the Modi wave last time.

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, who is a Rajya Sabha MP, may this time contest from the Sambalpur Lok Sabha seat as a BJP candidate.

Bhubaneswar
It is traditionally a BJD stronghold. The party retained the Bhubaneswar seat from 1998 till the 2014 elections. However, BJP candidate and bureaucrat-turned-politician Aparajita Sarangi snatched the seat from the BJD in the last Lok Sabha election.

Sundargarh
The Lok Sabha constituency is represented by former Union minister and five-time BJP MP Jual Oram. Except for the 2009 election, Oram won the seat in all polls held from 1998 to 2019. Even after ruling the state for about 24 years, the BJD has never won the seat.

Puri
This Lok Sabha seat in coastal Odisha is one of the key constituencies in the state as both BJP and BJD are eyeing to grab the prestigious seat in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls. It has been with the BJD since 1998.

BJP's face in media, Sambit Patra, had contested from the constituency in 2019 and gave a tough fight to the BJD nominee Pinaki Misra. The BJD won the last election with a margin of

only 11,714 votes. Patra has been visiting the constituency on a regular basis and attending public programmes there.

Koraput
This Lok Sabha constituency in southern Odisha is the only seat where Congress got victory in the 2019 election. Though the Congress party has a stronghold in the constituency, BJD was able to win the seat in 2009 and 2014. In the 2019 elections, Congress won the seat defeating BJD with only 3,613 votes.

Sambalpur
The leader of Opposition in the Odisha Assembly Jayanarayan Mishra won the Sambalpur Assembly constituency in the 2019 elections. The seat has been with the BJP since 2000 except in 2014 when BJD won the seat. Mishra's health condition is not so good after he went through a major operation, so, his daughter may contest from the seat in 2024.

Chandbali
This Assembly segment assumes significance in Odisha because it is the home turf of BJP state president Manmohan Samal. Samal unsuccessfully contested from the seat in 2019.

BJD organisational secretary Pranab Prakash Das represents the Jajpur constituency in the Assembly. The MLA seat has been with the BJD since 2000.

Bonai, Rajgangpur seats to be tricky for 'alliance partners'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Mar 16: As the suspense over a possible pre-election alliance between BJD and BJP continues to drag on, its effects are clearly visible on seat sharing arrangements between the two major political parties in the state. And Sundargarh district is no different where speculations are rife about who will be pitted and where in such an eventuality.

One of the largest districts of the state, Sundargarh has seven Assembly constituencies - Biramitrapur, Bonai, Raghunathpalli, Rajgangpur, Rourkela, Sundargarh and Talsara, and one Lok Sabha seat. In all likelihood, the Lok Sabha seat is going to fall in BJP's kitty. Observers said the real issue between the two parties will surface during discussions over sharing the Assembly constituencies. A BJD activist said the simple logic of 'winner retaining its seat' will come into play during the distribution process. And in that case, BJD will get two - Rourkela and Ragnathpalli - while BJP will have Biramitrapur, Talsara and Sundargarh seats.

However, the bone of contention will be Bonai and Rajgangpur constituencies. Bonai was once the bastion of the BJP, and sitting MP of Sundargarh Juel Oram was among two of its state leaders who opened ac-



THE REAL ISSUE BETWEEN THE TWO PARTIES WILL SURFACE DURING DISCUSSIONS OVER SEAT SHARING IN THE EVENT OF A TIE-UP

count for the party here and went to the Assembly in 1989 and 1995.

In 2000 and 2009 BJP's Dayanidhi Kissan and Bhima Choudhury, respectively, won the seat. However, of late, the constituency became a red bastion with CPM's Laxman Munda winning from here. However, BJD, following sustained efforts of minister Sarada Nayak, has managed to establish a formidable organisational base by inducting Bhima Choudhury into the party fold.

"Now we are in a very strong position. We are going to win this time with or without any alliance," said a top BJD leader while requesting anonymity. "BJP has left the party languishing with cadres deserting it. With concerted efforts, Sarada Nayak has reinforced the party organisation. The masses are with us, so the question of giving the seat to them does not arise," he said to drive

home his point. However, Rajgangpur will be the trickiest one as neither BJD nor BJP appeared to let it go. A few days back, BJP state spokesperson Dhiren Senapaty had told **Orissa POST** that the party is confident of winning the seat given the tempo it has built around the Ram Mandir. A BJP leader from Rajgangpur said they are in no mood to give the seat to BJD, though the party candidate came third in 2019.

In the last election, Congress candidate Rajan Ekka pooled 53,913 votes, followed by BJD's Mangala Kissan (52,972 votes). BJP's Narasingha Minz had secured 52,896 votes. The effective difference between the winner and first loser was 941 votes, while between BJD and BJP it was just 76.

And this narrow margin gives BJP the confidence to romp home by cashing in on the present political atmosphere following the Ram Mandir consecration.

EC gears up to deal with 4 Ms -- Muscle, Money, Misinformation, MCC violations

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 16: Drone-based checking at borders, surveillance of non-chartered flights, a crackdown on misleading advertisements and fake news, and ruthless action against poll violence are among the EC's strategies to deal with the four-fold challenge of muscle, money, misinformation, and Model Code of Conduct violations.

Announcing the schedule of general elections for the 18th Lok Sabha, Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar said the poll body is fully determined to tackle the challenges.

The daunting challenge in conducting free and fair elections is four-fold, the four Ms muscle, money, misinformation, and MCC (Model Code of Conduct) violations. The Election Commission is committed and has put in place measures to deal with these disruptive challenges, he said.

To tackle the first 'M' - Muscle, the Election Commission has issued some guidelines and regulations so that the polls can be held in a free and fair manner.

"We have issued strict directions to DMs and SPs to ensure a level playing field. Additionally, CAPF would be deployed adequately and assisted by integrated control rooms in each district. There will also be drone-based checking at the borders,"



the CEC said. Asserting that violence in elections is unacceptable, Kumar said the poll panel will be ruthless if any violence takes place during elections.

In the 2022-23 election cycle, cash seizure surged over 800 per cent to ₹3,400 crore in 11 states compared to five years ago. Enforcement agencies have been directed to crack down on illicit money, liquor, drugs and freebies, and stay vigilant against disruptive methods.

No movement of bank vehicles will be allowed after sunset and there will be surveillance and inspection of non-scheduled chartered flights. Strict vigil will be maintained over illicit online cash transfers, he said.

Warning against creating digital memories of any bad words during campaigning, Kumar said, "I urge parties to refrain from personal attacks and foul

language. No-go areas in speeches are defined to maintain civility. Let's not cross lines in our rivalry." It is important because in this digital world... Whatever is said once, its record will be there for 100 years. Avoid creating digital memories of bad words coming from your mouth," he said.

Noting that tackling misinformation in this digital age is complex, Kumar said the EC has put in place certain measures to ensure misinformation is nipped in the bud.

"We are proactive in debunking fake news. Originators of fake news are to be dealt with severely as per extant laws. Remember, verify before you amplify is the mantra to combat fake news. Let's rely on authoritative sources to ensure accurate information prevails. Stay vigilant and help us maintain the integrity of the electoral process," he said.

The CEC warned against the use of children during campaigning and also said there will be a crackdown against misleading advertisements.

Elections aim for key outcomes enhanced citizen participation and zero violence. The commission strives for reduced repolls, no inducements, clear campaigns, and curbing fake narratives. Ensuring a successful electoral process is a top priority, Kumar added.

MAJOR ELECTION ISSUES IN ODISHA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 16: The key issues for the elections to the 21 Lok Sabha seats and in the 147-member Odisha Assembly are unemployment, corruption, law and order, paddy procurement irregularities and chit fund and mining scam. Elections in Odisha will be held in four phases May 13, 20, 25 and June 1.

The ruling Biju Janata Dal headed by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has already completed 24 years in power in the state.

In the last five years, the BJD has supported the Narendra Modi government in different Bills and policies and even openly declared on the floor of the Parliament that the state was getting the required support from the Centre in developmental projects. Therefore, the BJD has lost its main weapon to target the opposition BJP.

The opposition BJP has already announced that it will go to polls over the issue of Odia Asmita (Odia Pride) as the state administration is mostly run by non-Odia officers and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik mostly depends on non-Odia officers rather than political leaders.

Unemployment and migration
This is likely to be the major election for both BJP and the Congress. Though Patnaik ruled the state for 24 years, it has 'failed' to stop the migration of youths from Odisha. The government has also 'failed' to provide jobs to men and women.



THE STATE'S LAW AND ORDER REMAIN BY AND LARGE UNDER CONTROL, HOWEVER THERE IS RISE IN THE CRIME AGAINST WOMEN IN ODISHA. BJP AND CONGRESS HAVE ALREADY MADE IT AN ISSUE

The parties may also raise recruitment scam allegations which were raised during the last two years.

Law and Order
Though the state's law and

order remain by and large under control, there is rise in the crime against women in Odisha. Both BJP and Congress have already made it an issue.

Corruption
Corruption is one of the major issues in the elections. However, in Odisha, this time the charges of corruption are added with allegations like discrimination. While there is allegation of corruption in the implementation of different schemes, the opposition parties this time made additional charges like the beneficiaries of PMAY and other schemes are selected on a political basis and not in a neutral manner. The Congress has also raised questions about the state government giving priority to non-Odia contractors in differ-

ent works.

Chitfund and Mining scam
Like previous years, the Opposition is also set to raise the chit fund scam as people cheated by ponzi firms are yet to get back their money. The BJP and Congress alleged that the members of the ruling party were involved in both the chit-fund scam and mining irregularities. They have demanded a proper CBI probe into the twin scams.

Paddy procurement irregularities
Though the Naveen Patnaik government has implemented several farmer welfare schemes like KALIA & BALIA (financial assistance to farmers schemes), the administration has 'failed' to solve 'irregularities' in paddy procurement. There is allegation that the farmers are not getting proper MSP on paddy sales and there is sometimes distress sale of paddy by farmers due to irregularities in the state-run mandis.

Drinking water and irrigation
As the polling will be held during the scorching heat, it is natural that the drinking water issue will dominate the poll campaign. The state government has not yet been able to provide piped drinking water to all people. Outbreak of diarrhoea and other waterborne diseases is a natural phenomenon in tribal-dominated districts like Rayagada, Gajapati and some other places. Apart from these issues, the parties may also raise many local problems.

national

of the day quote

The countdown for Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy has started with the announcement of election notification for the simultaneous Legislative Assembly and Lok Sabha polls in Andhra Pradesh

The people will not spare the rebel MLAs. A person who sells his honour and betrays their families has to run into hiding out of fear

To maintain the pace of India's development journey, cast your vote for a leadership which has a track record of doing work and a vision to make India developed

Navneet new Prasar Bharati chairman

New Delhi, March 16: Retired bureaucrat Navneet Kumar Sehgal has been appointed as the new Prasar Bharati chairman, a post that was vacant for four years.

Sehgal succeeds A Surya Prakash, whose term ended in February 2020 after he turned 70, the upper age limit for a person holding the post. Sehgal took charge Saturday.

"...The President, on the recommendation of the Selection Committee, is pleased to appoint Shri Navneet Kumar Sehgal, IAS (retd) as the Chairman of the Prasar Bharati Board with effect from the date of his assuming charge of the post for a term of three years or until he attains the age of seventy years, whichever is earlier," an order dated March 15, issued by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, said.

Sehgal was a 1988-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of the Uttar Pradesh cadre. He retired last year. Sehgal has handled key assignments in the Uttar Pradesh government and retired as the additional chief secretary, sports and youth welfare.

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar chaired a meeting Friday to select the chairman of the public broadcaster. The vice president, who is also the chairman of the Rajya Sabha, heads the selection panel for the post of the Prasar Bharati chief. The chairperson of the Press Council of India (PCI) and a nominee of the president complete the three-member panel. The meeting was attended by PCI Chairperson Justice (retired) Ranjana Desai and Information and Broadcasting Secretary Sanjay Jaju.

OWAISI MOVES SUPREME COURT

Owaisi, one of the petitioners who have challenged the validity of certain provisions of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, has now filed an application in the top court seeking a stay on the implementation of the Act and the 2024 rules till the final disposal of the petitions

New Delhi, March 16: AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi has moved the Supreme Court seeking a stay on the implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Rules till the apex court disposes of the petitions challenging the constitutional validity of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019.

Kavitha sent to ED custody till March 23

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 16: Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) leader K Kavitha, allegedly a key member of the "South Group", which has been accused of paying the ruling Aam Aadmi Party kickbacks of Rs 100 crore in return for a big share of liquor licences in the national capital, was Saturday remanded in ED custody till March 23 in a money laundering case linked to the Delhi excise policy "scam".

Kavitha, a member of the Telangana Legislative Council and daughter of former state chief minister K Chandrashekar Rao, was produced before Special Judge for ED cases M K Nagpal, who sent her to the custody of the federal anti-money laundering agency for a week. The ED had sought her custody for 10 days.

Kavitha, 46, was arrested from her Banjara Hills residence Friday amid protests by BRS supporters. Her remand came on a day Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal appeared before a metropolitan court in connection with two complaints filed by the Enforcement Directorate against him for skipping summons in the money laundering case linked to the al-



BRS leader K. Kavitha being taken to the Enforcement Directorate (ED) office after she was produced before the Rouse Avenue Court in connection with the Delhi excise policy-linked money laundering case, in New Delhi

leged excise policy scam.

Kejriwal, who skipped eight ED summonses before turning up at the court, was granted bail. His senior party colleagues Manish Sisodia and Sanjay Singh are in jail for their alleged involvement in formulating and implementing the excise policy 2020-21 which drastically raised the profit margins of liquor

wholesalers and retailers. The ED has claimed Delhi's ruling dispensation extended them the favour in return for money.

While being produced before the judge, Kavitha termed her arrest as illegal and asserted, "We will fight it out in court." During the hearing, senior advocate Vikram Chaudhary, appearing for Kavitha along with advocate

Nitesh Rana, told the judge her arrest was "illegal".

The counsel also accused the federal anti-money laundering agency of flouting the Supreme Court direction while arresting her. They claimed the apex court had directed the ED to not take any coercive action against Kavitha before it hears her plea against the summons issued by the agency to her on March 19.

"It is a black day that SC orders are violated, that an officer thinks he/she is above law," the counsel told the court. The ED, however, said it has not made any statement before a court, including the Supreme Court, that no coercive action will be taken against Kavitha. "There is enough evidence, witnesses' statements against K Kavitha in the case," the ED said.

The agency also accused Kavitha of destructing evidence in the case. "We have summoned several witnesses to confront K Kavitha with," the agency told the court.

Though Kavitha has not been named as an accused in any chargesheet filed by the ED, the agency has claimed she was a key figure of the "South Group" who made benami investments in beneficiary liquor companies.

Shajahan's brother held in ED attack case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 16: The CBI Saturday arrested three people, including the brother of suspended TMC leader Shajahan Sheikh, for being allegedly involved in the January 5 attack on an Enforcement Directorate team at Sandeshkhali in West Bengal, officials said.

Sheikh Alomgir, who is Shajahan Sheikh's brother, Mafujar Molla, the president of the TMC's student wing in Sandeshkhali, and Sirajul Molla, a local, would be produced before a local court Sunday.

The agency took into custody Sheikh's brother and two others during their questioning. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) took over three FIRs registered by the West Bengal Police on the directions of the Calcutta High Court.

After detailed examination, and according to technical evidence collected, they were arrested by the CBI, the officials said. With these arrests, the number of people nabbed by the CBI in the case has increased to 14. The agency suspects that these people were allegedly part of the attack on Enforcement

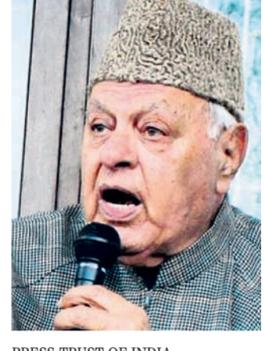
Directorate (ED) officials on January 5 and instigated a crowd to target the team when they went to raid the premises of Sheikh at Sandeshkhali in West Bengal, they said.

Sheikh was arrested February 29 after 55 days on the run following violent protests led by women, alleging sexual atrocities and land grab. He went missing after a mob attacked the ED team that went to search his house in an alleged ration distribution scam.

The state CID took over the investigation into the allegations against him. He was later handed over to the CBI on an order of the Calcutta High Court. March 10, the court sent him to CBI custody for four days which was later extended by another eight days - till March 22.

The CBI has taken over the investigation in three cases related to incidents January 5, when the ED team was attacked by an around 1,000-strong mob. A former state minister has been arrested in the ration scam case. Sheikh was arrested by the state police February 29, a day after the High Court ordered that the CBI, ED or the West Bengal police could arrest him.

Parties in J&K disappointed



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar/Jammu, March 16: Political parties in Kashmir are disappointed that Assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir are not being held simultaneously with the Lok Sabha election. They have said a crucial democratic space is being "denied" to the people of the Union Territory by keeping the polls in a "deep freeze".

However, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has defended the move of the Election Commission (EC), citing security reasons. The EC Saturday said the Assembly election in Jammu and Kashmir will be held after the Lok Sabha polls as organising both simultaneously is not viable from the security point of view.

National Conference (NC) president Farooq Abdullah said there

is "something fishy" in not holding the Assembly election along with the Lok Sabha polls. "If there are conducive conditions for the parliamentary election, how is it not alright for the state election? There is something fishy," the former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister said.

NC leader Omar Abdullah said the EC is unable to conduct simultaneous polls in Jammu and Kashmir even as it has acknowledged that the Assembly election is due in the Union Territory. "So much for 'One Nation One Election'. The EC is unable to conduct assembly polls in J&K with the general election even when they acknowledge that elections are due #GeneralElection2024," the former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister said in a post on X.

The NC said while it had no expectations from the EC, it was hoping against hope that common sense would prevail and the poll panel would give the people of Jammu and Kashmir the right to govern themselves.

"A crucial space in democracy is being strategically denied to the people of Jammu and Kashmir for the last 10 years now. So much so that even the panchayat and municipal elections are not happening here when people are talking about conducting the parliamentary polls," PDP spokesperson Mohit Bhan said.



Youth Congress activists protest against BJP over alleged illegal and unlawful fund transfer through electoral bonds in recent years, in New Delhi, Saturday

Man gets cartridges in sweet box

New Delhi: A businessman found a threat letter and two live cartridges inside a sweet box outside his house in southwest Delhi's Vasant Vihar area, police said Saturday.

A case under Section 506 (criminal intimidation) of IPC and section 25 of the Arms Act has been registered against unknown persons and investigations started, they said. The businessman approached the local police Friday afternoon after he received the box, an officer said.

"On opening the sweet box, he found two live cartridges with sweets and a handwritten threat letter with some personal comments written on it," the officer said. "It is suspected that some personal enmity is the reason behind the threat," the officer said, adding that they are investigating the case from all possible angles.

Another officer said CCTV cameras installed outside the businessman's house are being analysed to narrow down on suspects. "A few people have been rounded up and teams are working on multiple leads," Deputy Commissioner of Police (southwest) Rohit Meena said.

40 injured in Haryana blast

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Rewari, March 16: Around 40 workers were rushed to hospitals with burn injuries following a blast in the boiler of a spare parts manufacturing facility in the industrial area of Dharuhera here Saturday, said police.

No casualty was reported yet, a senior officer said. Many of the wounded were rushed to the Civil Hospital in Rewari and some were referred to other hospitals in Gurugram, Dharuhera, and Rewari, said police.

One serious patient was referred to Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences (PGIMS),

Rohtak. The incident took place around 5.50 pm when a boiler burst in the dust collector of the factory, said police.

Several fire tenders were rushed to the unit to put out the fire. Rewari Civil Surgeon Surrender Yadav said around 40 workers were injured in the incident.

"We have 23 patients admitted here and all are stable," he said, adding, ambulances were rushed to the spot after the information about the blast reached them. All hospitals in Rewari have been put on alert for swift medical care to the injured if any of them gets admitted, said Yadav.





In India, the world's largest democracy, the country's dominant social media platforms - including Meta-owned WhatsApp - have a long track record of amplifying misleading and false content.
MICHAEL BENNET | SENATOR, US

ARTEFACTS RETURNED

Twenty-two historic artefacts that were looted following the Battle of Okinawa in World War II have been returned to Japan after a family from Massachusetts discovered them in their late father's personal items, the FBI said Friday



of the day quote

Look forward to working closely with HRH Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to transform the deep-rooted, historic fraternal Pakistan-Saudi ties into a comprehensive strategic partnership
SHEHBAZ SHARIF | PM, PAKISTAN

It is necessary for aid to reach Gaza on a larger scale now. That will be a topic that I also have to talk about
OLAF SCHOLZ | CHANCELLOR, GERMANY

It should come as no surprise that I will not be endorsing Donald Trump this year
MIKE PENCE | FORMER VP, US

SHORT TAKES

Gething wins Welsh Labour Party fight

London: Vaughan Gething won the Welsh Labour Party leadership contest Saturday, and is set to become the first Black leader of Wales' semi-autonomous government. Gething, who is currently Welsh economy minister, beat Education Minister Jeremy Miles in a race to replace First Minister Mark Drakeford. Drakeford announced late last year he would step down once a replacement was chosen. Gething, 50, will be the fifth first minister since Wales' national legislature was established in 1999.

Nigeria clashes: 16 soldiers killed

Abuja: Sixteen Nigerian Army soldiers were surrounded by youths and killed earlier this week after they attempted to quell community clashes in the oil-producing southern Delta state, an army spokesperson said Saturday. The troops from 181 Amphibious Battalion had responded to the conflict in the Okuoma community when they were killed Thursday, Brigadier General Tukur Gusau said in a statement.

Hong Kong jails 12 over 2019 protests

Hong Kong: A Hong Kong court sentenced 12 people Saturday to prison over the storming of the city's legislative council building at the height of the anti-government protests in 2019. Hundreds of protesters swarmed into the legislature the night of July 1, 2019 - the 22nd anniversary of the former British colony's return to China - defacing pictures and smashing furniture. Some spray-painted slogans in the chamber and painted over the territory's emblem on a wall before vacating the site as riot police cleared surrounding streets with tear gas before moving inside.

Amnesty urges Pak to restore X app

Islamabad: Human rights watchdog Amnesty International has called on the Pakistan government to immediately restore social media platform X, which has been blocked in the country since February 17, days after the general elections were held February 8. Urging the Pakistani authorities to "uphold the rights to freedom of expression and access to information under the country's international human rights commitments", the UK-based NGO in a post on X said it is one of the 28 civil society organisations that have signed a joint statement calling for immediate restoration of the social media platform in the country 29 days after it was blocked.

Islamophobia takes centre stage in UNGA

India abstains in UNGA on Pak resolution on Islamophobia, says religiophobia against Hinduism, Sikhism must also be acknowledged

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

United Nations, March 16: India abstained in the UN General Assembly on a draft resolution introduced by Pakistan and co-sponsored by China on Islamophobia, asserting that the prevalence of "religiophobia" against Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and other faiths facing violence and discrimination must also be acknowledged rather than singling out just one religion.

The 193-member General Assembly adopted the resolution 'Measures to combat Islamophobia', introduced by Pakistan Friday, with 115 nations voting in favour, none against and 44 abstentions, including India, Brazil, France, Germany, Italy, Ukraine and the UK.

India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj voiced condemnation of all acts motivated by anti-Semitism, Christianophobia and Islamophobia but asserted that it is crucial to acknowledge that such phobias extend beyond Abrahamic religions. "Clear evidence shows that over decades, followers of non-Abrahamic religions have also been affected by religiophobia. This has led to the emergence of contemporary forms of religiophobia, particularly anti-Hindu,



anti-Buddhist and anti-Sikh sentiments," she said, in an explanation of India's position on the resolution.

India stressed that the adoption of the resolution should not establish a precedent that could result in numerous resolutions centred on phobias tied to specific religions, "potentially dividing the United Nations into religious camps."

"It is crucial for the UN to maintain its stance above such religious concerns, which have the potential to fragment us rather than unite us under the banner of peace and harmony, embracing the world as one global family," Kamboj said.

India called on all member states to consider the broader scope of religious discrimination that persists globally.

"While the issue of Islamophobia is undoubtedly

Measures to combat Islamophobia: 115 nations voted in favour, none against and 44 abstentions

significant, we must acknowledge that other religions are also facing discrimination and violence. Allocating resources solely to combat Islamophobia, while neglecting similar challenges faced by other faiths, might inadvertently perpetuate a sense of exclusion and inequality," she said. Kamboj told the UN General Assembly that "it is crucial to recognise" that Hinduism, with over 1.2 billion followers, Buddhism with more than 535 million and Sikhism with over 30 million followers worldwide, are all subject to religiophobia.

India stands against all forms of religiophobia, be it antisemitism, Christianophobia, or Islamophobia, as we stand against all anti-Hindu, anti-Buddhist, and anti-Sikh sentiments
RUCHIRA KAMBOJ | INDIA'S PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UN AMBASSADOR

Hatred of one group fuels hatred of another. Hate normalises hate. Hate destroys the fabric of our societies
ANTONIO GUTERRES | SECRETARY-GENERAL, UN

"It is time that we acknowledge the prevalence of religiophobia, rather than single out just one," she said.

Kamboj said the contemporary forms of religiophobia are evident in the increasing attacks on religious places of worship such as gurudwaras, monasteries and temples, as well as the spreading of hatred and disinformation against non-Abrahamic religions in many countries. "The destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas, violations of gurudwara premises, massacres of Sikh pilgrims in gurudwaras, attacks on temples, and the glorification of breaking idols in temples all contribute to the rise of contemporary forms

of religiophobia against non-Abrahamic religions," she said. The resolution condemned the incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence against Muslims as manifested in the increasing number of incidents of desecration of their holy book, attacks on mosques, sites and shrines and other acts of religious intolerance, negative stereotyping, hatred and violence against Muslims.

It also requested UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to appoint a United Nations Special Envoy to combat Islamophobia.

India said it "in principle" is opposed to the creation of the post of a Special Envoy on the basis of a single religion, she said. The General Assembly adopted a resolution in 2022 proclaiming March 15 as the International Day to Combat Islamophobia in the wake of the 2019 mass shootings in two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand that had killed over 50 people.

In his remarks to mark the day, Guterres said that around the world, there is a rising tide of anti-Muslim hate and bigotry in many forms such as structural and systemic discrimination, unequal immigration policies, unwarranted surveillance and profiling and restrictions in accessing citizenship, education, employment and justice.

Indian navy intercepts Somali pirates on hijacked ship Ruen

REUTERS

Washington, March 16: An Indian navy warship has intercepted the hijacked cargo ship Ruen and demanded the Somali pirates on board surrender, a navy spokesperson said Saturday.

The pirates who allegedly hijacked the Maltese-flagged bulk cargo vessel December 14 opened fire on the navy ship in international waters Friday, the spokesperson said without providing further details.

The navy had called on the pirates to surrender and release the vessel and any civilians they may be holding.

Somali pirates who seized the vessel in December may have used it in the takeover of a Bangladesh-flagged cargo ship off the coast of Somalia this week, the European Union naval force said Thursday.

Until the Ruen was seized, there had been no successful hijacking of a merchant ship by Somali pirates since 2017.

At least 17 incidents of hijacking, attempted hijacking or suspicious approaches have been recorded by the Indian navy since December, Indian officials have said.

India deployed at least a dozen warships east of the Red Sea in January to provide security against pirates and has investigated more than 250 vessels.

HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

One in three children under 2 acutely malnourished in Gaza

Gaza: One in three children under age 2 in northern Gaza is now acutely malnourished and famine is looming, the main UN agency operating in the Palestinian enclave said Saturday. "Children's malnutrition is spreading fast and reaching unprecedented levels in Gaza," the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) said in a social media post. More than five months into Israel's air and ground campaign in Gaza, triggered by Hamas' attack October 7, much of the enclave is in ruins with most of its 2.3 million population displaced and facing a major humanitarian crisis. Hospitals in Gaza have reported some children dying of malnutrition and dehydration. For the IPC to declare famine, at least 20% of the population must be suffering extreme food shortages, with one in three children acutely malnourished and two people out of every 10,000 dying daily from starvation or malnutrition and disease.

5mn at risk of starvation: UN

United Nations: The United Nations appealed Friday for Sudan's battling factions to allow delivery of humanitarian relief to fend off looming "catastrophic" hunger. Some five million Sudanese could face calamitous food insecurity in coming months as a nearly yearlong war between rival generals continues to tear the country apart, according to a UN document sent Friday by AFP. The war between army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his former deputy, Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, has since April last year killed tens of thousands, destroyed infrastructure and crippled the economy. It has also triggered a dire humanitarian crisis and acute food shortages, with the country teetering on the brink of famine. Noting that some 18 million Sudanese are already facing acute food insecurity -- a record during harvest season -- UN humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths warned in a letter to the Security Council that "almost 5 million people could slip into catastrophic food insecurity in some parts of the country in the coming months." He noted that nearly 730,000 Sudanese children -- including more than 240,000 in Darfur -- are thought to suffer from "severe" malnutrition. The UN's World Food Programme has warned that the war risks "triggering the world's largest hunger crisis."



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and his daughter inspect a training of the Korean People's Army airborne units in North Korea

Taiwan warns off Chinese coast guard boats again

REUTERS

Taipei, March 16: Taiwan Saturday warned off Chinese coast guard ships that entered its restricted waters near front-line islands close to China for a second day in a row, as tensions simmer across the sensitive Taiwan Strait.

Taiwan's coast guard said four Chinese coast guard boats Saturday morning entered the restricted waters of Taiwan-controlled Kinmen islands, which hug the Chinese coast. It said the Chinese boats stayed just over an hour after Taiwan authorities asked them to leave.

China claims democratically-governed Taiwan as its own territory, over the island's strong

objections. It has stepped up military activities near Taiwan in recent years, with almost daily incursions into air defence identification zones.

"You have entered our country's restricted waters. Please turn around immediately," a Taiwan official said via radio in a broadcast message to their Chinese counterparts, according to footage released Saturday by Taiwan's coast guard. The footage shows a Taiwan coast guard boat tracking the movement of two Chinese ships in the near distance.

"The move has seriously impacted traffic and safety. To avoid triggering naval incidents we urge them to stop such behaviours," Taiwan's coast guard said in a statement.

Ukraine attacks Russian city, refinery

REUTERS

Moscow, March 16: A Ukrainian missile attack killed two people in western Russia and a separate drone strike set an oil refinery ablaze Saturday, the second day of an election that President Vladimir Putin has accused Kyiv of trying to disrupt.

The Ukraine war has cast a shadow over voting in the three-day presidential election, which is all but certain to hand Putin six more years in the Kremlin.

In the Belgorod region where cross-border attacks from Ukraine have become part of daily life, the governor reported the deaths of a man and a woman. Video obtained by Reuters showed fires ablaze and air raid sirens sounding in the empty streets of Belgorod city.

SECOND DAY OF PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION



- Two killed in missile strike in Russian border region
- Refinery on fire in region southeast of Moscow
- Putin says Ukraine is trying to disrupt election

Dmitry Azarov, governor of the Samara region 850 km (530 miles) southeast of Moscow, said the Syzran refinery was on fire but an attack on a second refinery had been thwarted.

Russia's Defence Ministry said it had repelled attempts by Ukrainian forces to cross the border into Belgorod region.

Governor Gladkov said that, given "the current situation", schools in much of the region would close Monday and Tuesday, and that shopping centres in Belgorod city would be shut Sunday and Monday.

Ukraine has staged repeated strikes this week Russian soil, particularly against oil refineries.

Russia mounted its deadliest attack in weeks Friday when its missiles hit a residential area in Ukraine's Black Sea port city of Odesa, killing at least 20 people and wounding more than 70.

Putin's hold on power is not under threat. Aged 71 and in office as president or prime minister since the last day of 1999, he dominates Russia's political landscape and none of the other three candidates on the ballot paper presents any credible challenge.

His leading critics are in prison or have fled abroad, prompting the opposition to call the vote a sham. Russia's best known opposition politician, Alexei Navalny died in an Arctic penal colony last month and his supporters have accused Putin of having him killed.

HELD 11 YEARS AGO Pak court slams govt for failure to deport Indian

ABDUL MUGHNI WAS ARRESTED IN 2013 BY THE MOBINA TOWN POLICE STATION NEAR ABUL HASSAN ISPAHANI ROAD AND BOOKED UNDER VARIOUS PROVISIONS OF THE FOREIGNERS ACT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Karachi, March 16: A Pakistani court has slammed the interior ministry for its failure to deport an Indian national arrested nearly 11 years ago despite court orders and warned that the secretary concerned would be summoned to explain how his department is working in such cases.

Sindh High Court (SHC) headed by Justice Mohammad Karim Khan Agha Friday directed the interior ministry to depute an officer well-versed with the facts of the case or file a compliance report at the next hearing, the Dawn newspaper reported on Saturday.

Abdul Mughni was arrested in 2013 by the Mobina Town police station near Abul Hassan Ispahani Road and booked under



various provisions of the Foreigners Act. A sessions court sentenced him to six months in

prison in 2017. The convict filed an appeal against his conviction before the SHC.

The court during the hearing observed that the appellant was an Indian national, while the interior ministry was not able to confirm his nationality apparently due to lack of efforts, the report said.

The bench said that since the appellant had already served out his sentence, the jail superintendent had been directed to make arrangements for his deportation through the home department.

However, at the last hearing, it also noted that the focal person of the home department of Sindh had submitted that a correspondence was made with the Ministry of Interior on the sub-

ject matter and it did not respond and thereafter, the court had issued a notice to the secretary to send an official familiar with this case to explain as to why the appellant had not been deported yet.

Friday, a section officer of the ministry turned up and said that the deportation did not happen due to certain procedural issues. The bench in its order said "I find it quite extraordinary that after a lapse of seven years, the Ministry of Interior has not been able to confirm whether the appellant is an Indian national or not. Prima facie this is because of lack of efforts on the part of the Ministry of Interior."



Indian Real Estate today stands at an extremely important junction amidst India's journey to become a developed economy by 2047

BOMAN R IRANI
PRESIDENT, CREDAI

UK HALTS FTA TALKS

The 14th round of the free trade agreement (FTA) negotiations between India and the UK has now closed, with formal negotiations being put on hold as India heads into election campaign mode as the general election schedule is announced Saturday



of the day quote

During Covid-19, rapid digitisation happened, but people were not travelling then. Now, when people are travelling again, we are seeing this trend, where the digitisation in the smaller towns is really helping, and a lot more of our bookings are coming from non-metros

The trend of rising foreign portfolio investment in India witnessed in the first week of March continued in the second week

We firmly advocate for manufacturers to swiftly embrace change amidst evolving market dynamics and technological advancements, all while upholding efficiency and sustainability

SHORT TAKES

IDBI Capital arm settles SEBI case

New Delhi: IDBI Capital Markets & Securities has paid Rs 13 lakh as settlement charges to capital markets regulator Sebi in a case related to alleged violation of stock broker regulations. The order came after the applicant proposed to settle the instant proceedings initiated against it, without "admitting or denying the findings of fact and conclusions" of law. Sebi conducted an investigation into the trading activities of Kajal Ilesh Savla in the securities market. The period of investigation was from January 2019 to July 2022.

Apple to pay \$490mn

Washington: Apple has agreed to pay \$490 million to settle a class-action lawsuit alleging CEO Tim Cook misled investors about a steep downturn in iPhone's sales in China that culminated in a jarring revision to the company's revenue forecast. The preliminary settlement filed Friday in Oakland, California, federal court stems from a shareholder lawsuit focused on the way Apple relayed information about how iPhone models released in September 2018 were performing in China, one of the company's biggest markets. Cook signalled that the new iPhones were off to a good start during an investor conference call in early November 2018, according to the complaint. That reassurance dissolved into a huge letdown January 2, 2019 when the Cook issued a warning that Apple's revenue for the just-completed quarter would fall \$9 billion below management's forecast for the period.

RBI widens scrutiny of credit 'exuberance'

The central bank aims to ensure risks to the system do not escalate amid global economic uncertainty, analysts say

REUTERS

Mumbai, March 16: India's central bank is stepping up its fight against "exuberance" in retail lending, targeting new areas including mortgage-linked "top-up" loans, on concern about rising risks to the financial system, a dozen sources said.

The Reserve Bank of India is tightening its supervision of the industry and nudging individual lenders to rein in credit in areas where it sees increased risks, although it has not taken any formal enforcement action, the sources with direct knowledge of the process told Reuters.

The RBI has taken a string of measures over the past six months to rein in some retail lending by banks and non-bank financial firms, and publicly warned them against "all forms of exuberance".

But the new scrutiny, essentially a shot across the bow for financial firms, marks a change for the central bank, which as recently as September said India's credit expansion did not point to building systemic stress.

"RBI is following a four-step approach on supervision now - monitor, warn, penalise and then act," one source said. "They want to give entities a chance to course-correct based on public or specific warnings, but also act when warranted."

The RBI typically uses moral suasion - speeches, calls to bank executives, individual meetings - as initial steps to prod banks, before considering more assertive enforcement.

In addition to the mortgage top-ups, the RBI is cautioning



UNSECURED PERSONAL LOANS WERE UP 21% AT THE END OF JANUARY FROM A YEAR EARLIER

lenders about the risks of algorithm-based credit models and nudging a few institutions to slow co-lending, the sources said.

The sources - including people familiar with central bank thinking, bankers and others in the industry - asked not to be named given the sensitivity of the matter. The RBI did not respond to an email seeking comment.

"We do not wait for the house to catch fire and then act," RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said in December when asked about tougher rules the bank had announced for personal loans.

"The RBI is also setting out regulatory expectations from the industry through its recent supervisory actions, which can act as a guidance for the entire sector," said Anil Gupta, senior vice president and co-group head of financial-sector ratings at ICRA.

Credit extended by India's banks has been rising about 16% annually, more than double the economy's scorching 7.6% forecast growth for the financial year ending this month, despite 2.5 percentage points of RBI interest-rate hikes over the past two years.

The central bank in November

raised risk weights on personal loans, credit cards and bank credit to non-banking firms on signs of above-trend growth in those segments.

It has taken action against a two non-bank firms in the recent past, one for inadequate loan-related due diligence and the other for deficiencies in providing loans towards public issue subscriptions.

Banks' lending margins are expected to hold up this quarter, but the impact of the RBI's credit curbs are likely to be more pronounced in the coming three months, banking sources say.

'SOURCE OF RISK'

The RBI is now closely monitoring mortgage top-ups. They are meant to fund home improvements or additions, but banks are advertising them for expenses such as weddings, vacations and business expansions.

"One can take a top-up of a home loan and start investing the share market or use it for consumption purpose," said Prashant Kumar, managing director and CEO at Yes Bank, a commercial lender. "That could potentially be a source of risk in terms of repayment."

Fintech and banking sources say the RBI has asked banks to conduct rigorous audits on algorithm-based lending models, which use indicators from cash flows to home address to generate nearly instantaneous approvals for personal loans.

Central bank officials have asked multiple algo-based loan providers to ensure their models were "properly tested and validated", said a senior executive in the risk division of a private bank.

India grants 1 lakh patents in one year

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 16: Indian patent office has granted over 1 lakh patents in the past year on account of steps taken by the government to further strengthen the intellectual property rights ecosystem, an official statement said Saturday.

It also said that there has been a notable surge in Geographical Indication (GI) registrations, demonstrating a threefold increase compared to the previous year.

As on date, 573 GIs are registered in India. In 2023-24, 98 new GIs have been registered and another 62 will be registered by March 31 this year. Similarly, so far this fiscal, copyright and design registrations totalled at 36,378 and 27,819 respectively.

"Every 6 minutes one technology is seeking IP protection in India. In 2023, an all-time high of 90,300 patent applications were received. Patent office granted over one lakh patents in the last one year (15-Mar-2023 to 14-Mar-2024). Every working day, 250 patents were granted," the commerce and industry ministry said.

It added that the Patent Rules, 2024 have been notified and these rules introduced several provisions aimed at simplifying the process of obtaining and managing patents, thereby facilitating a conducive environment for inventors and creators.

In the revamped rules, a unique provision for New 'Certificate of Inventorship' has been introduced to acknowledge the contribution of inventors in the patented invention.

Besides, the time limit to furnish foreign application filing details in a specified form has been changed from six months from the date of filing of application to three months from the date of issuance of the first examination report.

"Considering the fast pace of technology, the time limit for filing requests for examinations has been reduced from 48 months to 31 months from the date of priority of application or from the date of filing of application, whichever is earlier," it said.

INDUSTRY HAILS NEW EV POLICY

India opens doors for global EV makers as it will lower EV import tax if \$500mn invested

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, March 16: The new electric vehicles (EV) manufacturing policy, announced by the Central government Friday, will not only aim to attract global players to India but also stress domestic value addition, a top official of the Automotive Component Manufacturers Association of India (ACMA) said.

ACMA President, Shradha Suri Marwah, who is also the CMD, Subros said, "The EV policy marks another significant step towards accelerating the adoption of cutting-edge technology and fostering innovation in India's automotive sector."

"The policy not only aims to attract global EV majors to invest in India but also emphasizes a significant Domestic Value Addition (DVA) criteria, ensuring the creation of a robust supply-side ecosystem."

As per the new policy trying to attract global players like Tesla, a minimum investment of Rs 4,150 crore (about \$500 million) is needed to set up manufacturing facilities and production started within three years and reach 25 per cent DVA by three years and 50 per cent DVA within 5 years at the maximum.

According to the government, the customs duty of 15 per cent (as applicable to completely knocked down or CKD units) would be applicable on a vehicle of minimum CIF value of \$35,000 and above for a total period of 5 years subject to the manufacturer setting up manufacturing facilities in India within a 3-year period.

The duty foregone on the total number of EVs allowed for import would be limited to the investment made or Rs 6,484 crore (equal to incentive under the PLI scheme) whichever is lower. A maximum of 40,000 EVs at



The new policy sets the stage for a vibrant future-mobility global manufacturing hub in India

SHRADHA SURI MARWAH | PRESIDENT, ACMA

the rate of not more than 8,000 per year would be permissible if the investment is \$800 million or more.

The carryover of unutilised annual import limits would be permitted, the government said.

The investment commitment made by the company will have to be backed up by a bank guarantee in lieu of the custom duty forgone. The bank guarantee will be invoked in case of non-achievement of DVA and minimum investment criteria defined under the scheme guidelines, the government said.

This move would help access global technologies, expand product range, and improve cost competitiveness, all of which would facilitate enhanced EV adoption.

ICRA currently expects about 15 per cent of new car sales to be electric by 2030, ICRA Ltd's Senior Vice President and Group Head, Corporate Ratings, Shamsher Dewan said.

According to Dewan, countries that have been front-runners in EV adoption have also developed a local vendor ecosystem.

This policy is a step in the right direction and would aid in increasing EV components localisation in India, which is currently at 30-40 per cent, he added.

Patanjali organises 'Jigyasa'



NEW DELHI: 'Jigyasa' programme was organised Saturday at Patanjali Research Institute where students and scientists from across the country participated. On this occasion, Dr Nirmal Kumar Awasthi (Chairman, Traditional Knowledge and Herbal Medicine Development Foundation) and Dr Sushil Kumar Upadhyay (former Deputy Director NMPB, Ministry of AYUSH) were present as key speakers. The main speaker laid

emphasis on the conservation and promotion of traditional medicinal knowledge and forest medicines. On the occasion of the conclusion of the programme, Acharya Balkrishna addressed and informed about the work being done by Patanjali. Also emphasis was placed on medicinal plant museum including World Pharmacopoeia, Soumitray Samhita and evidence based Ayurveda.

174th SLBC Meeting held

Bhubaneswar: The 174th State Level Bankers' Committee Meeting of Odisha convened March 16 at The Crown hotel. Goutam Patra, General Manager, UCO Bank cum Convenor SLBC welcomed the participants and reiterated the proactive role played by SLBC towards achievements of various parameters by the Bank in Odisha. The Managing Director and CEO of UCO Bank cum Chairman SLBC Odisha Ashwani Kumar expressed his satisfaction over the performance of banks in Agriculture, MSME, SHG and Social Security schemes. The principal secretary Finance Department, Govt of Odisha Vishal Kumar Dev expressed happiness over achieving Rs 1,28,268.85 crore under ACP against target of Rs 1,60,280.22 crore till 31st December 2023 which is 80.03% of the target. He also congratulated Banks for achieving a remarkable CD ratio of 82.50% which is one of the highest compared to other states in the country. The Regional Director, RBI, Bhubaneswar Sarada Prasan Mohanty advised all banks to strengthen the KYC norms to prevent frauds. He also advised banks to achieve 100% digitalisation of districts by 31st March 2024. The Commissioner cum Secretary, Mission Shakti Department, Govt of Odisha Sujata R Kartikeyan congratulated all banks for achieving the target of Rs15,000 crore credit linkage to WSHGs within February 2024. The Chief General Manager, NABARD congratulated all the banks for their support and active participation in the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra (VBSY) due to which performance of Odisha State was better compared to many other states. Finally, the in-charge, SLBC, Odisha Lingaraj Nayak extended vote of thanks to the dignitaries and all participants of the meeting.

BIZ BUZZ

Institute Of Cost Accountants Of India-Bhubaneswar Chapter awarded

Bhubaneswar: The Institute of Cost Accountants of India-Bhubaneswar Chapter has been awarded the "Best Chapter Award" under category A in the Eastern Region at the National Regional Council & Chapters meet held March 16 in Indore, recognising its outstanding performance across all activities. This marks the 23rd consecutive time this vibrant Chapter has received this prestigious award. Representing the Bhubaneswar Chapter, CMA Surya Narayan Tripathy, Chairman, and CMA Ramesh Chandra Patra, Secretary, accepted the award in the presence of the President & Council Members of ICMAI, including CMA Damodar Mishra, Treasurer, ICMAI-EIRC, and other Regional Council members of ICMAI-EIRC.



On this joyous occasion, the Chairman and Secretary of the Chapter extend their gratitude to the Managing Committee Members, Founder members, Members, Faculties, Students, Staff of the Chapter, and stakeholders for their unwavering support and cooperation. They assure that the same level of dedication will be maintained at the Bhubaneswar Chapter in the future for the betterment of the Chapter and the CMA profession. They expressed their happiness and stressed that this award is the most significant recognition for this dynamic Chapter.

BIG MAC GOES BIG TECH, WITH A FEW HICCUPS

REUTERS

San Antonio, March 16: When McDonald's first opened for business in the 1940s, its workers stood at physical counters, its burgers and fries were listed on paper menus, and its customers paid cash to its human cashiers.

How quaint. Today technology so infuses every aspect of McDonald's business that it would only be a slight exaggeration to call it a tech company that happens to sell burgers.

McDonald's mobile app; its human-less, order-taking kiosks; its digitized menus that change based on trends, the weather and more; and even its generative AI - together, these enable McDonald's to eke out additional sales and efficiencies worth billions of dollars to the company, which has 40,000 locations in roughly 100 countries.

Yet that same tech can also bring McDonald's to its knees.

On Friday, system outages plagued McDonald's locations across some of its biggest global markets, including Japan, Australia and the United Kingdom, forcing many stores to temporarily take only cash or shut down entirely.

McDonald's hasn't disclosed how widespread the outages were, but Friday afternoon, 12 hours after the outages were first reported, a franchise in San Antonio, Texas wouldn't accept orders in its app and couldn't accept cash.

McDonald's said in a statement the outage was caused by an unnamed third-party provider during a "configuration change". Asked for comment, McDonald's referred to that statement.

McDonald's Japan Saturday apologised for the inconvenience, saying all its restaurants and its delivery service were operating normally.

The burger giant did flag that



something like this could happen, at least to Wall Street.

"We are increasingly reliant upon technology systems," company lawyers wrote in its annual Securities and Exchange Commission filing February 22. "Any failure or interruption of these systems could significantly impact our or our franchisees' operations, or our customers' experiences and perceptions."

Even AI gets a warning in the filing, which states that "the artificial intelligence tools we are incorporating into certain aspects of our restaurant operations may not generate the intended efficiencies and may impact our business results."

Yet Friday's widespread outage is unlikely to bump McDonald's out of its long-term strategy to deepen its reliance on tech.

McDonald's wants more customers to order through digital avenues like its app and kiosks,

which already made up a third of its sales in top markets in 2022.

In December McDonald's announced a partnership with Google to move restaurant computer systems into the cloud, where the global scale of data will allow McDonald's generative AI system to "better understand the broadest range of patterns and nuances," resulting in what McDonald's at the time said would be "hotter, fresher food."

Generative AI already powers much of the restaurant operations and personalized pitches made from internal profiles of customers.

It's not just McDonald's. Tech is the strategy du jour of virtually every major fast food chain. Starbucks in 2019 announced its own internal AI platform, called "Deep Brew," which then-CEO Kevin Johnson said would increasingly power its personalized offers, store staffing and inventory management.

"Over the next 10 years, we want to be as good at AI as the tech giants," Johnson told a retail conference in 2020, according to Retail Dive, a trade publication. Starbucks in 2022 hired a former McDonald's executive to oversee its use of technology.

Risks from this new technology don't just come from system outages.

Wendy's got public backlash after its CEO said during an earnings call in mid-February that the chain would soon use "dynamic pricing" on its digital signs - yet another technology that would not have been possible before the age of information.

The chain later clarified that it did not intend to use digital signs to implement "surge pricing" that could let it charge higher prices during busy times. Rather, Wendy's said, its CEO's remarks referred to its plan to offer discounts to patrons during slow parts of the day.

SEBI defers full launch of same day settlement

REUTERS

Mumbai, March 16: India's market regulator Friday deferred a full launch of optional same day settlements, according to a press release.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) said that same day settlement, or T+0, would be launched for only 25 stocks and with a limited set of brokers to test the efficacy of a shorter settlement cycle. The regulator will review progress at the end of three and six months before deciding on a further course of action, SEBI said.

In December, the regulator proposed a phased rollout of optional same-day settlement and earlier this week said it wants it to launch by the end of March.

However, the plan has met resistance from offshore investors who say it would be costly for them and could fragment the market.

Lifter Sheuli expelled from camp

The CWG gold medallist was found entering a women's hostel at Patiala late Thursday night

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 16: Commonwealth Games gold medallist weightlifter Achinta Sheuli has been expelled from the Paris Olympics preparatory camp after he was caught entering the women's hostel at night in NIS Patiala.

The disciplinary breach occurred Thursday night. The 22-year-old, who competes in the men's 73kg weight class, was caught by security personnel, who filmed a video of the lifter entering the hostel.

"Obviously, such indiscipline will not be tolerated. Achinta was asked to leave the camp immediately," an Indian Weightlifting Federation (IWLF) official said here on condition of anonymity.

The Sports Authority of India (SAI) and NIS Patiala executive director (ED) Vineet Kumar were immediately informed about the incident. "The video filmed by the security personnel was sent to Kumar and the headquarters in New Delhi. IWLF was then asked to remove Achinta from the camp," a SAI source informed.

Achinta, who won the gold medal at the 2022 Birmingham CWG with a Games record, left the camp Friday. Despite efforts to contact him, he remained unreachable.

This is not the first time the IWLF has taken strict action against a lifter for a disciplinary breach. CWG and Youth Olympics champion Jeremy Lalrinnunga was evicted from the national camp on grounds



of indiscipline before.

Following his expulsion, Achinta's chances of qualifying for the Olympics were also ended as he will not be travelling for this month's IWF World Cup in Phuket, Thailand, which is a mandatory event for a spot at the Paris Games. Achinta is currently placed 27th in the Olympic qualification rank-

ings and had a chance of making the cut via the continental quota. "It is such a pity because he had actually started getting back on track after his injury," the IWLF source said.

Only Tokyo Olympics silver medallist Mirabai Chanu (49kg) and CWG silver medallist Bindyarani Devi remain in contention for the Paris Games.

The two will be travelling to Thailand later this month to take part in the IWF World Cup. The tournament will mark Chanu's return to competition after suffering a hip tendinitis injury in August last year.

Under the 2024 Olympic qualification rule, a lifter has to compulsorily compete in the 2023 World Championships and the 2024 World Cup.

FORMER INDIA SKIPPER TO TAKE CALL ON RETIREMENT AFTER PARIS GAMES

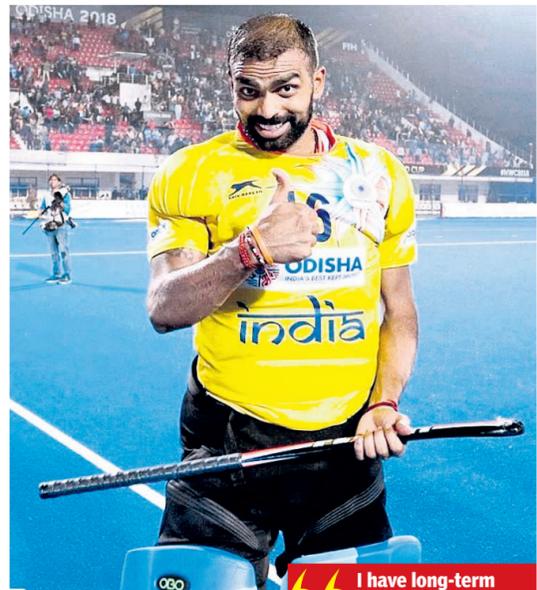
Sreejesh eyes coaching role after active playing career

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 16: He has become a part of folklore of Indian hockey due to his unbelievable saves under the Indian bar. Such is his aura, that goalkeeper PR Sreejesh is an automatic selection to the Indian team. However Sreejesh is the first to admit that age is catching up with him.

Sreejesh said recently that he doesn't want to predict his future. He will take a call on his retirement after the Paris Olympics. However, the veteran player has his targets chalked out. He wants to be the chief coach of the national side by 2036. As recent trends indicate India is all set to make a bid for the 2036 Olympics. Sreejesh remains optimistic but said once he calls it quits, he definitely wants to give something back to the game. "For me, this Olympics is really important because at this age it is really hard for me to talk about the next four-year cycle. From the last Olympics, I was only taking one year at a time. The rest of the decisions comes after the Olympics," Sreejesh said.

"I don't think so (it will be his last Olympics) because when you are 36 and doing a beep test of 20.8, I think it's quite good. However, you never know what the future holds. (But) after my career I will take a break. I will need time to transfer myself from a player to any role, as a coach, assistant coach or goal-keeping coach. I have long-term plans. My plan is for 2036 or 2040," Sreejesh added.



I have long-term plans, I want to evolve as a coach so that I can be the head coach of India by 2036

PR SREEJESH

The former Indian captain also said that he has ambitions of coaching the national side. "I want to improve myself, I want to see myself as the coach or chief coach of the Indian national hockey team in that time because by that time I will be more experienced. I want to be a part of an Indian independent coaching staff of the national hockey team," Sreejesh elaborated.

Sreejesh played a key role in India's historic bronze medal-winning feat at the Tokyo Games. He asserted the current side have the potential to produce

better results in Paris. "All the top six teams in the world are now beating each other. We have got an open pool where anyone can beat anyone," Sreejesh pointed out. "I believe that we have got the potential to finish on the podium for sure but you can't be overconfident," Sreejesh pointed out.

SHORT TAKES

Valiant Lakshya goes down in semifinals

Birmingham: Shuttler Lakshya Sen missed his date with history after stumbling to a three-game loss against Indonesia's Jonatan Christie in the semifinals of the All England Championships here Saturday. In a game of fine margins, the 22-year-old, who had finished runner-up in the 2022 edition, was marginally short as he slipped to a 21-12, 10-21, 15-21 defeat to World No. 9 Christie, the 2018 Asian Games gold medallist, after a 68-minute smash-fest. "I am disappointed with the loss today, but I am happy with my overall performance," Sen said.

Javed appointed SL bowling coach

Colombo: Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) appointed Saturday former Pakistan pacer Aaqib Javed as their fast-bowling coach until the completion of the ICC T20 World Cup 2024 in June. Javed, a 1992 World Cup winner, is currently serving as head coach of Lahore Qalandars in the Pakistan Super League (PSL). "We warmly welcome Aaqib and believe that his immense international experience, both in playing and coaching, will help our bowlers come into good shape ahead of the upcoming major international competitions, such as the ICC Men's T20 World Cup," Ashley De Silva, SLC CEO, said in a press release.

Neymar on road to recovery, says doc

Rio de Janeiro: Star forward Neymar remains on track to return from a serious knee injury in July or August, Brazil team doctor Rodrigo Lasmar said Friday here. The 32-year-old has not played since suffering a ruptured anterior cruciate ligament and meniscus of his left knee in Brazil's 0-2 defeat to Uruguay in a World Cup qualifier October 17, 2023. "Neymar has shown good progress and is expected to return to the pitch (after a recovery period of) nine or 10 months," Lasmar was quoted as saying by newspaper 'O Tempo'. He has already begun muscle strengthening work under the medical staff at his club Al Hilal, Lasmar added.

FIFA boss Infantino gets huge salary hike

Geneva: FIFA has raised president Gianni Infantino's base salary 33% last year to lift his total pay package to more than 4.13 million Swiss francs (USD 4.67 million), soccer's governing body has said in its financial report, released Friday. Infantino was re-elected unopposed in 2023 to extend his presidency to 11 years. Currently it looks like he will continue in the chair till 2029.

DC start favourites against RCB

MANDHANA HOPING HER TEAM CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN THEIR GIANT-KILLING SPREE

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 16: Both Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) and Delhi Capitals (DC) will have different goals in mind when they face in the Women's Premier League (WPL) final here Sunday. For RCB, who will be playing their first WPL final, the target will be to achieve what their men counterparts have never been able to do so far, winning the IPL title. RCB men's team have finished runners-up on three occasions (2009, 2011, 2016) in the 16 editions of the IPL played so far.

DC, on the other hand, will look to erase the memories of last season when they lost in the final to Mumbai Indians. They certainly start as favourites as they have been in imperious form in the tournament topping the five team league table with 12 points from eight games. But then, the final is another day when everything starts afresh.

Meg Lanning, the skipper of DC has been the inspiration for her side. She has scored 308 runs from eight innings while South African all-rounder Marizanne Kapp and Australian left-arm spinner Jess Jonassen have dominated the bowling show with 11 wickets each. Add to them, the fact that DC have never lost to RCB in four meetings is enough to put the latter on the back-foot.

For RCB, all-rounder Ellyse



Perry will be the key to success as besides being the highest run-getter with 312 runs, the Australian has been impressive with the ball, scalping seven wickets. However, others like skipper Smriti Mandhana, Richa Ghosh and Sophie Devine need to come to the party. If RCB are to make a fight out of the game, bowlers Renuka Singh, Shreyanka Patil and Georgia Wareham also need to deliver.

Mandhana however, is not in the mood to talk about the RCB men's team and their failures. She pointed out that she likes to deal in the present. "We are really not co-relating with what happened with the men's team. Cricket has taught it is important to live in the present. It's just about playing good cricket on that particular day, whoever plays the best cricket tomorrow

is going to win," Mandhana said. Lanning on the other hand hoped that the team remain consistent. "We are really in a good space heading into tomorrow (Sunday). It's going to be a cracking game. We are really excited to be involved, give ourselves an opportunity to go out there and win it," Lanning said. "We are looking forward to play our best game of the tournament," she added.

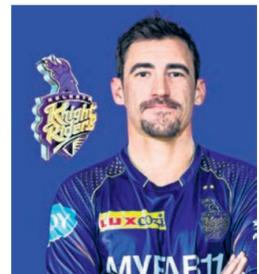
KKR's Starc gears up for IPL 'circus'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 16: Australia pacer Mitchell Starc opened up on returning to the IPL and is prepared for a 'bit of circus'. After nearly nine years, Starc is set to make his highly anticipated return to IPL, donning the colours of KKR. He was bought by KKR for an astronomical price tag of Rs 24.70 crore in the auction making him the costliest player in IPL history. Starc, last played for RCB in the IPL in 2015 and finished with 20-odd wickets.

In an interview with 'cricket.com.au', Starc shared his enthusiasm for the challenge ahead. He emphasised his readiness to embrace the dynamic environment of the IPL. With a fresh roster of teammates and a renewed sense of purpose, Starc said he is poised to make his mark in the world's premier T20 competition.

"It's been eight-nine years, I think. (I am) back to KKR where I was supposed to be in 2018. So I'll be back there for the chance to pull on the gold and purple. I guess my memories are a few and far between of back in 2014 and 2015 with RCB but yeah, really excited to get stuck in. Obviously, it will be a new group of players, a bunch of guys I certainly haven't met or been able to work with before," Starc was quoted as saying by the website.



IPL is the best T20 league in the world and so it is exciting, but definitely challenging

MITCHELL STARC

Acknowledging the electrifying atmosphere and global appeal of the IPL, Starc said he is anticipating an exhilarating season ahead. He characterised the tournament as a 'circus' that encapsulates the essence of T20 cricket at its finest.

"Yes I will be playing for and against quite a few guys that I have played international cricket with. Yes, it's gonna be exciting, but definitely a new challenge. It's always a bit of a circus when it is the best T20 league in the world and so I look forward to it," said Starc.

KKR will play their season-opener March 23 against Sunrisers Hyderabad at the iconic Eden Gardens.

DAV School (CDA) triumphs

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, March 16: DAV Public School (CDA) won the Cuttack District Intra-School Cricket Tournament-2024 defeating A-Combine School (CDA) by nine wickets in the final played Saturday at the Barabati Stadium here. It was a one-sided final which was completely dominated by DAV Public School (CDA). It should also be stated here that a total of 21 schools participated in the tournament.

A-Combine School (CDA) could manage to score only 106 all out in 35 overs after electing to bat. The DAV bowlers bowled with great discipline and maintained a proper length and line to stifle the opposition. Kaushik R Das (3/9), skipper Baibhab Mohanty 3/(16) and Animesh Parida (2/16) were the pick of the DAV Public School (CDA) bowlers. They did not allow the opposition batters to score freely.

Chasing a small target for vic-



tory the batters of the DAV Public School (CDA) achieved it quite easily in 26 overs. Preetish Mishra (54 n o, 84b, 9x4) led the chase from the front hitting the ball all round the park. He was well-supported by Abhishek Kalia (27, 49b, 4x4) and Sandipan Sahu (22 n o, 25b, 2x4). None of the opposition bowlers could make a mark on the DAV Public School (CDA) batters who did not face any problems while reaching the victory target.

BRIEF SCORES: A-Combine School (CDA) 106 in 35 overs (Kaushik R Das 3/9, Baibhab Mohanty 3/16) lost to DAV Public School (CDA) 107 for 1 (Preetish Mishra 54 n o) by nine wickets.

Swiatek, Sakkari set up final date

AGENCIES

Indian Wells, March 16: World No.1 Iga Swiatek overpowered Marta Kostyuk 6-2, 6-1 here Friday to reach the final at the ATP-WTA Indian Wells Masters tennis tournament. Four-time Grand Slam champion Swiatek, who won the title here in 2022, needed just 69 minutes to get past 32nd-ranked Ukrainian Kostyuk.

Swiatek will meet Maria Sakkari, who outlasted Coco Gauff 6-4, 6-7 (5), 6-2, after blowing three match points in the second set of their rain-delayed semifinal Friday night.

Swiatek and Kostyuk avoided the desert showers, but played in overcast, chilly conditions. However, it did not matter to Swiatek who appeared in red-hot form.

"I think it was the cleanest match I played here," said Swiatek, who hit 14 winners with just six unforced errors



Iga Swiatek in action during her semifinal Friday against Marta Kostyuk

and didn't face a breakpoint. "I didn't really have any moment today (Friday) in the match where I didn't feel confident. I felt all the positive vibes," she added.

Although Swiatek reached the final without dropping a set, she had insisted after prior victories that she had a few things in her game to sort out. It looked as if she had done just that as she put Kostyuk on the run early, piling on the pressure with her precision and power.

The Ukrainian, playing in

DJOKO PULLS OUT

FLORIDA: Top-ranked Novak Djokovic informed Saturday that he will skip the Miami Open and said that he needs to balance his 'private and professional schedule'. Djokovic's announcement on his social media accounts follows his defeat Monday to unheralded Luca Nardi in the third round of the Indian Wells tournament. "At this stage of my career, I'm balancing my private and professional schedule. I'm sorry that I won't experience some of the best and most passionate fans in the world," Djokovic wrote.

her first 1000 level semifinal, held serve to open the match, but Swiatek won the next five games and pocketed the opening set in half-an-hour. Kostyuk, who finished with 17 winners and 23 unforced errors, could find no way to steady the ship in the second set also after falling behind 0-3.

DESPITE POLLS, IPL WILL BE PLAYED IN INDIA ONLY: DHUMAL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Marc 16: IPL chairman Arun Dhumal dismissed speculation Saturday that the league would be shifted to the UAE due to the upcoming general elections in the country from April 19 to June 1.

There were endless rumours with the reports filling social media about players being asked to deposit their passports with their respective franchises.

However, Dhumal set the record straight. "The IPL is not being shifted anywhere. We will soon announce the remaining fixtures," Dhumal said.

The schedule for the first two weeks has been already released with defending champions Chennai Super Kings taking on Royal Challengers Bangalore at home March 22.