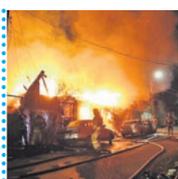




Mrunal at top

Actor Mrunal Thakur says she is thrilled that filmmakers are envisioning her in roles that have multiple layers

LEISURE | P2



Big attack

Ukraine carries out drone attack against targets in southern Russia, and claims to have destroyed six Russian planes at an airbase in Rostov region

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Rate unchanged

The Reserve Bank of India keeps the benchmark interest rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent for the seventh time in a row

BUSINESS | P11



India face Australia

An in-form Indian men's hockey team face a formidable Australian side in a five-match Test series beginning today

SPORTS | P12

BJD picks 9 more MLA candidates

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 5: BJD president and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Friday released the third list of candidates, featuring nine contestants for the Assembly polls.

With this declaration, the ruling party has so far announced candidates for 108 of the total 147 Assembly segments in the state.

The nine candidates included three turncoats. They are Prakash Behera (Barabati-Cuttack seat), Raisen Murmu (Rairangpur) and Rohit Joseph Tirkey (Biramitrapur). The trio had joined the BJD recently from other parties.

This new candidate list of the BJD comprises one woman candidate Meena Majhi who has been nominated for the Keonjhar Assembly segment. She has been pitted against BJP leader Mohan Majhi.

The BJD president has re-nominated Labour Minister Sarada Prasad Nayak. He is fielded in Rourkela Assembly segment. The party has nominated Prasant Behera from Salipur, Naba Kishore Mallik from Jayadev, Sudarshan Haripal from Rengali and Swarup Das from Balasore.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I know I was here yesterday too. But yesterday, I asked you to vote for I.N.D.I.A.

MARKET WATCH	
INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	74248.22 ↑ 20.59
NIFTY	22513.70 ↓ 0.95
DOLLAR	83.34 ↓ ₹0.16
EURO	90.39 ↓ ₹0.28
GOLD	₹70,465 ↑ ₹758
SILVER	₹80,768 ↑ ₹784

WEATHER		
	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	43.5°C	40.6°C
Min Temp	26.3°C	26.0°C
Humidity	81%	85%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
FORECAST	LIGHT TO MODERATE RAIN	



HOT & HUMID: Commuters cover themselves as Bhubaneswar recorded 43.5 degrees Celsius, Friday

PIC: BIKASH NAYAK

City sizzles at 43.5° Celsius

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 5: Intense heatwave conditions continued to prevail across Odisha with the mercury shooting up to 43.5 degrees Celsius at Bhubaneswar Friday.

According to a bulletin issued by IMD's Bhubaneswar centre, at least nine places, including Bhubaneswar, recorded a maximum temperature of 42 degrees C or above during the day.

The maximum day temperature at Paralakhemundi was 42.6 degrees C, it was 42.4 degrees C at Talcher, 42.2 degrees C at Malkangiri and Boudh, 42.1 degrees C at Angul, and 42 degrees C at Bolangir, Titlagarh and Nayagarh. A total of 25 places witnessed a maximum temperature of 40 degrees C or above.

Forecasting heatwave conditions for April 6, the weather office has issued a yellow warning (be updated) for Khurda, Cuttack, Keonjhar, Boudh, Malkangiri, Nayagarh, Angul, Bolangir, Kandhamal, Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Mayurbhanj, and Jharsuguda.

From April 7 to 10, the temperature is likely to go down by 2 to 4 degrees C as most places are likely to receive thunderstorms and rain during April 7, 8 and 9, said IMD's weather scientist Umashankar Das.

SC relief to madarsa students

In a huge relief to about 17 lakh madarsa students of Uttar Pradesh, the Supreme Court has stayed an order of the Allahabad High Court that declared the Uttar Pradesh Board of Madarsa Education Act, 2004 as 'unconstitutional' and violative of the principle of secularism. The HC had asked the state government to accommodate these students in the formal schooling system in its order March 22. According to the top court, the HC 'prima facie' misconstrued the provisions of the Madarsa Act, which does not provide for any religious instruction. It also observed that the solution would lie in issuing appropriate directions to make sure that students are not deprived of quality education instead of striking down the Madarsa Act.



DY Chandrachud issued notices to the Centre, the Uttar Pradesh government and others on the pleas against the HC order.

PNN & AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 5: The Supreme Court Friday stayed an order of the Allahabad High Court that scrapped the Uttar Pradesh Board of Madarsa Education Act, 2004 calling it 'unconstitutional' and violative of the principle of secularism.

Observing that the issues raised in the petitions merit closer reflection, a three-judge bench headed by Chief Justice

lie in striking down the Madarsa Act but in issuing suitable directions to ensure that the students are not deprived of quality education," the bench said.

The apex court said the high court, while striking down the provisions of the Madarsa Act, directed relocation of the students.

"This would affect 17 lakh students... We are of the view that direction of relocation of students to other schools was not warranted," it said.

"State shall file counter on or before June 30, 2024. SLP be listed for final disposal in 2nd week of June 2024. The impugned order and judgement of the high court dated March 22, 2024, shall remain stayed," the bench ordered.

At the outset, senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for the Managers Association Madaris, a body of madarasas, submitted that the madarsa regime, which had existed for 120 years, has now been disrupted suddenly, impacting 17 lakh students and 10,000 teachers.

Terminating the reasons given by the HC as 'astonishing', Singhvi said it did not examine the locus standi of the petitioner who challenged the Act.

Refuting the HC's contention that modern subjects were not taught in madarasas, Singhvi submitted that Math, Science, Hindi, English and other subjects were taught there. He said it was wrong to assume that only religious education was imparted at madarasas.

"We also have very famous gurukuls in Haridwar and Rishikesh which are doing very good work. My father had a degree from there. Do you shut them down saying they are places of religious instruction? A regime is there uninterrupted for 120 years. 17 lakh students and 10,000 teachers cannot be absorbed with the academic year ending as it would create chaos," Singhvi said.

Additional Solicitor General KM Nataraj, appearing for Uttar Pradesh, submitted that the state government defended the Act but has accepted the HC's judgement which struck down the law.

"When the state accepts the judgement, the state cannot be burdened to bear the expenses of the legislation now. The state is competent to repeal the legislation as well. If the matter requires consideration, then I am not coming in the way," Nataraj said, adding that no madarsa is being shut down by the government.

Congress promises jobs, caste census

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 5: Right to apprenticeship, a legal guarantee for MSP, passing a constitutional amendment to raise the 50 per cent cap on reservations for SCs, STs and OBCs, a nation-wide caste census and scrapping of Agnipath scheme are among the promises made by the Congress in its Lok Sabha election manifesto released Friday.

The manifesto, focusing on five 'pillars of justice' and 25 guarantees under them, was released at the AICC headquarters in the presence of Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and former party chiefs Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi.

In the 45-page document titled 'Nyay Patra', featuring pictures of Kharge and Rahul and Bharat Jodo Yatra, the Opposition party said it would implement 10 per cent quota in jobs, educational institutions for economically weaker sections (EWS) for all castes, communities without discrimination if it comes to power.

The party also promised full statehood to Jammu and Kashmir, besides giving special status to Andhra Pradesh, full statehood to Puducherry, and to



amend the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991, to declare that Lt Governor shall act on the aid and advice of Council of Ministers of NCT, Delhi.

It also promised to fill nearly 30 lakh vacancies in sanctioned posts at various levels in the central government and said the Rajasthan model of cashless insurance of up to ₹25 lakh will be adopted for ensuring universal healthcare across the country.

The Congress will pass a constitutional amendment to raise the 50 per cent cap on reservations for SC, ST and OBC if it comes to power in the general elections beginning April 19, the party promised.

NCERT drops Guj riots, Babri references from textbooks

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 5: Dropping references to the demolition of Babri Masjid and killing of Muslims in Gujarat riots are among the latest revisions made public by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) in its textbooks.

Chapter 8 on Secularism in Class XI textbook earlier said, "More than 1,000 persons, mostly Muslims, were massacred during the post Godhra riots in Gujarat in 2002."

It has been changed to "more than 1,000 persons were killed during the post Godhra riots in Gujarat in 2002."

In Recent Developments in

Indian Politics, references to Babri Masjid were dropped. The earlier paragraph read: "Fourth, a number of events culminated in the demolition of the disputed structure at Ayodhya (known as Babri Masjid) in December 1992."

This was changed to: "Fourth, the centuries old legal and political dispute over the Ram Janmabhoomi Temple in Ayodhya started influencing the politics of India which gave birth to various political changes... These changes culminated in the construction of the Ram Temple at Ayodhya following the decision of the constitutional bench of the Supreme Court (which was announced on November 9, 2019)."

LONGEVITY IS 'JUST LUCK'

111-yr-old Briton world's new oldest man

JOHN TINNISWOOD, WHO HAS BEEN RETIRED FOR MORE THAN HALF A CENTURY, INHERITED THE GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS TITLE FROM VENEZUELAN JUAN VICENTE PEREZ MORA, 114, WHOSE DEATH WAS ANNOUNCED EARLIER THIS WEEK

REUTERS

London, April 5: The world's oldest living man, 111-year-old Briton John Tinniswood, said his longevity was 'just luck' and there was no special secret to his diet - although his favourite food was fish and chips every Friday.

Tinniswood, who has been retired for more than half a century, inherited the Guinness World Records title from Venezuelan Juan Vicente Perez Mora, 114, whose death was an-



nounced earlier this week.

Born in 1912 in Merseyside, northern England, retired accountant and former postal service worker Tinniswood clocks in at 111 years and 222 days.

He gave a pithy reply when asked for the secret to his longevity, however: "You either live long or you live short, and you can't do much about it."

Guinness World Records said in a statement that Tinniswood's claim to the record was assessed by its experts and by the Gerontology Research Group,

which catalogues the world's confirmed 'supercentenarians'.

The oldest man ever was Japan's Jiroemon Kimura, who lived to 116 years and 54 days. The oldest living woman and oldest living person overall is Spain's Maria Branyas Morera, aged 117.

Tinniswood gave a somewhat measured view on the state of the world.

"The world, in its way is always changing. It's a sort of ongoing experience... It's getting a little better but not all that much yet. It's going the right way."

leisure



WHEN SHAKIRA LOST LYRICS FOR AN ENTIRE ALBUM

Grammy winner Shakira lost an entire album when her suitcase disappeared from an airport in Bogota and had to start from the scratch. The pop star had written enough lyrics for her fourth album when she was 21-year-old in the 1990s which she kept in her suitcase.

LOVE ISN'T ALL PEACHES AND CREAM: BRITNEY

Pop star Britney Spears has looked back on her failed marriage to Sam Asghari and admitted love isn't always easy. Opening up on her love life, the *Toxic* star said in a video, "I miss being in a relationship, but have to acknowledge that love isn't all peaches and cream."



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

Today, you want to do something for the environment. Ganesh says plant a tree, clean up your neighbourhood, ask for a paper bag. You wish to lead the world into a better place? Do it by all means, but one step at a time.

TAURUS

You will not lose your cool today despite the overwhelming odds, feels Ganesh. Rationale and reason will be the rhyme of your attitude as you diagnose the problems and uproot them successfully. Success beckons and you are ready to reach out and grab it by hook or by crook.

GEMINI

You will ponder over religious and cultural values and issues today. You will indulge in a fair amount of discussion with your family members over the issue and present your thoughts and feelings on the subject. These discussions could end up covering topics like law, education, societal concerns, manners and etiquette etc., says Ganesh.

CANCER

The day looks set to be an ordinary day, for both work and play, says Ganesh. Yet, if you are planning to participate in an event or a competition today, march ahead, by all means. There will, practically, be no one who'll be able to compete with you. On other fronts, expect things to be rather calm and mundane, with no significant ups and downs.

LEO

A mixed bag of fortunes, a bittersweet pill, call it what you will, but today brings with it a lot of things packed within its 24-hour period. Ganesh foresees a hectic morning, and an even more frantic afternoon. So, respite will be a luxury for you today. If this was the bitter end of the pill, then its sweet results will be like a balm on your frayed nerves, says Ganesh.

VIRGO

Give attention to your deepest feelings. A small excursion may be on the cards. Ganesh says today you will easily get along with other people. You will shower your sincere love and affection on your near and dear ones. Use your magical skills to improve your relationships.

LIBRA

It is your friends who prove to be lucky and beneficial for you today, especially if they happen to be walking the corridors of power, says Ganesh. Do not hesitate to start that new joint venture today. See your popularity grow by leaps and bounds as you get due recognition for your abilities and efforts.

SCORPIO

It is high time you diverted all your energies towards your object of love, advises Ganesh. Research-oriented work could well be an option too. Ganesh says you are likely to find someone special to talk about those good old times and have a great time.

SAGITTARIUS

You will be your usual self today, frank and precise. You are all ears for what your life partner has to say. This will make them feel special! According to Ganesh, be patient and carry out your work gracefully.

CAPRICORN

Lack of proper planning is probably the reason for you not being able to get your work done in time. You'll realise this mistake and today, you will spend majority of time drawing a plan on paper, says Ganesh. You may hit a jackpot, but think twice before spending the money on anything unnecessary.

AQUARIUS

You may feel constrained by future plans. Ganesh says that plans are okay, but you must live in the present to avail the cosmic energy that ultimately manifests your dreams.

PISCES

You would do well to make a to-do list today, if only to gain a realistic perspective of how much you want done and how much you can achieve in the time you have available. Making unreasonable demands from yourself will only lead to further delays, says Ganesh.

Mrunal on cloud nine

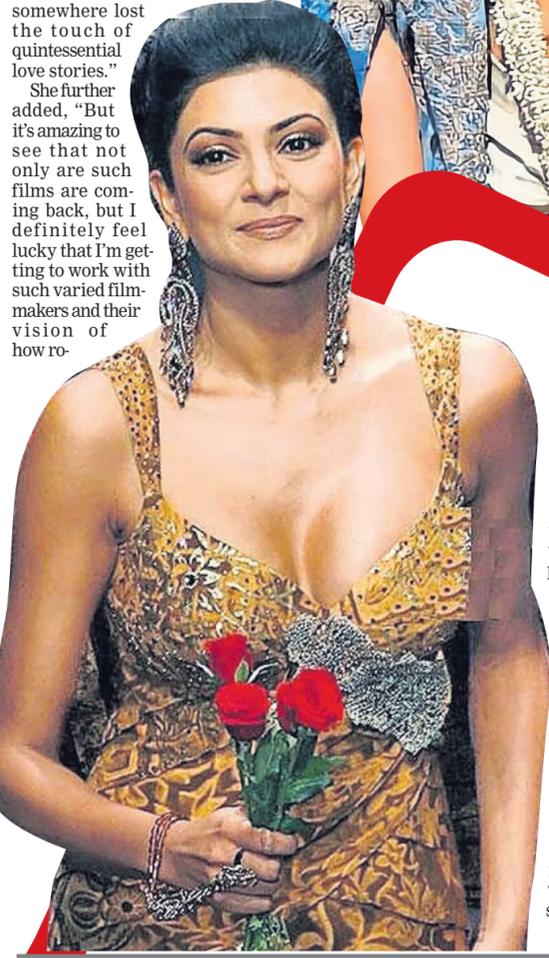
Mumbai: Mrunal Thakur, with her 2022 hit *Sita Ramam* followed by the success of *Hi Nanna*, is steadily establishing herself as the 'Queen of Romance' in Indian cinema.

With these two releases, the actress has swiftly become the 'poster girl of romance' in celluloid, a title often reserved for male actors.

Elated by the opportunities she's receiving, Mrunal expressed her joy, stating, "I am thrilled that filmmakers are envisioning me in roles that are not only soft and gentle but also layered, allowing me to hone my craft as an actor. Romance as a genre is so beloved and something over time we have somewhere lost the touch of quintessential love stories."

She further added, "But it's amazing to see that not only are such films coming back, but I definitely feel lucky that I'm getting to work with such varied filmmakers and their vision of how ro-

mance is played out on the screen. I have enjoyed playing both Sita Mahalakshmi and Yashna, two quintessential romantic heroines but so differently different and can't wait more for *Indu* from *Family Star* to cast her magic on the silver screen." AGENCIES



Sushmita gets candid about her personal life

Mumbai: Sushmita Sen often finds herself in the spotlight due to her personal life, whether it's her candid social media posts, past relationships with figures like Lalit Modi and Rohman Shawl, or discussions about her love life.

In a recent interview with *Indulge*, the actress reflected on her penchant for transparency in matters of the heart, addressing topics like marriage and maintaining friendships with ex-partners. When questioned about her approach to handling heartbreak with grace, Sushmita emphasised the importance of maintaining dignity in all aspects of life, regardless of the circumstances.

She expressed her belief in learning from past experiences and moving forward, regardless of whether relationships succeed or falter. Regarding the

possibility of re-remaining friends with exes, Sushmita acknowledged the complexity of such dynamics but affirmed that it's achievable with clear boundaries. She also addressed the topic of marriage, stating that while she doesn't believe in rushing into it for societal expectations, she remains open to the prospect if the right person enters her life. Sushmita's romantic history includes relationships with actor Randeep Hooda from 2004 to 2006 and model Rohman Shawl from 2018 to 2021. Additionally, in July 2022, it was revealed that she was romantically involved with businessman and IPL founder Lalit Modi. AGENCIES

POOJA BHATT ASSERTS HER INDEPENDENCE

Mumbai: Pooja Bhatt is relishing a new chapter in her career, embracing a variety of roles. Yet, she finds herself constantly confronted with inquiries about her relationship status.

The actress recently admitted that she's frequently asked about her single status, with others attempting to set her up, a situation that deeply troubles her.

Despite their attempts to 'rescue' her and set her up with someone, Pooja asserts her in-

dependence, emphasising that she doesn't need 'saving'.

Recently featured in the web series *Big Girls Don't Cry*, the 52-year-old says that if she seeks companionship, it's on equal terms. The *Sadak* actress stresses that she isn't seeking a solution from a man, as individuals must navigate their own paths independently.

Pooja has been transparent about her personal life, with her relationships often in the public eye. She has previously been romantically involved with Manish Makhija and Ranvir Shorey, maintaining an open-book approach to her personal experiences.

Pooja emphasises that while finding a companion would be wonderful, she doesn't view her single status as a deficiency. She cherishes her life, appreciating her family, friendships, and career.

Despite attempts by others to play match-maker, she feels content with her life as it is. AGENCIES



Alia to turn desi princess!

Mumbai: Alia Bhatt is in discussions with filmmaker Gurinder Chadha to star in a Disney film revolving around an Indian princess, as per a report by *Mid-Day*.

Gurinder, known for *Bend It Like Beckham* (2002) and *Bride and Prejudice* (2004), has been signed on by Disney to helm an original musical feature inspired by a princess from Indian history.

The report says Alia and Gurinder had met in January this year, when the filmmaker visited India to attend actor Aamir Khan's daughter Ira Khan's wedding.

A source told the portal, "The two (Alia and Gurinder) have been in talks for a while. The final casting will happen only after the script is developed,

but Alia is among the top casting choices."

The source added, "After playing a singer in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's period drama and an undercover agent in Shiv Rawail's movie, a Disney princess will be a great addition to Alia's repertoire. Leading the big-budget international project will also be a step forward towards making her presence felt in Hollywood after *Heart of Stone*."

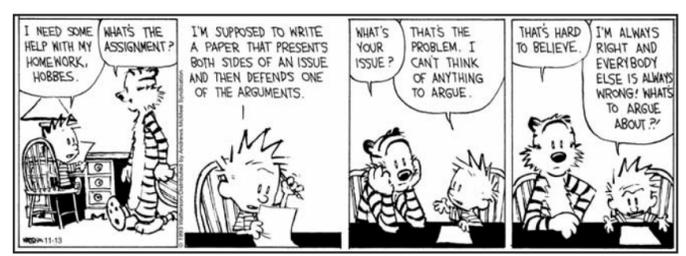
If things fall in place, she will kick off work with Gurinder in the second half of 2025." AGENCIES



PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

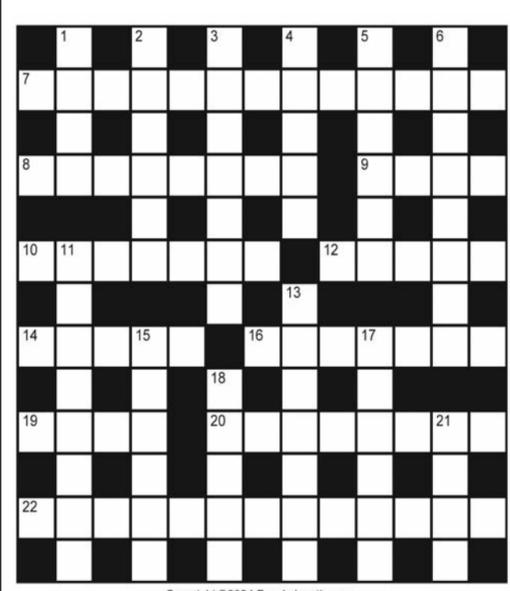


BREVITY



FUN post

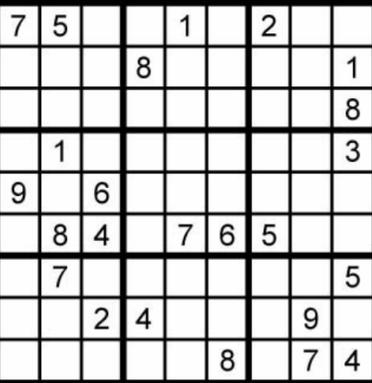
CROSSWORD



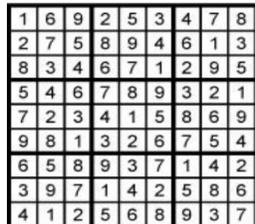
- Across**
- 7 Baking salt (5,2,6)
 - 8 Hawaiian capital
 - 9 Bawl out
 - 10 Support and strengthen
 - 12 Strait-laced
 - 14 Cousin of a mink
 - 16 Blight
 - 19 Squeal
 - 20 Source of pain
 - 22 Persistence
- Down**
- 1 Wynken, Blynken and Nod, e.g.
 - 2 Celebrated
 - 3 Intent
 - 4 Pompous walk (3-3)
 - 6 Reckless
 - 11 Foreigner
 - 13 Dictatorship
 - 15 Young bird
 - 17 Shack
 - 18 Beat
 - 21 Basketball shot

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

SEEKING ACTION

A BJP delegation presents a memorandum alleging poll code violation by the ruling BJD, at the CEO office in Bhubaneswar, Friday



PRAKASH R NEW DCP OF CUTTACK

Election Commission of India approves names of 3 IPS officers for fresh posting in state

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 5: The Election Commission of India (ECI) has approved the appointment of Prakash R as the deputy commissioner of police (DCP) of Cuttack and two other IPS officers as the superintendents of police (SPs) of Rourkela and Angul, an official said Friday.

"The appointment of Brijesh Kumar Rai (2009 batch) for the post of Rourkela SP Umashankar Dash (2008 batch) as Angul SP and Prakash R (2008 batch) as Cuttack DCP has been approved," read a letter of the ECI to Chief Secretary Pradeep Kumar Jena.

The ECI had April 2 ordered



Prakash R

the transfer of six IPS officers, including Cuttack DCP Kanwar Vishal Singh, Rourkela SP Mitrabhanu Mohapatra, and Angul SP Sudhanshu Sekhar Mishra, to non-election-related post with immediate effect.

The other three IPS officers were IGP (central range) Ashish Kumar Singh, Khurda SP Jugal Kishore Banoth and Berhampur SP Saravana Vivek Kumar.

The ECI had also ordered the transfer of Cuttack Collector Vineet Bharadwaj and Jagatsinghpur Collector Parul Patwari.

The election panel had asked the chief secretary to provide a list of three names for each of these posts.



INTENSE HEAT: As daytime temperature soars, the otherwise busy Grand Road in Puri wears a deserted look, Friday

PIC: YAGNESWAR MOHANTY

City police busts hooch den; 5 held

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April, 5: Continuing the crackdown on illegal activities ahead of the polls, the Commissionerate Police busted a hooch manufacturing unit at Salia Sahi under the jurisdiction of Maitri Vihar police station, and arrested five persons in that connection, Friday.



The arrested were identified as Biswanath Badaseth, Jaya Chandra Pradhan, Sapan Soren, Ananta Kadamseth and Bijay Kumar Marandi, said a senior police official, adding that the accused are all locals.

ACP (Zone V) Goutam Kishan said 1,080 litres of hooch, six LPG cylinders, as many gas stoves and storage containers were seized from the den. Following the seizure, samples of the illicit brew have been sent to the forensic lab for examination, he added.

Kishan stated that the accused procured inferior quality jaggery to make the alcohol. The police have launched an investigation to find more details about the case, he added. The Maitri Vihar police booked the accused under Sections 272, 273 and 52 (A) of Excise Act and produced them before a local court for remand.

Man gets 10-yr RI for raping minor

AGENCIES

Puri, April 5: A local court here has awarded 10 years of rigorous imprisonment (RI) to a man for raping a minor girl in 2019, sources said, Friday.

The court slapped a penalty of ₹20,000 on the convict, Narayan Mallick, and directed the District Legal Services Authority to pay ₹7 lakh to the victim.

According to the prosecution, the victim, a resident of Keonjhar, boarded a bus in Bhubaneswar and reached the Holy City here around 8pm July 8, 2019.

"Finding the girl alone, Mallick, the helper of the bus, raped her. The minor girl was found crying in the bus stand when some locals, after learning her ordeal, informed the police," Additional Public Prosecutor B Parida said.

Kumbharpada police reached the spot, sent the victim to the District Headquarters Hospital for treatment and arrested Mallick.

Tattoo helps cops crack daring robbery

DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 5: A tattoo on the palm of a miscreant, who along with three of his associates had robbed two businessmen of ₹11 lakh and valuables in Shastri Nagar area here last month, helped the Commissionerate Police crack the case, Friday.

Commissioner of Police Sanjeeb Panda said Somanath Jena, 31, Dipti Ranjan Baliarsingh alias Deepak, 31, Asish Kumar Dash, 25 and Smrutiranjana Sethi alias Bablu, 25, were arrested from a place under Info Valley police limits in the City.

"₹9.69 lakh of the looted cash and four two-wheelers have been recovered from the accused," Panda said.

He said Somanath, Dipti and Smrutiranjana are natives of Khurda, while Asish hails from Nayagarh.



Giving details of the case, Panda said City-based trader Udaya Bhanu Biswal would regularly visit a bank to exchange higher denomination notes, collected from retailers by his business partners, with smaller ones.

On March 30, Udaya's partners - Sambhunath and Dharmendra - were on their way to the City on a bike after with-

drawing ₹11 lakh cash from SBI's Chatrapur (Ganjam) branch when the foursome spotted them near Pitapalli area.

"They gave Sambhunath and Dharmendra a chase on their bikes, before intercepting them in Shastri Nagar area. They then took away two bags containing the cash and their mobile phones by threatening them on knife point," Panda added.

He said during a brief scuffle with the foursome, the victims noticed the tattoo of a tiger face on the palm of one of the accused.

Following the incident, a complaint was lodged at the Info Valley police station where the victims gave detailed statement. Based on the information, the police scanned the CCTV footage collated from the area and rounded up some suspects. Based on the description given by the victims about the tattoo, the police identified one of the accused. His interrogation led to the arrest of other accused, Panda added.

During further investigation, it was revealed that all the four were repeat offenders and were arrested in at least five similar cases in the City in the past.

"The accused were booked by the Info Valley police under Sections 329 and 34 of the IPC," Panda said.

2 held with leopard skin

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 5: The Special Task Force (STF) of Odisha Police has arrested two persons and seized one leopard skin from their possession following a raid in Kalahandi district.

The accused were identified as Chakra Benal, 45, and Purna Chandra Bag, 39, both from Kalahandi district.

"Following a tip-off, an STF team Thursday conducted a raid with the help of Kalahandi police at a secluded spot near Narla railway station in the district and apprehended the criminals awaiting a prospective customer for the execution of a deal," said an STF official.

The official added, "During a search, a leopard skin along with other incriminating materials was recovered from their possession."

The STF later arrested the accused after registering a case under various Sections of the IPC



The accused were identified as Chakra Benal, 45, and Purna Chandra Bag, 39, both from Kalahandi district

The seized leopard skin will be sent to the Wildlife Institute of India in Dehradun for biological examination

and Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. The seized leopard skin will be sent to the Wildlife Institute of India in Dehradun for biological examination.



CULTURAL EVENT: Singer Subhranshi Rout performs during a cultural event organised at Rabindra Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Friday

PIC: MAUSAM NANDA

Civic bodies told to set up water kiosks

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 5: Amid intense heatwave conditions, Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) Satyabrata Sahu has directed municipal commissioners of Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Sambalpur, Berhampur and Rourkela to open 'Jala Chhatras' (drinking water kiosks) for ensuring drinking water to commuters.

In a letter to the municipal commissioners, the SRC said that those using public transport system have been facing a tough time to travel amid intense heatwave conditions.

"The government has learnt through media that many localities under the five municipal corporations lack waiting rooms and drinking water facilities for

IN VIEW OF THE HEATWAVE, ESPECIALLY IN THE CAPITAL CITY, ALL SCHOOLS AND ANGANWADI CENTRES IN KHURDA DISTRICT WILL REMAIN OPEN FROM 06.30AM TO 10.30AM

those using the public transport system. As the daytime temperature is expected to rise, lack of such facilities will add to the woes of the commuters. As a precautionary measure, it is requested to open 'Jala Chhatras' at places of public gathering," the SRC said.

This apart, Labour department has asked all offices not to engage workers from 11am to 3.30pm due to the heatwave condition. The offices have to provide shelter and drinking

water at the workplace. Meanwhile, in view of the heatwave, especially in the Capital City, all schools and Anganwadi centres in Khurda district will remain open from 06.30am to 10.30am.

The regional centre of the India Meteorological Department here has advised people to take precautionary measures while going outside during the day (11am to 3pm) and not to leave children or pets in parked vehicles. Election rallies and gatherings need to be judiciously monitored during peak hours of the day (11am to 3pm), it said.

"People attending the rallies are advised to take necessary precautions to avoid prolonged exposure in high humidity and temperature areas," it said.

Large-scale climatic phenomena conducive for monsoon: IMD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 5: As summer scorches large parts of the country, weather scientists have picked up early signs of a favourable monsoon season this year in fading El Nino conditions and lesser snow cover over Eurasia.

In an interview with PTI, India Meteorological Department (IMD) Director General (DG) Mrutyunjay Mohapatra said large-scale climatic phenomena were conducive for the southwest monsoon, which is crucial for the largely rain-fed Indian economy.

"This year, El Nino is fading. By the beginning of June, it may become a neutral condition," Mohapatra said, referring to the warming of the central Pacific Ocean which is considered one



Advancing monsoon clouds and showers in Aralvaimozhy near Nagercoil

of the factors to impact the southwest monsoon. He said the second half of

the July-September monsoon season may witness La Nina conditions, which refer to

The southwest monsoon delivers about 70% of country's annual rainfall, critical for the agriculture sector that accounts for about 14% of the GDP and employs more than half of its 1.4 billion population

India received below-average cumulative rainfall of 820mm compared to the long-period average of 868.6mm in the 2023 monsoon season, which was attributed to a strengthening El Nino

IMD considers three large-scale climatic phenomena to forecast monsoon season rainfall. The first is the El Nino, the second is the Indian Ocean Dipole and the third is the snow cover over the northern Himalayas and the Eurasian landmass

the cooling of the central Pacific Ocean. "La Nina is good for the Indian

monsoon. And neutral conditions are good. However, El Nino is not good. In 60 per cent of years, El Nino has had a negative impact on the Indian monsoon, but last year, it did not have a negative impact," Mohapatra said.

"This year also the snow cover is less. That is another positive factor. So, large-scale processes are conducive for monsoon," he said.

The southwest monsoon delivers about 70 per cent of country's annual rainfall, critical for the agriculture sector that accounts for about 14 per cent of the GDP and employs more than half of its 1.4 billion population.

India received 'below-average' cumulative rainfall of 820mm compared to the long-period av-

erage of 868.6mm in the 2023 monsoon season, which was attributed to a strengthening El Nino.

The IMD is set to issue the southwest monsoon forecast later this month.

The agency considers three large-scale climatic phenomena to forecast monsoon season rainfall.

The first is the El Nino, the second is the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) which occurs due to differential warming of the western and eastern sides of the equatorial Indian Ocean and the third is the snow cover over the northern Himalayas and the Eurasian landmass, which also has an impact on the Indian monsoon through the differential heating of the landmass.

NATIONAL MARITIME DAY

Odisha committed to play major role in maritime sector: Naveen



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 5: Emphasising the crucial role played by the maritime sector in the country's economic growth and development, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on the National Maritime Day (NMD), Friday reiterated his government's resolve to make Odisha a major power in the growth of the sector.

Taking to X, the CM said "On NMD, let's celebrate Odisha's glorious maritime past, traditions and heritage, and reaffirm commitment to make it a major

On the occasion, FROST vice president Purnendu Misra made a presentation on the significance of the day and stressed on the contributions of mariners in the progress of the country.

Dean of Marine Engineering department, CV Raman Global University (CVRGU), Chittaranjan Biswal, joined as the chief guest and presided over the interactive session. Biswal highlighted the key milestones achieved by the maritime sector. The celebration was followed by a quiz session and prizes were distributed to the participants of different competitions. RSC Education Officer HS Satpathy proposed the vote of thanks.

Nearly 200 students, primarily from Chandrasekharpur and Pokhariput DAV, and CVRGU took part in the event.

The tradition of celebrating NMD in the country dates back to 1964 and became an annual celebration that takes place every year April 5.

This day is celebrated to honour to the mariners who spend their life at sea, contributing significantly to the country's progress by expanding global trade and commerce.

maritime power with a thriving trade network."

Meanwhile, the Regional Science Centre (RSC) here, in collaboration with Forum for River and Ocean Scientists and Technologists (FROST) celebrated NMD with a series of interactive session with school children.

A series of demonstrations on boat and ship models, audio/video quiz and poster making competition were held to mark the occasion.

The programme started with a welcome address by project coordinator, RSC, Kapil Jain.



SWIFT MOVE: Artistes perform Odissi dance at the inaugural function of a wrestling championship at Saradha Bali in Puri, Friday. PIC: YAGNESWAR MOHANTY

SNM demands CEO to disengage retired officers

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 5: City based Sachetan Nagarika Mancha (SNM) Thursday wrote to the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of the state, requesting to transfer or disengage retired officers, currently engaged in the office of the Chief Minister and other public offices of the state, in order to ensure free, fair and peaceful conduct of general elections.

In the letter, SNM secretary BC Sahoo said, "With due respect, I am to bring to your kind notice that, in the state government, many officers are working in behest of ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) party line since long for

more than eight years and have been re-engaged in the same post after their retirement for mobilising junior officers as well as the administration. They are freely working for ruling BJD in state and mobilising funds for the party by utilising their power and positions in service," he added. "In order to ensure free, fair

and peaceful conduct of elections, the retired officers who were connected or likely to be connected with the conduct of elections directly or indirectly in their supervisory capacity should not be allowed to continue in present place of posting after retirement of service," Sahoo said.

Free computer edu for slum youths

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 5: The Centre for Sustainable Use of Natural and Social Resources (CSNR), a state-based voluntary outfit, in collaboration with Mahaveer Biju Adarsa Colony, opened a computer education centre at Sailashree Vihar here, Friday, that would provide digital knowledge to youths for free.

The computer centre was inaugurated by Odisha State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (OSPCPCR) chairperson Mandakinee Kar. Attending the event as chief guest, Kar stated that the centre is dedicated to all who wish to be digitally literate. She also stressed on values and virtues of computer education. Kar lauded the initiative by CSNR.

The programme started with a welcome address by CSNR program manager Pragnya Paramita Jena who also gave a brief introduction of the guests present on the dais.

CSNR secretary Dharendra Panda shared the objectives of the computer training centre and also elaborated its usefulness for the unemployed youths of the nearby slums. Jasodhara Pradhan, corporator, Ward No-7, stated that the centre will be effective and successful if the parents take the equal responsibility in sending their children to the centre to avail the facility.

Another milestone in cancer treatment by SIGLS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 5: In a noteworthy achievement by the Sai Institute of Gastroenterology and Liver Sciences (SIGLS), a 34-year-old woman suffering from Early Gastric Cancer (EGC) underwent successful Endoscopic Submucosal Dissection (ESD), recently.

According to reports, the pa-

tient consulted SIGLS head Ashutosh Mohapatra over gas-related issues sometime back. After preliminary survey through endoscopy, Mohapatra found the ailment symptomatic of gastric cancer. Later, Krushna Chandra Pani of the institute confirmed it as EGC by Tissue Biopsy process. The size of the cancer cell was measured around 8mm. Sonmoon

Mohapatra performed ESD and completely removed the cancer cell avoiding the risk of a critical surgery. SIGLS is one of the premier institutes in the country to successfully treat EGC. Sonmoon said, "In the coming days, EGC can be treated successfully by ESD without affecting the liver." Ashutosh commended the team work by doctors at SIGLS.

Director, Asian Institute of Gastroenterology (AIG), Mohan Ramchandani congratulated SIGLS for the success. "Ashutosh Mohapatra applied the same method of endoscopy treatment used by doctors in Japan. He has presented his research paper on EGC at different conferences throughout the country. Recently he presented his research paper at the AIG," he added.

Students of Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts (IGNCA), New Delhi, a premier government-funded arts organisation in the country under the Union Ministry of Culture, are scheduled to visit the Central University of Odisha (CUO) on a study tour from April 6 to 11.

IGNCA students to visit CUO

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

The team comprising 41 students along with professor in-charge (academic), head of departments and staff members is scheduled to reach Koraput by April 6. Students of both the institutes will engage in a joint exercise for field study at various spots in the district. CUO is gearing up to host the Delhi team and ensure a fruitful outcome from the collaboration.

The team is expected to visit various places on the district, including the Shabara Srikhetra, tribal museum, Kunduli market, Gupteswar temple, Subai Jain temple, Sarbeswar temple, Batrisa Simhasan and Rani Duduma waterfall. The team will also visit an exhibition on biodiversity at the Landiguda campus of CUO. The academic unit of IGNCA will put up an exhibition titled, 'Akshar, Shabd,



Bhasha' on April 8 as part of the International Conference on Science and Technology on Ancient Indian Literature in Modern perspective, to be organised by the Sanskrit department, CUO.

The visiting team will be a partner on the seminar, titled 'A technical session on Bharatiya gyan parampara ke alok me kala aur sahitya' on April 9. IGNCA Kala Kosh division head Sudhir Lal will be the chief speaker and CUO VC Chakradhar Tripathi will preside over the meeting.

Professor in-charge (academic), IGNCA, Arun K Bhardwaj will interact with students of both campuses. A cultural programme has also been arranged at the CUO Sunabada campus.

Tripathi expressed his happiness for the joint exercise between the two institutions and hoped that this cultural exchange would lead to strengthening of national integration among the youth.



MAKING A POINT: Noted author Alok Pandey delivering his address on the second evening of 53rd Nikhila Utkal Sri Aurobindo Patha Chakra Sammilani at Matrubhaban, Sri Aurobindo marg in Cuttack, Friday. OP PHOTO

Prostate cancer deaths may rise by 85 per cent: Lancet

THE PC CASES ARE PROJECTED TO RISE TO 29 LAKH A YEAR AND ALMOST SEVEN LAKH PC RELATED DEATHS A YEAR BY 2040

Prostate Cancer (PC) cases worldwide are projected more than double and deaths are expected to increase by 85 per cent between 2020 and 2040, with Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs) likely to bear the 'overwhelming brunt' of this spike, according to the Lancet Commission on PC.

The surge in cases is 'inevitable', with actual numbers likely to be much higher because of under-diagnosis and missed opportunities for data collection in LMICs, researchers said.

"Ageing populations and improving life expectancy will lead to more cases of prostate cancer in older men, given that being 50 years or older is a risk factor. Lifestyle changes and public health interventions may not be able to prevent the upcoming surge," researchers added. "As more and more men

around the world live to middle and old age, there will be an inevitable rise in the number of prostate cancer cases. We know this surge in cases is coming, so we need to start planning and take action now," said lead author of the commission, Nick James, professor of prostate and bladder cancer research, Institute of Cancer Research, London.

The commission called for evidence-based interventions, including early detection and diagnosis, along with education and awareness programmes, to help save lives from PC in the coming years.

"This is especially true for LMICs, which will bear the overwhelming brunt of future cases," said James.

The authors called for improving the "poor" levels of awareness in LMICs about the dangers and symptoms of



metastatic PC, such as bone pain, among men and their families.

"One of the common pains in PC comes from spine metastasis,

where the cancer spreads to the spine. While this usually presents in the later stages of the disease, it could even be the pre-

senting symptom. Other pains may be associated with urination or treatment, such as post-surgical or chemotherapy-induced pain," said specialist Lakshmi Vas, director of the Ashirvad Institute for Pain Management and Research, Mumbai.

Similarly, there is a low general awareness that treatments available in LMICs can prolong survival and decrease suffering, including cheap, effective ones such as hormone therapy.

Acknowledging the 'fear of suffering' that comes with a cancer diagnosis, Vas advocated for consulting with a pain specialist.

"The greatest fear is the suffering associated with cancer and patient education in this regard. I strongly suggest that right after being diagnosed with PC, take an appointment with a pain specialist. This way the pa-

tients can be reassured that pain management is possible whatever the stage of cancer might be, and also for other pains that come with cancer treatments. Forewarned is forearmed, after all," said Vas.

As with early diagnostic capacity, there is a need to scale up availability and improve access to treatment for advanced disease in LMICs, the authors said.

Globally, the study estimated yearly cases of PC to be 14 lakh and yearly deaths due to the disease to stand at 3.75 lakh in 2020. The PC cases are projected to rise to 29 lakh a year and almost seven lakh PC related deaths a year by 2040.

The commission includes researchers from the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), an inter-governmental agency forming part of the World Health Organisation (WHO). PT

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AFFIDAVIT

I, Sulata Samanta, W/o. Late Sanjib Ranjan Bose, R/o. At/P.O/PS. Indupur, Dist. Kendrapada, Odisha declare by this affidavit No.2595 dt.04.04.2024 that now onwards I shall be known as Sulata Samanta for all future purposes.

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HOMEWARD BOUND: Women of Inchol village under Hatadihi block in Keonjhar district returning home after collecting firewood from jungle, Friday OP PHOTO

Ahead of polls, CS visits Kotia

POST NEWS NETWORK

Pottangi, April 5: With the Assembly and Lok Sabha elections set to be held after a month, the sight of the state Chief Secretary Pradeep Kumar Jena and the secretaries of other departments returning from a visit to the fringe areas along the Andhra-Odisha border has become a topic of discussion in various circles including the power corridors.

According to reports, Chief Secretary Pradeep Kumar Jena and Principal Secretary, Agriculture Arabinda Padhee arrived in Koraput district Friday and held election-related discussions with the district administration. Koraput Collector V Keerthi Vasan, DIG (South Western Range) Charan Singh Meena, Superintendent of Police Abhinav Sonkar, Sub-Collector Benudhar Shabar, local BDO Sukant Kumar Patnaik and Tehsildar Devendra Bahadur Singh Dharwa were present in the meeting.

In the meeting, the officials discussed the status of five frontier booths out of the total nine

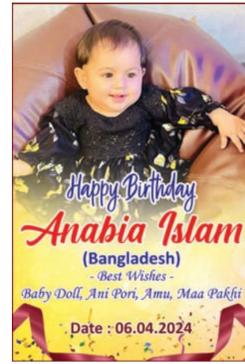


polling booths under Kotia panchayat. However, they were tight-lipped about the details of the discussions. On the other hand, it is assumed that such a visit of the Chief Secretary and the Principal Secretary of the Agriculture department may have many implications for neighbouring Andhra Pradesh.

The two top officials, including other officials of the district, reached the panchayat to see the strawberry cultivation in Barabandh village and discussed the benefits and losses with the present farmers.

Later they visited and took stock of the panchayat office, Special Odisha Adarsha Vidyalaya (OAV), Primary Health Centre (PHC), Jagannath temple and 5T schools, and discussed studies and related issues with the school students.

Finally, the Chief Secretary advised the district and block administrations to look into creating awareness among the people to increase the voting rate in the booths located in the border areas.



Police rescue baby stolen from Balasore DHH; one detained

POST NEWS NETWORK

Balasore, April 5: The newborn baby boy who was allegedly stolen Thursday from the district headquarters hospital here has been rescued, police said Friday. They added that the boy has been reunited with his parents while a woman has been detained in this connection. Police managed to crack the case quickly by scanning the CCTV footage of cameras installed within the hospital. The infant was rescued from Durgadevi village, Balasore SP Sagarika Nath informed.



The baby was undergoing treatment at the DHH after he was diagnosed with jaundice. His mother Tikili Barik had gone to talk to a doctor when the alleged theft took place. After returning, Tikili found that in place of her son, an infant girl was lying on the cot. Later, Tikili and her husband Susant Barik lodged a complaint at the police outpost inside the hospital.

While scanning the CCTV footage of various cameras, cops found that a woman was leaving the hospital with the baby boy and acting as if it was her son. The cops traced the woman to Durgadevi village in the district and rescued the baby.

Police said that during interrogation, the woman confessed that she had taken the boy from the cot and in his place had placed her own daughter.

"Except for the CCTV footage, we did not have much information. However, we managed to procure information about the woman by talking to various people in the hospital including doctors of the Gynaecology department. Accordingly a team went to the village and rescued the baby. We are happy that we have managed to reunite the baby with his original parents," Nath said.

Gahirmatha bustling as mass nesting begins

THE PHENOMENON HAS BEEN DELAYED BY A MONTH THIS YEAR LIKELY DUE TO A ROUGH SEA AND A SPELL OF UNSEASONAL RAINS

PNN & AGENCIES

Kendrapara, April 5: The Gahirmatha beach in Kendrapara district was bustling Friday as the Olive Ridley turtles returned for the much-awaited annual mass nesting which has commenced at Nasi-2 island since Tuesday evening.

An estimated 1,84,653 Olive Ridley sea turtles have laid eggs at Nasi-2, the favourite nesting place of the endangered species, inside the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary during the last 72 hours, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) of Rajnagar Mangrove (forest) and Wildlife Division, Sudarshan Gopinath Yadav, said Friday.

Yadav said while 3,037 Olive Ridelys laid eggs April 2 evening, about 83,600 female Olive Ridley sea turtles reported en masse to lay eggs April 3 and as many as 98,016 laid eggs April 4 at the Nasi-2 beach.

Last year, 5.12 lakh turtles had come to Gahirmatha for nesting, between March 8 and 13. This time, the phenomenon was delayed by a month, likely due to a rough sea and a spell of unseasonal rains, Yadav said. However, it is heartening to note that turtles have finally come



to lay eggs at the tranquil beach in the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary, he said.

The natural phenomenon is expected to last for at least a week, he added. The topography of the beach, free from erosion, is conducive for the turtles to nest, Yadav said.

Gahirmatha is a protected area under the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), which conducts missile tests from the neighbouring Wheeler Island. As a result, people are not allowed entry here, except Forest guards on turtle protection duty who are the lone witness to the rare sight of thousands of turtles crawling on the beach making a cacophony, a unique natural heritage.

The presence of Forest per-

sonnel on the nesting ground did not bother the turtles as they maintained a distance. Emphasis is on to provide privacy to the turtles during the egg-laying process, said another official.

It's only the female turtles that invade the nesting beaches, usually in the dead of the night, to lay eggs, a phenomenon described as 'arribada'. They tend to move towards the beaches in large synchronised concentrations and lay their eggs in 2-3-foot-long pits, which they dig with their rear flippers.

After laying eggs, the turtles leave the nesting ground to stride into the deep seawater in a zigzag manner to confuse predators about the location of the nests. Hatchlings emerge from these eggs after 45-60 days. It is a rare

TAGGED TURTLES RETURN TO BIRTHPLACE AFTER DECADE

Much to the joy of turtle lovers and researchers, three female Olive Ridley sea turtles, tagged more than a decade back, returned this year to the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary, the largest rookery of the species, to lay eggs. This clearly proved that the tagged female turtles are finding their way to Gahirmatha, where they were born more than a decade ago. It has been ascertained that the turtles generally come to the favourite nesting place time and again for laying eggs at the golden beach of Gahirmatha where they earlier laid eggs, Rajnagar Mangrove (forest) and Wildlife Division DFO Sudarshan Gopinath Yadav said. It may be noted here that the Odisha Forest department in collaboration with Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dehradun, fitted tags on the flippers of the turtles between 1998 and 2010. Sea turtles are also tagged to recognise individuals or cohorts for research purposes. Tagging is most often done to obtain information on their reproductive biology, movements and growth rates. Sea turtles throughout the world are known to migrate thousands of kilometres between their nesting beaches and feeding grounds. The tagging helps researchers study the turtle's migratory route and areas of foraging. Tagging data also shows how the turtles navigate waters across different areas. There was a lack of information about turtles, after they left the coast of Odisha. Hence, there was a need for tagging and satellite telemetry to track their movements and enhance the protection of their habitats. The Forest personnel with the help of WII researchers had fitted tags on several endangered Olive Ridley turtles in the past years in all the three major nesting sites - Gahirmatha, Rushikulya and Devi beaches to know their movement. Notably, as many as six tagged female Olive Ridley sea turtles also came to lay eggs last year to Nasi-2 island.

natural phenomenon in which babies grow without their mother, said an official.

Each Olive Ridley turtle lays about 120-150 eggs, but not all remain intact as predators devour some, he said. Besides,

eggs are also washed away by sea waves during high tide, he added. As many as 28 segments, each 100 metre wide, have been made by the Forest personnel at Nasi-II island for counting the turtles' nests.

Close shave for driver as pick-up van catches fire

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kesinga, April 5: The driver of a cotton laden pick-up van narrowly escaped after the vehicle came in contact with a live overhead electric wire and caught fire at Karlabhadi village under Laitara panchayat and this block in Kalahandi district, sources said Friday.

Reports said the pick-up van carrying cotton sack was moving through the village road when the vehicle came in contact with the high voltage live wires and caught fire. The people who were present at the scene immediately informed Kesinga fire brigade. After receiving the news fire brigade personnel rushed to the spot and doused the fire. However, most of the cotton sacks on the van had



been completely damaged by the fire by then.

According to the locals, this accident occurred due to presence of high-powered live wires above the village road. The villagers blamed the electricity department's negligence for the mishap. Reportedly the pick-up van was overloaded with cotton bags and the fire broke out due to a short circuit.

Vedanta Aluminium expands Lanjigarh alumina refinery capacity to 3.5 MTPA

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 5: Vedanta Aluminium has expanded the capacity of its alumina refinery at Lanjigarh in Kalahandi district from 2 MTPA to 3.5 MTPA.

With this expansion, the company entered into the top three global players with 3 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) of aluminium production capacity.

Vedanta will achieve 100 per cent vertical integration with the commissioning of the increased capacity of the alumina refinery.

This additional 1.5 MTPA capacity is a part of the company's ongoing expansion to take the overall nameplate capacity at the Lanjigarh refinery from the current 2 MTPA to 5 MTPA, to support its increasing aluminium production.

Vedanta Aluminium offers one of the largest ranges of high-quality aluminium products in the world, including India's first low-carbon 'green' aluminium range, branded Restora.

These products find critical applications in sectors such as automotive, aerospace, defence, infrastructure, power projects, electrical, and packaging, amongst others. The company is also one of the largest producers of premier smelter grade alumina (SGA) in India, a key raw material for the company's aluminium plants in Jharsuguda and BALCO (Chhattisgarh).

Speaking on the occasion, Vedanta Aluminium CEO John Slaven said, "We are delighted to commission the expanded capacity which strengthens our raw material security and

reduces costs for our Jharsuguda and BALCO aluminium smelters."

Strict action against sponge iron units dumping 'char'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, April 5: Strict action will be taken against sponge iron units that indiscriminately dump 'char', the industrial waste generated in the process of sponge iron production. This was stated here Thursday by Anup Mallick, Regional Officer of the State Pollution Control Board (SPCB).

Currently most sponge iron units in this district dump the waste material at places which suit them. One can easily find huge quantities of char dumped on the road side, in artificially created gorges and for that matter in open spaces. Most of the dumping is done at night hiding from the eyes of the ad-

ministration.

"The companies do not care about the environment; they just dump the heaps of dust anywhere. This is a common site in the interior parts of Sundargarh district where many sponge iron units are operating," said a villager of Nuagaon near Kuanrunda in the district.

Mallick confirmed that he has received complaints on this aspect. "I have received complaints against 'Bhaskar' and 'Srihari' sponge iron units. I have dispatched teams to the Bonai region to examine the facts. If the allegations are true then action will be taken," Mallick stated. He added that he has asked the concerned departments to spray water on



the piles of black dust to keep it from getting blown away by strong winds and causing inconvenience. Mallick informed that the dump-

ing of char will gradually decrease as now it is being used by many companies to make pellets. "Many sponge iron units are sup-

plying black dust to companies in Raipur. Pellets that are used in various types of furnaces are being made from the dust," Mallick said. "In addition bio-pellets are being made by mixing cow dung, hay or dry leaves with the black dust," he added. He stated that the bio-pellets are used in furnaces for tandoori preparations as they last longer.

"The Rourkela Municipal Corporation (RMC) is planning to set up a bio-pellet production unit soon. It has already procured a machine for this purpose. As the Model Code of Conduct has been implemented, the machine has not been unveiled. Once the elections are over, production of bio-pellets will start," Mallick said.

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Interested candidates may apply online over Prasar Bharati web link <https://applications.prasarbharti.org/> within 15 days from the publication date of the newspaper along with self-attested copies of supporting documents. All details are available on the above link.

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Consciousness a drop of sincerity has more value than an ocean of pretension and hypocrisy. **THE MOTHER**

Babu Under Fire

In the wake of recent directives from the Election Commission, a whirlwind of controversy has swept through Haryana. Just days after the poll panel decided to transfer a senior IPS officer, who happens to be the spouse of a BJP Member of Parliament in the state, the Opposition parties have now set their sights on the removal of Rajesh Kumar Khullar, the Chief Principal Secretary to the Haryana Chief Minister.

Sources have informed DKB that a formal complaint has been lodged with the Commission, levelling allegations of "blatant violation" against Khullar, a former senior IAS officer. The complaint points out that the Commission's own guidelines expressly stipulate that officials, except those serving in the office of the Chief Electoral Officer, who are on extension of service or reemployed in various capacities, should not be involved in any poll-related activities.

Apparently, following the change in Haryana's Chief Minister, among the first orders was the retention of Khullar as Chief Principal Secretary, emphasising Khullar's previous tenure as Principal Secretary to former Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar. But the state government is continuing to justify Khullar's continued presence, citing that it has complied with all procedures.

However, opposition parties have also objected to the tenure of Devinder Singh Kalyan, an IRS officer currently serving as Principal Secretary (Excise and Taxation). His brother, Harvinder Singh Kalyan, is a BJP MLA from the state. Devinder's deputation to Haryana in February last year was marred by controversy, sources informed DKB, especially after his swift ascent to the post of Principal Secretary in the excise department within barely two months.

As the battle lines are drawn and accusations fly, the coming days will be fraught with high-energy actions.

Nitin Kareer's tenure extended

Nitin Kareer will continue as Maharashtra Chief Secretary for three more months, or until the election dust settles down.

The decision denies Sujata Saunik the opportunity to become the first woman chief secretary of the state, for the time being. Despite her qualifications and suitability for the role, her candidature was rejected due to her husband, Manoj Saunik, serving as the principal advisor to Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and being directly involved in election work.

The state government had initially proposed Saunik's name for the chief secretary's post but following directives from the Election Commission, additional names were submitted for consideration, among them Revenue Secretary Rajesh Kumar and CM's secretary Iqbal Singh Chahal. Rajesh Kumar did not fit the bill due to his family's political affiliations, while Chahal who previously served as BMC commissioner for an extended period, is current additional chief secretary in the Chief Minister's Office (CMO).

The Election Commission, reportedly, was in favour of giving a suo moto extension to Kareer and asked the state government to send a proposal, which was then sent to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) for consent. Sujata Saunik may get another shot at the state's top post but for now, Kareer, who is good at what he does, gets to continue his gig for three more months.

Date takes charge at NIA

In the current politically charged atmosphere, Sadanand Vasant Date, a 1990-batch Maharashtra cadre IPS officer, has assumed the National Investigation Agency's (NIA) leadership. Date succeeds Dinkar Gupta, who has retired after two years and left with an impressive array of achievements, including DGP of Punjab Police and many key assignments during an eight-year stint with the Ministry of Home Affairs.

With extensive experience dealing with terrorism, Date will now head the country's premier investigation agency.

Date has enjoyed a distinguished career in the government, having served in the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) as Deputy Inspector General and in the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) as Inspector General. Notably, he was honoured with the President's Medal for Gallantry for his role in saving lives and combating terrorism during the 26/11 Mumbai attacks. Before this appointment, Date headed the Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS).

Besides Date, the Centre has also announced a transition in leadership by naming another 1990-batch Rajasthan cadre IPS officer Rajeev Kumar Sharma as the Director General of the Bureau of Police Research & Development (BPRD). Piyush Anand, a UP cadre 1991 batch IPS officer, is the new Director General of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF). Sources informed DKB that Date's tenure will conclude at the end of 2026 while Rajeev Sharma will head BPRD until June 2026.

Share a babu experience! Follow [dilipthecherian@twitter.com](https://twitter.com/dilipthecherian). Let's multiply the effect

WISDOM CORNER

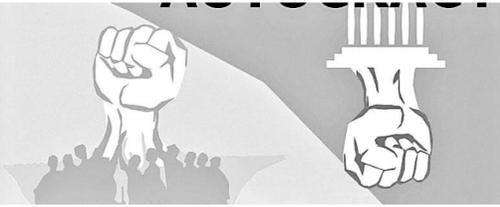
- Great things are done by a series of small things brought together. **VINCENT VAN GOGH**
- Tradition becomes our security, and when the mind is secure it is in decay. **JIDDU KRISHNAMURTI**
- Men are born ignorant, not stupid. They are made stupid by education. **BERTRAND RUSSELL**

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1862:** Union troops clashed with Confederates in southwestern Tennessee at the Battle of Shiloh, the second great engagement of the American Civil War. The central cause of the war was the dispute over whether slavery would be permitted to expand into the western territories, leading to more slave states, or be prevented from doing so.
- 1868:** The Japanese emperor Meiji issued the Charter Oath, which served to modernize the country during the Meiji Restoration.
- 1909:** American explorer Robert Edwin Peary led the first expedition to the North Pole. Peary's claim to have reached the North Pole was widely debated along with a competing claim made by Frederick Cook, but eventually won widespread acceptance.
- 1917:** The United States declared war on Germany, thus entering World War I three years after the conflict began. Germany's resumption of submarine attacks on passenger and merchant ships in 1917 became the primary motivation behind Wilson's decision to lead the United States into WW I.

DEMOCRACY VS AUTOCRACY

FOCUS NATION



The laws on money laundering, sedition, unlawful activities and hurting sentiments of communities are so vaguely worded that the government can arrest anyone on flimsy grounds



Dhurjati Mukherjee

THE CLEAN IMAGE OF THE RULING PARTY HAS BEEN NEGATED BY THE RECENTLY RELEASED DATA ON ELECTORAL BONDS BY THE STATE BANK OF INDIA

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge recently stated that a reign of autocracy and hooliganism has been unleashed in the country by the ruling dispensation.

The recent arrest of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, and also that of his counterpart in Jharkhand Hemant Soren are glaring examples of the government's ulterior motive. In the case of Kejriwal, apart from Germany, the US demanded a "fair, transparent and timely legal process". However, Prime Minister Modi has said no matter how big the corrupt are, action will be taken against them. It may be interesting to note that Aurobindo Pharma's director, P. Sarath Chandra Reddy, on whose statement Kejriwal was arrested by the ED in the excise policy-linked money laundering case is himself an accused in the same case and contributed Rs 59.5 crore to the BJP through electoral bonds before and after his arrest. It is said that Reddy was used to arrest the AAP convenor, widely perceived as an upright politician.

The government, which is riding on a so-called Modi wave, is trying all sorts of tricks to put obstacles before the Opposition through various measures. Apart from the arrest, the Congress has been served IT notices demanding Rs 1823 crore, a hammer blow that threatened to deepen the financial crisis ahead of the general election and prompted the party to accuse the government of 'tax terrorism'.

The laws on money laundering, sedition, unlawful activities and hurting sentiments of communities are so vaguely worded that the government can arrest anyone on flimsy grounds. The government is also trying to prove that the Opposition leaders are corrupt, obviously indicating that those who belong to the BJP have a clean image. But will this strategy of the BJP be accepted by

the educated electorate?

This is reiterated by an article of Yamini Aiyar, who just before her resignation as chief of the Centre for Policy Research wrote in *The Economist* (on March 23): "The incumbent, Bhartiya Janata Party government of Narendra Modi is set to win a third term and surveys show that the prime minister's personal popularity is at an all-time high. But his governance, built on aggressive centralisation, legitimised by a cult of personality and undergirded by an exclusionary Hindu nationalist ideology, is eroding India's democracy. If unchecked, the consequences for the country's political, economic and social fabric will be grim".

Incidentally, the clean image of the ruling party has been negated by the recently released data on electoral bonds by the State Bank of India. Apart from the fact that the BJP was the largest beneficiary of electoral bonds, it is significant to note that over 60 companies that were set up after the announcement of the electoral bond scheme in early 2017 gave close to Rs 260 crore to political parties through bonds. Of this, over Rs 100 crore or over 40% went to the BJP while the BRS was the second largest recipient with Rs 61 crore or about a fourth of the money. Moreover,

it is amply clear that the bonds were given under pressure and have encouraged a quid pro quo.

Further, it has been revealed that several companies bagged huge government contracts after donating via electoral bonds, which allowed donors and recipients to remain anonymous, some NGOs alleged. BJP was the biggest beneficiary of EBs paid by loss-making companies and certain corporate groups. The Association of Democratic Reforms (ADR), NGO Common Cause and individuals like Prashant Bhushan and Niti Sethi have alleged that: (i) 16 companies that made no profit in the preceding three years paid a combined Rs 710 crore through the EBs with the BJP receiving Rs 460 crore of this amount; (ii) certain companies paid the BJP a total sum of Rs 1751 crore through EBs and received government contracts worth Rs 62,000 crore; and (iii) 41 group of companies paid the BJP a sum of Rs 2471 crore via the bonds after facing raids from the CBI, ED and income tax authorities.

The other side of the picture is that the INDIA alliance has yet to project a unified picture of its allies with a coherent strategy though Congress leader, Rahul Gandhi has been harping on valid socio-economic issues, claiming the government neg-

lect over the years. However, the BJP has conveniently shifted focus instead on religious issues and Hindu nationalism.

For the party, the focus was on northern and western states where Hindutva propagation would win the heart of the masses. Added to this, the consecration of the Ayodhya Temple fulfilled the ambit of the government's steady move from a secular approach to Hindu nationalism, reinforced by the notification of the recent CAA rules.

The educated electorate in southern states of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and Telangana may not support the BJP's strategy of Hindu domination and imposition of Brahmanical culture in the country. These states are highlighting the social and economic issues plaguing the country and reaching out to the poor and neglected sections.

India's transformation that has been witnessed in recent years resulted from the order changing from a liberal democracy to what the opposition terms as an autocracy. The idea of India is also under transformation - from a secular inclusive State that glorified diversity in thought, culture and faith to one that is based on one faith, one culture and a strong nationalism that glorifies the nation state. Not just the BJP, which is said to be the main villain of the piece, the authoritarian tendency is also manifest in the TMC, BRS and some other regional parties.

Finally, in a society where power and money are becoming decisive factors in politics, the controlling manner in which the Centre and most states are governed, and the rising inequality and dwindling incomes of the bottom 30-35% does not augur well for the country. If changes don't take place, social fragmentation, economic disparity, and chaos is inevitable. **INFA**

SPECTRUM CULTURE

Resurrecting the tradition of Odia theatre



Ashyashree Praharaj

COLLABORATION BETWEEN ARTISTES, PLAYWRIGHTS, DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS IS PARAMOUNT IN NURTURING A VIBRANT CREATIVE ECOSYSTEM

Theatre has long been a vibrant thread in the grand tapestry of cultural heritage, weaving stories, emotions, and societal reflections. However, in the corridors of Odia art, the once-thriving theatre scene now faces a looming shadow of decline. As curtains descend upon stages, it is imperative to illuminate the dimming footlights and reignite the flames of the atypical fervour across the state.

Once the heartbeat of Odia society, the theatre has gradually lost its pulse amidst the fast-paced entertainment revolution and changing societal norms. The majestic playhouses that once echoed with audiences' laughter, tears, and applause now stand silent, and their once-gilded halls gather dust. The emergence of alternative forms of entertainment, such as the burgeoning motion picture industry, has further relegated theatre to the sidelines.

Yet, amidst the gloom, there glimmers a beacon of hope. Odia theatre's essence, with its rich repertoire of classical dramas, melodramas, and comedies, possesses a timeless allure that transcends epochs. By harnessing the power of nostalgia and innovation, we can breathe new life into these hallowed halls.

Firstly, there is a dire need for investment and revitalisation of theatre infrastructure. Neglected playhouses must be restored to their former glory, offering modern amenities without sacrificing the historical charm that makes them unique. The role of the government in reviving Odia theatre is multifaceted. Government incentives and private patronage can play pivotal roles in this endeavour, ensuring these architectural treasures endure for generations. Philanthropic organisations and corporate sponsors can provide significant financial backing for theatre restoration projects, production costs and operational expenses. Their contributions can fill gaps left by government funding constraints, enabling ambitious artistic endeavours and ensuring the sustainability of theatrical ventures. Private patrons can serve as ambassadors for the arts, advocating for the importance of theatre in society and championing its preservation and growth.

Equally crucial is the cultivation of young talents and audience engagement. Educational programmes, workshops, and outreach incentives can ignite a passion for theatre in the next generation. Emerging talents in-

ject new ideas, styles and approaches into theatrical productions, challenging conventions and pushing boundaries. Their creativity and experimentation breathe life into classical works, reinterpreting them for contemporary audiences and infusing them with relevance and resonance. By fostering a culture of appreciation and understanding, we can sow the seeds of a thriving theatrical landscape.

Moreover, embracing technological advancements can catalyse a theatrical renaissance. Live-streamed performances, interactive experiences, and digital archives can democratise access to theatre, transcending geographical barriers and reaching audiences far and wide. This fusion of tradition and innovation ensures that theatre remains a dynamic and relevant art form in the digital age.

Furthermore, collaboration between artistes, playwrights, directors and producers is paramount in nurturing a vibrant creative ecosystem. The audience plays a fundamental role in revitalising Odia theatre, serving as active participants and supporters. By filling seats and contributing to box office revenue, audiences ensure the economic viability of theatrical pro-

ductions and enable theatre companies to continue producing high-quality shows. By attending performances of classical and contemporary plays, audiences contribute to preserving cultural heritage and artistic traditions. The audience is an indispensable partner in the revitalisation of Odia theatre, providing essential support, feedback, promotion, community building, cultural preservation, education, enlightenment, advocacy and support.

The resurrection of Odia theatre is not merely a nostalgic yearning for a bygone era but a reaffirmation of our cultural identity and collective memory. As we stand at the crossroads of history, let us seize this moment to revive the dying embers of the theatrical flame and ensure that the stage continues to be a sanctuary for imagination, empathy and enlightenment. Together, let us embark on a journey to reclaim the glory of Odia theatre, weaving anew the threads of our cultural heritage and illuminating the stage with the timeless power of storytelling.

The writer is research scholar in the P.G. Department of Business Administration, Berhampur University, Berhampur.

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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Rahul's forecast

Sir, While Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the ruling BJP are seeking a third consecutive term, the opposition alliance is yet to take a call on its face for the country's top post. At an INDIA bloc meeting in December last year, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and Arvind Kejriwal, her Delhi counterpart, had suggested Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge's name for the post. Kharge, however, had replied that the coalition must first win enough number of seats to stake claim to the PM's post. Rahul Gandhi, meanwhile, further stated that the 2024 general elections will be 'closer' than what is being projected in the media. However, nearly every pre-poll survey has predicted a convincing win for the incumbent government. **CK Subramaniam, NAVI MUMBAI**

Celestial phenomenon

Sir, The 8th April, 2024, will be a red-letter day as far as celestial events are concerned. The longest solar eclipse in the last 50 years will occur on this day. For 7.5 minutes the sky will remain dark. However, the eclipse will be visible only from the United States, Canada, Mexico, and some parts of North America. People in India will not be able to witness this celestial event. A total solar eclipse takes place when the sun, moon and earth completely align with each other, and the sun's rays can't reach the earth as the moon comes between them, creating darkness in the day sky. This year's celestial event is rare, hence the excitement to witness the spectacle is palpable. It is learnt that over a million people will gather at the Niagara Falls in Canada to watch the event. **Jayanthi Subramaniam, MUMBAI**

America's condition

Sir, The Biden administration has done well to communicate to Israel that safeguarding civilians is a condition for receiving US support. The US President expressed his disapproval of the attacks on humanitarian workers and the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza, which has led to famine warnings by the United Nations. In recent months, Biden has grown more frustrated with Netanyahu but still backs Israel's right to counter Hamas, which is strange. Qatar has been taking the lead in ongoing discussions for a temporary ceasefire, which would involve the release of hostages taken during Hamas' deadliest attack in Israeli history. **NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE**



Sunita Kejriwal best person to keep AAP together, says Saurabh



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 5: AAP leader Saurabh Bharadwaj has said that Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's wife Sunita is the best person to keep the party together in the prevailing circumstances and asserted that her presence has had a "positive effect" on the cadre.

In an interaction with PTI editors at the agency's headquarters here, Bharadwaj, who is also a cabinet minister in the Delhi government, said Sunita Kejriwal has always said that she is the "messenger" of the Delhi Chief Minister who is currently in jail.

Noting that the politics of a party does not just revolve around its manifesto, Bharadwaj said the support base and the emotional connection between the cadre and the top leadership also plays a crucial role in keeping an organisation together.

Sunita Kejriwal's presence has had a positive impact, he added.

"She is delivering the messages of Arvind Kejriwal ji. This has had a great impact on our party cadre and among our sympathisers. We want to propagate it. In the present circumstances, she is the best person to keep the party together," Bharadwaj said.

Kejriwal, arrested by the Enforcement Directorate in a money-laundering case linked to the Delhi government's now-scrapped excise policy, is in judicial custody till April 15.

His wife has addressed three digital briefings so far, in which she read out his messages from the ED custody and Tihar Jail. In a political debut of sorts, she read out his message at the INDIA bloc 'maharaj' March 31. Asked if Sunita Kejriwal will campaign for the party in the Lok Sabha polls, he said, "We would love if this thing happens... If Sunita ji does take part in campaigning but it is her personal decision."

AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh, who too was arrested in the excise policy case and received bail Wednesday, had met Sunita Kejriwal immediately after getting out of jail and was seen touching her feet. Talking about it, the minister said if someone's elder brother is in some difficulty, he is duty-bound to look after his family.

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Welfare pension disbursement process begins in Andhra

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Amaravati (Andhra Pradesh), April 5: The process to disburse welfare pension to 66 lakh beneficiaries across Andhra Pradesh has started, officials said.

More than 25 lakh beneficiaries received their pension Wednesday, Principal Secretary for Panchayati Raj and Rural Development Sashibhushan Kumar said.

"District Collectors have made all arrangements for the smooth distribution of pensions to all pensioners from April 3 to 6, 2024," he said in an official statement.

There was a delay in disbursement of pensions due to the Election Commission restricting the state government from engaging volunteers in the job in view of the Model Code of Conduct being in force for Assembly and Parliamentary elections in the state.

The ruling YSR Congress Party in the state and the op-



position have accused each other over the issue of hardship faced by pensioners.

Kumar said the state government has released an amount of Rs 1,952 crore for disbursing pensions.

According to the principal secretary, 13,699 ward and village secretariats from a total

of 14,994 have already begun the exercise of disbursing pension. Kumar said district collectors have been directed to devise an action plan to ensure mandatory doorstep delivery of pension to the extremely vulnerable categories of beneficiaries, according to the state-

For first time, TDP has no member in RS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Amaravati (Andhra Pradesh), April 5: For the first time in its over four decades of existence, Telugu Desam Party (TDP) finds itself without any representation in the Rajya Sabha as its lone member, K Ravindra Kumar retired Wednesday.

The vacuum may continue until 2026, when three of the incumbent members in the Upper House retire and new members are elected from the state.

YSR Congress party nominees YV Subba Reddy, Golla Babu Rao and Meda Raghunath Reddy were elected to the Upper House unopposed in February this year, making the ruling party the fourth largest party with 11 members. Vice-President and Rajya Sabha chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar administered the oath to the new members Thursday in the national capital.

Four of the TDP members—YS Chowdary, CM Ramesh, TG Venkatesh, and G Mohan Rao—joined the BJP soon after the 2019 Assembly polls, which shifted

The vacuum may continue until 2026, when three of the incumbent members in the Upper House retire and new members are elected from the state

the power balance towards the YSRCP in the state and the NDA at the Centre. "I retired yesterday. The term of the new members will start today. This is the first time that the TDP does not have representation in the Rajya Sabha. I was the lone representative during the past four years. Democracy is a numbers game," Ravindra Kumar told PTI.

Founded by the charismatic leader Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao (NTR) in 1982, the party quickly rose to prominence, capturing the imagination of the Telugu-speaking populace and over the years, the party has been a significant player in state and central politics.

'TAKE STEPS TO CHECK DENGUE SPREAD'

THE MUNICIPAL CORPORATION OF DELHI (MCD) COMMISSIONER HAS ASKED ALL PRIVATE AND PUBLIC ESTABLISHMENTS TO TAKE PREVENTIVE MEASURES TO CONTROL MOSQUITO BREEDING DURING THE MONSOON

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 5: MCD Commissioner Gyanesh Bharti Thursday directed all government and private offices, educational institutes, market associations, and RWAs to take preventive measures to check dengue cases in the city, an official statement said.

The commissioner's direction comes well ahead of the monsoon season that usually

begins in the national capital in the last week of June.

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) commissioner has asked all private and public establishments to take preventive measures to control mosquito breeding during the monsoon.

Expressing concern over the rise in dengue cases here every monsoon, Bharti said, "The central cross-checking teams of National Vector Borne



Disease Control Programme, National Institute of Malaria Research and MCD have been reporting high aedes mosquito breeding from various government offices, schools and certain residential colonies."

"There is a need to take preventive action to control larvae and aedes mosquito breeding at source," he added. The commissioner asked heads of all establishments to ensure that water tanks or containers

in their premises are properly covered with lids and coolers are regularly cleaned. He also advised to observe one day a week as 'dry day' to clean all articles prone to water accumulation.

"One tablespoon of kerosene oil or petrol can be put into those coolers that cannot be emptied. Collection of stagnant water should not be allowed inside or around office premises," the statement said.

"Accesses to overhead water tanks should be provided to the DBCs (domestic breeding checkers) for checking," it said.

The corporation will take action against people who are found flouting the rules to control vector-borne diseases, it added.

Sharmila hits out at Jagan for fielding uncle's 'killer'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kadapa (Andhra Pradesh), April 5: The murder of former minister, YS Vivekananda Reddy in 2019, has taken centre stage in Kadapa Lok Sabha constituency as his niece, YS Sharmila Reddy Friday launched her poll campaign with a fresh tirade against her brother and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, for allegedly shielding the killers.

Accompanied by Vivekananda Reddy's daughter Sunitha Reddy, the Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee chief and party candidate for Kadapa seat launched the campaign bus yatra.

The cousins slammed Jagan Mohan Reddy for once again fielding YS Avinash Reddy from Kadapa, despite the CBI naming him and his father, YS Bhaskar Reddy, as accused in Vivekananda Reddy's murder.

Accusing her brother of promoting the politics of murder, Sharmila Reddy said if politics



of murder is to be put to an end, people should defeat him and Avinash Reddy.

She reiterated that Jagan Mohan Reddy has once again fielded the killer of their 'chinnanna (uncle)'. Sharmila Reddy, daughter of former Chief Minister, late YS Rajasekhara Reddy, said she



embarked on the poll campaign with the blessings of her father, the love of her mother and as per the last wish of 'chinnanna'.

She alleged that Jagan Mohan Reddy was misusing power to shield the killers.

"I am contesting from Kadapa to make sure that the killer does not enter the legislature again.

I am fighting for justice," she said, targeting cousin Avinash Reddy, who is seeking re-election for a third-consecutive term.

The Congress leader said Jagan Mohan Reddy mortgaged the state's interests, including special category status for Andhra Pradesh and the Polavaram project with the BJP government at the Centre.

On her part, Sunitha Reddy appealed to the people to elect Sharmila in this fight for justice for her father Vivekananda Reddy.

On the first day of her campaign, Sharmila Reddy will cover seven mandals in Badvel Assembly segment.

The Congress party had Tuesday named Sharmila as the party candidate from Kadapa.

The same day she offered tributes at the samadhi of her father at Idupulapaya. She said Vivekananda Reddy's last wish was to see her contest for Lok Sabha from Kadapa.

Will meet you soon outside: Sisodia in letter from Tihar Jail

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 5: AAP leader Manish Sisodia has written a letter from Tihar Jail to the people of his Assembly constituency, comparing his plight with the atrocities committed by the Britishers against freedom fighters and asserting his commitment to education.

The former deputy chief minister, who has been arrested in connection with the Delhi excise policy scam case, also expressed hope that he will be out of jail soon.

"Will meet you soon outside. The British rulers had also arrogance of power and they sent people to jail in false cases," he said and added that Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela, who spent many years in jail, were his inspiration.

Sisodia's bail hearing is scheduled in a Delhi court Saturday. In the letter to people of his assembly constituency Patparganj in east Delhi, Sisodia, said a strug-



gle for good education and schools is underway like people fought for freedom of the country.

"Education revolution Zindabad. Love you all," Sisodia, who also served as education minister in the Kejriwal government before his arrest, said in the letter.

Sisodia said his love for the people of his constituency has increased while being incarcerated and that they were his strength. Despite the dictatorship of the British rulers the dream of freedom was realised. Similarly, every child will get good education one day, Sisodia said. Good education is necessary for a developed country, he added.

Heatwave warning for 130 mandals in Andhra Pradesh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Amaravati (Andhra Pradesh), April 5: Andhra Pradesh State Disaster Management Authority (APSDMA) has warned of a heatwave in 130 mandals across the state Thursday.

It also forecast a severe heatwave in one mandal.

Among the 130 mandals, 19 each are in Vizianagaram and Nandyala districts, 14 in NTR, 13 in Anakapalli and 12 in Parvathipuram Manyam district and they were expected to experience a heatwave, APSDMA managing director R Kurmanadh said in a press release Wednesday night.

As per APSDMA forecast, Komarada in Parvathipuram Manyam district would see a temperature of 44 degrees Celsius Thursday while several others would see the mercury hover at around 42 degrees Celsius.

TTD uses three tonne of flowers for Pushpa Yagam ritual

DEVOTEES AND TEMPLE OFFICIALS BROUGHT FLOWERS SUCH AS ROSES, JASMINES, LILIES AND OTHER VARIETIES IN BASKETS FOR THE PRIESTS TO USE IN THE RITUAL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Tirupati (Andhra Pradesh), April 5: The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD), the official custodian of Sri Venkateswara temple in Tirupati, conducted the annual Pushpa Yagam ritual, using a dozen varieties of flowers weighing three tonne.

The yagam which was held between 2 pm and 5 pm Thursday, also featured half a dozen varieties of leaves.

"The annual Pushpa Yagam was held with celestial fervour at Kalyana Venkateswara Swamy temple in Srinivasa Mangapuram Thursday evening.

A dozen varieties of flowers of three tonne and half a dozen (varieties of) leaves were used to render a floral bath to the processional deities from 2 pm to 5 pm," said a TTD release.

Devotees and temple officials brought flowers such as roses, jasmynes, lilies and others in baskets for the priests to use in the ritual.

Prior to the floral ritual, the temple body conducted Snapana Kalyanotsavam ritual and in the run-up to the event, it cancelled Tiruppavada and Kalyanotsavam.

On Friday, TTD executive officer (EO) A V Dharma Reddy participated in the monthly



'Dial Your EO' programme to receive feedback and suggestions from devotees across the country. As many as 29 callers from across India dialled the EO and a person named Venkatesh from

Gujarat enquired with Reddy about the procedure to renovate a 120-year-old Sri Venkateswara temple in the north Indian state.

"TTD will construct or renovate the temple as per the request of Sri Venkateswara Alaya Nirmana Trust (SRIVANI) with funds after a team of officers from TTD visit the temple and verify the possibilities," said Reddy in a release.

A devotee from Manchiryal in Telangana, called over phone to find out about the status of the temple construction in his place. The executive officer informed him that the construction process would take place only after a thorough verification.

Reddy highlighted that the temple body initiated the construction of 3,600 temples in the past three years, out of which 1,700 have been completed and the remaining temples are at various stages of construction.



According to the disaster management authority, Sidhout, Vontimitta and Kadapa town in the eponymous district saw the temperature soar to 43.4 degrees Celsius Wednesday. Also, Tadipatri in Anantapur district, Markapuram in Prakasam district and Nandikotkur in Nandyala district reported 43.3 degrees Celsius. Kurmanadh urged people to stay indoors as much as possible and called on elderly people, pregnant and lactating women to take precautions. Moreover, he advised people to consume a lot of liquids to avoid dehydration.



Dissidence, party hopping on

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 5: Three major political parties, the ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD), the Congress, and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), have been facing an uphill task to quell the rebellion by leaders who were denied tickets with resignations and party hopping continuing unabated. While former MP and Pallahara ex-MLA Rabi Narayan Pani resigned from the BJP, Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) vice-president Biswa Bhusan Das has sent his resignation letter to party president of the state Sarat Pattanayak Friday.

Moreover, senior BJD leader Santosh Kumar Amat has quit the party after allegedly being denied a ticket. He resigned from the primary membership of the party. Although, he did not mention the reason behind his move, 'continuous negligence' in the party and 'denial of ticket' ahead of the polls are assumed to be the prime reason. Amat was reportedly disappointed after the BJD announced former MLA Jyeshth Singh and Padma Shri Dilip Tirkey as the candidates for Sundargarh Assembly and Lok Sabha seats respectively.

Pani wrote in his letter to the state BJP president Manmohan Samal that 'there is no place of ethics and principle in present day politics'. 'Any Tom Dick and Harry is being given all sort of



power and responsibility by overlooking senior and sincere people like us who are forced to sit idle like silent spectators," Pani said in the letter.

Pani was elected to Lok Sabha from Deogarh constituency in 1989. He had successfully contested the Assembly Elections in 2009 from Pallahara constituency on BJD ticket. He was also the chief whip of the party. Pani had quit BJD in 2019 and joined the saffron party.

Meanwhile, a day after quitting BJD, Athamallik MLA Ramesh Chandra Sai joined the BJP Friday. Similarly, Youth Congress president Rajat Choudhury joined BJP Friday.

It is learnt that disappointed aspirants are either jumping to other parties or announcing to contest as independent candidates in their respective con-

Disappointed ticket aspirants are either jumping to other parties or announcing to contest as independent candidates in their respective constituencies

Similarly, many aspirants, along with their supporters, have been protesting at the party headquarters demanding reconsideration of the decision

stituencies. Likewise, many aspirants, along with their supporters, have been protesting at the party headquarters demanding reconsideration of the decisions.

Talking to media, senior BJD leader Padmanabha Behera said, "There have always been rebels in politics. This time, the number of rebels is a bit more in number."

He said that BJD has the ex-

perts in winning elections by successfully dealing with such rebellions.

Several leaders tendered their resignations from the party within hours of it declaring its candidates list Wednesday. MLA Parshuram Dhada and former Phubani MLA Debendra Kanhar were among those who quit soon after Chief Minister and party president Naveen Patnaik announced the second list of candidates for Assembly seats.

Similarly, two more senior leaders from Berhampur - Rama Chandra Panda and T Gopi - resigned from the party Thursday.

"I was a ticket aspirant for Berhampur Lok Sabha seat in 2019 but the party fielded Chandrashekar Sahu who joined the BJD after leaving the Congress. Though I have been keen to contest the Lok Sabha

Pradhan launches 'Modi Vijay Prachar' campaign



AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 5: Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, who has been fielded from Sambalpur Lok Sabha seat, launched the 'Modi Vijay Prachar' campaign from Athamallik in Angul district, Friday.

Before launching the campaign, Pradhan visited Lord Shri Madanmohan Jiu Temple in Purunagarh and sought the blessings of the deity.

The Union minister, who after a gap of almost 15 years will enter into the electoral battle and contest the Sambalpur Lok Sabha

seat in the upcoming elections, said Purunagarh is the holy land of Swabhimana, sacrifice, devotion, and spirituality.

He said it is the land of sacrifice of Angul king Somnath Singh Jagdev where King Somnath fought against the tyranny of British rule.

Pradhan said he had the good fortune to visit Lord Shri Madanmohan Jiu Temple which was established centuries ago in Purunagarh. "It is a matter of honour to start the 'Modi Vijay Prachar' campaign in Athamallik constituency from the ground of sacrifice and struggle," Pradhan said.



NEW HOME: Former Youth Congress president Rajat Choudhury joins BJP at the state office of the saffron party in Bhubaneswar, Friday

Brothers pitted against each other in Chikiti

AGENCIES

Berhampur, April 5: Chikiti Assembly constituency in Ganjam district is all set to witness a contest between two brothers in the forthcoming elections to be held May 13.

The siblings facing each other in the electoral battlefield are sons of former Assembly Speaker Chintamani Dyansamantara.

While the Opposition BJP has fielded younger brother Manoranjan Dyansamantara, his elder brother Ravindranath Dyansamantara has been picked up by the Congress. The Congress and BJP declared their candidatures Tuesday.

Chintamani, a senior Congress leader, was elected three times from Chikiti - twice as an independent (1980 and 1995) and once on a Congress ticket (1985).

While junior Dyansamantara unsuccessfully contested the Assembly elections twice - on Congress ticket (2014) and BJP ticket (2019), his elder brother is contesting for the first time.

The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) has fielded Chinmayananda Srirup Deb, son of minister Usha Devi as its candidate from Chikiti Assembly seat, as Devi was reluctant to contest this time due to her age. Devi had been elected from the seat five times. "I have been active in Congress since my father's period. As a result,



The Opposition BJP has fielded younger brother Manoranjan, while his elder brother Ravindranath has been picked up by Congress for the upcoming polls

son's decision to contest on BJP ticket was his own decision. In democracy, we cannot impose our decision on anyone," he added.

Meanwhile, Nabarangpur district in southern Odisha will witness a fight between an aunt and her nephew in the Assembly election to be held May 13.

Kausalya Pradhani has been fielded by BJD from the Nabarangpur Assembly seat while her nephew Dilip Pradhani is Congress candidate from the same constituency. "This is a fight of two parties and not exactly between aunt and nephew," said Dilip. Kausalya said the elections will have no impact on their family relationship.

Family members contesting against each other in elections is not new in Indian politics, said JK Baral, a retired professor of Political Science in Berhampur University.

In the past, we have seen several such instances. Not surprised that two brothers are challenging each other in the same constituency, Baral said.

92-yr-old Jharkhand man to cast vote for first time

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sahibganj, April 5: Ninety-two-year-old differently-abled Khalil Ansari of Rajmahal parliamentary constituency in Jharkhand will exercise his right to cast vote for the first time in his life in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

This came to the fore during surprise inspections by Jharkhand Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) K Ravi Kumar in Sahibganj district, Friday. The CEO made surprise inspections at polling booths in

Mundro block of the district, around 450-km from Jharkhand's capital Ranchi. Kumar directed Sahibganj district election officials to register Ansari's name in the electoral roll with immediate effect, an official said.

He also visited several villages and met senior citizens and differently-abled voters, according to an official release.

During his visit, he asked Ansari if he was a registered voter. "I never exercised my franchise as my name is not there in voter list," Ansari told the CEO.



A resident of Badkhori village, Ansari is a voter under

Rajmahal parliamentary constituency, which will go to polls June 1.

Kumar directed the officials to enrol his name in the electoral roll with immediate effect.

Ansari expressed his thanks to the CEO and said, "I will cast my vote for sure for the first time."

The CEO also met other senior voters of the region and took stock of the minimum facilities and other arrangements available for senior citizens and differently-abled at the polling stations.



HITTING CAMPAIGN TRAIL: BJD's Sambalpur Lok Sabha candidate Pranab Prakash Das along with other party leaders takes out a rally in Deogarh, Friday



CONG RALLY: Congress' Kalahandi Lok Sabha candidate Droupadi Majhi and the party's Lanjigarh Assembly candidate Balabhadra Majhi during a rally at Gopalpur under Thuamul Rampur block in Kalahandi district ahead of the elections

of the day quote

The parties in the INDIA bloc have come together due to corruption charges against them

SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN
FORMER MP CM

India's contribution to the maritime sector goes back to ancient civilisations and our progressive nation continues to strengthen the sector fostering global trade and boosting the economy

PRAMOD SAWANT | GOA CM

In 2014, Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy had sought votes as the chief of YSRCP claiming that his father Y S Rajasekhara Reddy was murdered and in 2019 he approached the voters claiming that his paternal uncle Y S Vivekananda Reddy was done to death. Now, Jagan Mohan Reddy, as the Chief Minister of the state is again resorting to similar corpse politics by not disbursing pensions to the beneficiaries

N CHANDRABABU NAIDU | TDP SUPREMO

SHORT TAKES

Himanta defends Kangana's remark

Guwahati: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma Friday defended actor-turned-politician and BJP's Lok Sabha candidate Kangana Rana's assertion that Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was the first Prime Minister of the country. Sarma said Netaji had established the Azad Hind government four years before Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had become the Prime Minister which was recognised by nine countries. "To those mocking @KanganaTeam - On 21 October 1943, Netaji established the Azad Hind Govt, of which he was the head, nearly 4 years before Pt Nehru took oath as Prime Minister following transfer of power", the Chief Minister posted on X. "Nine countries recognised the Azad Hind Govt as the legitimate Government of India. This subconscious urge to interpret history on the lines of colonialists is called 'Ghulam ki Mansikta'", he added.

SC grants bail to Shoma Kanti Sen

New Delhi: In a relief to academic-activist Shoma Kanti Sen, arrested in June 2018 in connection with the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case, the Supreme Court Friday granted her bail while taking cognisance of the "composite effect" of the delay in framing charges coupled with her prolonged detention. The apex court imposed several conditions on the 66-year-old Sen, including that she shall keep the location status (GPS) of her mobile phone active round the clock while under bail and her phone shall be paired with that of the investigating officer of the NIA to enable him, at any given time, to identify her exact location.

Normal ops by May: Vistara CEO

New Delhi: Full-service carrier Vistara expects operations to normalise by May as the flight disruptions mainly caused by a stretched roster for pilots are getting addressed, its CEO Vinod Kannan said Friday. He also said the concerns raised by the pilots are being reviewed and discussed by the airline. The Tata Group airline cancelled many flights earlier this week due to the non-availability of pilots and has also been forced to temporarily reduce the overall flight operations in order to stabilise the situation. The carrier cancelled more than 125 flights over three days from April 1.



We have to show the country our collective power. They (BJP) are trying to promote one religion. How can they decide what you eat, how you dress? We will not be cowed

FAROOQ ABDULLAH | NC CHIEF

THAROOR DECLARES ASSETS WORTH ₹55CR

Shashi Tharoor, who is eyeing a fourth consecutive win from the Thiruvananthapuram Lok Sabha seat, has declared assets of over ₹55 crore in his nomination papers. The sitting Congress MP from Thiruvananthapuram also declared a total income of over ₹4.32 crore in the financial year 2022-2023



ATISHI LASHES OUT AT EC



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 5: Delhi minister and senior AAP leader Atishi lashed out at the Election Commission (EC) after she was served a show-cause notice Friday, asking if it was a 'subsidiary organisation' of the BJP. She said in a press conference that 'questions were raised over neutrality of the EC', whose responsibility was to remain non-partisan, provide level-playing field to the opposition parties, and conduct free and fair elections. The notice was issued to Atishi by the poll body over her claims that the BJP had approached her to either join the party or be prepared to be arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) within a month. Atishi said that news was flashed at 11:15 am Friday that she has been issued a notice by the EC whereas she got it through email at 11:45 am. "It means the news of EC notice was first planted to the media by the BJP and then the EC gave the notice. I want to ask the Election Commission of the country -

have you become a subsidiary organisation of the BJP," she said.

The senior AAP leader said she will reply to the notice and remind the Election Commission of the neutrality and non-partisanship expected of it in conducting free and fair elections in the country. The Election Commission of India has been given a very big responsibility by the Constitution to save democracy in the country, she said. Atishi said the present three election commissioners had predecessors like T N Seshan, and added, "You are running an Election Commission that is looked up to by the whole world and praised for. No question is ever raised on the impartiality of elections in a country like India."

"I want to appeal the EC not to bow down before the BJP and its central government. The three election commissioners will be remembered by the country for 100 years for all the wrong reasons if they do not allow level-playing field and free and fair elections," she said. The Election Commission in its notice has asked Atishi to back with facts her statement that the BJP approached her to join the party. The BJP moved the poll commission Thursday against Atishi's claim made in a press conference April 2. The BJP lodged a complaint with the EC March 4 and the poll body within hours issued the notice to her, Atishi claimed and asked why no notices were sent to the central agencies for their action against opposition parties and leaders during elections.

THE ELECTION COMMISSION IN ITS NOTICE HAS ASKED ATISHI TO BACK WITH FACTS HER STATEMENT THAT THE BJP APPROACHED HER TO JOIN THE PARTY

THE BJP MOVED THE POLL COMMISSION THURSDAY AGAINST ATISHI'S CLAIM MADE IN A PRESS CONFERENCE APRIL 2

to bow down before the BJP and its central government. The three election commissioners will be remembered by the country for 100 years for all the wrong reasons if they do not allow level-playing field and free and fair elections," she said.

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"Was a notice issued to the ED when the agency arrested a sitting Chief Minister (Arvind Kejriwal), convener of a national party and prominent face of the opposition even after imposition of the model code of conduct for the elections," she asked.

The Delhi government minister also asked the EC why it did not send notices to Income Tax (I-T) department for freezing bank accounts of major the Congress, CPI and the CPI(M). "The BJP-led central government is openly misusing the ED, CBI and I-T department ahead of the elections in front of the poll panel," she alleged. The AAP leader also claimed that the Election Commission did not give the party appointments over issues related to the I-T department raid at the residence of its MLA Gulab Singh March 22.

Video of Shivpal 'bullying' voters goes viral



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Budaun (UP), April 5: Samajwadi Party leader Shivpal Yadav Friday faced charges of 'bullying', triggered by a video clip in which he appears to be talking about dealing later with people who do not vote for the party. "We will seek everyone's vote. If you vote for us, it is all right. Otherwise, the matter will be settled later," he is heard saying in Hindi. In the video, the Samajwadi Party (SP) MLA from Sahaswan, Brajesh Yadav, and Shivpal's son are also seen on the stage along with Shivpal Yadav.

Reacting to the video, BJP leader and Rajya Sabha MP Brij Lal said threatening and bullying people is the basic character of the SP. Brajesh Yadav said, "The video has been presented after twisting its content. This video is of March 15. It was when Shivpal Yadav was going towards Gannaur. He made the statement in the Bilsa Assembly constituency of Budaun."

Meanwhile, Budaun District Magistrate Manoj Kumar said, "We have traced the video, and information about this video has been sought by the office of the Chief Electoral Officer of UP. The contents of the video are being probed. Based on the probe report, action will be taken." Shivpal Yadav is currently an SP MLA from Jaswantnagar in Etawah district.

EC targets 266 seats to boost voter turnout

In the last Lok Sabha elections, of the 50 seats with the lowest voter turnout, 17 were in metropolitans or major cities

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 5: The Election Commission (EC) Friday said it has identified 266 parliamentary constituencies, including 215 in rural areas, with low voter turnout and is planning targeted intervention to enhance voting percentage in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls.

Municipal commissioners from major cities and select district election officers from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh discussed enhancing voter engagement and participation in identified urban and rural Lok Sabha seats. At its conference on low voter turnout here, the EC said 266 parliamentary constituencies - 215 rural and 51 urban - with low voter turnout have been identified.

Eleven states and Union territories - Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Maharashtra, Uttarakhand, Telangana, Gujarat, Punjab, Rajasthan, Jammu and Kashmir and Jharkhand - had a voter turnout lower than the national average of 67.40 per cent in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

Addressing the participants, Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar stressed that 'one size fits all' approach will not work and different strategies have to be worked out for different areas and segments.

Polling for the seven-phased Lok Sabha polls begins April 19. Kumar emphasised on a three-

pronged strategy of providing facilitation at polling stations, such as queue management, sheltered parking in congested areas; targeted outreach and communication; and involvement of critical stakeholders including RWAs, local icons and youth influencers to persuade people to come to polling stations on voting day.

He told officials to prepare a booth-wise action plan for enhanced participation and behaviour change. He asked the participants to prepare different strategies for urban and rural areas and plan interventions accordingly for different target audiences.

Discussions were centred on critical issues such as optimising queue management at polling stations and facilitating voting in high-rise buildings. Urban specific hurdles to increased voter turnout were identified and targeted city-specific interventions were planned. The officers were encouraged to develop tailored, region-specific outreach programmes that resonate with the unique needs and demographics of their constituencies.

The Commission recalled that nearly 29.7 crore eligible voters did not vote in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections 'underscoring the scale of the problem which calls for proactive measures'. In the last Lok Sabha elections, of the 50 seats with the lowest voter turnout, 17 were in metropolitans or major cities.

EXCISE SCAM

CBI gets permission to grill Kavitha



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 5: A court here Friday allowed the CBI to interrogate BRS leader K Kavitha, arrested in the Delhi excise policy-related money laundering case, in Tihar jail, raising the likelihood of her arrest in the scheduled offence of corruption. Kavitha was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in a money laundering case linked to the alleged excise pol-

icy scam March 15. She is currently in judicial custody. Special Judge for ED and CBI cases Kaveri Baweja permitted the agency to interrogate Kavitha.

The order was passed on the plea filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) seeking the court's permission to interrogate Kavitha in judicial custody. The CBI, in its application, sought the court's permission to "interrogate/quiz and record the statement" of Kavitha regarding WhatsApp chats recovered from co-accused Buchi Babu's phone and documents related to a land deal after which Rs 100 crore was allegedly paid to the Aam Aadmi Party in kickbacks.

Since Kavitha is already in judicial custody, the court's permission was required to question her in jail. Kavitha's advocate Nitesh Rana said the application was neither served to the accused nor the information about the hearing given to the defence counsel.



Shia Muslim women during a demonstration to show solidarity with Palestine on International Quds Day at Magam area of Budgam district in Jammu and Kashmir, Friday

One dead, another hurt in Kerala blast

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kannur (Kerala), April 5: A blast that claimed the life of one person and seriously injured another near Panur in this north Kerala district Friday stirred up political waters in the state with both the Congress and the BJP blaming the CPI(M) for it, while the Left party denied any involvement in the incident.

The opposition Congress alleged that the blast, which occurred around 1 am according to the police, happened during the manufacturing of country-made bombs by some CPI(M) supporters. The BJP accused the Left party of trying to create terror by using bombs.

The ruling CPI(M), meanwhile, denied the allegations and said that the two persons involved in the incident were also accused of attacking workers of the Left party, and therefore they were no longer considered as part of the political organisation.

The CPI(M)'s Panoor area committee, in a statement, also said that while the Left party has been trying to maintain peace, its political opponents are deliberately spreading "propaganda" that the injured were party workers to mislead the people.

Sherin, a resident of Kaivelikkal, succumbed to his injuries while undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Kozhikode. The other injured person, Vineesh, lost one palm and is in critical condition, according to the police.

Leader of Opposition in the State Assembly V D Satheesan blamed the CPI(M) for the incident and alleged that the Left party was using its workers to manufacture country-made bombs and worsening the law-and-order situation during the elections.

Senior BJP leader and the party's Kerala in-charge Prakash Javadekar claimed that CPI(M) is taking refuge in terror as it is losing support among the people. He also attacked the Congress over the support offered to it by the SDPI and said it was a grim situation before the elections on April 26 in the state.

Ocean floor 'reservoir' of plastic pollution: Study

THE RESEARCHERS SAID THEIR ESTIMATE OF THE PLASTIC POLLUTION ON THE OCEAN FLOOR COULD BE UP TO 100 TIMES MORE THAN THE AMOUNT OF PLASTIC FLOATING ON THE OCEAN'S SURFACE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 5: A new research has estimated that about three to 11 million tonnes of plastic could be sitting on the ocean floor. Scientists said that with a garbage truck's worth of plastic entering the ocean every minute, the ocean floor has become a 'resting place' or a 'reservoir' for most of the plastic pollution.

All this accumulated plastic then gets broken down into smaller pieces before getting mixed with ocean sediments.

Denise Hardesty, senior research scientist at the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), Australia, said this is the first estimate of how much plastic waste ends up on the ocean floor.

"We discovered that the ocean floor has become a resting place, or reservoir, for most plastic pollution, with between three to 11 million tonnes of plastic estimated to be sinking to the ocean floor," said Hardesty, one of the corresponding authors of the study published in the journal Deep Sea Research Part I: Oceanographic Research Papers.

The researchers said their estimate of the plastic pollution on the ocean floor could be up to 100 times more than the amount of plastic floating on the ocean's surface. "The ocean surface is a tem-



porary resting place of plastic so it is expected that if we can stop plastic entering our oceans, the amount would be reduced. However, our research found that plastic will continue to end up in the deep ocean, which becomes a permanent resting place or sink for marine plastic pollution," said lead researcher

Alice Zhu, a PhD candidate from the University of Toronto, Canada.

While previous estimates looked at microplastics on the seafloor, this research looked at larger items, 'from nets and cups to plastic bags and everything in between,' said Hardesty. For their study, the researchers es-

timated the amount and spread of the plastic pollution using predictive models, based on data from remote-operated vehicles (ROVs) and bottom trawls.

Their results also revealed that about 54 per cent of the estimated 3-11 million tonnes of plastic resides in the ocean depths, from 200 metres to as deep as 11,000 metres. The remainder 46 per cent of the estimated plastic mass resides above a depth of 200 metres, the researchers said.

Inland and coastal seas are predicted to hold as much plastic mass as does the rest of the ocean floor, despite these areas covering much less surface area than oceans, they said.

"These findings help to fill a longstanding knowledge gap on the behaviour of plastic in the marine environment," said Zhu. With the use of plastic expected to double by 2040, understanding the pathways of plastic, including how and where it travels, is crucial to protecting marine ecosystems and wildlife, the researchers said.



Defense industry cooperation between Japan and the United States, as well as with like-minded countries, are extremely important
FUMIO KISHIDA | JAPANESE PM

KOSOVO TO CONDUCT A NATIONWIDE CENSUS

Kosovo's government began Friday its first nationwide census since 2011 which will include surveying the ethnic Serb minority in the north, at a time when tensions with neighbouring Serbia are high. The Agency of Statistics is conducting the 12-million euro (USD 13 million) census, originally set to take place in 2021 but was postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic



of the day quote

Nevertheless, there are still challenges due to adverse financial spillovers from geopolitical tensions, volatility in global commodity prices

SANTIPHAB PHOMVIHANE | LAOS' FINANCE MINISTER

The US also wants to see tangible steps to bolster the protection of civilians and aid workers

ANTHONY BLINKEN | US SECRETARY OF STATE

We want to provide speedy justice to the people. We want to fulfil our promise

BILAWAL BHUTTO ZARDARI | FORMER MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF PAK

YELLEN WARNS CHINA ON EXCESS PRODUCTION

REUTERS

Guangzhou, China, April 5: US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said Friday that concerns are growing over the global economic fallout from China's excess manufacturing capacity, making the issue the main focus of four days of economic meetings with Chinese officials.

China is too large to export its way to rapid growth and would benefit by reducing excess industrial capacity which is pressuring other economies, Yellen said in remarks to an audience of about 40 representatives of the American Chamber of Commerce in Guangzhou.

"Overcapacity isn't a new problem, but it has intensified, and we're seeing emerging risks in new sectors," Yellen said in China's southern export hub of Guangzhou, where she met with Vice Premier He Lifeng and

Guangdong Province Governor Wang Weizhong.

Yellen and other Biden administration officials are growing increasingly concerned about China's overproduction of electric vehicles, solar panels, semiconductors and other goods that are flooding into global markets in the face of a demand slump in China's domestic market.

She said that this is not healthy for China and is hurting producers in other countries, urging Beijing to shift away from state-driven investment and return to the market-oriented reforms that fueled growth in past decades.

While Sino-US tensions over a range of issues have been escalating, Yellen highlighted areas of mutual interest in a dialogue launched during her first visit to China last July, including fighting climate change and illicit finance.



Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak takes part in a cricket practice session whilst meeting participants in the ACE Programme in south London

Ukraine drones destroy six Russian warplanes

The overnight attack targeted a military airfield near Morozovsk in Russia and was conducted by Ukraine's Security Service in cooperation with the army

AGENCIES

Kyiv, April 5: Ukrainian officials claimed Friday they used a barrage of drones to destroy at least six military aircraft and badly damage eight others at an airfield in Russia's Rostov region. Russian defense officials, however, claimed they intercepted 44 Ukrainian drones and that only a power substation was damaged in the attack.

The Associated Press could not independently verify either side's claims. The assault appeared to be one of Kyiv's biggest air attacks in the war, coming as its forces stepped up their assaults on Russian soil. Russia has also escalated attacks on civilian infrastructure, including Ukraine's power plants, in recent weeks, signalling a new and potentially dangerous phase in the conflict as both sides struggle to achieve significant advances on the ground.

The overnight attack targeted a military airfield near Morozovsk in Russia and was conducted by Ukraine's Security Service in cooperation with the army, Ukrainian intelligence officials told the AP.

They said around 20 members of the airfield's personnel were killed or injured. Morozovsk airfield was used by Russian bombers that have been launching guided aerial bombs at Ukraine's cities and frontline positions, the officials said.

They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were



IF TRUE, THE ATTACK WOULD BE AMONG UKRAINE'S MOST SUCCESSFUL CROSS-BORDER STRIKES

LAST OCTOBER, UKRAINE CLAIMED IT DESTROYED NINE RUSSIAN HELICOPTERS AT TWO AIRFIELDS IN RUSSIAN-OCCUPIED REGIONS USING LONG-RANGE BALLISTIC MISSILES DONATED BY THE UNITED STATES

not authorized to publicly discuss the operation. If true, the attack would be among Ukraine's most successful cross-border strikes. Last October, Ukraine claimed it destroyed nine Russian helicopters at two airfields in Russian-occupied regions using long-range ballistic missiles donated by the United States.

Last August, Ukrainian media, citing unidentified intelligence sources, claimed that drone attacks hit parked Russian bomber aircraft at air bases deep inside Russia.

In a conflicting version of events, Russia's Defense Ministry said a total of 44 drones were "intercepted and destroyed" in the Morozovsk district, more than 100 kilometers (60 miles) from the border. The attack damaged a power substation, Rostov Gov. Vasily Golubev said, adding that eight people near the airfield were injured.

Usually well-informed Russian military bloggers confirmed an attempted attack by Ukrainian drones on a military air base in Morozovsk but claimed there were no casualties at the base and no damage to warplanes.

The Russian defense ministry said nine more drones were intercepted over the border regions of Kursk, Belgorod, Krasnodar and the nearby Saratov region, bringing the total of attack drones deployed by Ukraine overnight to 53.

Earthquake rattles NYC

ASSOCIATED PRESS

New York, April 5: An earthquake centred between New York and Philadelphia shook skyscrapers and suburbs across the northeastern US for several seconds Friday morning, causing no major damage but startling millions of people in an area unaccustomed to such tremors.

The US Geological Survey reported a quake at 10:23 am with a preliminary magnitude of 4.8, centred near Whitehouse Station, New Jersey, or about 45 miles (72 kilometres) west of New York City and 50 miles (80 kilometres) north of Philadelphia. The agency's figures indicated that over 42 million people might have felt the rumbling.

People from Baltimore to the Massachusetts-New Hampshire border reported feeling the ground shake. While there were no immediate reports of serious damage, officials were checking bridges and other major in-



frastructure, Amtrak slowed trains throughout the busy Northeast Corridor, and a Philadelphia-area commuter rail line suspended service out of what it said was "an abundance of caution."

Pictures and decorative plates tumbled off the wall in Christiann Thompson's house in Whitehouse Station, she said. Thompson was volunteering at the local library when the quake hit, leaving few effects, but she got a report from her husband on the scene at home.

ATTACK ON CONSULATE Iran vows to 'punish Zionist regime'



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tehran, April 5: The commander of Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guard warned Friday that "our brave men will punish the Zionist regime," escalating threats against Israel for an airstrike that killed seven of the group's members, including two Iranian generals, earlier this week.

The strike, widely attributed to Israel, destroyed the consular section at the Iranian embassy in Syria.

The attack on an Iranian diplomatic compound was a significant escalation in what has been a long-running shadow war between the two archenemies, and Israel has been bracing for an Iranian response.

The tensions flared against the backdrop of the six-month-old Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, and raised renewed fears of a widening regional conflict. The Islamic militant group Hamas, which has ruled Gaza for 17 years, is one of Iran's proxies,

along with Lebanon's Hezbollah militia and Yemen's Houthi rebels.

Both Hezbollah and the Houthis have carried out attacks along the fringes of the Gaza war, with Hezbollah engaging in daily cross-border exchanges with Israel and the Houthis frequently targeting Red Sea shipping.

On Friday, thousands joined a funeral procession in Tehran for the seven slain Guard members, chanting "death to Israel" and "death to America." Marchers held up banners with photos of those killed in the attack.

Other banners read: "We will make the wicked Zionist regime regret this crime, with the power of God." The protesters then headed to Tehran University where the head of the Revolutionary Guard, Gen. Hossein Salami gave his speech before the weekly Friday prayers.

"Our brave men will punish the Zionist regime," he said, adding that "no enemy act against our holy system will go unanswered."

SHORT TAKES

Russian Governor stabbed in stomach

Moscow: Governor of Russia's Murmansk region Andrei Chibis was stabbed in the stomach after a meeting in the town of Apatity Thursday. Chibis was hospitalised and the attacker was detained, Russian media reported. According to the Governor's spokesperson, the attack happened suddenly and the perpetrator did not make any demands or shout any slogans. He was quickly apprehended by a Russian National Guard (Rosgvardiya) officer. Chibis, who was currently in the operating room, managed to get to the car on his own after the attack.

McDonald's buys its Israeli restaurants

San Francisco: McDonald's is buying its restaurants in Israel from a longtime franchisee, hoping to reset sales that have slumped due to boycotts in the region. The Chicago-based burger giant said Friday it will buy Alonyal Limited, which owns and operates 225 restaurants in Israel. Financial terms weren't disclosed. The deal is expected to close in the next few months. McDonald's said it would operate the restaurants and retain more than 5,000 employees.

Shehbaz Sharif to visit Saudi Arabia

Islamabad: Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will embark on his maiden three-day visit to Saudi Arabia from Saturday to meet the Saudi leadership and discuss issues of mutual interest, it was announced here Friday. Sharif, who assumed office as Pakistan's Prime Minister for a second time last month, will also perform Umrah (in Makkah) and offer prayers at the Masjid Nabwi Al-Sharif (in Medina) during the visit from April 6 to 8 during the last days of Ramadan, according to the Foreign Office.

Strikes end

London: The Indian-origin chair of the British Medical Association's (BMA) Consultants Committee Friday confirmed the end of year-long strike action after senior National Health Service (NHS) doctors accepted the government's pay offer. Dr Vishal Sharma said the agreement is "the end of the beginning" in consultants' efforts to restore their pay to 2008 levels and stressed it is "imperative" for the review body to utilise its independence to prevent future pay disputes. Around 83 per cent of NHS consultants who took part in a three-week referendum tabled by the BMA doctors' union voted in favour of accepting the offer on behalf of the profession.

Austria likely to be largely 'ice-free' in 45 yrs: Experts

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Vienna, April 5: Austrian glaciers receded last year at a rapid pace and the Alpine country is likely to be largely ice-free in 40 to 45 years as the process continues, experts said Friday.

The Austrian Alpine Club said that, of the 93 glaciers its volunteers measured and observed, all but one receded in 2022-2023. The 79 glaciers measured both last year and the previous year were an average 23.9 metres (78 feet) shorter than a year earlier, it said in an annual report. That was the third-highest figure of shrinkage in both the club's 133 years of measurements and in the past seven years.

The retreat of 14 other glaciers was observed less precisely, for example by comparing photos. The biggest retreat was that

of Austria's biggest glacier — the Pasterze, in the Glockner mountain group in the southern province of Carinthia — which shrank by 203.5 metres (668 feet), a record for that glacier.

Gerhard Lieb, the co-leader of the club's glacier measurement service, said Austria's glaciers can no longer be saved and their disappearance in the coming decades is "unstoppable." The process of forming snow reserves at the upper ends of glaciers so that they can stabilize takes decades, "and the time is up," he added. "That means nothing can be done anymore."

"There might be some remnants in shadowed locations — maybe at the Glockner glacier on the north-east side, some areas in the Oetzal valley," said the service's other co-leader, Andreas Kellerer-Pirklbauer. "But de facto,



in 40 to 45 years all of Austria will be pretty much ice-free."

The experts, both of whom work at the University of Graz's geography institute, said that the continued existence of

Austria's glaciers is down entirely to ice reserves from the past.

Kellerer-Pirklbauer said that "a late but very long and warm melting period in 2023" was the

Glaciers are masses of ice that form as snow and ice compact over centuries and then flow slowly over land

Their melting is one of the most notable indications of human-caused climate change, with glaciers around the world rapidly retreating

Experts in neighbouring Switzerland said in September that that country saw 4 per cent of its total glacier volume disappear in 2023, the second-biggest decline in a single year on top of a 6 per cent drop in 2022

main culprit in the latest numbers. Last year's average figure for glacier retreat fell short of the record set in 2021-2022 of 28.7 metres (94.2 feet). But no glacier receded by more than 100 me-

tres that year, and two did in the latest report: Alongside the Pasterze, Tyrol province's Rettenbachferner glacier was 127 metres (416.7 feet) shorter.

Only one glacier, the Baerenkopfkees in the Glockner group, was unchanged in length last year.

Glaciers are masses of ice that form as snow and ice compact over centuries and then flow slowly over land. Their melting is one of the most notable indications of human-caused climate change, with glaciers around the world rapidly retreating. Experts in neighbouring Switzerland said in September that that country saw 4 per cent of its total glacier volume disappear in 2023, the second-biggest decline in a single year on top of a 6 per cent drop in 2022.

business

of the day quote

We are pleased to announce the successful transition to 100 percent natural gas for urea production

ASHWIN MUTHIAH | CHAIRMAN, SPIC

There has been a 23 per cent growth in demand for women migrants in 2023 in the MENA's hospitality and construction industries compared to the previous year

SAMUEL JOY | CEO, HUNTR

While FMCG has underperformed Nifty, we expect gradually improving earnings to trigger re-rating in valuations

DEVENDER SINGHAL | EXECUTIVE VP, KOTAK MAHINDRA ASSET MANAGEMENT

Q4 RESULTS

BoM logs 16% growth in credit

New Delhi: State-owned Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) Friday said it has posted a credit growth of 16.31 per cent at ₹2.03 lakh crore for the March quarter. The outstanding credit was ₹1.75 lakh crore at the end of March 31, 2023. BoM said in a regulatory filing. The Pune-headquartered lender reported 15.63 per cent increase in total deposits to ₹2.70 lakh crore as against ₹2.34 lakh crore at the end of the fourth quarter of the previous financial year. During the quarter, it said, Current Account and Savings Account (CASA) declined to 52.73 per cent of the total deposits as against 53.39 per cent. The Credit Deposit (CD) ratio increased to 75.23 per cent at the end of March 31, 2024 as against 74.87 per cent in the year-ago period.

Adani Wilmar sees double-digit rise

Bangalore: India's Adani Wilmar forecast double-digit percentage growth in fourth-quarter edible oil sales Friday, driven by strong demand during the festive season in the world's biggest importer. The maker of "Fortune" branded cooking oil had seen a fall in revenue in four consecutive quarters. However, its overall volumes grew just 4% from last year, due to a decline in the animal feed export business. The company had reported an 18.4% fall in third-quarter profit due to weak edible oil demand and lower product prices. India meets more than two-thirds of its edible oil requirements through imports, with Adani Wilmar being one of the largest importers of the product.

STRAINED RELATIONS

India emerged as Maldives' second largest trade partner in 2022 and the largest in 2023

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 5: India Friday removed export curbs on specified quantities of certain commodities like eggs, potatoes, onions, rice, wheat flour, sugar, and dal for Maldives in the current fiscal year. The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) in a notification said these exports have been permitted to Maldives under the bilateral trade agreement between countries during 2024-25. "Export of eggs, potatoes, onions, rice, wheat flour, sugar, dal, stone aggregate and river

7TH TIME IN A ROW

RBI keeps status quo

THE CENTRAL BANK HOLDS REPO RATE AT 6.5%; HOME, AUTO EMIS TO REMAIN UNCHANGED

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 5: The Reserve Bank of India Friday kept the benchmark interest rates unchanged at 6.5 per cent for the seventh time in a row, citing concerns over food inflation in view of IMD's prediction of above normal maximum temperatures during April to June. As RBI has held key policy rates steady, the EMIs on home and auto loans are likely to remain stable for some more time. The central bank has kept interest rates unchanged since February, 2023.

While unveiling the first bi-monthly monetary policy for the current financial year, RBI has retained its growth and inflation forecast for the current fiscal at 7 per cent and 4.5 per cent respectively.

"After a detailed assessment of the evolving macroeconomic and financial developments and the outlook, it (MPC) decided by a 5 to 1 majority to keep the policy repo rate unchanged at 6.50 per cent," RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said. He further said that the six-member MPC would remain focused on withdrawal of accommodation to ensure that inflation progressively aligns to the target, while supporting growth.

INFLATION FIGHT

Referring to inflation, Das said food price uncertainties continue to weigh on the inflation trajectory going forward. Also, the tight demand-supply situation in pulses and the production of key vegetables warrant close monitoring, given the forecast of above normal temperatures in the coming months. "Wheat harvesting is by and large over... Wheat availability



SHAKTIKANTA DAS | GOVERNOR, RBI

will not be affected as much as it did 2 years ago, when there were heatwave conditions starting from March. So, in wheat there is not so much concern. But vegetable prices will have to be watched and any other impact that heat wave conditions may produce," Das said at a post policy press briefing.

Retail inflation in February was 5.1 per cent, with food basket inflation at 8.66 per cent. For the full 2023-24 fiscal, inflation is projected at 5.4 per cent. In the current fiscal, the RBI expects inflation to be around 4.5 per cent, with Q1 at 4.9 per cent; Q2 at 3.8 per cent; Q3 at 4.6 per cent; and Q4 at 4.5 per cent.

Recalling 7.8 per cent retail inflation in April, 2022, Das said the elephant in the room at that time was inflation. The effort, he said, is now to ensure price stability on an enduring basis, paving the way for a sustained period of high growth.

The Indian economy is estimated to have grown 7.6 per cent in 2023-24.

The elephant has now gone out for a walk and appears to be returning to the forest. We would like the elephant to return to the forest and remain there on a durable basis. In other words, it is essential, in the best interest of the economy that CPI inflation continues to moderate and aligns to the target on a durable basis. Till this is achieved, our task remains unfinished

"With rural demand catching up, consumption is expected to support economic growth in 2024-25. Urban consumption stayed buoyant as evident from various indicators. The resilience in cement production, together with strong growth in steel consumption and production and import of capital goods, augur well for the investment cycle to gain further traction," RBI said. It said strengthening of rural demand, improving employment conditions and informal sector activity, moderating inflationary pressures and sustained momentum in manufacturing and services sector should boost private consumption, it added.

GROWTH ESTIMATES

Das said the Indian economy is projected to grow at 7 per cent in the current fiscal. This would be the fourth successive year with 7 per cent or above GDP growth rate.

"Improving global growth and trade prospects, coupled with our rising integration in global supply chains, are expected to propel external demand for goods and services. The headwinds from protracted geopolitical tensions and increasing disruptions in trade routes, however, pose risks to the outlook," RBI said. The real GDP growth for Q1 FY25 is projected at 7.1 per cent; Q2 at 6.9 per cent; Q3 at 7 per cent; and Q4 also at 7 per cent.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Benchmark interest rate or repo rate kept unchanged at 6.5%
- GDP growth for 2024-25 retained at 7%, lower than 7.6% last fiscal
- Retail inflation to average 4.5% this fiscal, lower than 5.4% in FY24
- Food price uncertainties to continue to weigh on inflation
- Trading of Sovereign Green Bonds permitted in International Financial Services Centre
- RBI to launch an app to facilitate retail participation in G-secs
- RBI to allow cash deposits in banks throughUPI
- Permits non-bank payment system operators to offer CBDC wallets
- India continues to be the largest recipient of remittances in the world
- INR most stable among major currencies in FY24
- Net inflows by foreign portfolio investors stood at \$41.6 billion during 2023-24, the second highest level of FPI inflow after 2014-15
- Next monetary policy committee meeting scheduled during June 5 to 7, 2024

REACTIONS

- The central bank maintains the repo rate at 6.5 per cent continuing a hawkish stance to keep inflation under check. However, with repo rates being an industry agnostic subject, we hope to see lower repo/interest rates later this year which will provide an impetus to not just real estate and housing demand but across industries - compounding sectoral and economic growth
- We stand by RBI's commitment for 'unwavering focus on price stability' to ring-fence the economy from global headwinds, including geo-political situation and the resultant supply chain disruptions
- RBI's decision on its policy rates will propel economic activity and boost economic growth. We expect a repo rate cut as and when headline inflation softens around 4.5 per cent
- The decision to maintain the status quo will keep the ongoing residential real estate sales momentum on course and unimpeded. Aspiring homebuyers eyeing a purchase will proceed with confidence

BOMAN IRANI | PRESIDENT, CREDAI
DEEPAK SOOD | SECRETARY GENERAL, ASSOCHAM
SANJEEV AGRAWAL | PRESIDENT, PHDCCI
ANUJ PURI | CHAIRMAN, ANAROCK

LATEST SETBACK

Byju's breaches loan terms, small stake sale blocked

REUTERS



New Delhi, April 5: Indian ed-tech startup Byju's breached terms of loans worth \$42 million and has been asked by an arbitrator not to sell some shares of a group firm, a confidential order showed, the latest setback for the company already battling allegations of mismanagement. An arbitrator, appointed under Singapore International Arbitration Centre rules, has ordered Byju's not to dispose of 4 million shares of Aakash, which as per the loan agreement amounted to a 6% stake last year, according to the April 4 order.

A "case of breach of the loan agreement" has been made out, Ritin Rai, the emergency arbitrator, wrote in his order, which is being reported for the first time by Reuters. Byju's did not respond to a request for comment. A source close to Byju's said the order is not detrimental to Byju and the company is in talks with MEMG to resolve the matter.

Sensex gains marginally to hit new peak

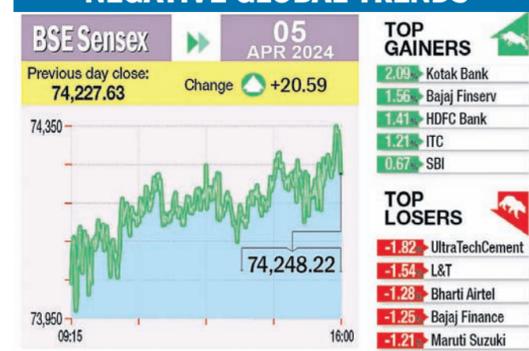
BOTH NIFTY AND SENSEX ADDED ABOUT 0.8% EACH FOR THE WEEK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 5: Equity benchmark index Sensex registered marginal gains to hit a fresh lifetime high of 74,248 Friday after the Reserve Bank maintained the status quo on key interest rates amid a negative trend in global markets. The 30-share BSE Sensex inched up 20.59 points or 0.03 per cent to settle at a fresh record of 74,248.22. The index oscillated between the intra-day peak of 74,361.11 and the low of 73,946.92.

The broader NSE Nifty ended with a marginal loss of 0.95 points at 22,513.70. As many as 28 components of the 50-share benchmark ended in the red. While the main domestic indices concluded with marginal movement, the Bank Nifty edged higher, propelled by robust credit growth in Q4 FY24. The global sentiment was dampened by the

NEGATIVE GLOBAL TRENDS



rise in oil prices and tensions in the Middle East. Investors remain attentive to upcoming US non-farm payroll and unemployment data, seeking clarity on the Federal Reserve's future rate path," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said. Kotak Bank was the largest gainer in the Sensex pack, rising 2.09 per cent, followed by Bajaj Finserv, HDFC Bank, ITC, SBI, M&M and ICICI Bank.

On the other hand, UltraTech Cement, L&T, Bharti Airtel, Bajaj Finance and Tech Mahindra were among the laggards. Among sectoral indices, realty surged by 1.49 per cent, financial services advanced by 0.92 per cent and bankex gained 0.83 per cent. While BSE Services rose by 0.79 per cent, BSE FMCG went up 0.51 per cent. In contrast, tech declined by 0.51 per cent, IT fell by 0.44 per cent and capital goods dipped

by 0.22 per cent. Other laggards included auto, oil & gas, and metal, slipping 0.17 per cent, 0.15 per cent and 0.11 per cent, respectively. BSE largecap gained 0.15 per cent, while midcap and smallcap indices rose 0.50 per cent. Interest-rate-sensitive bank and NBFC stocks gained Friday after the RBI decided to maintain interest rates.

Among the banking counters, Kotak Mahindra Bank jumped 2.09 per cent to end at ₹1,785.25, and HDFC Bank went 1.41 per cent higher to finish at ₹1,549.40 apiece on the BSE. Also, State Bank of India grew 0.67 per cent to end at ₹764.35 each, IndusInd Bank climbed 0.66 per cent to settle at ₹1,554, and ICICI Bank rose 0.51 per cent to finish at ₹1,082.35. However, Bank of Baroda fell 0.24 per cent to close at ₹268.70 per piece on the exchange. On Thursday, the BSE benchmark Sensex surged 350.81 points or 0.47 per cent to settle at its lifetime high of 74,227.63. The NSE Nifty also hit its fresh peak of 22,514.65, gaining 80 points or 0.36 per cent.

India steps up exports to Maldives

sand has been permitted to the Maldives. The export of these items to Maldives will be exempted from any existing or future restriction/prohibition on export," the DGFT said.

In general, there is either a restriction or prohibition on exports of these goods.

The specified quantity allowed includes potatoes (21,513.08 tonne), onions (35,749.13 tonne), rice (1,24,218.36 tonne), wheat flour (1,09,162.96 tonne), sugar (64,494.33 tonne), dal (224.48 tonne), stone aggregate (one million tonne) and river sand (one million tonne).

It said that for the exports of river sand and stone aggregate, CAPEXIL (a body to promote the export of chemical and allied products) will ensure that the suppliers/extractors have obtained appropriate clearances and mining of the sand is not un-



dertaken in the coastal regulation zone area, which is prohibited under the coastal regulation zone notification.

Through a post on social media platform X, the Indian High Commissioner said that this was being done "under a unique bilateral mechanism" under which the quotas for each of these items have been revised upwards.

The announcement comes amid a diplomatic row between the two countries since November last year when

Bilateral trade between the nations has surged to \$973.37 million in 2022-23 from about \$740 million in 2021-22

President Mohamed Muizzu, known for his pro-China leanings, took the oath, and within hours demanded India to repatriate its 88 military personnel from his country.

The relations further deteriorated when three Maldivian officials made crass comments after Prime Minister Narendra Modi posted photos and videos of the Lakshadweep Islands, resulting in a heavy backlash from Indians, including many celebrities. #BoycottMaldives campaign resulted in a significant decline in Indian tourists to the island nation too.

Sinha new regional head of Union Bank, Rayagada

Rayagada: Kundan Kumar Sinha has joined as the new regional head of Union Bank of India, Rayagada

region which covers seven districts - Koraput, Nabarangpur, Malkangiri, Rayagada, Gajapati, Kalahandi and Bolangir. Prior to this, he was working as zonal audit head in zonal audit office, Visakhapatnam. Sinha started his banking career as a probationary officer in Canara Bank in 2003 and has gained vast experience of over 20 years, working on various functional capacities in different places in Odisha, Delhi, Mumbai, Surat and Visakhapatnam at branches, regional offices and audit offices. He also has experience of working in Rourkela and Sambalpur districts in Odisha. The total business mix under this region is ₹3995.05 crore.

TIDBITS

Structural overhaul: Zee to trim 15% of workforce

Bangalore: Zee Entertainment said Friday it is cutting 15% of its workforce in its latest bid to trim costs. The job cuts could affect nearly 700 employees at the company, which had a total headcount of 4,577 employees, according to its latest annual report. This is part of Zee's move to substantially cut costs and reduce losses in its business, including its English TV channels, to meet a key profit target, as mandated by a company-formed review panel. Zee has had two major deals fail in January - a \$10 billion merger with Sony India and a \$1.4 billion cricket broadcasting deal with Walt Disney. Earlier this week, Zee Chief Executive Punit Goenka took a 20% pay cut, while the company made cuts in the workforce at its Technology & Innovation Centre in Bangalore March 29.

Paytm parent okays grant of 91,250 stock options

New Delhi: Paytm parent company One97 Communications Friday announced approval of grant of 91,250 stock options under ESOP 2019. The Nomination and Remuneration Committee of the company's board has also approved allotment of fully paid-up 2,91,388 equity shares having face value of ₹1 each to eligible employees under ESOP 2008 and 2019, as per a stock exchange filing. It said each stock option (of 91,250 stock under ESOP 2019) is convertible into one fully paid up equity share having face value of ₹1 each. The exercise price per stock option is ₹9.

SUNRISERS OUTPLAY KINGS

COLLECTIVE EFFORT BY THE BOWLERS HELP HYDERABAD REGISTER THEIR SECOND VICTORY IN THE TOURNAMENT



VITAL KNOCK: Aiden Markram of Sunrisers Hyderabad plays a drive during his match-winning innings against Chennai Super Kings, Friday

PTI PHOTO

AGENCIES

Hyderabad, April 5: A collective bowling effort and a fine half century by Aiden Markram (50, 36b, 4x4, 1x6) helped Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) beat defending champions Chennai Super Kings (CSK) in their IPL encounter played here Friday. After restricting CSK to 165 for five, the hosts suffered a few hiccups before going past the line with 11 balls to spare. It was the second loss for CSK in the tournament and the second win for SRH. It was the fourth game for both the teams.

A score of 165 was always going to be difficult to defend and it became more so after Abhishek Sharma (37, 12b, 3x4, 4x6) and Travis Head (31, 24b, 3x4, 1x6) gave the team a rollicking start putting on an opening stand of 46 in only 2.4 overs. Head and Markram then put on 60 runs for the second wicket to put SRH in a comfortable position.

Nearing the target, SRH suffered the loss of two quick wickets as Markram and Shabbaz Ahmed (18) were dismissed by Moeen Ali (2/23). However, Nitish Reddy (14 n o) and Heinrich Klaasen (10 n o) saw the team through without any further

problems. It was a clinical display by the hosts and they outplayed the Kings in all departments of the game.

Earlier CSK batters failed to capitalise on their starts as they were restricted to a below-par score. Only Shivam Dube (45, 24b, 2x4, 4x6) showed some promise, but then he too failed to go on and get a sizeable score. Ajinkya Rahane (35, 30b, 2x4, 1x6) also settled down but could not carry on. CSK needed at least a 70-plus knock from one of their top batters to put up a challenge, but it did not happen.

The only bright spot in the CSK innings was the 65-run stand

between Dube and Rahane in only 6.3 overs. However, once they were dismissed, the others failed to force the pace. It was only Ravindra Jadeja's unbeaten knock of 31 (23b, 4x4) which helped CSK get past the 160-run mark. However, that was never going to be enough.

The Hyderabad bowlers bowled with a lot of discipline and the result was that CSK could score only 37 runs in the last five overs. It was a collective bowling effort from SRH with Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Pat Cummins, T Natarajan, Ahmed and Jaydev Unadkat taking a wicket apiece. They

took the pace off the ball making it difficult for the CSK batters to score.

CSK made a decent start, reaching 25 for no loss in three overs before Kumar gave SRH the breakthrough with his first wicket of the season by dismissing Rachin Ravindra (12). Skipper Rituraj Gaikwad (26) also got a start, but he too fell to the left-arm spin of Ahmed.

BRIEF SCORES

CSK 165 for 5 (Shivam Dube 45, Bhuvneshwar Kumar 1/28) lost to **SRH 166 for 4** in 18.1 overs (Aiden Markram 50, Moeen Ali 2/23) by six wickets.

Bangaluru, RR look to tackle similar worries



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



but the left-handed opener has made just 39 runs from three matches, and Jos Buttler offers a similar story. The England T20 captain is yet to be in his intimidating self, and has managed 35 runs from three outings and his strike-rate across these matches is a mere 85.

The Royals' batting has largely revolved around captain Sanju Samson (109 runs, one fifty) and the highly-improved Riyan Parag (181 runs, 2 fifties) and at some point, the duo will require solid support from others.

However, Rajasthan have an edge over their opponents in the bowling department. Pacers Trent Boult and Nandre Burger and veteran leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal have worked up a nice early rhythm and have shared 16 wickets between them. The out of touch Bengaluru batters might just find it tough to tackle the trio at its home turf.

The lone missing piece in Rajasthan's bowling, rather surprising at that, is the patchy form of Ravichandran Ashwin, who has taken one wicket from three matches while giving away 8.3 runs per over. But the seasoned off-spinner can turn that around quickly, and he has a fine record against RCB as well.

However, going by their last four matches, RCB seem to be lacking the variety or strength in their bowling to exploit the chinks in Rajasthan batting.

MATCHDAY

Indian Premier League

RR vs RCB

Time: 07:30 pm

Telecast: Star Sports Network

Stream: Jio Cinema

Jaipur, April 5: Struggling Royal Challengers Bengaluru and high-flying Rajasthan Royals bizarrely have similar worries to address when they face each other in the IPL here Saturday.

The eighth place where RCB are currently on the 10-team table is a fair indication of their troubles, but Rajasthan's all-win record so far and the resultant second place do not necessarily mirror their turmoil. An underwhelming top-order is the intertwining factor between them.

The RCB top-order comprising skipper Faf du Plessis, Glenn Maxwell, Cameron Green and Rajat Patidar is a storehouse of talent and explosiveness. But none of them have fired either in isolation or in unison, except star batter Virat Kohli, the current Orange Cap holder with 203 runs, who has made two fifties.

Patidar showed a glimpse of his clean shot-making abilities while registering 29 in their 28-run defeat against Lucknow Super Giants, but he needs to do a lot more to prop up the RCB middle-order.

The Bengaluru outfit will hope for a reversal at the Sai Man Singh Stadium, a venue that carries similar traits as RCB's home - Chinnaswamy Stadium - in terms of a smooth pitch and a blistering outfield adding value to the batters' shots. But the aforementioned RCB quartet has company in the Royals' ranks.

Yashasvi Jaiswal entered this iteration of IPL on the back of some excellent recent efforts,

Palmer fashions Chelsea's comeback win vs Man Utd

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, April 5: Cole Palmer struck twice in stoppage time to complete a hat-trick and a stunning 4-3 comeback win for Chelsea against Manchester United in the Premier League.

United were headed for a dramatic victory at Stamford Bridge after recovering from 0-2 down to lead 3-2. But Palmer ensured the points went to Chelsea after converting a penalty in the 110th minute and then firing a winner with a deflected effort from outside the box a minute later.

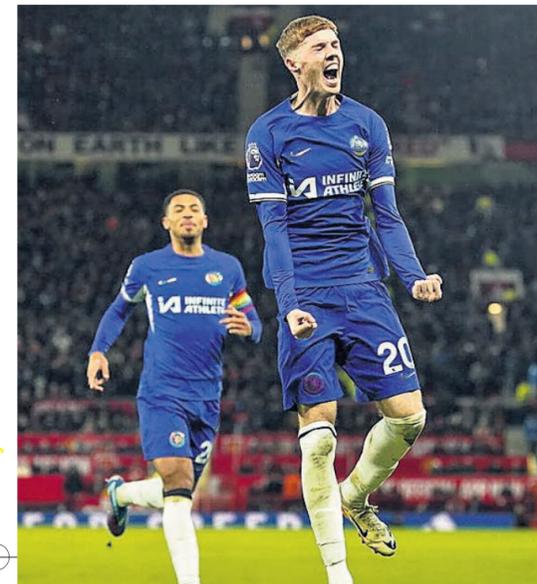
A 12th league defeat of the season and will likely heap more pressure on manager Erik ten Hag ahead of Sunday's game against title-chasing Liverpool. Chelsea had raced into a 2-0 lead through Conor Gallagher's effort from just inside the area in the fourth minute and Palmer's penalty in the 19th. But United responded impressively with Alejandro Garnacho seizing on a mistake from Moises Caicedo to pull a goal back in the 34th.

Bruno Fernandes evened the score when he headed in Diogo

Liverpool back on top

LIVERPOOL: Alexis Mac Allister scored a stunning goal to help Liverpool beat Sheffield United 3-1 and return to the top of the Premier League. Darwin Nunez had given Jurgen Klopp's team a first-half lead at Anfield, but Sheffield United was gifted a way back into the game through Conor Bradley's own goal after the break. With Liverpool in danger of dropping points in the race for the title, Mac Allister eased the tension when he blasted a long-range effort into the top corner in the 76th minute. The game was put beyond doubt when substitute Cody Gakpo headed in a third in the 90th. Liverpool moved two points clear of Arsenal at the top, but it had to dig deep against last-place Sheffield United.

Dalot's cross five minutes later. United went ahead in the 67th through Garnacho, who headed past Djordje Petrovic after a wonderful cross from the outside of Antony's boot. United looked comfortable with time running down until Dalot brought down Noni Madueke in the box and Palmer sparked late drama.



India men ready for Australia challenge

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Perth, April 5: The in-form Indian men's hockey team will look to pass the "litmus test" that the formidable Australian side will pose at home when the two face off in a five-match Test series beginning here Saturday. The series offers India a chance to gauge their strengths and capabilities ahead of the Paris Olympics.

"This series serves as a litmus test for our team's preparedness ahead of the Paris Olympics. We aim to fine-tune our strategies and identify areas for improvement to ensure we are in peak form for the mega event. Our focus will be on executing our game plan effectively and adapting to the challenges posed by the Australian side," chief coach Craig Fulton said.

The away assignment offers the ideal chance for India to break their decade-long dry spell against Australia and secure a Test series win. Notably, India won the last away Test series against Australia back in 2014.

Fresh from their impressive performances in the FIH Pro League in February, the Indian squad, under the leadership of Harmanpreet Singh, is approaching this assignment with confidence.

India's exceptional abilities



and unwavering determination were evident as they clinched victories in three out of four matches in Bhubaneswar (within regulation time) and remained unbeaten in Rourkela (also within regulation time). However, they had lost both their matches against Australia.

With the two sides drawn in the same group at the Olympics, the Test series provides the perfect platform for both to gauge each other's strengths and weaknesses before the ultimate showdown in Paris Games.

"We are geared up for the challenge that lies ahead. Every match is an opportunity for us

to showcase our skills and make our nation proud. We are aware of the tough competition Australia presents, but we are confident in our abilities and our preparations," captain Harmanpreet said.

"As a team, we are united and determined to give our best on the field. Our goal is to not only perform well in this series but also to learn and grow as a unit, laying a strong foundation for our campaign in the Paris Olympics."

India and Australia have clashed on the hockey field a total of 43 times since 2013, according to data from the FIH Data Hub.

Among these match-ups, Australia have emerged victorious 28 times, while India have celebrated triumph in eight games. Additionally, seven matches have concluded in a draw.

With India ranked fourth and Australia fifth in the current world rankings, the stage is set for a gripping battle between two hockey powerhouses.

MATCHDAY

India vs Australia

Time: 02:00 pm

Telecast: Sports18 Network

Stream: Jio Cinema & watch.hockey

East Zone crush North, to take on South for crown

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Pune, April 5: East Zone crushed North Zone by a huge margin of 135 runs to set up summit clash against South Zone, who played out a draw against West Zone, in the Senior Women's Inter-Zonal Multi-Day Trophy here Friday. In the other semifinal, South Zone advanced to the final after playing out a draw against the West Zone.

WOMEN'S INTER-ZONAL MULTI-DAY TROPHY

Despite having conceded a slender lead of 12 runs in the first innings, a strong show with the bat in the second essay put East Zone in a dominant position. They declared their second innings for 282/9 to set North Zone a target of 271 runs.

Deepthi claimed 6/49, while Annapurna Das took 3/21 as North Zone were shot out for a paltry 135 in 48.2 overs — their second low score in the game after making 144 in the first essay.

Shafali Verma missed out on a personal milestone as she fell for 49 whereas India skipper Harmanpreet Kaur once again flopped with the bat, falling for a mere five after making 10 in the first innings.

MI get SKY boost ahead of clash with DC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 5: In a big boost for struggling Mumbai Indians, world number one T20 batter Suryakumar Yadav trained with the team here Friday after a long injury lay-off and unleashed his trademark shots without any visible discomfort, raising hopes that he could compete in the team's next IPL match against Delhi Capitals.

Five-time champions Mumbai Indians are languishing at the bottom of the 10-team table, having lost all three matches so far

and if Suryakumar plays, the Hardik Pandya-led team will hope that his presence helps them with the anticipated turnaround.

The 33-old aggressive batter has been out of action since January. He underwent a surgery to treat sports hernia and was also nursing an ankle injury which he had sustained during India's tour of South Africa late last year.

Suryakumar was the first to arrive for the training session at the Wankhede Stadium, more than an hour before his teammates came



Suryakumar Yadav gets the ramp going in the nets during MI's practice session, Friday

for the afternoon session.

Suryakumar walked into one of the two nets and batted for more than an hour, not looking to exert himself but getting his body in rhythm and getting his strokes going a few days after he was given the clearance to join the Mumbai Indians' squad by the National Cricket Academy (NCA) staff.

The right-handed batter unleashed strokes in all parts of the ground while batting against throwdown specialists and MI spinner Kumar Kartikeya. He hit the ball exactly the way he wanted, middling most of his

strokes and also practiced his trademark flick shot over the fine-leg region.

The team is coming off a short break after taking a trip to Jamnagar following its third straight loss in the ongoing tournament, the last one being a six-wicket defeat Rajasthan Royals April 1.

Meanwhile, in the adjacent nets, Delhi Capitals and Australia batter David Warner had a long hit among the others. Mumbai's Ranji Trophy bowler Mohit Awasthi was also seen bowling to the Delhi Capitals' batters during their training.