



Sara's reflections
Actor Sara Ali Khan discusses evolving self-image, societal pressures, and contrast between real self and on-screen personas

LEISURE | P2



Russians mourn
Russia lowers flags to half-mast for a day of mourning after 133 were killed in the deadliest attack inside Russia in two decades

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Vedanta's big plans
Vedanta Ltd will invest \$6 billion across businesses as it looks to add at least \$2.5 billion to annual EBITDA

BUSINESS | P11



Samson scripts win
Skipper Sanju Samson plays a match-winning knock to guide RR to victory in their game against LSG

SPORTS | P12



DREAM COME TRUE: Players of Odisha FC celebrate with the trophy Sunday at the Kalinga Stadium after winning their maiden title in the Indian Women's League

'INDIA bloc intact, will cross 272'

"No, no. Where has it burst?" says Jairam Ramesh asserting that Nitish Kumar not being a part does not mean that the INDIA bloc has collapsed. Raking up the electoral bond issue as 'quid pro quo', he downplays the PM's corruption pitch as a 'hollow plank' and goes on to exude confidence that the bloc will cross the halfway mark.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 24: The INDIA bloc is intact despite Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's somersault and TMC supreme Mamata Banerjee deciding to be Mamata Banerjee, senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh has said, rejecting as 'hollow' Prime Minister Narendra Modi's pitch against the Opposition on corruption. In an interaction with PTI editors at the news agency's headquarters here, Ramesh also said the Opposition will unitedly cross the halfway mark of 272 in the elections and oust the BJP from power. He spoke on a range of issues including electoral bonds, the arrests of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and JMM leader Hemant Soren, who

to take the corruption plank and use Hemant Soren and Arvind Kejriwal as examples that he is fighting corruption is absolutely a bogus argument. Look at the electoral bonds saga, it is a complete case of quid pro quo," the Congress leader said. There is ample evidence to show that the corruption is a 'khokhla (hollow) plank' as far as Mr Modi is concerned, he added. On Opposition unity, he said all 28 parties were together up to December 19 but Nitish Kumar did a somersault and Mamata Banerjee decided to be Mamata Banerjee. These are the two things that have happened. The fact that Nitish Kumar is not part of the INDIA bloc does not mean that the INDIA bloc has collapsed, Ramesh said, asserting the opposition will certainly cross the halfway mark. "Yes, I'm sure that it will add up to 272," he said.

Asked if the INDIA bloc bubble has burst, he said, "No, no. Where has it burst?" "The alliance with the Aam Aadmi Party is intact as is the tie-up with the NCP, Shiv Sena, the DMK and JMM, the Congress leader asserted. Our alliance with CPM and CPI is going to be finalised in West Bengal. We have an 11-party alliance in Assam and we have an alliance with the Samajwadi Party. Mamata Banerjee has said that she is part of the INDIA bloc. She is not seat-sharing with us, but she is very much part of the INDIA bloc," he said. On how Kejriwal's arrest would impact the Opposition, especially as the PM making corruption an issue using the cases of the Delhi CM and Hemant Soren, Ramesh said, "Chanda do, dhanda lo (quid pro quo)" is becoming obvious, after the electoral bonds issue.

18 candidates in BJP's Odisha list

Bhubaneswar, March 24: The BJP Sunday announced the names of its candidates for 18 of the 21 Lok Sabha seats in Odisha, while dropping four sitting MPs from the list. The nominees for Cuttack, Jajpur and Kandhamal LS constituencies are yet to be named. While Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan will contest from Sambalpur, the saffron party's spokesperson Sambit

Patra will try his luck from Puri once again after losing out in a close contest in 2019. Similarly the party has retained sitting MPs Jual Oram (Sundargarh), Pratap Sarangi (Balasore), Sangeeta Kumari Singh Deo (Bolangir) and Aparajita Sarangi (Bhubaneswar). Among others, Pradeep Purohit will contest from Bargarh, Ananta Nayak from Keonjhar, Naba Majhi from Mayurbhanj, Abhimanyu Sethi from Bhadrak, Rudra Pany from Dhenkanal, Malvika Keshari

Deo from Kalahandi, Balabhadra Majhi from Nabarangpur, Baijayant Panda from Kendrapara, Bibhu Tarai from Jagatsinghpur, Anita Subhadarshini from Aska, Pradeep Kumar Panigrahy from Berhampur and Kaleram Majhi from Koraput. The sitting MPs who were denied tickets this time are Suresh Pujari (Bargarh), Bishweswar Tudu (Mayurbhanj), Nitish Gang Deb (Sambalpur) and Basant Panda (Kalahandi). **More P8**

HOLIDAY NOTICE
The offices and press of Orissa POST will remain closed March 25 & 26 on the occasion of Dola Purnima and Holi. Hence, there will be no edition of the paper on March 26 & 27.
—EDITOR

IRREGULAR by MANJUL
No, not with mud. It's Holi today. Let's use colours

Kejriwal's 'water work' order from ED custody

New Delhi, March 24: In the midst of discussions regarding his ability to perform duties as the Delhi Chief Minister while in ED custody, Arvind Kejriwal has issued his first direction on running the city government, instructing Water Minister Atishi to solve water and sewer-related problems in some areas of the city. Addressing a press conference Sunday, Atishi said the directions, received late Saturday, brought tears to her eyes with Kejriwal showing concern for the people of Delhi despite his own plight. "I have come to know that there are significant issues with water and sewage in some areas of Delhi. I am concerned



months, Atishi said. The minister said Kejriwal directed to issue instructions to the chief secretary and other officers in this regard. He also suggested seeking the help of Lt Governor VK Saxena, if needed, and expects that he will extend all assistance, she said. Kejriwal (55) was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) Thursday from his official residence in connection with an excise policy-linked money-laundering case. A court Friday sent the AAP national convener to the central agency's custody till March 28. The ED has said that Kejriwal is the "kingpin and key conspirator" in the now-scrapped excise policy case in collusion with AAP ministers, leaders and other persons.

Dogs understand more than they reveal

New Delhi, March 24: Known to respond to command words such as 'sit', dogs have now been found to conjure up mental representations when they hear known words referring to objects such as a ball, according to a new research that analysed their brain activity. The researchers said it did not matter how many object words a dog understood -- known words activated mental representations anyway. This suggested that the ability is generally present in dogs and not just in some exceptional canines knowing the names of many objects, they said. "Your dog understands more than he or she shows signs of," said Lilla Magyari from Hungary's Eötvös Loránd University and co-first author of the study published in the Current Biology journal. Dogs are not merely learning a specific behaviour to certain words but they might actually understand the meaning of some individual words as humans do, Magyari said. The finding that dogs may have a general capacity to understand words



in a referential manner, as humans do, can reshape the way scientists think about humans' uniqueness in using and understanding language, the researchers said. It also has important implications for theories and models of language evolution, they said. For the study, the researchers recruited 18 dog owners and had them say words for toys that their dogs knew. The dogs were then presented with objects -- sometimes matching the word their owner said and sometimes not -- and their brain's electrical activity was measured. The brain activity recordings showed differences in patterns when the dogs were shown matching objects against those when shown non-matching ones, the researchers said and added that this was evidence of dogs understanding words. They also found a greater difference in the brain activity patterns for words that the dogs knew better. While the team also thought that dogs' ability to understand words depended on them having a large vocabulary of object words, the results showed otherwise. "Because typical dogs learn instruction words rather than object names, and there are only a handful of dogs with a large vocabulary of object words, we expected that dogs' capacity for referential understanding of object words will be linked to the number of object words they know; but it wasn't," said Magyari. The researchers now want to know if this ability to understand words through mental representations is specific to dogs or is present in other mammals as well.

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leisure



OLIVIA OPENS UP ON PAY DISPARITY IN HOLLYWOOD

Oscar-winning actress Olivia Coleman has talked about the pay disparity in Hollywood and shared that she would make way more money if she were a man. She said, "Don't get me started on the pay disparity, but male actors get paid more because they used to say they drew in the audiences."

RON HOWARD DOES NOT WATCH HIS OWN MOVIES

Filmmaker Ron Howard, who has spent many decades in Hollywood and has churned out classics including *Cocoon* and *Backdraft*, has said that he refuses to watch his hit movies. The actor told *People*, "Frankly, I don't go back and watch my movies, so it's been a long time since I've seen *Splash*."



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

Some cheerful news could put you in really high spirits today. The news could either be of a personal or professional nature—perhaps about your career, or a social gathering, or some monetary profit. You always give your best, and Ganesh says today it will lead to rich dividends.

TAURUS

It is more than likely that you will emerge victorious in all your meetings and outings today, predicts Ganesh. Your calm temperament will not let you flinch in the face of pressure. It is in your best interest to take some time to cope with all the stress, advises Ganesh.

GEMINI

Today will be a day of joy, happiness and festivities on the home-front. You will try and spend as much time as possible with the children and will enthusiastically participate in home improvement projects. You will be able to solve pending issues at home by taking an intelligent interest in them, says Ganesh.

CANCER

Ganesh says that you will feel tiredness and weakness but in the office or business you will be relaxed, with less tension. Ganesh suggests that you should be careful to fulfil new responsibilities entrusted to you. You will spend on travel.

LEO

You may not get the desired results in spite of working hard. You need to keep your weaknesses in mind, and your mistakes, before starting anew again. You will need to do more than necessary, if required, to make sure that your business relationships stay strong. Finances will improve, says Ganesh.

VIRGO

Ganesh advises you to quantify your worth in the spheres of emotions and sentiments. You will prepare yourself for everything, from games to peers to family. However, at the same time you will realise your shortcomings. Ganesh foretells that from today on the artist in you will begin to come to the fore.

LIBRA

Ganesh says your nature of spending wisely is highly appreciated as it is a good thing to save money for the future. This nature of yours will not allow you to spend money on useless things. You will be able to buy a home or a vehicle in the near future with these savings of yours.

SCORPIO

Don't run from your troubles, learn to face the challenges and try to solve your problems. This piece of Ganesh's advice is going to help you today. And you very well know why. Take all the tips that come to you sportingly and try to implement it in your practical life.

SAGITTARIUS

You are a social butterfly as you attend a series of parties and events today, says Ganesh. You may even bump into old pals and relive good 'ol days. Also, you meet your extended family! It's time for soiree and merry-making.

CAPRICORN

You are a bighearted person and you love to help others in every possible way. But, people may take you for a ride, warns Ganesh. You may realise that if you would have been extra careful, you could have stopped others take advantage of you. By the end of the day, you will shake off such negative feelings and be grateful to the God for blessing you with all the nice things in life.

AQUARIUS

You will try everything to please your colleagues and bosses, but they will still have something negative to say about your performance. In order to be in the good books of everyone you end up hurting your own interests, feels Ganesh. The second half of the day promises to be relaxing, thanks to your sweetheart who will make special efforts to lighten your burden of work.

PISCES

If you are the leader of a project or a team, then today is your day. Your enthusiasm and creativity will give a sense of purpose and direction to your colleagues. You are more concerned about the means rather than the ends. Today is a good day to progress on the work-front. While no remarkable events are likely to occur in your personal life, your family will expect you to pay attention to their needs, says Ganesh.

Corporate race isn't kind to women: Raveena

Mumbai: Actress Raveena Tandon, who plays a lawyer in the upcoming streaming film *Patna Shuklla*, said that the corporate race isn't kind to anyone, especially women. From managing household chores to running companies, the world has become more progressive. But women still face challenges to prove they deserve more.

She pointed out the same as she said, "For years, women had to walk extra miles to prove their place in the world; my character Tanvi has too as well. Being the only female attorney in the court, she has to work extra hard compared to any other attorney. Let's face

it, the corporate race hasn't been kind to anyone, especially women, and *Patna Shuklla* brings that into perspective in a very mindful way."

The actress further mentioned, "It was comparatively easy for me to get into that mind space and deal with struggles as Tanvi; all I had to do was tap into all the challenges I faced at work. I think these small elements make *Patna Shuklla* a very raw and authentic portrayal of a woman's journey."

Produced by Arbaaz Khan Productions and directed by Vivek Budakoti, the courtroom drama currently streams on Disney+ Hotstar.



AGENCIES



Sara calls herself a cerebral person

Mumbai: Actress Sara Ali Khan, while promoting her films, discussed her evolving self-image and decision-making process. The contrast between her real self and on-screen personas led to feelings of disconnect and overthinking influenced by societal pressures.

Over time, the image she presents on social media clashes with the characters she portrays in her films. This contrast between her real self and the personas she takes on in her acting roles is noted as a point of interest or perhaps concern by the public or social media.

In an interview, the *Simmba* actress said that people are getting confused between her 'unadulterated' version in the

beginning and an extremely different version on social media and in her interviews. She admits that she let herself down in this case. She says that in the early period of her career, she opened a door for the audience, the media, and people in general to see an unadulterated, very honest version of herself. It made them draw comparisons. She eventually started feeling very empty and felt she was being let down by herself.

She calls her decision-making 'visceral', which has now started becoming 'cerebral'. She realised it was not working for her as a starter and did not know how to filter the noise. The actress understood that when a person is inauthentic, their body signals it to them.

AGENCIES

I hate masking my feelings: Kriti

Mumbai: Actress Kriti Sanon spilled the beans on the 6th season of *No Filter Neha* on video, hosted by the ever-charismatic Neha Dhupia. Giving audiences a peek into her personal life, she made some fun revelations.

She revealed, "I feel like we are actors, and in front of the media and camera, we are so strong and nothing is affecting us, and hee hee haa haa is going on, but there are times when what you are feeling internally is so different and you have to mask it, and I hate that. Actors are also humans, and it's almost impossible for them to be unaffected by what's written or said about them."

On the work front, Kriti will be seen next in *Crew* alongside Kareena Kapoor Khan and Tabu.

AGENCIES

Anurag to charge money to meet new talents

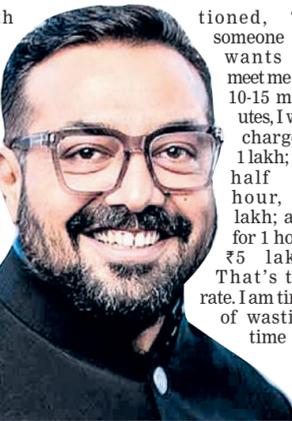
Mumbai: Filmmaker Anurag Kashyap, who is known for cult classics like *Gangs of Wasseypur*, *Black Friday*, *Gulaab*, and others, is putting a price cap on the newer talents who want to meet him for a potential collaboration.

This action comes in light of the filmmaker's claims about random people meeting him and adding nothing to his films or ending up giving him mediocre work.

The filmmaker took to his Instagram and wrote, "I wasted a lot of time trying to help newcomers and mostly

ended up with mediocre s**t. So now onwards, I don't want to waste my time meeting random people who think they're creative geniuses. So I will now have rates."

He further men-



tioned, "If someone wants to meet me for 10-15 minutes, I will charge ₹ 1 lakh; for half an hour, ₹ 2 lakh; and for 1 hour, ₹ 5 lakh. That's the rate. I am tired of wasting time

meeting people. If you really think you can afford it, call me or stay the f*** away. And all paid in advance."

Anurag wrote in the caption, "And I mean it. Don't text, DM, or call me. Pay, and you will get time. I am not a charity, and I am tired of people looking for shortcuts."

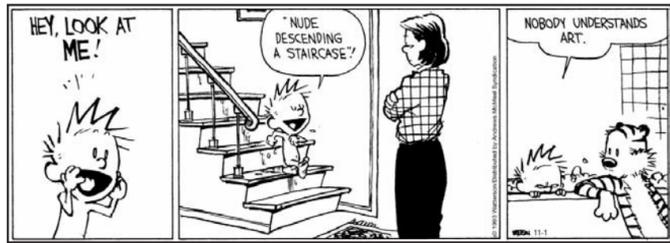
In the past, the filmmaker has collaborated with many newcomers; his collaboration with music composer Amit Trivedi in *Dev.D* marked a new dawn in Hindi film music.

IANS

PEANUTS



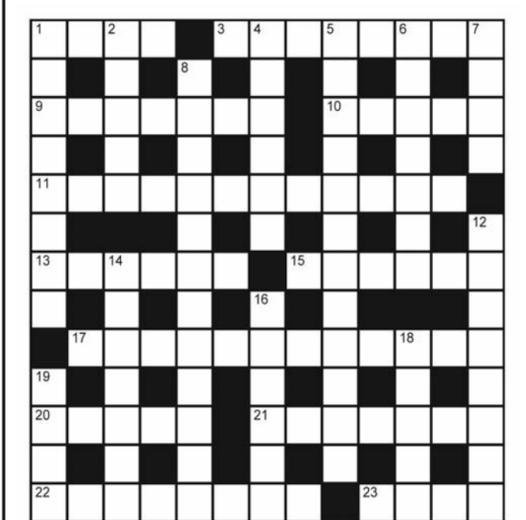
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



FUN post CROSSWORD



- Copyright ©2024 PuzzleJunction.com
- Across**
- 1 Confederate
 - 3 *The Mikado*, for one
 - 9 Chemical element
 - 10 Combine
 - 11 Underling (6,6)
 - 13 Gave out
 - 15 Roofing material
 - 17 Chiromancers' tools (7,5)
 - 20 Doctrine
 - 21 Madrigal style song
 - 22 Power generator
 - 23 Trifling
 - Down**
 - 1 Liquidator
 - 2 Sachet scent
 - 4 Distill
 - 5 Wacky (5,3,4)
 - 6 Short poem
 - 7 Domain
 - 8 Weather prediction
 - 12 Bawl out
 - 14 Hospital big-wig
 - 16 Call off
 - 18 Free
 - 19 Garbage barge

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.

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|---|---|--|--|---|
| 6 | | | | | | | | 1 |
| 1 | 2 | | 9 | 5 | | | | 8 |
| | 5 | | 1 | | | | | 6 |
| 3 | | | 8 | 2 | | | | 9 |
| 7 | | | | | | | | 5 |
| | | | | 4 | 1 | | | 3 |
| | | | 5 | | | | | 6 |
| 9 | | | | | | | | 7 |
| | | | 7 | | | | | 2 |

SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| B | M | P | O | D | U |
| F | O | R | E | G | O |
| R | T | S | T | C | H |
| H | E | I | R | S | P |
| I | E | T | L | A | |
| D | I | S | C | S | S |
| L | S | P | E | R | V |
| G | L | O | B | E | T |
| F | O | P | E | I | |
| B | A | R | B | A | R |
| T | B | O | E | U | H |
| R | E | F | L | E | X |
| D | E | Y | E | S | A |

SUDOKU

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | 5 | 6 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 2 | 9 | 7 | 8 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 6 | 1 |
| 1 | 8 | 3 | 9 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 2 |
| 5 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 6 | 9 | 8 |
| 9 | 7 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 8 | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| 3 | 6 | 8 | 4 | 1 | 9 | 2 | 5 | 7 |
| 7 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 9 | 1 | 8 | 2 | 5 |
| 8 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 9 | 7 | 6 |
| 6 | 2 | 9 | 7 | 8 | 5 | 4 | 1 | 3 |

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

SHOPPING SPREE

Heavy rush of buyers at Baisakhi Baniya Mela, being held at Balyatra upper ground in Cuttack, Sunday



₹21 lakh cash, 700 gm gold seized from crorepati thief



DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

Bhubaneswar, March 24: The Commissionerate Police Sunday claimed to have arrested a man who robbed houses in affluent locations in the Capital City, and would splurge the loot on a lavish life. Twin City Police Commissioner Sanjeeb Panda said Parasuram Giri alias Sana was arrested during a security check (nakabandi) Saturday night. His arrest led to the seizure of ₹21 lakhs cash, 700 grams of gold ornaments and 7 kg silver ornament, he said. The seized articles have been handed over to their owners here after police verification, he added. The top cop said Sana, a native of Balasore, had earlier been

booked in five cases, including one for abetting his wife's suicide. Sana would indulge in criminal activities soon after obtaining bail in each of these cases, before landing in jail again, Panda added. Panda said Sana had sold the stolen ornaments (that have been recovered) at a jewellery shop near Rajmahal square for ₹50 lakh. He said the owner of the jewellery shop is currently on the run. "We will get him soon," he added. An officer privy to the investigation of the case said that Saturday night Sana was trying to leave the city limits after committing the burglary when he was detained during the routine security checking. He broke down

during sustained questioning and spilled the beans about the burglary, he said. Describing Sana as a skilled robber, Panda said he would re-see locked houses in prime locations in the City during day time and burgle those at night. He would strike between 1 and 3 pm, and, take off his shoes (chappals) in order not to make any noise when he was at his job. "He will also switch off his phone, or put it on aeroplane mode in order to erase any digital trail of his movement," the officer added. Panda said Sana had been stopped a couple of times by police patrolling units while returning home after committing burglaries. However, he would evade suspicion by making up stories, he added. Significantly, the Police Commissioner said the master thief used to make reservations in lavish hotels and pubs across metropolitan cities like Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata to splurge his plunder. This apart, he also used the money to renovate his ancestral house in Soro area of Balasore district. Preliminary investigations have revealed that the accused was involved in 21 cases of burglary and theft under Bhubaneswar UPD.



FEST FERVOUR: A child looks curiously at a mask in a make-shift shop on the eve of Holi in Choudhury Bazar area of Cuttack, Sunday

OP PHOTO

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Injured leopard moved to NZP for treatment

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 24: An injured sub-adult leopard was rescued from Dasapalla forest, Saturday during a joint operation by the rapid response teams from Chandaka Wildlife Division and Mahanadi Wildlife Division field staff. The leopard was relocated to Nandankanan Zoological Park (NZP) where it is undergoing treatment. Sanath Kumar, Deputy Director, NZP, said "The big cat is currently being treated by a senior Neurosurgeon from OUAT



and an expert team at the Nandankanan's Veterinary Hospital. As per initial reports, it looks like a vertebral injury due to old age. Detailed X-ray report is awaited."

According to reports, the leopard was tranquilized and rescued following its detection. It was found dragging itself in the jungle with injuries in its hind leg. Informing about the incident, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) Susanta Nanda said, "There is no evidence to conclude the injury was caused by poaching. After extensive examination, the real cause of injuries can be established. Hopefully, the expert team will be successful in treating the animal."

TIGHT SECURITY IN CITY FOR HOLI

SPECIAL TEAM OF 300 COPS FORMED TO LOOK INTO CASES OF HARASSMENT OF WOMEN AND EVE-TEASING

DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

Bhubaneswar, March 24: With a view to ensure safe holi celebrations, the Commissionerate Police Sunday announced to deploy 15 platoons of police, in-

cluding four additional-DCP rank officers, eight Assistant Commissioners of Police (ACPs), 26 inspectors, and 60 Assistant Sub-Inspector, within the city limits. Furthermore, the City police have issued a helpline number '112' for the general public seeking help during emergencies. DCP Bhubaneswar Prateek Singh said the police stations in the City would maintain close watch on unruly incidents under their respective jurisdiction in adherence to the model code of conduct for the upcoming polls.

For this they have prepared a list of the events that would be held during the festival. The police have also obtained complete details on the total number of guests at these venues from the organisers, he said. Singh added that the police have earmarked 31 'highly-sensitive zones' across the city which will see patrolling by mobile bike units and PCs. The marked locations would also be monitored by the cops at the smart control room which will take cognizance of untoward events and undertake preemp-

tive actions. Moreover, the Commissionerate Police has sealed entry to water bodies within the city limits, including Puri canal, Daya river and Kuakhai river, for public use. For women's safety, the Commissionerate Police has formed a special team comprising of 300 cops, to look into cases of harassment and eve-teasing. The special team would remain alert and patrol across the city to deal with cases of misbehavior with women, said a senior cop.

IAU approves 'Shiv Shakti'

INDO ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bengaluru, March 24: The International Astronomical Union (IAU) has approved the Chandrayaan-3 landing site name 'Shiva Shakti'. The approval came March 19 after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement following the success of the mission August 26, 2023.



"IAU working group for Planetary System Nomenclature has approved the name station 'Shiv Shakti' for the landing site of Chandrayaan-3's Vikram lander," the Gazetteer of Planetary Nomenclature, which provides detailed information about planetary names by IAU said. The announcement defined the origin of the name as, a 'compound word from Indian mythology that depicts masculine (Shiva) and feminine (Shakti) duality of nature; Landing site of Chandrayaan-3's Vikram Lander. On August 28, 2023, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced at ISRO announced that

the landing point of the Chandrayaan-3 mission would be known as 'Shiv Shakti Point'. While the Chandrayaan-2 landing failure spot will be called 'Tiranga point', the day of the touchdown of the Vikram Lander on the Moon (August 23) will be celebrated as 'National Space Day' in the country, PM Modi had stated. Prime Minister Modi made the announcements while addressing the gathering of scientists at the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) at the ISRO Command Centre. "India has decided to name

the touchdown point where Vikram Lander made a soft landing on the Moon as 'Shiv Shakti Point'. The word 'Shiv' stands for the welfare of humanity. 'Shakti' stands for the required strength to get going to achieve the welfare of humanity," PM Modi said. PM Modi has said that the Moon's Shiv Shakti point will be a symbol of unity from the Himalayas to Kanyakumari. "The Shiv Shakti Point will inspire future generations in the direction of the use of science for the welfare of humanity," PM Modi had underlined.

Mercury touches 38 degree in 3 places

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 24: With the mercury rising, three places in Odisha recorded day temperatures of 38 degree Celsius and above Sunday. While the maximum temperature in Malkangiri was 38 degree Celsius, Titilagarh was hotter at 38.2 degree Celsius. Bolangir recorded the highest maximum temperature of 38.5 degree Celsius. Koraput recorded the lowest minimum temperature of 14.6 degree Celsius. According to the regional centre of the India Meteorological Department (IMD), while the maximum temperature is likely to rise by 3 degree Celsius to 4 degree Celsius in many parts of the state during the next four days, the maximum temperatures in some districts are likely to touch 40 degree Celsius by the end of March. On the other hand, the IMD predicted that light rain or thundershower is likely to occur at one or two places in some Odisha districts Monday and Tuesday.

Cong slams PM over fall of rupee against US dollar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 24: The Congress Sunday targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the issue of falling value of the Indian rupee against the US dollar, and sought answers from him. Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said the falling value of the rupee impacts the pocket of every Indian due to rising fuel rates, inflation and higher EMIs for loans. "Before 2014, the BJP would make big claims on the relatively smaller declines in the strength of the rupee. Remember, the typically uncouth remarks made by the then Gujarat CM, linking the rupee's value and Dr. Manmohan Singh's age? The rupee's value fell below the self-proclaimed

Vishwaguru's own age a long time ago," Ramesh said in a post on X. "Today, amidst the drastic plunge in the value of the rupee, he is nowhere to be seen," he said, asking "ChuppiTodaPradhanMantriji". The rupee depreciated 48 paise to settle at an all-time low of 83.61 against the American currency Friday, tracking a surging greenback against major crosses in the overseas markets and weak Asian peers. The rupee had earlier recorded its lowest closing level of 83.40 December 13, 2023. The Congress leader said, "When the BJP came to power in 2014, the price of one dollar to the rupee was ₹59. Today, the BJP has increased this price from ₹59 to ₹84."

Deepfakes biggest threat to upcoming polls

INDO ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 24: Misinformation and disinformation spread through artificial intelligence (AI)-generated deepfakes and fake content are the biggest threat to the upcoming election in India, exposure management company Tenable said Sunday. As per the company, these threats will be shared across social media and messaging platforms like WhatsApp, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and others. "The biggest threats to the 2024 Lok Sabha elections are misinformation and disinformation as part of influence operations conducted by malicious actors against the electorate," Satnam Narang,



Senior Staff Research Engineer, Tenable said. According to a recent report by Tidal Cyber, this year, 10 countries will be facing the

The easiest way to identify a deepfake image is to look for text that is nonsensical or that looks almost alien-like in language

and current President Joe Biden were fabricated and circulated to confuse citizens during the coming presidential elections. According to experts, the proliferation of deepfake content surged in late 2017, with over 7,900 videos online. By early 2019, this number nearly doubled to 14,678, and the trend continues to escalate. "With the increase in generative AI tools and their use growing around the world, we may

see deepfakes, be it in images or video content, impersonating notable candidates seeking to retain their seats or those hoping to unseat those currently in parliament," Narang said. Recently, the Indian government had issued directives to social media platforms such as X and Meta (formerly Facebook), urging them to regulate the proliferation of AI-generated deepfake content. In addition, ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, the Ministry of Electronics & IT (MeitY) has issued an advisory to such platforms to remove AI-generated deepfakes from their platforms. According to Tenable, the easiest way to identify a deepfake image is to look for text that is nonsensical or that looks almost alien-like in language.

Work together for a TB-free future: CM

Health and Panchayati Raj departments have jointly initiated interventions from this year to attain tuberculosis-free status in all 6,794 Gram Panchayats of state



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, March 24: Reaffirming his government's commitment to detect and prevent Tuberculosis (TB), Sunday, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, on the World Tuberculosis Day, urged the people of the state to work together to ensure a healthier and Tuberculosis-free future for all citizens.

For this year, the theme for the day has been set as 'Yes we can end TB' and at the AIIMS, doctors, students and staffers all participated in the walkathon to spread the message of TB elimination.

"Tuberculosis (TB) is a bacterial infection that spreads through inhaling tiny droplets from the coughs or sneezes of an infected person. It is a serious condition, but can be cured with proper treatment," said AIIMS executive director Ashutosh Biswas.

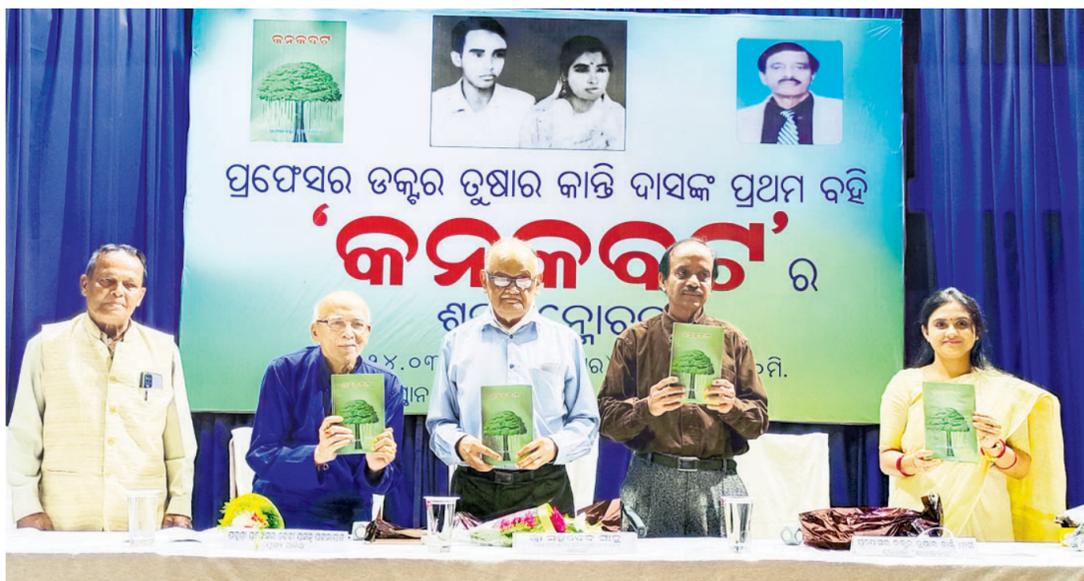
Notably, the state government has set a target to make all panchayats of Odisha free of TB by

2025. As per sources, to eliminate the disease by 2025, the ministry of Health and Family Welfare has chalked out a special strategy to ensure that all villages of the state are free from the communicable disease.

With multi-drug resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) showing a declining trend, the Health and Panchayati Raj departments have jointly initiated panchayat-level interventions from this year to attain tuberculosis-free status in all 6,794 gram panchayats (GPs) of the state.

"As per the strategy, health functionaries at village and sub-centre/health and wellness centre (HWC) levels, along with the support of gram panchayats, will intensify efforts to end TB in the state," said a ministry official.

The official added that all panchayats will work to ensure that at least 30 presumptive TB tests are administered per 1,000 population and a notification rate of less than one per 1,000 population is achieved in a year with a treatment success rate of more than 85 per cent and a drug susceptibility test rate of at least 60 per cent. After that point Odisha can only be declared TB free.



BOOK RELEASE: Distinguished guests including Padma Shri Debi Prasanna Pattanayak and former Chief Secretary Sahadev Sahoo release the book 'Kanakbata' by Tushar Kanti Das at Soochana Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

Lecture on 'Odisha at 2036' held at CYSD

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, March 24: Centre for Youth and Social Development (CYSD) observed 42nd foundation day, Sunday. On the occasion economist Satya S Tripathi said, "We should learn from the tribals - who are the most intuitive, conscious and earth-bound people. Their agricultural practices have a lot of significance not only to check the carbon footprints, but also to ensure food security and sustainable livelihoods."



The Foundation Day lecture

itled "Odisha @2036 - Leveraging Pathways to a Green Economy Transition," Chandra Sagaria, Kaberi Durua and Raimati Durua from Koraput were felicitated for their contribution to conservation of soil and forest

Tripathy, Secretary General of Global Alliance for Sustainable Planet quoted "The agriculture sector has the potential to both emit and sequester carbon - the process of storing carbon in soil.

The farmers, who practice natural and organic farming, help a long way in carbon sequestration. Such farmers should be incentivized."

Citing at the Andhra Pradesh Model, he said that the farmers of Andhra Pradesh are paid Rs 40,000 per hectare of land for their contribution to checking emission and increasing soil fertility and thus help mitigating the impacts of climate change, he added.

Free course for SC, ST at World Skill Center



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, March 24: The spot admission for various advance skill and industry-ready courses is set to open at World Skill Center for the academic session 2024-25. The process of spot admission scheduled from March 27 and will continue till April 6. Interested candidates can report with required documents as per the notification issued by the World Skill Center (WSC).

The candidates can apply for spot admission in courses under School of Engineering and School of Services. The timing for admission will be from 9am to 5pm. Some of the courses listed under School of Engineering are Vertical Transportation (Lift Technology), Air Conditioning and Refrigeration, Mechanical & Electrical Services, Mechatronics and Electrical Technology. Interested candidates should have qualified their 2 Year ITI course or 3 year diploma course in order to enroll into School of Engineering. Post completion of the course, students can attend multiple placement drives in national and international companies.

offered under School of Services are Beauty Wellness and Spa, Hair Fashion and Design. Interested candidates should have completed their +2 degree or degree in Diploma to take admission into School of Services. The students can avail national and international career opportunities after completion of the course.

This initiative, under the state government, aims at enhancing the skills of youths. WSC will provide hostel facility, free uniform, transportation and food. The course fee is free for SC, ST, OBC, SEBC, EBC, minorities and female students.

AM/NS India holds Nat'l Safety Week to create health awareness

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 24: ArcelorMittal and Nippon Steel (AM/NS) India's Odisha operations recently observed the 53rd National Safety Week to create awareness on health and safety among its employees and shop floor workers.

The week-long celebration started March 4 with hoisting of the safety flag by Suresha G, executive director of Odisha operations. Organised with the theme 'focus on safety leadership for environmental, social and governance (ESG) excellence,' the week-long celebrations promoted measures to ensure safety at the workplace. "The programme commenced with the administration of the safety pledge and a rally was organised on the plant premises. For greater participation of employees and workers, Safety, Health and Environment (SHE) campaign, and other related activities such as 'DASH-A-THON-Run for Sustainability' were organised at Paradeep beach road March 6," informed a company representative.

More than 160 employees and



business associates participated in these events and reaffirmed their commitment to safety and sustainability.

USR Raju, head of Pellet Plant, Saroj Pattnaik, head of Power Plant, and CH Hariprasad, head of operations, encouraged the employees to actively participate in the programmes. Sanjeev Muduli, head of Health and Safety highlighted the importance of health and safety and urged employees to take responsibility of their own safety and help each other in making the workplace healthier and safer.

The Odisha operations office also organised 'safety beyond

boundaries' programme at Government High School, Paradeep where school students participated in quiz and other awareness activities.

On the occasion, Suresha G, executive director of Odisha Operations, said, "Occupational health and safety is our priority. AM/NS India is committed to set an exemplary level of health and safety condition for its employees and workers in the plant. We aim to bring overall improvement in health and safety by introducing various behavioural changes, cross functional shop floor audit and various rewards and recognitions to encourage best practices."

New block at Kalinga Hosp

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 24: One of the leading healthcare providers of Odisha, Kalinga Hospital Limited (KHL), introduced a new block solely funded by Dr Sita Kantha Dash, Chairman, KHL, offering state-of-the-art facilities.

Governor Raghubar Das inaugurated the new facility block, Saturday. Speaking on this occasion, Das said, "I commend Dr Sita Kantha Dash and the entire team at Kalinga Hospital for their unwavering dedication in providing quality healthcare services to the citizens. Your efforts to enhance the well-being of our community are truly commendable and reflect the spirit of service and compassion."

Dash, in his address, said, "Over the past two years, our path has been one of perseverance and growth. Despite en-

countering numerous challenges, our dedicated team has risen above all hurdles to achieve triumphs. With a new leadership team in place, we stand ready to usher in a new era of healthcare excellence."

The facilities included 50 general beds and 30 ICU beds, Ortho Sciences, Neuro Sciences, Renal Sciences and Gastro Sciences. Additional 4 OTs, Central Sterile Services Department (CSSD) with advanced technology and enhanced equipments will also be available for general public. Expansion of kidney transplant unit, advanced isolation critical care unit and centralized nursing system within the new intensive care unit (ICU) also features in the new block.

Rehabilitation and physiotherapy, dedicated medicine centre and advanced diagnostics for personalized treatment plans will be provided in the new block.



4 startups get HDFC Parivartan Grants

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, March 24: AIC-Nalanda, a leading technology business incubator, recently announced the winners of its cohort of HDFC Parivartan Startup Grants.

This grant is dedicated to support startups with a focus on Building Green Solutions for Smart Cities marking a significant stride towards sustainable development and innovation. After a rigorous selection process, AIC-Nalanda chose the top 10 startups from among 70 applications to participate in the Parivartan Cohort 1.0 programme.

Durga Prasad, CEO of AIC-Nalanda, expressed his delight about the recent developments and underscored the significant

impact the startups would create in the sustainability sector. Nikhil Patra, Deputy Vice President, HDFC Bank said, "We are delighted to collaborate with AIC-Nalanda to provide CSR grant to startups of the state. Through our CSR initiative Parivartan, we are continuously helping startups through grants. We are in seventh years of our journey in Odisha and this time four startups are selected to which we have provided Rs 30 lakh grant."



Managing diabetes could help prevent dementia

An Indian-origin scientist in his research has found that reducing the risk of dementia in Alzheimer's is possible by keeping diabetes well controlled or avoiding it in the first place.

Narendra Kumar, an associate professor at the US-based Texas A&M University, who led the study published in the journal 'American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology', found that diabetes and Alzheimer's disease are strongly linked.

"By taking preventative or amelioration measures for diabetes, we can prevent or at least significantly slow down the progression of the symptoms of dementia in Alzheimer's disease," he said.



Diabetes and Alzheimer's are two of the fastest-growing health concerns globally. Diabetes alters the body's ability to turn food into energy and affects an estimated one in 10 US adults. Alzheimer's is among the top 10 leading causes of death in the US, according to the study.

The researchers investigated how diet might affect the development of Alzheimer's in people with diabetes.

They discovered that a high-fat diet reduces the expression of a specific protein in the gut called Jak3. Mice without this protein showed a chain of in-

flammation from the intestine to the liver and then to the brain. As a result, the mice displayed Alzheimer's-like symptoms in the brain, along with cognitive impairment.

The researchers believe that the pathway from the gut to the brain involves the liver.

"Liver being the metaboliser for everything we eat, we think that the path from gut to the brain goes through the liver," Kumar said. They have been studying the functions of Jak3 for a long time and have found that changes in the expression of Jak3 due to food can lead to leaky gut, resulting in chronic inflammation, diabetes, reduced brain ability to clear toxic substances, and dementia-like symptoms seen in Alzheimer's disease.

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No protective measures for Kendrapara 'kuji mendha'



POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, March 24: The conservation of a threatened breed of sheep found in Kendrapara district and conferred with the 'rare and singular' species tag by the Centre has been given a short shrift by the state government, sources said here Sunday. The National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources (NBAGR) has accorded genetic recognition to this breed of sheep, locally known as 'kuji mendha', sources informed. The NBAGR has conferred genetically rare status carrying Fake-B gene on this sheep. The state government should carry out conservation of this domestic animal and conduct more research, the body had stated said. This is indeed a rare type of sheep and gives multiple births. This variety of sheep usually is of small size and the body is covered with coarse hair. The average adult sheep weighs around 18-20 kg. These animals are mainly domesticated for production of mutton. The other product of economic importance is their skin. They are well

adapted to high ambient temperatures, high humidity and rains. Proper conservation and research on this animal can help boost the livelihood of the residents as well as the economy of the district which is primarily dependent on agriculture, farmers and local intelligentsia said. The Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT) in Bhubaneswar has taken up the conservation and research of Binjarpuri breed of cows which has also been conferred a 'special' tag by the Centre. However, it has been neglecting conservation of 'kuji mendha' and not much is being done in this regard, locals alleged. Recently 60 sheep of this breed were killed by unknown animals, but the farmers did not receive any compensation as the sheep lacked insurance cover. People associated with the breeding of this variety of sheep alleged that lack of food is harming the animal. Encroachments have destroyed substantial grasslands leaving very little for the sheep to feed on. As a result investing on 'kuji mendha' is not a viable source of income any-

more, locals said. Sheep farmer Niranjan Parida of Kansar village asserted that breeding of cattle, goats and sheep is essential for the growth and development of rural economy. These animals are of help during any disaster or problem. He added that banks do not provide any loans for developing this breed of sheep and also no treatment facilities are available. Senior resident Prasanna Kumar Dhal said that the Centre is implementing Rashtriya Krushi Yojana while the state government is implementing various schemes for the development of animal resources. However, these remain only in paper as the population of domestic animal is declining in the district every year. According to the 2000 animal census, the district had 14,885 sheep. However, numbers have reduced by 10-12% at present, locals opined. Sheep farming will get a boost if the district administration can arrange for training, loan, marketing facilities and mandi, they added. The economy of the district is dependent on agriculture after the Super Cyclone. Approximately 47 per cent residents in this district are dependent on domestication of animals for their livelihood. Zoologist Devi Prasad Sahu said the 'kuji mendha' can give birth to three to four lambs at a time and hence is a good source of income. When contacted, chief district veterinary officer (CDVO) Dr Deepti Mohapatra said there are no special plans for the conservation of 'kuji mendha' variety of sheep at present.



ENTHRALLING AUDIENCE : Artistes perform at Utkal Keshari Agarpada Mahotsav in Bhadrak district
OP PHOTO

Man kills parents over family dispute; held

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, March 24: In a shocking incident, a 35-year-old man allegedly hacked his parents to death over a trivial matter in Basira village under Champua police station in this district Sunday morning. Later police arrested the accused Dhyana Munda. The deceased had been identified as father of accused, Gurucharan Munda (65) and his mother Pali (60). According to the eye-witnesses, at about 7.00am in the morning, Dhyana was cutting firewood with an axe in the courtyard of their house. When Gurucharan asked him not to do so, he first hit the former with a heavy piece of wood. Then he mercilessly



hacked Gurucharan with an axe leading to the latter's death on the spot. In the meanwhile, Pali had come running out of the house to protect her husband. Gurucharan also attacked her with the axe. As Pali collapsed on the ground, Dhyana fled to the spot. Locals rushed Pali to the Champua sub-divisional hospital where after initial treatment

doctors decided to transfer her to the district headquarters hospital here. However, en route to the hospital, she succumbed to her injuries. On being informed, personnel from the Champua police station rushed to the spot and arrested Dhyana. Later sub-divisional police officer, Bijay Kumar Mallick and IIC Debaki Nayak went to the spot and initiated a probe into the ghastly killings. They seized the weapon and sent the bodies for post-mortem. According to the villagers, the wife of Dhyana had left him a few months back due to domestic violence. Dhyana was living with his two sons at the house of his parents since then.

'The Zoo Story' enralls all



POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, March 24: It was an interesting mix of absurd and reality where the two met and melted to create a visual delight called "The Zoo Story". This was the first day's rendition of Edward Elbee's wonderful creation by the same name to celebrate 'World Theatre Day', organised by 'Sampark', a leading theatre group of the city. The play was directed by Utpal Jha of Panchkoshi while the roles were enacted by NSD professors. It was an absolute optical pleasure of 75 minutes. The play depicts the story of a person called, Jerry, who wants to speak because he has hardly spoken to anyone in years. Jerry wants to speak to Peter, a well-paid executive in a publishing house. Peter as per his routine comes every Sunday to a particular park and sits on the same bench and reads. Jerry, who hangs on the edge of sanity, is a wanderer who claims to stay in a big dingy apartment, as per his own admission.

The two meet and the story moves on and Jerry says his experience is absolutely absurd. And finally, the narrative takes a dramatic turn as Peter and Jerry fight for the ownership of the bench and at the end the latter is killed by the former. The actors portrayed their roles to perfection and it was a world class performance. There was hardly anything amiss in the entire play. The music composition was also apt with the play and helped the actors in portraying their emotions. The costume designing was also very good, the audience who had gathered to watch the play opined. Later on after the end of the play, the director participated in a question-answer session. "In the age of mobile when personal interaction time is getting reduced every minute, Jerry wants to say something and there is no one to listen. It may look absurd but it is up to the audience to interpret as per their own thought," Jha said. The programme was inaugurated by DiC Rourkela Steel Plant, Atanu Bhowmick.

Single-window cells to grant permission for campaigning activities in Odisha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Berhampur, March 24: Several districts in the state have set up 'single-window cells' for granting permission to political parties and their candidates for election rallies and other campaigning activities, officials said Sunday. All the required permission such as the use of vehicles and sound systems during campaigning or at public meetings



will be provided to candidates within 48 hours of receipt of applications, Ganjam Collector Dibyajyoti Parida said. Ganjam and Kandhamal are among the districts that have established such cells ahead of the simultaneous Lok Sabha and assembly elections in Odisha from May 13. Teams of officials from various government departments will be engaged to oversee the applications, while assistant collectors will coordinate with them to give the required permission, Kandhamal Collector Ashish Ishwar Patil said. The 'single-window cells' have been set up in the district collectors' offices and offices of other returning officers, the officials added.

240kg ganja seized; 6 arrested

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, March 24: Excise sleuths have seized 240kg of ganja after conducting raids at various parts of this town late Saturday night. Six persons have been arrested in this connection and four vehicles and a two-wheeler have also been seized from them, officials said. Following the arrest, all the accused were forwarded to court and a case (No- 918/23-24) has been filed against them, Excise department IIC, Gobardhan Rana informed Sunday. The arrested peddlers have been identified as Jibijya Nayak, 32 and Bulu Lima, 26, residents of Chandiput village in Gajapati district, Saroj Kumar Sahu, 25, resident of Luhagudi, Sonu Sabar, 23, resident of Naranpur village under Adaba police lim-



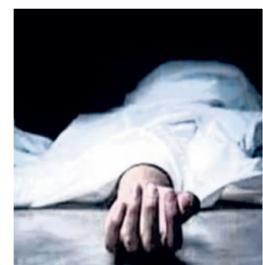
its, Shekhar Mohanty of Kabisuryanagar Nua Kharida area and K Sudhakar, 29, a resident of Uttar Pradesh. According to sources, police got a tip-off that peddlers were smuggling ganja from Gajapati district through this district. Excise officials then conducted raids at different places close to the Haladiapadar Chowk. They seized the contraband

and the vehicles used for its smuggling. During interrogation the accused peddlers confessed before police that they had procured the ganja from Gajapati district and it was being sent to Uttar Pradesh, cops said. Excise IIC, Gobardhan Rana, ASI Ajit Kumar Nayak, ASI Braja Bahari Nayak were part of the team which conducted the raid.

Man dies by suicide three days after wife's demise

POST NEWS NETWORK

Tensa, March 24: Unable to recover from the shock of his wife's death three days ago, a man allegedly died by suicide after hanging himself from a tree at Zero Point locality under Tensa police outpost and Koira block in Sundargarh district Saturday. The deceased has been identified as Nandlal Champia, a resident of the same locality. Locals informed that Nandlal's wife Jinesh Kandulana had sustained severe burn injuries when her saree caught fire from a bonfire January 26. She was admitted to a private hospital at Rourkela and was undergoing treatment since then. After battling for a lengthy period, she succumbed to her injuries March 20. Since his wife's death, Nandlal went into depression and even stopped interacting with anyone.



Suddenly Saturday evening people found that he died by suicide by hanging himself. Locals are now worried as to what will happen to the three-month-old baby girl belonging to the couple. On being informed, Tensa police outpost in-charge Sudarshan Dehury along with others reached the spot and sent the body for post-mortem after registering a case of unnatural death.

'Sanjeevani Vatika' bonding people together

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sundargarh, March 24: Nestled amidst the verdant landscapes of Sundargarh district, Jhurimal village is a shining example of communal harmony and proactive environmental stewardship. At the heart of this narrative lies the tale of 'Sanjeevani Vatika', a unique medicinal garden that stands as a testament to the village's unwavering commitment to biodiversity conservation and traditional healing practices. Initiated by the Jhurimal Van Surakhya Samiti (VSS), this project marks a significant milestone in the village's history in encouraging traditional healing practices. The village, renowned for its unity and fraternity, embarked on this journey in 1993, organising protests against deforestation and form-

ing the VSS to enforce conservation regulations. The inauguration of 'Sanjeevani Vatika' July 16, 2022, by Sundargarh divisional forest officer Pradeep Mirase, heralded a new chapter in the village's legacy. Spanning over three acres of land, the garden was a labour of love, with the community contributing through voluntary labour. Initially featuring 56 varieties of medicinal plants, vines and shrubs, the garden has now expanded to over 100 species. Notable regional medicinal plants like Harida, Bahada, Amla, Camphor, Cardamom, Clove, Brahmkamal, Cinnamon, Dalchini, Sandal, Giloy, Black pepper, Kumkum etc adorn the 'Sanjeevani Vatika', enhancing its allure and therapeutic potential. Digambar Upadhyay, the mentor of the Vatika and chief ad-



visor to Jhurimal VSS, is compiling an educational manual detailing each medicinal plant, creeper and shrub present in the garden, further enriching the community's knowledge base. The initiative has garnered international acclaim, with

renowned environmental scientist Pradeep Patel from the USA lauding the efforts of the Jhurimal VSS during his visits. He had once remarked, "The unique initiatives of the Jhurimal VSS have inspired and encouraged the Indian diaspora abroad. The community's unity,

fraternity and zeal for innovation have been exemplary." Mirase commended the establishment of the medicinal garden, emphasising its significance as a testament to the community's pride, respect and love for the environment. He believes that the exemplary work of the forest protection committee will serve as a catalyst for similar initiatives across the state. Through its innovative endeavours, the Jhurimal VSS, sans any governmental aid, continues to harness the power of collective labour, transforming 'Sanjeevani Vatika' into a symbol of communal prosperity and environmental resilience. With accolades pouring in from various quarters, the village's journey stands as a beacon of hope, guiding future generations towards a harmonious coexistence with nature.

| FORM A PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT (Under Regulation 6 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (Insolvency Resolution Process for Corporate Persons) Regulations, 2016) | |
|---|---|
| FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE CREDITORS OF ARYAN ISPAT AND POWER PRIVATE LIMITED | |
| RELEVANT PARTICULARS | |
| 1. Name of corporate debtor | Aryan Ispat and Power Private Limited |
| 2. Date of incorporation of corporate debtor | 28/04/2003 |
| 3. Authority under which corporate debtor is incorporated / registered | ROC Delhi |
| 4. Corporate Identity No. / Limited Liability Identification No. of corporate debtor | U27102DL2003PTC259757 |
| 5. Address of the registered office and principal office (if any) of corporate debtor | 19B, SFS, Vasant Enclave Rao Tula Ram Marg, South Delhi, New Delhi, Delhi, India, 110057 |
| 6. Insolvency commencement date in respect of corporate debtor | 22/03/2024 |
| 7. Estimated date of closure of insolvency resolution process | 18/09/2024 |
| 8. Name and the registration number of the insolvency professional acting as interim resolution professional | Mangesh Vitthal Kekre Reg. No.: IBB/IFA/001/IP-P00539/2017-18/10964 |
| 9. Address and e-mail of the interim resolution professional, as registered with the Board | Address: 607, Chetak Center, RNT Marg, Near Hotel Shreemaya, Indore, Madhya Pradesh, 452001. Email: ca.mangesh@gmail.com |
| 10. Address and email to be used for correspondence with the interim resolution professional | Address: 607, Chetak Center, RNT Marg, Near Hotel Shreemaya, Indore, Madhya Pradesh, 452001. Email: cirp.aipp@gmail.com |
| 11. Last date for submission of claims | 05/04/2024 |
| 12. Classes of creditors, if any, under clause (b) of sub-section (6A) of section 21, ascertained by the interim resolution professional | Based on limited information, there is no class of creditors u/s 21(6A) (b) of IBC, 2016 |
| 13. Names of Insolvency Professionals identified to act as Authorized Representative of creditors in a class (Three names for each class) | NA |
| 14. (a) Relevant Forms and (b) Details of authorized representatives are available at: | (a) Web link: The relevant form can be downloaded from https://bbi.gov.in/home/downloads (b) Physical address: Not applicable |

Notice is hereby given that the National Company Law Tribunal, New Delhi has ordered the commencement of a Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process of **Aryan Ispat and Power Private Limited** on 22/03/2024.

The creditors of **Aryan Ispat and Power Private Limited** are hereby called upon to submit their claims with proof on or before 05/04/2024 (Being 14 days from 22/03/2024 i.e. the date of receipt of the said order of Hon'ble NCLT, New Delhi by IRP) to the interim resolution professional at the address mentioned against entry No. 10.

The financial creditors shall submit their claims with proof by electronic means only. All other creditors may submit the claims with proof in person, by post or by electronic means. A financial creditor belonging to a class, as listed against the entry No. 12, shall indicate its choice of authorized representative from among the three insolvency professionals listed against entry No. 13 to act as authorized representative of the class in Form CA. Not Applicable.

Submission of false or misleading proofs of claim shall attract penalties.

Date: 25/03/2024
Place: Indore

Mangesh Vitthal Kekre
Interim Resolution Professional
Aryan Ispat and Power Private Limited
Reg. No. IBB/IFA/001/ IP- P00539/2017-18/10964

FOCUS AI

FUTURE OF EDUCATION



Since access to facts will be simplified through AI, what people will need to develop is the ability to dissect and use the information

of instruction. In this mode, the course content is covered before the live lecture takes place. This can be either via textbook readings, or via pre-recorded lectures. The students are expected to read or watch the content prior to the class. The classroom is purely focused on discussion on the content. This allows for a richer understanding and deeper insight of the material.

The third principal element of education is assessment. Certainly, there have been advances in assessment in the last few decades. The single assessment at the end of the term in the form of a final exam has been replaced by more periodic assessment via quizzes, assignments and projects. However, this needs to go much further. Assessment is still largely based on proficiency in the completion of specific tasks. There needs to be a better way of assessing the competencies of students which can be useful in the workplace.

The late Dr WE Deming, the quality and management guru, used to advocate the elimination of grades. At the very least he suggested that the goal of the teacher/faculty should be that all students get an 'A.' Such thinking flies in the face of the current practice where students are assigned grades based on a curve in order to differentiate one student from another. Empirical evidence does not suggest that grade differentiation among students is predictive of future career successes for the students. Grades and evaluation on a curve are deeply entrenched in our education system and will take visionary leadership to change. However, this will be necessary for future students to develop and grow to meet new challenges.

This article has looked at some aspects of the current education system that need to change to prepare students for a future world which will be powered by AI. Since it takes time to bring about major changes in education, we need to start now.

INFA

Scientific discoveries, technology, and innovation have tended to disrupt the way in which humans think and act. This is a truism from discoveries in astronomy and medicine to the invention of the wheel, automobiles, and computers among other major human creations. The 2016 Hollywood movie "Hidden Figures" described the lives of three black women 'computers' who worked for NASA and who played an important role in the first American manned space flight piloted by John Glenn.

It is difficult to imagine that, prior to the invention of the modern day computers, complex and lengthy calculations required for space travel were performed manually. Hence the three women were called human computers. We know that the introduction of electronic computers has totally changed the way in which we calculate anything, from household budgets, to store checkout totals and any complex scientific calculation.

It is instructive to note that, about 50 years ago, students were not permitted the use of pocket calculators in exams. Today they are ubiquitous, embedded in devices such as mobile phones. Why this matters is because when a new technology is introduced human society takes time to absorb the technology in its day-to-day working. And just as technology affects human thought and behaviour, our education system affects the direction of technology development and use.

Therefore, as we await a more complete development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its impact in our lives, it would be useful to consider how our education system should help steer society to assimilate the technology meaningfully and to provide direction for its future growth. In order to fully appreciate the role of education in a world where AI will likely be as ubiquitous as the internet is today, three major components of education need to be considered; the design of the curriculum, the delivery of the

content, and the assessment. Each of these three aspects merits consideration.

The curriculum is a very crucial part of the education experience. If the curriculum does not resonate with the needs of the students and society, it will not matter how effectively it is taught. In the past, course content was to a large extent, focused on delivery of facts, approaches, and methods of doing various activities. In most cases, facts become outdated, and approaches and methods evolve as societal needs change. What a good deal of curricula lack is helping students develop the ability to think and learn. This ability would mean that the role of the student changes from a passive recipient of information, to a collaborator, or participant in the learning process. Also, the role of the faculty changes from someone who is a storehouse of knowledge, to one who can draw out the best in each student.

In addition, there would need to be greater emphasis on some of the soft skills, which do not receive much attention today. These soft skills include critical thinking, communication, and collaboration. Critical thinking is the ability to question, analyse, interpret and make a judgement about what we read and hear. Since access to facts will be simplified through AI, what people will need to develop is the ability to dissect and use the infor-

mation. No matter how much the developers of AI claim, forming judgements about actions to be taken will remain a human endeavour at least for the foreseeable future. Communication skills are essential for people to get their point across. However, current leadership in education does not necessarily see the role of education in developing these skills in students.

The second area where education needs to focus on is the delivery of the material. Traditionally, the faculty has been assumed to be the source of all information, and learning by the students is a passive activity. In this model of education, students are not active participants, and tend to forget the content of the course shortly after a term is over. There is sufficient empirical evidence to suggest that if students participate in their learning, they will understand better and retain the material for longer. This will require that the role of the faculty change from the guru who knows everything, to one who engages the students and facilitates learning. Greater class participation, in the form of discussions, where alternative perspectives are encouraged and explored, helps students better understand the relevance and application of what is being discussed in class.

One of the more recent innovations in classroom delivery format is the flipped mode



Rajiv Gupta

GRADES AND EVALUATION ON A CURVE ARE DEEPLY ENTRENCHED IN OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM AND WILL TAKE VISIONARY LEADERSHIP TO CHANGE

In sincerity is the certitude of victory. Sincerity! Sincerity! How sweet is the purity of thy presence?

THE MOTHER



Delaying Enactments

In an unprecedented move, the Kerala government has petitioned the Supreme Court against President Droupadi Murmu for withholding assent to four of the seven bills referred to her by the Governor. The Left Democratic Front (LDF) government led by the CPI(M) has named the Union government, the Secretary to the President of India, Kerala Governor Arif Mohammad Khan, and his additional secretary as parties to the case. According to the plea, the Governor had been holding onto these bills for approximately two years and his actions were described as undermining the operations of the state legislature, making its existence pointless and ineffective. "The bills include public interest bills which are for the public good, and even these have been rendered ineffective by the Governor not dealing with each one of them "as soon as possible" as required by the proviso to Article 200," the plea said.

"The actions of the Union Government, in advising the President of India to withhold assent to Bills which had been passed by the state legislative assembly as long as 11-24 months back, and which were wholly within the domain of the state government, subverts and disrupts the federal structure of the Constitution of India, and is a grave encroachment into the domain entrusted to the state under the Constitution," it said. The petitioner appealed to the court to rule that it is unconstitutional for the President to withhold assent to bills passed by the state legislature without providing a reason.

It is pertinent to note that the Constitution does not specify a time limit for the President to grant assent to bills referred for consideration, or to refuse consent. Moreover, Article 361 of the Constitution says: "The President, or the Governor or Rajpramukh of a State, shall not be answerable to any court for the exercise and performance of the powers and duties of his office or for any act done or purporting to be done by him in the exercise and performance of those powers and duties."

However, the larger question here is why Governors appointed by the current dispensation at the Centre have frequent confrontations with state governments, especially those ruled by Opposition parties, by overstepping their powers. Till a few years ago, we saw this gubernatorial overreach in West Bengal, and now we are witnessing this trend in Punjab and the two southern states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Only recently the Supreme Court had come down heavily on Tamil Nadu Governor RN Ravi for refusing to re-induct DMK leader K Ponnudurai into the state Cabinet even after the latter's conviction in a criminal case was stayed by the top court. A bench of Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra pulled up the Governor saying he was "defying the Supreme Court of India" by his actions. In December 2023, the top court had raised concerns about the prolonged delay by Ravi in approving bills submitted for his assent since January 2020. It questioned why Governors should wait for parties to bring their grievances to the top court.

The Governors, acting as agents of the Centre, is yet another assault on Indian democracy's federal structure which is already in strain under the present set up. India is a Union of States and not respecting the states' autonomy is a grave threat to the very existence of a democratic environment. Such actions or rather inactions bring disrepute to the posts of Governors and the President. It does not matter what the Supreme Court rules in this matter concerning the President. The very fact that a State Government has appealed against the President of the Union itself is highly damaging for the highest post of this country. This present President has been slighted in many prominent instances by the Union Government and thereby hampering the image of that post. An example is the inauguration of the new Parliament building where the President, as the custodian of the Constitution, was not even invited. In the Kerala appeal, if the SC gives any verdict that may seem tilting favourably towards the State then again the President's seat will stand compromised. If, on the other hand, the SC does not touch the matter or refrains from dragging the President then it is the Supreme Court that will lose credibility in the eyes of the citizen. The damage that ensues because of politicising and demeaning such exalted seats of power results in a breakdown of respect and regards for those posts. Many aspects of governance, especially in a country like India with a long history of feudalism, depend on perceived powers that have the ability to punish or spare. Responses to every little action or inaction cannot be traced down to the Constitution. In earlier times, it was the King's mood at the time of deciding an issue that sealed the fates of many. In a seemingly democratic society as is being posed currently, it is important to retain and strengthen the image of justice being meted out in a non partisan manner. Regular assaults on and resultant diminishing of authority that should be viewed as fair and equitable will only destroy the capacity of the governance system for the detriment of all.

WISDOM CORNER

- To be nobody but yourself in a world which is doing its best, night and day, to make you everybody else - means to fight the hardest battle which any human being can fight; and never stop fighting. **EE CUMMINGS**
- In a closed society where everybody's guilty, the only crime is getting caught. In a world of thieves, the only final sin is stupidity. **HUNTER S. THOMPSON**
- He that has eyes to see and ears to hear may convince himself that no mortal can keep a secret. If his lips are silent, he chatters with his fingertips; betrayal oozes out of him at every pore. **SIGMUND FREUD**

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1655:** Dutch mathematician and astronomer Christiaan Huygens discovered Titan, the largest moon of Saturn.
- 1957:** The Treaties of Rome were signed, establishing the European Community and the European Atomic Energy Community.
- 1965:** Martin Luther King, Jr., and other civil rights activists completed their march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama; two previous marches had been halted by local police.
- 1975:** King Faisal of Saudi Arabia is assassinated by his nephew. Despite the king's dying wish that the life of the assassin be spared, Faisal bin Musaid was publicly executed on June 18, 1975.
- 1988:** Thousands of people join the first peaceful demonstrations against the communist regime in Czechoslovakia. The Candle Demonstration was brutally dispersed by the Police but was the first step towards the Velvet Revolution that resulted in the establishment of democracy in the country.

LOL

Caught red-handed

A shoplifter was caught red-handed trying to steal a watch from an exclusive jewellery store. "Listen," said the shoplifter, "I know you don't want any trouble either. What do you say I just buy the watch and we forget



about this?" The manager agreed and wrote up the sales slip. The crook looked at the slip and said, "This is a little more than I intended to spend. Can you show me something less expensive?"

SPECTRUM REGULATION

Bring accountability to engineering



Gyanaranjan Samal

UNFORTUNATELY, THERE IS NO STATUTORY/Legal AUTHORITY TO REGULATE THE ENGINEERING PROFESSION UNDER AN ACT OF PARLIAMENT LIKE IN OTHER COUNTRIES

The Karnataka Legislative Assembly has passed the Karnataka Professional Civil Engineers Bill, 2024 to allow only registered engineers to approve building plans ensuring that they will be accountable for any eventualities. Karnataka is the second state after Gujarat to pass such legislation in India. Gujarat has passed the Gujarat Professional Civil Engineers Act, 2006 after the major earthquake, to make engineers accountable for any man-made disasters.

Unfortunately, there is no statutory/legal authority to regulate the engineering profession under an Act of Parliament like in other countries and other professions in India. India has been waiting since Independence for such an Act for engineers. Unlike other professions like medical, legal, chartered accountant, company secretary, and nursing, engineering as a profession is not legally recognised in India. Legislation is required to regulate the practice of engineering and the engineers who practice it. This will not only provide dignity to the very important

profession but will also bring accountability to practicing engineers. It is said that if a doctor makes a mistake that will endanger only one life, but if an engineer makes a mistake it can cause a disaster endangering the lives of many.

It is important to mention here that a committee on technical consultancy services chaired by GS Barve was set up way back in February 1966 by the then-Planning Commission (now NITI Aayog). The terms of the reference of the committee were to study the problems related to technical consultancy services and provide necessary guidelines for future courses of action with increasing reliance on domestic talent suitable to Indian conditions. The committee submitted a report in September 1970 which spelled the establishment of an all-India institution to lay the foundation for experience, capability, and capacity required for engineering consultancy services and to keep the undesirable elements from the engineering profession and practices. Further, this would encourage the growth of con-

sultancy services on sound lines to make the services efficient, reliable, and internationally competitive.

Though various drafts of the legislation, in the form of a draft Engineers Bill, were prepared but the enactment has still to see the light of the day. The first draft Engineers Bill was prepared in 1985 by the Association of Consulting Engineers (India), for which the Ministry of Human Resources Development (MHRD) was identified as the nodal ministry in 1990. The second draft of the Bill was prepared in 2004 and MHRD decided to give this responsibility to the All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) and set up a committee chaired by Dr DP Aggarwal. After various rounds of consultations and meetings, the third draft was prepared in 2005. The fourth draft was finalised in 2008 and presented to MHRD. This was circulated by MHRD to all the other ministries and their comments were obtained. Since the matter could not be passed in the Parliament, another committee chaired by Prof MS Ananth of IIT Madras was con-

stituted under the aegis of AICTE to frame the draft legislation for the professional engineers and the committee submitted its draft in September 2019. It was expected that the Bill would be passed during 17th Lok Sabha, but the engineers had to wait. Once the Bill is passed a council of engineers shall be established by an Act of Parliament like other professions, which would have the power to issue the licenses to the practicing engineers.

While the country is passing through an infrastructure revolution, such a Bill must be brought to the Parliament for enactment which will not only improve our professional practices but also the overall dignity of the profession. Though Gujarat and Karnataka have taken the lead, the other states may follow the path, but an Act of Parliament will make the profession and practice more meaningful.

The writer, an alumnus of IIT Madras, is General Manager (Engg.), NBCC, a PSU under Govt of India. Views are personal.

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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Concerning trajectory

Sir, In the grand tapestry of India's challenges, none looms larger than the steady degradation of air quality within its bustling urban hubs. This predicament demands not mere solutions, but a symphony of coordinated efforts to reverse this concerning trajectory. At the heart of this crisis lies a stark reality: India persistently occupies the unenviable ranks among the most polluted nations on the global stage. From Begusarai to the bustling thoroughfares of Guwahati and Delhi, the ominous clouds of pollution linger, casting a shadow over the nation's health and well-being. The insidious presence of PM2.5 particles, with their ability to infiltrate the deepest recesses of the lungs, paints a grim portrait of public health. Surpassing World Health Organization recommendations by a staggering 2.6-fold, these pollutants pose an imminent threat to the populace, manifesting in a spectrum of respiratory ailments and far-reaching health implications. Yet, amidst the haze, glimmers of hope emerge through a multifaceted approach to remedy this environmental malaise. Through stringent regulation and unwavering enforcement, India can chart a course towards cleaner skies, harnessing advancements in emission standards for vehicles and industries alike. Moreover, a pivot towards sustainable practices, anchored by the embrace of renewable energy sources and the cultivation of energy-efficient infrastructure, promises to untether the nation from the shackles of fossil fuel dependency. Central to this endeavour is the imperative of public awareness and engagement, as informed citizens wield the power to effectuate change.

Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH

Despicable act

Sir, The horrific terror attack on Moscow's Crocus City Hall, in which 143 people have died, is a despicable act. Armed attackers stormed the venue and began shooting at the audience, who had gathered to attend a concert by the Russian band Picnic. The Afghanistan branch of the Islamic State (IS) group took responsibility for the attack. Russian authorities detained eleven individuals involved in the attack, and President Vladimir Putin vowed to retaliate. Several world leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, denounced the attack.

NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE

HRTC resumes bus service between Kullu-Manali and Keylong

Shimla, March 24: HRTC buses resumed service between Kullu-Manali and Keylong Sunday after almost four months, officials said. Himachal Roadways Transport Corporation (HRTC) services were stopped in November following snowfall in parts of the Kullu and the Lahaul and Spiti districts. Service on the stretch resumed Sunday, with the first bus starting from Kullu at 7.15 am and reaching Keylong at noon, the officials said. Earlier, the service would resume in May. This is the first time that bus services to the snowbound area have been restored in March following the inauguration of the Atal Tunnel in Rohtang in 2019.



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The decision to resume the service was taken after successful trial runs Friday and Saturday, a statement said. Meanwhile, Shimla received light showers early Sunday, with the local Met office predicting a wet spell in the state till Friday, except Monday. Rain and snow are likely in isolated areas in the mid and the high hills from Tuesday to Friday while the lower hills are predicted to witness rain Thursday and Friday under the effect of a fresh western disturbance. Another western disturbance is likely to affect the western Himalayan region from Friday, the weather office has said. Minimum and maximum temperatures have risen across the state in the past few days amid dry conditions.

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HIMACHAL TO FOCUS ON 414 POLLING STATIONS



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Shimla, March 24: With 414 polling stations in Himachal Pradesh registering less than 60 per cent voter turnout in the 2019 general elections, the Election Commission of India (ECI) has decided to launch station-specific interventions in these polling stations this time, state Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Maneesh Garg said Friday. Named 'Mission 414', these polling stations would be made model polling stations where booth youth icons will be appointed from among the first-time voters. Garg said the Commission is also focusing on the polling stations with a history of 'poll boycotts'. Special signature walls would be set up in these polling stations at conspicuous places under the theme, 'Yes, I will Vote', Garg said. As a special gesture, invitation cards made by children from the area would be given to the voters to boost their enthusiasm and make them join the festival of democracy. The CEO said the Commission is also engaging adventure sports associations, etc., to connect with the voters and motivate them to assist in strengthening democracy. He said to increase voter turnout in these 414 polling stations, special cultural events will also be organised.

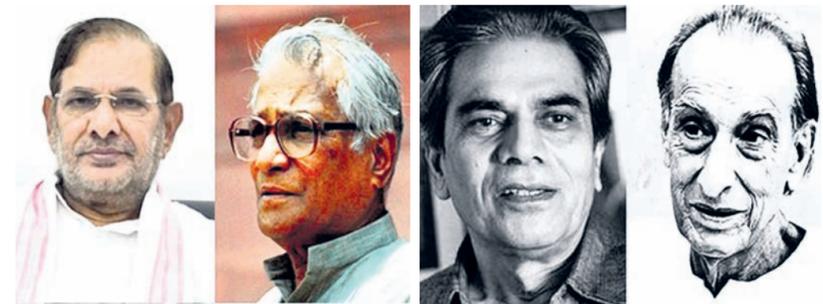
Diarrhoea outbreak in Hamirpur under control

Hamirpur, March 24: An outbreak of diarrhoea that affected more than 400 people in Himachal's Hamirpur district has been brought under control, officials said. Chief Medical Officer, Hamirpur, R K Agnihotri said all the 441 patients in the 29 panchayats of the Tauni Devi area of the district are now cured. Agnihotri said the outbreak was under control but advised people to take preventive steps like using boiled water for drinking. The first case of diarrhoea was reported on March 11 and the number continued to rise thereafter, officials said, adding two water samples collected from the area were deemed unfit for consumption and a detailed report is awaited. All those who fell ill were given free medicines and chlorine was also used in their water sources to make the water fit for consumption, the CMO said. This is the third time in the last 14 months that a diarrhoea outbreak has been reported from Hamirpur.

For long, Bihar voters sending 'outsiders' to Parliament

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Patna, March 24: Bihar has a long history of its voters not only accepting the leaders of other states but also sending them to Parliament. Socialist leader Madhu Limaye was one of them. He was originally from Pune in Maharashtra but was elected three times from Munger and once from Bihar's Banka Lok Sabha constituency. He represented these two constituencies in the third, fourth, fifth and sixth Lok Sabha. JB Kripalani was born November 11, 1888 in Hyderabad (Pakistan). He was a great freedom fighter and won the Lok Sabha election from Bhagalpur in 1952. He was also elected from Sitamarhi in 1957. Socialist leader George Fernandes who emerged from the JP movement was a native of Mangalore in Karnataka but was elected from Nalanda and Muzaffarpur in Bihar. He also served as the Defence Minister of the country. Sharad Yadav, a native of Madhya Pradesh was elected from Madhepura in 1991, 1996, 1999 and 2009. He was also elected from Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. At present, many leaders are not natives of the constitu-



ties they were representing in the Lok Sabha. They belong to other districts and are in the poll fray in 2024. Lalit Narayan Mishra was originally from Bihar's Supaul district but he was elected from Darbhanga Lok Sabha constituency. Lovely Anand is a native of Saharsa but was elected from Vaishali Lok Sabha constituency and she is expecting the JD-U ticket from Sheohar Lok Sabha seat in 2024. Ram Vilas Paswan and Pashupati Kumar Paras were elected from Hajipur but they are natives of Bihar's Khagaria district. Chirag Paswan is also a native of Khagaria district and was elected from Jamui. He is a candidate of the LJPR from Hajipur seat in the 2024 Lok Sabha poll. Syed Shahnawaz Hussain is a native of Supaul district but was elected from Kishanganj and Bhagalpur Lok Sabha constituencies. Sushil Kumar Modi is a native of Patna but was elected from Bhagalpur Lok Sabha constituency. Upendra Kushwaha is from Bihar's Vaishali district but was elected from Karakat seat in 2014. He is a candidate from Karakat again this time. Jay Prakash Narayan Yadav, a native of Bihar's Jamui district, was elected from Banka Lok Sabha seat. Giridhari Yadav, the present MP of Banka is also a native of Jamui and he is in the poll fray from this seat in 2024. RJD chief Lalu Prasad Yadav is a native of Gopalganj but was elected from Madhepura. Ashwini Kumar Choubey, the present MP from Bihar's Buxar

JD(U) ANNOUNCES LIST OF 16 CANDIDATES FOR LS ELECTIONS

Janata Dal (United) Sunday announced a list of 16 candidates for Bihar for the Lok Sabha elections. Bashistha Narain Singh, the national vice president of the party, announced the names at the party's head office here. The names are: Chandeshwar Prasad to contest from Jahanabad; Kaushalendra Kumar from Nalanda; Lalan Singh, Munger; Ajay Kumar Mandal, Bhagalpur; Giridhari Yadav, Banka; Dr Alok Kumar Suman, Gopalganj; Rampreet Mandal, Jhansi; Dulal Chandra Goswami, Katihar; Dinesh Chandra Yadav, Madhepura; Santosh Kushwaha, Purnea; Dileshwar Kamat, Supaul; Sunil Kumar, Valmiki Nagar; Lovely Anand, Sheohar; Devesh Chandra Thakur, Sitamarhi; Muzahid Alam, Kishanganj; and Vijaylaxmi Kushwaha, Siwan. The party denied tickets to two sitting MPs -- Sunil Kumar Pintu of Sitamarhi and Kavita Singh of Siwan. The tickets were given to Devesh Chandra Thakur and Vijaylaxmi Kushwaha respectively.

Will contest Aurangabad LS seat in Bihar: Nikhil Kumar

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Patna, March 24: In a blow to the INDIA bloc ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, the RJD and Congress have locked horns over seat-sharing in Bihar's Aurangabad. Former Governor and senior Congress leader Nikhil Kumar Sunday said that he will contest the election from Aurangabad. The statement comes after the RJD gave the ticket to Abhay Kushwaha. "Aurangabad is a traditional seat of the Congress party and we have good strength here. The Congress party had made the mistake five years ago and lost this seat only to respect the coalition pact. The people of Aurangabad are expecting that a Congress candidate should contest this election and I am expecting that our party would allow me to contest from this seat," Nikhil Kumar said. "The supporters of the



Congress party approached me and asked me to contest the election from Aurangabad at any cost," Kumar said. "RJD has given the ticket to the candidate who is unaware of the local issues. He does not know the ground reality of Aurangabad. We have been working here for the last 10 years and know everything about Aurangabad," Kumar said. The polling in Aurangabad

will take place in the first phase April 19. At present, Sushil Kumar of BJP is the sitting MP here. Reacting on the development, Prabhakar Mishra, spokesperson of BJP's Bihar unit said: "Fight is currently underway over seat-sharing in Mahagathbandhan. It is reflecting the Jungle Raj of Mahagathbandhan. RJD has crossed the limit and is giving seats to any candidate. It has grabbed the Aurangabad seat from the Congress party. The grand old party is helpless before Lalu Prasad Yadav. The supporters of Nikhil Kumar are angry with the RJD." "The supporters of Nikhil Kumar are also miffed over the top leadership of their own party as they have completely surrendered to the RJD. The members of the district Congress committee of Aurangabad may resign from the party before Lok Sabha election 2024," Mishra said



Lok Janshakti Party (Ramvilash) chief Chirag Paswan being welcomed by supporters on his arrival at Jai Prakash Narayan Airport in Patna, Bihar

More than 87 pc students pass Class XII board exam in Bihar

AGENCIES

Patna, March 24: Over 87 per cent of students this year passed the Class XII board exam, the result of which was announced by the Bihar School Examination Board (BSEB) Saturday. BSEB chairman Anand Kishore and education minister Sunil Kumar jointly announced the result in Patna Saturday afternoon. Anand Kishore said that 87.21 per cent students have passed the examination this year. Tushar Kumar of Patna reached the top position in Arts stream. He obtained 482 marks out of 500 in the Class XII examination. With 481 out of 500, Mritunjay Kumar of Siwan scored the highest marks in Science stream in Bihar. Priya Kumari of

Around 13 lakh students appeared in the Class XII examinations held between February 1 and 12 this year. Sheikhpura topped the rank in Commerce stream with 478 marks out of 500. BSEB chairman Anand Kishore said that 325848 students have passed in the first division in the Class XII examination in Science while 173823 students passed in the first division in Arts and 25157 students passed in the first division in Commerce. Around 13 lakh students appeared in the Class XII examinations held between February 1 and 12 this year.

Row in Bihar over teachers' training, exams on Holi

THE BIHAR GOVERNMENT HAS ALREADY DECLARED PUBLIC HOLIDAYS ON HOLI AND GOOD FRIDAY AND ALL OFFICES OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT WILL REMAIN CLOSED ON THOSE DAYS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Patna, March 24: A row has erupted over the Bihar education department scheduling a training programme for government teachers and annual examinations for school students on Holi and Good Friday respectively. RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav has sought the intervention of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar into the matter. A circular issued by the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) on March 20 stated, "Officials concerned must ensure that all primary

school teachers (from classes 1 to 5) who have not attended training session earlier, must attend the six-day Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) training that is being organised by the council from March 25 to 30." The circular has been sent to the principals of all College of Teacher Education (CTE), District Institute for Education and Training (DIET), Primary Teacher Education College (PTEC), Block Institute for Education and Training (BIET) and other officials concerned. As per the letter, a total of 19,200 government school teachers will attend FLN training at 78 training centres of the department from March 25 to 30. The SCERT has made it clear that "no leave will be granted" to all concerned during the training period. The SCERT is the apex academic body in the state for school and teacher education and is a



wing of the education department. The Bihar government has already declared public holidays on Holi and Good Friday and all offices of the state government will remain closed on those days. Similarly, the department's decision to conduct annual examinations for students below

class 8 even on Good Friday (March 29) has triggered a controversy. Even Robert L Chongthu, principal secretary to the Bihar governor, in a letter to the chief secretary, urged him to direct the department to change the exam schedule of March 29. Both the SCERT circular and the Raj Bhavan letter to the chief secretary are in possession with PTI. Despite repeated attempts, Education Minister Sunil Kumar was not available for his comments on the issue. In a post on X, Tejashwi Yadav said, "As per orders of the NDA government in Bihar, teachers have to be present even on the day of Holi. This has never happened in Bihar earlier.. When the entire state is celebrating Holi, teachers will stay away from their families on that day. The CM must intervene in the matter."



BJP may field new face in Biramitrapur

PARLEYS ON IN SAFFRON CAMP OVER PICKING THE RIGHT CANDIDATE



RAJESH MOHANTY, OP

Rourkela, March 24: A lot of churning is happening within the BJP in Biramitrapur Assembly segment as there is a possibility that the saffron party may not give a ticket to sitting MLA Shankar Oram this time because of the alleged dissent against him. For BJP, there are a few other aspirants this time. "For hardcore party cadres, Oram has become unpopular for his behaviour and approach," said a party leader during discussion at Biramitrapur. There are two names doing the rounds at this moment - Purnima Kerketta and Sanjeev Pratap Singhdeo. The latter is the scion of Kunaramunda royal family. Purnima is stated to be more aggressive this time and is lobbying hard for a ticket. "She has

gained popularity given the sitting MLA Oram's near absence in the constituency," said a local. On several occasions, locals and party cadres had complained of his absence in the constituency. "Anyone who comes from Raibaga or far-off places will have to change three buses to reach his residence at Sector-2, Rourkela. But his absence hurts them. We had requested him several times to stay here, but to no avail," said another BJP worker. **OrissaPOST**, in its March 22 edition, had published a report about the dissent against Shankar Oram which is now evident. Meanwhile, grapevines have it that Oram, if denied a ticket by BJP, may switch over to BJD. However, Purnima, a general secretary of BJP and in-charge (prabhari) of the party's

Jharkhand Mahila Morcha, rarely moves out of here unless there is a dire necessity. She is from Raibaga. "At least we have the confidence that Didi will be here with us at the time of our need. She is accessible to all and never forgets to respond over phone," say some voters. Sanjeev, aka Lalu, who is more famous by the name, has on several occasions raised local issues and fought with the administration. His royal blood is also favouring him. "Didi is our first choice and then Lalu bhai, but not Oram," said most of the people during the interaction. Besides, another factor that works in favour of Purnima is that Oram tribe is the dominant force in Biramitrapur. And it is heard that the three Oram groups are ready to back her this time. On the other hand, BJD's Makhlu Oram has kept his fingers crossed for a ticket again with hardly anyone visible in the race. Last time, he had lost electoral battle to Shankar Oram by a margin of 16,351 votes. Since then, he has been very active in the constituency and has been very active. He is also raising issues pertaining to locals and standing with them. During an interaction, Makhlu had said, "I am a local. Ticket hardly matters. I am with the people of Biramitrapur."



Irani Ray from Nayagarh joins BJD at Sankha Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Sunday, in the presence of party leaders Manas Mangaraj, Arun Kumar Sahoo and Sasmit Patra

Irani Ray, hubby Lala Manoj Ray join BJD

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh/Bhubaneswar, March 24: BJP leader from Nayagarh district Irani Ray and her husband joined the ruling BJD at a merger meeting held at Sankha Bhawan in Bhubaneswar Sunday, weeks ahead of the simultaneous Lok Sabha and assembly polls in the state.

Ray came along with her hundreds of supporters from Nayagarh to join the regional party. Ray and her supporters joined the BJD in the presence of Rajya Sabha MP and party leader Manas Mangaraj at Sankha Bhawan. "Although I was working with 100 per cent dedication for BJP, the party did not acknowledge

my contribution and sacrifices at all. This is the reason why I along with my supporters quit the BJP," she said after joining the BJD. Ray had unsuccessfully contested the 2019 Assembly election from Nayagarh Assembly constituency. Irani had secured 66,737 votes in 2019 as a BJP candidate from the seat. Before

joining the saffron party, her husband Lala Manoj Ray was in Congress and fought the Nayagarh Assembly polls in 2014. BJD's Arun Kumar Sahoo had defeated her by a margin of 14,855 votes. The Nayagarh MLA and the party's Rajya Sabha MP Sasmit Patra were present at the merger meeting.

KUCHINDA ASSEMBLY SEAT

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, March 24: As the haze over a possible BJD-BJP alliance is now clear and both the parties have decided to go solo in the upcoming polls, it has come to the fore that Kuchinda Assembly constituency under Sambalpur Lok Sabha segment is likely to witness a fight between a teacher (guru) and a disciple (shishya). Earlier, the speculation regarding a pre-poll tie-up between BJD and BJP had put the aspirants of both the parties in a fix. They were in dark about the poll prospects as it was undecided as to which party will get the chance to contest Kuchinda seat, if at all the alliance takes place. However, Friday's decision by BJD and BJP to fight separately has spread cheers among the workers of both the parties and raised the political temperature in the Assembly seat. Kuchinda MLA Kishore Chandra Naik had defected from BJP to join BJD and won this seat in 2019 election. Earlier, Kishore was a close confidant of BJP state vice-president and former MLA Rabi Narayan Naik and had worked with him for many years. Kishore was looking after the organisation of Rabi Naik which helped

'Guru-Shishya' battle on cards



AFTER BJD DECIDED TO GO SOLO IN THE UPCOMING POLLS, SPECULATIONS ARE RIFE ABOUT KISHORE CHANDRA NAIK GETTING THE TICKET FROM KUCHINDA SEAT. POLITICAL ANALYSTS BELIEVE THAT THE CONSTITUENCY WILL AGAIN GET THE CHANCE TO WITNESS THE GURU-SHISHYA FIGHT IN THE UPCOMING ELECTION IF BJD DECIDES TO RETAIN KISHORE FROM THIS SEAT

him develop some organisational skills. Political analysts believe that both Rabi and Kishore belong to Gond tribal community which very often decides the poll results in this Assembly segment. Keeping these things in mind, the ruling BJD fielded Kishore as its candidate from this constituency in 2019. Kishore also managed to win the election by defeating his political guru Rabi Naik in the 2019 polls. Recently, Rabi Naik has managed to strengthen BJP organisation during last five years. However, during alliance talks it was then said that the seat might go BJD for which Rabi Naik will not get a chance to contest the 2024 election. After BJD decided to go solo in the upcoming polls, speculations are rife about Kishore getting the ticket from Kuchinda seat. Political analysts believe that the con-

stituency will again get the chance to witness the guru-shishya fight in the upcoming election if BJD decides to retain Kishore from this seat. However, many old-timers of BJD are yet to accept Kishore as their leader. Many BJD workers are not happy with him for his failure to connect with the party workers. Many local leaders and party workers have lodged complaints against Kishore before the senior party leaders. Chatters are a buzz that in this situation, the ruling BJD might give ticket to a new candidate. Among them, former BJD candidate-cum-sitting Kuchinda block chairman Bhubaneswar Kishan, special development council (SDC) chairman Sobharam Pradhan, former Bamra block chairman Sadanand Kujur and youth leader Mahendra Bag are some other aspirants for BJD ticket. Similarly, the Congress is also trying to wrest the Kuchinda Assembly seat from BJD. Former MLA and former district Congress president Rajendra Chhatra and former chairman of Jamankira block Kedar Baraha are the frontrunners for the Congress ticket. However, the Assembly seat is likely to witness a tough fight between the BJD and BJP.

BJP names 111 more candidates

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 24: The BJP Sunday named 111 more Lok Sabha poll candidates, dropping Union ministers Ashwini Kumar Choubey and VK Singh, and MP Varun Gandhi, while fielding actors Kangana Ranaut and Arun Govil. The party has axed former Union minister Anant Kumar Hegde, a six-term Lok Sabha member from Uttara Kannada, this time. A hardline Hindutva leader, he has often courted controversies with his remarks including the recent row when he said a big mandate for the BJP is necessary so that it could amend the Constitution. Kerala BJP president K Surendra will contest from Wayanad, the seat from where incumbent MP and former Congress president Rahul Gandhi is again in the fray. The BJP has fielded Rekha Patra, who party leaders said is one of the Sadeskhali victims, from West Bengal's Basirhat constituency in a bid to corner the state's ruling Trinamool Congress. The BJP named candidates for all 17 seats it is contesting in Bihar, renominating Union minister Giriraj Singh from Begusarai and former Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad from Patna Sahib.

Union ministers RK Singh and Nityanand Rai have also been fielded from their current seats, while in Uttar Pradesh the ruling party named 13 more candidates. While it has denied the ticket from Pilibhit to Varun Gandhi, a three-term Lok Sabha MP who has often aired views deemed critical of his party's governments at the Centre and in the state, it has renominated his mother Maneka Gandhi from Sultanpur. Jitin Prasada, a minister in the state government, is the party's choice from Pilibhit while Atul Garg replaces two-term MP V K Singh in Ghaziabad. Hours before the party released the list, Singh said in a post on X that he is opting out of the polls. Three leaders who joined the BJP Sunday figured in the list - Naveen Jindal from Kurukshetra, Haryana government minister Ranjit Chautala from Hisar (both in Haryana), and Varaprasad Rao from Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh. With this list of 111 candidates, the ruling party has named 398 nominees, excluding the four who withdrew after their names created controversy, for the elections to the 543-member Lok Sabha. Ranaut, a vocal supporter of the BJP, will contest from Mandi in her home state of Himachal

Pradesh, while veteran actor Arun Govil, famed for his role of Lord Ram in the popular TV serial "Ramayan", has been preferred to seasoned parliamentarian Rajendra Agrawal in Meerut by the ruling party. Sita Soren, the sister-in-law of former Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren, is BJP's candidate from Dumka. She had quit the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha a few days ago. Former Karnataka chief minister Jagadish Shettar, who snapped his long ties with the BJP to join the Congress last year before returning to its fold months later, will contest from Belgaum. The party has named 19 more candidates from West Bengal, including former Calcutta High Court judge Abhijit Gangopadhyay from Tamuk. It named seven candidates from Rajasthan, four each from Haryana, Karnataka and Kerala, 18 from Odisha, and three each from from Maharashtra and Jharkhand among other states. Its Andhra Pradesh president D Purandeswari will contest from Rajahmundry and former chief minister N Kiran Kumar Reddy from Rajampet as the party named its picks for all the six Lok Sabha seats in the state it is contesting in alliance with the TDP and the Jana Sena.



Several workers of various political parties join BJP at a merger meeting held at Kankadhada in Dhenkanal district, Sunday



AAP workers hold a press conference in Kendrapara, Sunday, terming the arrest of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal as 'undemocratic'

Former IAF chief Bhaduria in BJP

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 24: Former Indian Air Force chief RKS Bhaduria joined the BJP Sunday and praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership and the steps taken by his government to modernise and strengthen the armed forces. Varaprasad Rao, a former MP and a YSR Congress leader from Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh, also joined the BJP in the presence of Union Minister Anurag Thakur and party General Secretary Vinod Tawde. Having retired in 2021, he termed the last eight to 10 years of his service as a "golden period", praising the steps taken by the Modi government to boost self-reliance and modernise the armed forces. He also praised its measures for national security and lauded Modi's foresight, saying the steps taken across various departments will help the country emerge stronger.



Various colours of Holi symbolise the diversity of our country. This festival promotes the feelings of love, unity and brotherhood among the people. This festival also inspires us to strengthen our cultural heritage
DROUPADI MURMU | PRESIDENT OF INDIA

K'TAKA MOVES SC SEEKING RELEASE OF DROUGHT RELIEF FUNDS

The Karnataka government has moved the Supreme Court seeking a direction to the Centre to release financial assistance from the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) to the state for drought management. The petition has also sought to declare that the Centre's action in not releasing the financial assistance for drought arrangement as per the NDRF is "ex-facie violative" of the fundamental rights of the people of the state guaranteed under Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution



of the day quote

Those who wear the cloak of being fiercely honest are now in jail
NAYAB SINGH SAINI | HARYANA CM

The BJP has opened the eyes of people of the entire northeast. The winnability chance of the party is 200 per cent
N BIREN SINGH | MANIPUR CM

We are trying to find out if these accused have more links in Punjab. If there are more gangs selling spurious liquor, they will also be arrested and booked under Section 302
BHAGWANT MANN | PUNJAB CM

SHORT TAKES

2 additional SPs arrested

Hyderabad: Two additional superintendents of police have been arrested by Hyderabad Police in connection with the case of phone tapping and destroying certain computer systems and official data. During investigation, Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police Thirupathanna and Additional Superintendent of Police N Bhujanga Rao were arrested, an official release from Hyderabad police said late Saturday night. The two police officials, who had earlier worked as additional superintendents of police in the Special Intelligence Bureau (SIB) and Intelligence Department respectively, were Sunday remanded in judicial custody.

Factory fire: Relatives of victims block NH

Jaipur: Locals and relatives of the six men who died in a chemical factory fire in Jaipur's Bassi blocked the Jaipur-Agra National Highway Sunday, demanding compensation for the family members and action against the factory owner. The deadlock ended this evening when officials assured them of action on their demands in accordance with the rules, Deputy Commissioner Of Police (DCP) East Kavendra Sagar said. The bodies of the victims were handed over to family members after postmortem, the police said.

3 killed as truck rams into car

Malda (WB): At least three people were killed when the car they were travelling in was hit by a truck in West Bengal's Malda district, police said Sunday. The incident took place late Saturday night on Malda bypass in Jadupur in English Bazaar police station area. "The truck rammed into the car from behind, severely injuring four occupants. They were taken to Malda Medical College and Hospital, where doctors declared three of them dead while the fourth person is undergoing treatment," a police officer said.

EAM calls Lavrov

New Delhi: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar Sunday said he has spoken to his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov and conveyed India's deepest condolences on the loss of lives in the "horrific terrorist attack" in Moscow. More than 130 people were killed in the attack on a suburban Moscow concert hall Friday. "Spoke to Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. Conveyed our deepest condolences on the loss of lives in the horrific terrorist attack in Moscow," Jaishankar posted on X. Prime Minister Narendra Modi Saturday had condemned the attack, calling it a "heinous terrorist attack".

INDIA bloc's 'maha rally' March 31

Addressing a press conference, INDIA bloc allies AAP and Congress announced the rally

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 24: The Opposition INDIA bloc will hold a "maha rally" at Delhi's Ramlila Maidan March 31 to safeguard the country's interests and democracy. AAP leader Gopal Rai said Sunday.

The announcement comes after Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal (55) was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) Thursday from his official residence in connection with an excise policy-linked money-laundering case. A court Friday sent the AAP national convener to the central agency's custody till March 28.

Addressing a press conference, INDIA bloc allies AAP and Congress announced the rally. "We will hold a 'maha rally' at Ramlila Maidan March 31 against what is happening in the country. The top leadership of the INDIA bloc will participate in the event," Rai, the AAP's Delhi convener, Rai said.

"Democracy and the country are in danger. All INDIA bloc parties will take part in this 'maha rally' to safeguard the country's interests and democ-



racy," he added. Rai claimed that Kejriwal's arrest has angered people who respect the Constitution.

"It is not only about Arvind Kejriwal. The entire opposition is being threatened. Either they use money to buy people or scare them by using the ED and the CBI (Central Bureau of Investigation). If someone refuses to bow, they get them arrested under false cases," Rai alleged.

The Delhi minister cited the arrest of former Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren and alleged that West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and

RJD leader Tejaswi Yadav are also being targeted.

Soren's Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, the Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress and the RJD are all members of the opposition INDIA bloc.

"All INDIA bloc leaders are being framed in false cases. They turned Delhi into a fortress. Elected MLAs, ministers were detained when they were protesting. Kejriwal's family was placed under house arrest. They sealed our party office. Yesterday (Saturday), at Shaheed Park, they behaved with us as if we were criminals," Rai further charged.

The announcement comes after Arvind Kejriwal was arrested by ED Thursday from his official residence in connection with an excise policy-linked money-laundering case

He further said the BJP is claiming that opposition leaders are being arrested because they are involved in corruption but no money trail has been found in the excise policy case, the investigation into which has been going on for two years.

"However, a ₹60-crore money trail has been found. They arrested Sarath Reddy in the excise policy case but he was released on the condition that he give a statement against Kejriwal and donate ₹60 crore to the BJP through electoral bonds. The bank accounts of the oldest party of the country were sealed so that they could not even campaign for the Lok Sabha elections," Rai said.

The AAP leader said the entire

opposition is coming together to save the country.

Reddy of Aurobindo Pharma was arrested by the central agency last November in connection with the excise policy case. No comments were available from Reddy or his company over the charges. There was no immediate reaction to the allegations from the BJP either. Arvinder Singh Lovely, the Congress' Delhi unit chief, alleged that the opposition parties are not being given a level playing field and highlighted the freezing of his party's accounts and the arrest of a Chief Minister.

"The March 31 'maha rally' will not only be a political one but a call to save the country's democracy and raise voices against the BJP-led Centre," he said.

"Democracy is in danger. Our leader Rahul Gandhi is fighting to save democracy. We are standing with our INDIA bloc allies with full strength," he added.

Rai was later asked if they would get permission to hold the rally. "We will apply for permission and are hopeful of getting it. If we do not get the permission, we will see what needs to be done," he said.

JNUSU polls: ABVP, Left in neck-and-neck battle

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 24: The RSS affiliated Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) and the United Left outfits are locked in a neck to neck fight for the central panel of the Jawaharlal Nehru University's Students' Union elections here.

As per the early poll trends, Left's Dhananjay is leading the tally for the president's post with 1,361 votes followed by the ABVP's Umesh C Ajmeera with 1,162 votes. For the vice-president's post also, the ABVP is giving a tough competition to the Left's candidate Avijit Ghosh, who is currently leading with 1,214 votes. ABVP's Deepika Sharma is second in the race with 984 votes.

The early poll trends are based on the tally of 3,295 ballots done by the Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU) election committee shared by different students outfits. For the general secretary's post, BAPSA candidate Priyanshi Arya is supported by the Left. She is leading the post with 1,478 votes.

The United Left extended its support to Arya after the Election Committee cancelled the nomination of its candidate Swati Singh after her candidacy was challenged by the ABVP.

IIT student held under UAPA for 'links with ISIS'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, March 24: An IIT-Guwahati student, who had allegedly pledged allegiance to ISIS, was arrested under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act Sunday, a senior official said here.

The student was detained three days after the ISIS India head Hiris Farooqi alias Harish Ajmal Farukhi and his associate Anurag Singh alias Rehan were arrested in Dhubri district after they had crossed over from Bangladesh.

The IG said, "Further investigation is underway as of date and further rounds of questioning of the suspect are going on." Meanwhile, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma told reporters in Chirang, where he is on a tour for election campaigning, that police have got information about two students of IIT-Guwahati trying to join ISIS.

"One of them has been found, but the other is not found. We are looking for him and will soon get him. They have been radicalised and we have informed their parents. They hail from Batla House area of Delhi," he added.

him in the court, which has sent him to police custody for 10 days. We also carried out a search in his hostel room inside the IIT-Guwahati campus," Mahanta said.

On Saturday, he was detained at Hajo in Kamrup district while he was on his way to join ISIS after allegedly pledging allegiance to the terror group.

The student was detained three days after the ISIS India head Hiris Farooqi alias Harish Ajmal Farukhi and his associate Anurag Singh alias Rehan were arrested in Dhubri district after they had crossed over from Bangladesh.

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"One of them has been found, but the other is not found. We are looking for him and will soon get him. They have been radicalised and we have informed their parents. They hail from Batla House area of Delhi," he added.

Rajnath celebrates Holi with soldiers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Leh, March 24: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh Sunday celebrated Holi with Army jawans in Leh and lauded them for protecting the country from enemies while braving extreme weather conditions.

Singh was earlier supposed to celebrate Holi with soldiers in Siachen, the world's highest battlefield, but his visit was cancelled due to inclement weather.

The minister was accompanied by Chief of Army Staff General Manoj Pande and General Officer Commanding, Fire and Fury Corps, Lt Gen Rashim Bali.

The defence minister applied tilak with 'gulaal' on soldiers' foreheads.

He also laid a wreath at the War Memorial here to pay tributes to soldiers who laid down their lives in the line of duty. Addressing the soldiers after celebrating the festival of colours, Singh said Ladakh is the national capital of courage and bravery.

"Like we have the national capital in Delhi, the economic capital in Mumbai, and the technological capital in Bangalore, Ladakh is India's capital of courage and bravery."

The country will always be indebted to the soldiers for their devotion and service.

The commitment of the soldiers posted in high altitudes is much stronger than the sub-zero temperatures, the minister said.



Devotees perform 'Holika Dahan' as part of Holi festival celebrations in Gandhinagar, Gujarat

PTI

SNIPPETS

Four-year-old raped in Delhi; protesters vandalise vehicles

New Delhi: A four-year-old girl was allegedly raped by a 34-year-old brother of her teacher at a tuition centre in east Delhi's Pandav Nagar area, sparking a protest in the area with people vandalising some vehicles, police said Sunday. They said an FIR has been registered the accused arrested. They also said inflammatory messages about the case are being circulated through WhatsApp to spoil the atmosphere, and urged people to maintain peace. They said the alleged incident happened Saturday and the victim has been referred to All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS)-Delhi from Lal Bahadur Shastri Hospital. Police said the protesters gathered near the house of the accused and vandalised some vehicles over rumours that no action was being taken. They said a large number of police personnel and paramilitary forces have been deployed in the area to maintain law and order.

CBI team revisits Sandeshkhali

Kolkata: A Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) team, probing into an attack on Enforcement Directorate (ED) officials at West Bengal's Sandeshkhali January 5, Sunday visited a village in the area to gather more evidence. This is the second visit of the CBI to Sarberia village in North 24 Parganas district after getting the custody of suspended TMC leader Shajahan Sheikh, the main accused in the attack, March 6. This time, the CBI team took two of the arrested persons along with them to reconstruct the incident and collect further evidence, officials said.

India brings back 35 Somali pirates

New Delhi: The Indian navy handed over 35 Somali pirates to the police in Mumbai Saturday, after 100 days of anti-piracy operations east of the Red Sea, where piracy has resurfaced for the first time in nearly a decade. India, the largest national force in the Gulf of Aden and northern Arabian Sea region, captured the pirates from the cargo ship Ruen last week, three months after it was hijacked off the Somali coast.

Substantial rise in breast cancer in India by 2025: ICMR

According to the projections, the burden of female breast cancer in India in 2025 is expected to be 5.6 million DALYs. Premature deaths due to breast cancer (YLLs) would contribute 5.3 million DALYs to the total burden, with the remaining due to disability (YLDs)

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 24: Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Karnataka and Delhi had a higher burden of breast cancer than eastern and northeastern states, according to an ICMR study that also projected a "substantial rise" in the disease burden in India by 2025.

The study, published earlier this month, focused on India's breast cancer burden at the state level from 2012 to 2016 in terms of years of life lost (YLLs), years lived with disability (YLDs), and disability-adjusted life years (DALYs), and to project the burden for 2025.

The burden of breast cancer among Indian women in 2016

was estimated to be at 515.4 DALYs per 1,00,000 women after age standardisation.

The burden metrics at the state level exhibited substantial heterogeneity. "Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Karnataka and Delhi had a higher burden of breast cancer than states in the eastern and northeastern regions. The projection for 2025 indicates a substantial increase, reaching 5.6 million DALYs," the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) study said.

DALYs are a measure of overall disease burden, expressed as the number of years lost due to ill-health, disability or early death.

Rural women are less likely to develop breast cancer than their



urban counterparts and age-standardised incidence rates are higher in urban and metro areas, with Hyderabad, Chennai, Bengaluru and Delhi topping the list among Indian cities.

According to the projections, the burden of female breast cancer in India in 2025 is expected to be 5.6 million DALYs. Premature deaths due to breast

cancer (YLLs) would contribute 5.3 million DALYs to the total burden, with the remaining due to disability (YLDs).

This study examined the state-wise burden of female breast cancer in India in 2016 using data from 28 population-based cancer registries across the country under the National Cancer Registry Programme (NCRP).

In 2018, age-standardised breast cancer incidence among women in south central Asia was 25.9 per 1,00,000 women, according to a Global Cancer Observatory (GLOBOCAN) study.

According to a Global Burden of Diseases (GBD) study, the age-standardised breast cancer rate in south central Asia in 2016 was 21.6 per 1,00,000 women. These studies estimated the national and sub-national burdens using a wide range of data sources.

Urban factors such as a sedentary lifestyle, high obesity rates, delayed age of marriage and childbirth and minimal breastfeeding have been attributed to a higher burden of breast cancer in urban areas.

Socioeconomic factors significantly shape the cancer burden, affecting access to health care, preventive measures and treatment outcomes.

Individuals with lower socioeconomic status encounter barriers to timely and quality health care, leading to delayed

cancer detection, compounded by limited resources and health literacy, the study highlighted.

Occupational exposures and financial strain heighten cancer risks and impact treatment accessibility while geographical and psychosocial disparities further complicate the issue. Research priorities may also inadvertently overlook cancers prevalent in lower socioeconomic groups.

Recognising and addressing these disparities is crucial for equitable cancer control, ensuring universal access to prevention, early detection and treatment, the study said.

The increasing incidence of breast cancer in India underscores the urgent need for comprehensive awareness campaigns and screening programmes, it emphasised.

A significant concern is that a majority of women diagnosed with breast cancer in the country present with advanced stages or metastatic disease, suggesting a lack of awareness.

international



The daily assault on the human dignity of Palestinians is creating a crisis of credibility for the international community
ANTÓNIO GUTERRES | SECRETARY-GENERAL, UN

POPE SKIPS PALM SUNDAY HOMILY

Pope Francis at the last minute skipped reading his homily during a Palm Sunday Mass for tens of thousands of people in St Peter's Square but continued presiding at the service. In recent weeks the 87-year-old pope has been suffering on and off from bronchitis and influenza and has delegated an aide to read his addresses for him, but Sunday his prepared text was not read



of the day quote

We will finish this operation only when the last terrorist is in our hands — alive or dead
YARON FINKELMAN | MILITARY HEAD (SOUTHERN COMMAND), ISRAEL

Both India and Russia have taken that extra care to look after each other's interests. So, I think we should have that confidence as we go forward
S JAISHANKAR | EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER

Under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, India has not only achieved remarkable success in the past decade but also paved the way for a promising and prosperous future
JIGME KHESAR NAMGYEL WANGCHUCK | KING, BHUTAN

SHORT TAKES

Indian dies in car accident in US

New York: In a tragic incident, a 24-year-old Indian professional was killed in a car accident in the US state of Pennsylvania. Arshia Joshi lost her life in a tragic car accident in Pennsylvania March 21, the Consulate General of India in New York said in a post on X Saturday, expressing deep condolences to her family. Joshi had completed her graduation last year. The Consulate said it is in touch with Joshi's family and local community leaders. "Extending all possible assistance to transport her mortal remains to India at the earliest," it said, without divulging more details about the deceased. Volunteer-based nonprofit organisation TEAM Aid is assisting in sending Joshi's mortal remains to Delhi to her family.

PTI's permission for stir denied

Islamabad: The Pakistani authorities Sunday rejected a request of jailed former premier Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party to hold a protest rally in Islamabad against the alleged rigging in the February 8 general elections due to security reasons. The beleaguered party had asked the capital city administration to allow it to hold a public gathering March 23 or March 30, the first such event since the February 8 elections. Since the first option for the rally already lapsed, it was trying to get permission to hold a protest march March 30.

CONCERT SHOOTING

Russia mourns victims

The assault was the deadliest attack on Russian territory since the 2004 Beslan school siege, when Islamist militants took over 1,000 people, including hundreds of children, hostage

Moscow, March 24: Russia lowered flags to half-mast Sunday for a day of mourning after scores of people were gunned down with automatic weapons at a rock concert outside Moscow in the deadliest attack inside Russia for two decades.

President Vladimir Putin declared a national day of mourning after pledging to track down and punish all those behind the attack, in which 133 people were killed, including three children, and more than 150 injured. "I express my deep, sincere condolences to all those who lost their loved ones," Putin said in an address to the nation Saturday, his first public comments on the attack. "The whole country and our entire people are grieving with you."

Islamic State claimed responsibility for Friday's attack, but Putin has not publicly mentioned the Islamist militant group in connection with the attackers, who he said had been trying to escape to Ukraine. He asserted that some on "the Ukrainian side" had prepared to spirit them across the border.

Ukraine has repeatedly denied any role in the attack, which Putin also blamed on "international terrorism".

People laid flowers at Crocus City Hall, the 6,200-seat concert hall outside Moscow where four armed men burst in Friday just before Soviet-era rock group Picnic was to perform its hit "Afraid of Nothing". The men fired their automatic



All the perpetrators, organisers and those who ordered this crime will be justly and inevitably punished. Whoever they are, whoever is guiding them. We will identify and punish everyone who stands behind the terrorists, who prepared this atrocity, this strike against Russia, against our people

VLADIMIR PUTIN | PRESIDENT, RUSSIA

- Billboards show the message 'We mourn'
- Flags lowered as Russia holds day of mourning
- Suspects due to appear in court
- Islamic State claims responsibility
- Putin says gunmen sought to escape to Ukraine

weapons in short bursts at terrified civilians who fell screaming in a hail of bullets.

Long lines formed in Moscow to donate blood. Blood banks said Sunday they now had enough blood supplies for four to six months.

Across Moscow, billboards carried a picture of a single candle, the date of the attack and the words "We mourn". In other cities, people laid flowers.

Countries around the world

have expressed horror at the attack and sent their condolences to the Russian people.

GUNMEN DETAINED

Putin said 11 people had been detained, including the four gunmen, who fled the concert hall and made their way to the Bryansk region, about 340 km (210 miles) southwest of Moscow. "They tried to hide and moved towards Ukraine, where, according to preliminary data, a

MISSILE RAIN

Russia stages major airstrike on Ukraine

Moscow launches 57 missiles with one rocket briefly entering Polish airspace

Kyiv, March 24: Russia struck critical infrastructure in Ukraine's western region of Lviv with missiles early Sunday, Kyiv said, in a major airstrike that saw one Russian cruise missile briefly fly into Polish airspace according to Warsaw.

Moscow launched 57 missiles and drones in the attack that also targeted the capital Kyiv, two days after the largest aerial bombardment of Ukraine's energy system in more than two years of full-scale war, Kyiv said.

"There were two preliminary hits on the same critical infra-

structure facility that the occupiers targeted at night," Lviv's regional governor Maksym Kozlytskyi wrote on the Telegram messaging app.

The strike used Kinzhal hypersonic missiles, which are harder to shoot down, he added, without identifying the facility.

The energy ministry said equipment caught fire when a critical energy facility in the Lviv region was attacked, causing it to lose power.

Air defences destroyed 18 of 29 inbound missiles and 25 of 28 attack drones, the air force said.

There were almost no details about what had been damaged, but the targeting of critical infrastructure could indicate Russia is trying to keep up pressure on the energy system after its strikes caused widespread blackouts Friday.



Demonstrators block a road during a protest against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government and call for the release of hostages held in the Gaza Strip by the Hamas militant group in Tel Aviv

WEEKS IN CAPTIVITY

Some of nearly 300 abducted Nigerian students released

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Abuja, March 24: At least 137 of nearly 300 Nigerian children abducted more than two weeks ago from their school in the northwestern state of Kaduna were released Sunday, the West African nation's military said.

An earlier statement from the government suggested that all the students were freed. Motorcycle-riding gunmen invaded the Kuriga school March 7 and marched the children into the forests before security forces could arrive, as terrified families watched helplessly. School authorities said a total of 287 students were kidnapped during the attack, at least 100 of them are aged 12 or younger.

At least 1,400 students have been kidnapped from Nigerian schools since 2014, when Boko Haram militants seized hundreds of schoolgirls from Borno state's Chibok village.



In recent years, abductions have been concentrated in the country's northwestern and central regions, where dozens of armed groups often target villagers and travelers for ransom. The 137 children were rescued in Zamfara state, an enclave known for kidnappings more than 200 kilometres away from their school, Nigerian military spokesman Major General Edward Buba said in a statement. "Efforts would continue until other hostages are found and the terrorists arrested, tried, and brought to justice by Nigerian law," Buba said.

In Sudan, 150 families risk lives to feed each other

Since the war began last April between the army of General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and the Rapid Support Forces of his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, tens of thousands have died and millions more have been forced to flee their homes

Cairo, March 24: Sameh Makki's soup kitchen is barely 100 metres from the market, but it can take two hours to make the journey through Sudan's war-torn streets, often through hails of bullets. The 43-year-old, his family and local volunteers have risked everything to get supplies to feed around 150 families caught in the crossfire between the army and paramilitaries.

"The only thing that matters is that people eat. If I had died while making that happen, so be it," said Makki. Initiatives like Makki's are some of the only ways that people survive as the impoverished country hangs on the verge of famine. Makki fled to Egypt to get medical care for his daughter and left the soup kitchen in the care



mittes created Emergency Response Rooms (ERRs) to provide civilians in the line of fire with healthcare, evacuation help and food aid.

Most ERRs run their own kitchens, others help with co-ordination and funding.

International aid groups call them the frontline of Sudan's humanitarian response and the United Nations has said ERRs have helped over four million civilians across Sudan.

Several volunteers told AFP the kitchens serve anywhere from a few dozen to 200 families each day.

In the capital alone, tens of

thousands rely on ERRs for daily meals, consisting mainly of rice, beans, lentils and the occasional animal protein.

"WE HAVE TO SMUGGLE" Volunteers like Makki were occasionally able to broadcast meal-times from the mosque in Omdurman, Khartoum's twin city.

The situation is starkly different just across the River Nile in Khartoum North, also known as Bahri, which has been under siege for nearly a year. "The army thinks of Bahri as an RSF stronghold, and treats anything going in like RSF supplies," one activist told AFP, requesting anonymity in order

not to compromise his work. "We basically have to smuggle our stuff in."

Volunteers go door-to-door delivering every ration, but the streets of Bahri are filled with paramilitary fighters known for looting life-saving aid.

"Carrying large quantities of food draws attention," ERR Bahri volunteer Mahmoud Mokhtar told AFP in Cairo. "If the army catches you, they say you're smuggling for the RSF, if the RSF catches you they call you an army spy."

When asked if he has lost comrades in the line of duty, Mokhtar's eyes quickly filled with tears. "People have been killed and raped and assaulted and detained and beaten and taken away for months at a time, we're used to it," he said.

There is no official count for how many activists and volunteers both sides have targeted, but ERRs and the doctors' union regularly post obituaries for civilians killed while providing life-saving assistance. "The kitchens themselves have been repeatedly shelled by both sides," according to Mokhtar.

of the day quote

We think we have a great financial future. Listing is in our future. But you never say never. We hope to list some day

VINAY DUBE | CHIEF, AKASA AIR

India's decision to allow Chinese car makers in India and cutting import tariffs on electric vehicles (EVs) will benefit Chinese manufacturers directly or indirectly being the dominant suppliers of EV batteries

AJAY SRIVASTAVA | FOUNDER, GTRI

This week being a truncated week and the derivatives' monthly expiry, we might see some volatility while Nifty is likely to consolidate at higher levels

SIDDHARTHA KHEMKA | HEAD (RETAIL RESEARCH), MOTILAL OSWAL FINANCIAL SERVICES

SHORT TAKES

Tech Mahindra to merge US units

New Delhi: IT services and consultation company Tech Mahindra said it plans to merge its two wholly-owned subsidiaries, Born Group and Tech Mahindra (Americas), to synergise business operations, optimise operational cost, and reduce compliance risks. The merger is subject to regulatory approvals in the country of incorporation. According to a regulatory filing, the appointed date of the plan of merger is April 1, 2024. "A Plan of Merger of Born Group, Inc, a wholly-owned step-down subsidiary of the Company with its parent company viz Tech Mahindra (Americas) Inc, a wholly-owned material subsidiary of the Company, has been approved by the respective companies on Friday, 22nd March 2024," the company said.

No export duty: Miners urge govt

New Delhi: Miners' body FIMI has urged the government not to impose any export duty on low-grade iron ore, stating that any such move would cause a significant loss of state revenues and employment and also affect foreign exchange earnings. In a representation to the government, the Federation of Indian Mineral Industries (FIMI) said the mining sector was adversely impacted when in May 2022 the export duty was imposed on low-grade iron ore fines and pellets. The government, however, withdrew the tax in November same year. A major share of the mining sector's contribution to the country's GDP is accounted for by iron ore among the non-coal minerals. Iron ore mining also significantly contributes towards creating jobs with employment of about 5 lakh persons --45,000 direct and 4,50,000 indirect, it said.

Bharti Hexacom to go public April 3

New Delhi: Telecom operator Bharti Airtel's subsidiary Bharti Hexacom's initial share sale will open for public subscription April 3. The three-day initial public offering (IPO) will conclude April 5, and the anchor book of the offer will open for a day April 2, according to the Red Herring Prospectus (RHP) filed Friday. This will be the first IPO in the financial year 2024-25. The maiden public issue is purely an offer-for-sale of up to 7.5 crore shares (representing a 15 per cent stake) by existing shareholder -- Telecommunications Consultants India Ltd. The OFS size has been reduced to 7.5 crore from 10 crore equity shares planned earlier.



India has been one of the best-performing markets in the world and investors have made money here

MATTHEW BLAKE | HEAD OF THE CENTRE FOR FINANCIAL AND MONETARY SYSTEMS, WEF

IRAN'S CURRENCY HITS RECORD LOW

Iran's currency fell to a record low Sunday, plunging to 613,500 to the dollar, as its people celebrated the Persian New Year. On Sunday, people were trying to exchange rials for foreign currency at Tehran's main hub of exchange shops, but most were closed due to the Nowruz holidays, which are run from March 20 to April 2



World's 1st Neuralink patient tweets 'just by thinking'

Neuralink, Musk's brain-chip startup, live-streamed an update showing Arbaugh playing video games and online chess using his mind

AGENCIES

Washington, March 24: Noland Arbaugh, the world's first Neuralink patient, has made history by posting a tweet on X (formerly Twitter) "just by thinking".

Arbaugh, a 29-year-old quadriplegic, has become the first person to send a tweet using only his thoughts, using Neuralink's cybernetic implant.

"Twitter banned me because they thought I was a bot, and @X and @elonmusk reinstated me because I am," Arbaugh joked.

Elon Musk reacted to Arbaugh's tweet, celebrating it as the "First ever post made just by thinking, using the Neuralink Telepathy device!"

Last Wednesday, Neuralink, Elon Musk's brain-chip startup, livestreamed its first successful demonstration of a patient using



a chip implanted in his brain to play online chess using only his mind. In the live stream, Arbaugh moved the cursor on a computer without using any physical tools. He explained that he simply imagines the cursor moving

where he wants it to go and it does.

"I had given up playing that game," he said, referring to the game Civilization VI, "You all (Neuralink) gave me the ability to do that again and played for 8 hours straight."

Arbaugh, 29, said he sustained a spinal cord injury in a "freak diving accident" eight years ago. He was working as a summer camp counsellor for children when he got into an accident that left him quadriplegic in 2016. He also said he was released from the hospital a day after the Neuralink procedure in

January, which went smoothly. He added that there is "still work to be done" to refine the technology.

Neuralink is a brain technology startup founded by Elon Musk. Its implant allows a patient to use their thoughts to control a computer. Musk has said that the company will start by working with patients who have severe physical limitations like cervical spinal cord impairment or quadriplegia.

The company's goal is to connect human brains to computers to help tackle complex neurological conditions.

STRONG DOMESTIC OUTLOOK

FPIs inject ₹38K-cr in equities in March

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 24: FPIs have shown a significant resurgence in their investment activity within the Indian equity markets this month, injecting over ₹38,000 crore, mainly driven by favourable shifts in the global economic scenario and strong domestic macro-economic outlook.



The investment came following a modest investment of ₹1,539 crore in February and a massive outflow of ₹25,743 crore in January, data with the depositaries showed.

With this, foreign portfolio investors' (FPIs) investment has turned positive to the tune of ₹13,893 crore in equities so far in 2024 and ₹55,480 crore in the debt market.

Additionally, the recent market correction has provided a buying opportunity.

Further, the influx of FPIs can be attributed to robust GDP growth and expectations of a potential shift in the RBI's policy, possibly leading to rate cuts of 25-50 basis points in the latter half of fiscal 2025, experts believe.

However, last week, FPIs turned net sellers, although marginally, to the tune of ₹314 million. This could be largely attributed to FPIs adopting a cautious approach.

Apart from equities, FPIs have injected a massive ₹13,223 crore into the debt market this month (till March 22). This came in the backdrop of Bloomberg announcing India's bonds inclusion in its Emerging Market (EM) Local Currency Government Index and related indices from January 31 next year.

Moreover, FPIs have been investing in the debt markets for the past few months. They invested ₹22,419 crore in February and ₹19,836 crore in January.

5 of top 10 firms take ₹1.97L-cr hit in valuation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 24: The combined market valuation of five of the 10 most valued firms eroded by ₹1,97,958.56 crore last week, with IT majors Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Infosys taking the biggest hit amid volatile trends in equities.

Last week, the BSE benchmark climbed 188.51 points or 0.25 per cent.

The market valuation of TCS tanked ₹1,10,134.58 crore to ₹14,15,793.83 crore, the most among the top 10 firms.

The valuation of Infosys tumbled ₹52,291.05 crore to ₹6,26,280.51 crore.

IT stocks fell Friday after tech giant Accenture lowered its revenue forecast for the sector for the 2023-24 fiscal.



Hindustan Unilever's market valuation fell by ₹16,834.82 crore to ₹5,30,126.53 crore and that of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) declined by ₹11,701.24 crore to ₹5,73,266.17 crore.

The market capitalisation (mcap) of HDFC Bank dipped ₹6,996.87 crore to ₹10,96,154.91 crore.

However, the valuation of Reliance Industries Limited jumped ₹49,152.89 crore to reach ₹19,68,748.04 crore.

State Bank of India added ₹12,851.44 crore, taking its mcap to ₹6,66,133.03 crore.

The mcap of ITC climbed ₹11,108.51 crore to ₹5,34,768.59 crore and that of Bharti Airtel went up by ₹9,430.48 crore to ₹6,98,855.66 crore.

ICICI Bank's mcap jumped ₹8,191.79 crore to ₹7,65,409.98 crore.

In the ranking of the most valued firms, Reliance Industries retained the number one title followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India, Infosys, LIC, ITC and Hindustan Unilever.

Vedanta to infuse \$6bn

The mining conglomerate has a pipeline of more than 50 active projects and expansions to drive growth

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 24: Mining conglomerate Vedanta Ltd will invest \$6 billion across businesses that span from aluminium and zinc to iron ore, steel and oil and gas as it looks to add at least \$2.5 billion to annual EBITDA, its executives said in an investor meeting.

It has a pipeline of more than 50 active projects and expansions to drive growth, which is expected to generate incremental revenue of over \$6 billion and boost EBITDA from an expected \$5 billion in the current fiscal ending March 31 to \$6 billion in the next and up to \$7.5 billion by FY27, they added.

Vedanta Chairman Anil Agarwal, according to a presentation made at the investor meeting, said the company "will get to a different level in the next 25 years".

His brother and vice chairman Naveen Agarwal gave details of the plans.

"Projects (are) under execution to deliver \$7.5+ billion yearly EBITDA," he said, adding \$6 bil-



lion is being invested across business verticals that will potentially yield incremental revenues of \$6 billion and "incremental yearly EBITDA potential of \$2.5-3 billion".

"We continuously explore options to create additional value at all our sites. We currently have several high-impact projects in execution mode across all our businesses. These will further contribute to our cost leadership while substantially increasing our operating capacities. These levers will help drive our EBITDA towards the stated target of \$7.5 billion annually," he said.

"40+ ongoing growth projects with a plan to spend \$6 billion in capex" will help boost EBITDA from an estimated \$5

billion in the current fiscal ending March 31 to \$7.5 billion in FY26 (April 2025 to March 2025)," Vedanta said in the presentations.

Stating that deleveraging was its "utmost priority", it said a \$3 billion deleveraging over the next three years has been firming up at parent Vedanta Resources without an increase in debt levels at the India-listed firm.

Net debt is being targeted to be cut to \$9 billion by FY27 from \$13 billion now, its CFO Ajay Goel said, adding parent Vedanta Resources has de-leveraged balance sheet by \$3.5 billion in the last two years to bring down net debt to \$6 billion and has "re-profiled and smoothed near-term bond maturities of around \$4 billion".

"Vedanta Limited cash flow pre-growth capex is estimated to be \$3.5-4.0 billion for FY25, suf-

The company aims to augment annual EBITDA to \$7.5 billion by FY27

Will get to a different level in the next 25 years

ANIL AGARWAL | CHAIRMAN, VEDANTA

PSBs' dividend payout may exceed ₹15K-cr

ALL 12 PUBLIC SECTOR BANKS EARNED HIGHEST-EVER PROFIT OF ₹1.05L-CR DURING FY23 COMPARED TO ₹66,539.98CR EARNED IN 2021-22

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 24: Public sector banks (PSBs) are likely to pay a dividend in excess of ₹15,000 crore for the financial year ending March 2024 on the

back of improved profitability, according to sources.

In the first three quarters of the current financial year, all 12 PSBs earned a total profit of ₹98,000 crore, only ₹7,000 crore less than the entire FY23.

PSBs earned the highest-ever aggregate net profit of ₹1.05 lakh crore during FY23 compared to ₹66,539.98 crore earned in 2021-22.

As a result, the government earned a dividend of ₹13,804 crore, 58 per cent higher than the ₹8,718 crore paid out in the previous financial year.

Since the profit in the current financial year would be



much higher than the previous year, so will be the dividend payout to the government, sources said. Going by the past record, the dividend payout for FY24 should be in excess of ₹15,000 crore, they added.

Earlier in January, the Reserve

Bank, in its draft guidelines, proposed to allow banks having net non-performing assets (NPAs) ratio of less than 6 per cent to declare dividends.

As per the prevailing norms last updated in 2005, banks need to have an NNPA ratio of up to

7 per cent to become eligible for declaration of dividends.

The central bank has proposed that the new guidelines should come into effect from FY25 onwards.

The draft lays down directions that need to be followed by banks' boards while considering proposals of dividend payouts, which include consideration on divergence in classification and provisioning for NPAs as well.

A commercial bank should have a minimum total capital adequacy of 11.5 per cent to be eligible for declaring dividends, the circular said.

Auto players line up array of new EV models in coming years

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 24: The Indian auto industry is gearing up to roll out an array of electric vehicle models over the next few years amid a renewed push by the government to encourage environment-friendly mobility solutions with the unveiling of a new policy.

Mass market players like Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai, Mahindra & Mahindra and Tata Motors are lining up new models to cater to the demand across segments.

Mahindra & Mahindra CEO Automotive Sector Nalinikanth Gollagunta told PTI that starting January 2025, the company will be rolling out five new battery electric vehicles in the coming years.

"These electric SUVs will be built on Mahindra's innovative INGL0 platform and aim to cater to a variety of consumers

through their diverse range. The launch of these SUVs is part of Mahindra's broader strategy to lead in the electric vehicle sector, and we expect 20-30 per cent of our portfolio to be electric by 2027," he noted.

Maruti Suzuki India Executive Officer (Corporate Affairs) Rahul Bharti said the auto major is making serious investments in EVs.

"We will start production of a high-spec EV designed-fresh as an EV with 550 km range in FY24-25 and will have about six EV models in the next 7-8 years," he noted.

Bharti, however, noted that in order to cut carbon and oil imports, the country will require many more technologies like hybrid-electric, CNG, Bio-CNG, Ethanol flex fuel etc.

"We are committed to work on all such technologies also," he added.

Hyundai Motor India COO

GREEN MOBILITY



Tarun Garg said the automaker was among the first OEMs (original equipment manufacturers) to introduce a fully long-range electric SUV KONA in India in 2019.

Last year, the company launched the IONIQ 5, its premium electric SUV.

Garg noted that as per multiple industry estimates, EVs are projected to contribute around

20 per cent of India's automotive market by 2030.

The company plans to invest around ₹26,000 crore over 10 years in Tamil Nadu. This investment will also include setting up a battery assembly plant in the state.

A Tata Motors spokesperson said that the company aims to have 10 EVs by 2026. The company plans to introduce four

With the Indian government's steadfast focus on electric vehicles and the supportive policy framework, we are confident that EVs will soon become mainstream, driving a sustainable automotive future for India

TARUN GARG | COO, HYUNDAI MOTOR

more EV models this year, including Curvv EV and Harrier EV.

Luxury carmakers are also gearing up to enhance their EV lineup in the country.

"We are invested in the market, having an aggressive product strategy with more than 12 new products planned for debut in 2024, of which three will be new BEVs," a Mercedes-Benz India spokesperson said.

This well-defined roadmap will help the automaker deepen

its BEV footprint, offering customers the best of luxury and technology, he added.

"Mercedes-Benz remains strategically focused and tactically flexible, as we believe customer preferences and market conditions will determine the pace of BEV transition," the spokesperson stated.

Audi India expects 50 per cent of its sales in India to come from electric vehicles by 2030.

The automaker, which sells four electric models in the country, plans to expand the product range to achieve its ambitious sales target.

Earlier this month, the government approved an electric-vehicle policy, under which duty concessions will be given to companies setting up manufacturing units in the country with a minimum investment of \$500 million, a move aimed at attracting major global players like US-based Tesla.

Maiden IWL title for Odisha eves

HOSTS FINISH ENGAGEMENTS WITH 6-0 THRASHING OF KICKSTART FC AT THE KALINGA STADIUM

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 24: Odisha FC emerged champions of the Indian Women's League (IWL) 2023-24 at the Kalinga Stadium here Sunday with a thumping 6-0 victory over Kickstart FC. By winning the title, the Odisha FC eves qualified for the AFC Women's Champions League.

It was the maiden title win for Odisha FC eves in the IWL. They finished with 31 points from 12 games winning 10, drawing one and losing a single match. Gokulam FC, Kerala with 29 points had to be satisfied with the runners-up spot.

In the one-sided game, Odisha FC player Lynda Kom got a hat-trick with goals in the 11th, 66th and 77th minutes respectively. The other goals were scored by star forward Pyari Xaxa (13th and 22nd) and Kartikha (58th).

Hosts Odisha FC began aggressively and could have scored early on with Win sending an accurate ball to the Kickstart FC box in the second minute. However, Xaxa reacted late and it enabled an opposition defender to clear the ball away. The very next minute Indumathi took a shot at the opposition goal, but missed the mark by inches.

Odisha FC took the lead when Manisa's chipped ball found Win, who crossed into the box for Lynda to slot it into the back of the net. Two minutes later, the



DREAM COMES TRUE: Pyari Xaxa (right) celebrates with Lynda Kom (9) and other teammates after scoring a goal against Kickstart FC at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

Kalinga eves extended their lead. Lynda made a splendid run down the left and sent in a curling ball into the opposition box. Xaxa was at the right place to score.

It was 3-0 soon after with Xaxa scoring with a powerful long-ranger that did not give the Kickstart FC goalkeeper any chance. Xaxa had a chance to get a hat-trick a couple of minutes later, but her first touch deserted her as she could not latch on to a lovely through ball from Indumathi. OFC eves went into the break with a 3-0 lead.

After resumption, Win delivered a perfect ball for Lynda, but the latter shot wide. However, the Odisha eves were not to be denied for long. Kartikha took a thunderous shot from just outside the box and it did not give any chance to Kickstart FC goalie. Then it was Lynda's turn to complete her hat-trick with two quick goals. The spade work for the first was done for the first goal by Xaxa while for the second it was done by Win, who had an outstanding game. Kickstart had their only chance of the game, but Shreya Hooda under the Odisha FC bar made a good save. Kartikha and Indumathi, both had chances after the sixth goal but failed to convert.

Avijit Paul, executive committee member, AIFF and joint secretary, FAO, was present as a guest in the game and handed over the trophy to the Odisha FC eves.

Samson guides RR to emphatic victory



Sanju Samson plays shot to the leg-side during his match-winning knock Sunday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur, March 24: Skipper Sanju Samson (82 n o, 52b, 3x4, 6x6) led from the front with a brilliant knock to steer Rajasthan Royals (RR) to a 20-run win over Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) in their IPL opener here Sunday. Samson's knock provided RR both impetus and stability after twin blows in the power play.

With Riyan Parag (43, 29b, 1x4, 3x6) also playing his part well by forging a 93-run association for the third wicket to consolidate for the side, Royals batting did come good in their opening game.

LSG fought through KL Rahul (58, 44b, 4x4, 2x6) and Nicholas Pooran (64 n o, 41b, 4x4, 4x6), after a disastrous start but their brave effort only reduced the margin of defeating while chasing a huge target of 194. LSG, who wobbled at 11/3, eventually finished at 173 for six.

Skipper Rahul struck a fine 50 on his return to top flight cricket. He also kept wickets for a full 20 overs to remove doubts, if any, about his fitness after suffering a quadriceps injury.

Lucknow were off to a poor start with RR's overseas left-arm duo of Trent Boult (2/35) and debutant Nandre Burger (1/30), coming on as an impact sub, causing the damage. LSG were left tottering at 11 for three inside the first four overs. With their backs against the wall, Rahul led a robust recovery for LSG in company of Pooran for the two batters raised the hopes of a win with an 85-run stand for the fifth wicket. However, in the end it was not meant to be as the target turned out to be stiff for the two.

Brief scores: RR 193 for 4 (Sanju Samson 82 n o) beat LSG 173 for 6 (Nicholas Pooran 64 n o, KL Rahul 58) by 20 runs.

SHORT TAKES

Contrasting wins for TSF, NFA eves

Bhubaneswar: Tata Steel Foundation (TSF), Joda defeated Kishore Club of Bhubaneswar 1-0 in a match of the U-17 Khelo India Women's Football League played Sunday. The all-important goal of the game was scored by Nitu Patro in the 33rd minute. In another match played on the day at the CDA-Sector 7 ground in Cuttack, the eves belonging to NITA Football Academy overcame KIIT/KISS 2-0. After a barren first half, the girls of NITA FA scored twice in the second half to get full points. The goals were scored by Kirti Kishan (53rd) and Ipsita Rout (66th).

IPL final in Chennai to satisfy MSD fans

New Delhi: The IPL final will be held at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai May 26, a BCCI source revealed here Sunday. It has been learnt that Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad will hold one 'Qualifier' and the 'Eliminator' while another 'Qualifier' will be held in Chennai. "The IPL governing council has followed the tradition of holding the opening game and final at the home venue of last year's defending champions - in this case Chennai Super Kings," a senior BCCI official said. With Mahendra Singh Dhoni playing his last IPL in all probability, knockout games in Chennai will be a treat for all the 'Thala' fans if the team reach that stage.

'Indian cricket has got its gem back'

Chandigarh: Former India opener Navjot Sidhu is confident wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant's return to form is just a 'matter of time' following his nearly 15-month-long absence from professional cricket after a horrific car crash. Though Pant did not have the comeback he would have wished for in Delhi Capital's match against Punjab Kings here Saturday, he scored 18, took a catch behind the stumps and also effected a stumping. "He is playing good cricket. Just a matter of time he will regain his form. But, importantly, Indian cricket has got its fine gem back," Sidhu said on a TV channel.

Easy for Alcaraz

Miami Gardens: Indian Wells champion and second-ranked Carlos Alcaraz began his Miami Open tennis tournament campaign with an emphatic 6-2, 6-1 victory over fellow Spaniard Roberto Carballés Baen here Saturday. The 20-year-old Alcaraz dominated the match from start to finish with his impressive speed and agility. Jannik Sinner advanced to the third round with a 6-3, 6-4 victory over fellow Italian Andrea Vavassori. Andy Murray also advanced to the third round with a 7-6 (7-5), 6-3 victory over 29th-ranked Tomás Martín Etcheverry.

Valiant Srikanth loses in semis

AGENCIES

Basel (Switzerland), March 24: Indian shuttler Kidambi Srikanth's winning run at the Swiss Open Super 300 badminton tournament came to an end here late Saturday night after a semi-final loss to Chinese Taipei's Lin Chun-Yi. The former World No.1 squandered a one-game lead to go down 21-15, 9-21, 18-21 in a gruelling last-four contest that lasted 65 minutes. With the loss, India's challenge at the USD 2,10,000 tournament also ended. The match marked Srikanth's first semifinal appearance in 16 months. He had last reached the last four stage at the Hylo Open in November 2022.

Srikanth dominated proceedings in the first game. He smashed accurately and used the drop shot judiciously to continuously keep Lin under pressure. Failing to cope up with Srikanth's speed and deft placements, Lin also committed a number of unforced errors. After building up a healthy 6-2 lead at the start, Srikanth wrapped up the first game easily.

Srikanth took an early 4-1 lead in the second game also. At that point of time, it appeared that he



Kidambi Srikanth in action during the semifinal match in Basel

would close out the match quickly. However, errors started to creep into the 2021 World Championships silver medalist's game and Srikanth lost the momentum to go down tamely in haste to quickly end the rallies. Srikanth also committed a number of unforced errors to hand back the initiative to Lin.

Srikanth did get his rhythm back in the decider with not much separating the two shut-

tlers, who fought hard for supremacy. The Indian managed to take a slender 11-10 lead at the interval. After the change of ends, both players went neck and neck till 16-all. However, at this point, Lin upped the tempo and took a three points in a row to lead 19-16. Srikanth managed to cut down the lead to 18-19. However, he couldn't put the finishing touches as Lin closed out the match with a stinging smash.

Wirtz's history-making goal helps Germany beat France

AGENCIES

Lyon, March 24: Florian Wirtz grabbed his first international goal with a strike that will go down in the history books as Germany beat France 2-0 in an international friendly here Saturday night. On the cusp of seven seconds the 20-year-old Wirtz stunned the crowd here to give Germany the lead, before Kai Havertz wrapped up the encounter just after half time in an impressive display by the Euro 2024 hosts.

Toni Kroos playing his first international since 2021, received the ball from kick-off and chipped it forward to Leverkusen playmaker Wirtz. The latter ventured forward and as he was not closed down, he unleashed a fierce dipping drive that left Brice Samba glued to the spot as the ball flew under the crossbar with the clock ticking to just seven seconds.

"I don't think anyone understood or realised what was happening. We were all quite surprised, but there was obviously a lot of joy. You can't start a match any better," Wirtz said to German television channel ZDF.

Four minutes after the break, Havertz slotted the visitors into a two-goal lead that they never looked like relinquishing. Jamal Musiala was left with far too much space in the box when Wirtz found him

Brazil start on positive note

London: Brazil's new boss Dorival Junior started his bid to revive the five-time World Champions with a 1-0 win against England as teenage sensation Endrick bagged his first international goal in Saturday's friendly at the Wembley here. On a cathartic evening for Brazil after their wretched 2023, it was fitting the highly-rated Endrick bagged Brazil's late winner. The Palmeiras forward, due to join Real Madrid in July, has been tipped to succeed Neymar as Brazil's latest superstar and his match-winning cameo appearance off the bench was a suitable coming of age moment in his third appearance.

with a long pass and the Bayern Munich youngster rounded Samba before laying the ball on a plate for the on-rushing Havertz.

France coach Didier Deschamps rang the changes on the hour mark but without Antoine Griezmann, missing his first international since 2017, the hosts lacked a cutting edge despite the presence of star striker Kylian Mbappe. It was however, Julian Nagelsmann's charges who looked the more likely to score the next goal, with only fine saves by Samba denying debutant Maximilian Mittelstadt and Thomas Mueller.

GT prevail under new captain Gill

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, March 24: An inexplicable batting strategy by Mumbai Indians at the death saw Shubman Gill make an auspicious debut as Gujarat Titans captain with a thrilling six-run victory in their opening IPL game here Sunday.

Jasprit Bumrah (3/14) was at his absolute best in his first IPL game in two years, firing in his express yorkers at will to help Mumbai Indians restrict Gujarat Titans to 168/6. But Bumrah's effort was not enough as batters like Tilak Varma and skipper Hardik Pandya failed to complement his brilliance.

MI ended at 162/9 as things went downhill when all they needed was 43 runs off last five overs with seven wickets in hand.

MI thus failed to break their opening game jinx. The last time they won their IPL opener was against Chennai Super Kings way back in 2012.

MI lost their first wicket with-

out a run on the board after Ishan Kishan failed to open his account, nicking an Azmatullah Omarzai (2/27) delivery to Wriddhiman Saha as the pacer set him up with some excellent swing bowling. After testing Kishan with inswingers, Omarzai got one to move away and the batter could only edge it to the keeper.

New face Naman Dhir began with a flurry of boundaries, leaving the likes of Ravi Shastri excited in the commentary box as the experts discussed the best possible combination for India in the upcoming T20 World Cup.

Meanwhile, Rohit Sharma (43 off 29 balls) found one on the slot and flicked Umesh Yadav over mid-wicket for a maximum as MI reached 52/2 at the end of powerplay.

Brief Scores: Gujarat Titans: 168 for 6 (Sai Sudharsan 45, Jasprit Bumrah 3/14) beat MI: 162 for 9 (Rohit Sharma 43, Dewald Brevis 46, Mohit Sharma 2/32, Spencer Johnson 2/32) by 6 runs

KKR pacer fined over misconduct

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 24: Kolkata Knight Riders star Harshit Rana has been handed a stringent penalty for breaching the Code of Conduct during the IPL game against Sunrisers Hyderabad played Saturday at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata. The fine is said to have been imposed on the KKR pacer because of his send-offs to SRH stars Mayank Agarwal and Heinrich Klaasen. Despite Rana's final over heroics, his conduct left many disappointed, with IPL deducting 60 per cent of his match fee.

"KKR bowler Harshit Rana has been fined a total of 60 per cent of his match fees for breaching the IPL Code of Conduct during his team's IPL match against SRH at Eden Gardens, Kolkata March 23," a release from the IPL read.

"Rana committed two Level 1 offences under Article 2.5 of the IPL's Code of Conduct. He was fined 10 per cent and 50 per cent of his match fees for the two respective offences. Rana admitted to the two offences and accepted the match referee's sanction," the release added.

SAINZ ENDS RED BULL'S STREAK

VERSTAPPEN RETIRES FROM RACE EARLY ON AS CAR CATCHES FIRE

AGENCIES

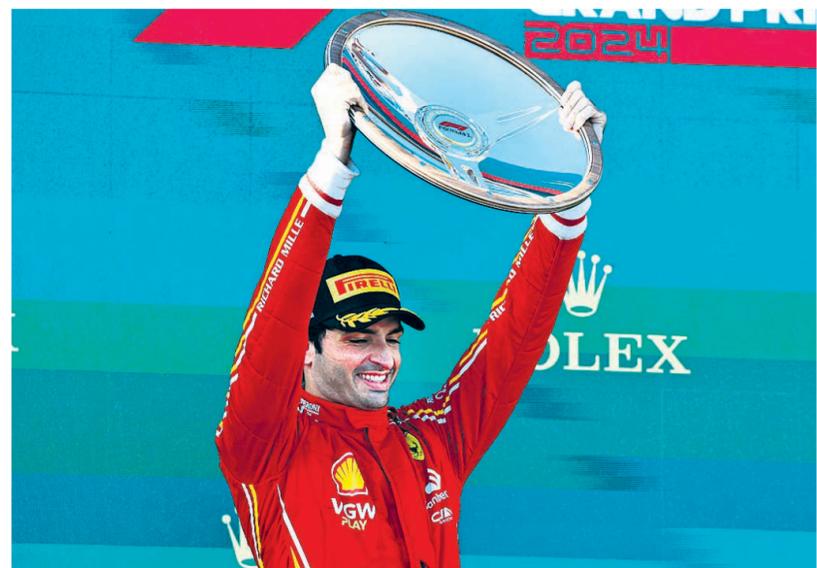
Melbourne, March 24: Ferrari's Carlos Sainz ended Red Bull's Formula 1 winning streak when the Spaniard took advantage of Max Verstappen's early retirement to win the Australian Grand Prix just two weeks after missing the previous race in Saudi Arabia due to an emergency appendectomy.

Sainz, who started on the front row alongside Verstappen, kept his place into turn one, but passed the Dutchman on lap two at turn nine for the lead and took control once his rival retired two laps later due to a fire caused by mechanical failure.

Verstappen had won the first two F1 races of the season in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia and was on a nine-race winning streak from last year.

Sainz finished ahead of teammate Charles Leclerc for Ferrari's first 1-2 result since the 2022 Bahrain Grand Prix, with McLaren's Lando Norris finishing in third for his first podium at Albert Park. His teammate, Australian Oscar Piastri, was fourth. Sainz, who will be replaced by Lewis Hamilton at Ferrari from 2025, was thrilled to get his third career win against the odds, his first since last year's Singapore Grand Prix.

"I felt really good out there," Sainz said. "Of course, (I felt) a bit stiff, especially physically. It



MOMENT TO CHERISH: Carlos Sainz poses with the trophy after winning the Australian GP, Sunday

wasn't the easiest, but I was lucky that I was more or less on my own so I could just manage my pace, manage the tires and manage everything. Life sometimes is crazy with the topsyturvy year I am having at present," he added.

Leclerc, on the podium for the second straight race, was encouraged by Ferrari's pace, and

their ability to take the fight to rival Red Bull during a period of dominance.

"We knew that pole position and the race win was possible because we had very good tire degradation, very good pace," Leclerc said. "That is a very encouraging sign. However, if you look at the first three races, two out of the first three races,

they (Red Bull) had the upper hand, so we still have a lot of work to do in the competition," the Frenchman added.

Red Bull's Sergio Pérez closed out the top five while two-time World Champion Fernando Alonso was sixth for the second straight race, having leapfrogged Aston Martin teammate Lance Stroll.