



## Problem in paradise!

Actor Anya Panday's latest cryptic post sparks break-up rumours with her beau Aditya Roy Kapur

LEISURE | P2



## Worst flood

Russia and Kazakhstan order over 1L people to evacuate after swiftly melting snow swelled mighty rivers beyond bursting point

INTERNATIONAL | P10



## Fresh peaks

Benchmark equity indices hit new peaks Tuesday with Sensex breaching the historic 75,000-mark for the first time during intraday

BUSINESS | P11



## From bronze to silver

Aishwarya Mishra's 2023 Asian Championships 400m bronze medal will be upgraded to silver after Farida Soliyeva fails a dope test

SPORTS | P12

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## SHORT TAKES

### Hanuman Jayanti rallies banned

**Sambalpur:** The district administration has ordered a complete ban on processions and bike rallies during the Hanuman Jayanti celebrations Sunday. A decision to this effect was taken keeping in mind the violence that broke out last year during the celebrations. A meeting was conducted Tuesday under the chairmanship of District Collector Akshay Sunil Agrawal regarding the Hanuman Jayanti celebrations. Also present at the meeting were senior district administration officials, SP Sambalpur, Mukesh Kumar Bhamoo and representatives of various communities.

P5

### Z-category security cover for CEC

**New Delhi:** The government has provided Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Rajiv Kumar with a Z-category VIP security cover of armed commandos in view of potential threats against him, official sources said, Tuesday. This is one of the rarest instances of a CEC being provided a central security cover. The Ministry of Home Affairs has entrusted the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) with providing a contingent of about 40-45 personnel for the task, the sources said. Former CEC, late T N Seshan, had a central security cover at one point of time.

### Plea in HC over Pana Sankranti date

**Cuttack:** Samanta Chandrasekhar Smruti Parishad (SCSP) Tuesday moved the Orissa High Court challenging the Srimandir Muktimandap Pandit Sabha's approval of a few almanacs mentioning April 14, 2024 as Pana Sankranti or Mahabishuba Sankranti. According to sources, Pana Sankranti is usually celebrated April 14 every year. However, 2024 being a leap year, the festival has been scheduled April 13. "Almost all almanacs in Odisha have mentioned April 13 as Pana Sankranti. However, a few erroneously mention April 14 as the date, and Srimandir Muktimandap Pandit Sabha (SMPS) has also consented to it," SCSP's Dolagovinda Panda said in the plea. Panda has urged the court to direct authorities for celebrating the festival April 13.

### IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Thankfully, I shunned ideologies and remained an opportunist. Now, five parties want me to contest for them

### MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VALUE	VIATION
SENSEX	74683.70	↓ 58.80
NIFTY	22642.75	↓ 23.55
DOLLAR	83.36	↓ ₹0.01
EURO	90.30	↓ ₹0.10
GOLD	₹71,148	↑ ₹236
SILVER	₹81,795	↓ ₹80

### WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	36.5°C	35.2°C
Min Temp	22.7°C	24.0°C
Humidity	67%	54%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
FORECAST	PARTLY CLOUDY SKY	



COLOURS OF CELEBRATION: Students in traditional Punjabi attire take part in Baisakhi Fair, at Amritsar, Tuesday

PTI PHOTO

# KEJRI: HC SAYS LEGAL

In what came as a disappointment to the Opposition 10 days before the general elections, the Delhi High Court Tuesday dismissed a writ petition filed by AAP leader and Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal challenging his arrest in the money laundering case made out against him by the ED in the alleged excise policy scam. The court said Kejriwal's arrest, or subsequent remand by the trial court, was 'not in contravention of law'. The HC order, which came days after speculations went rife about a possible reprieve for the embattled leader - whose political career was shaped on foundations of one of the biggest anti-corruption movements in the country - following the release of fellow cabinet colleague Sanjay Singh last week in the same case on bail, nevertheless, has been perceived as a huge setback for Kejriwal and his supporters who took to streets in several parts of the country demanding his release in the, what they termed, 'fabricated case'.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 9:** In a massive setback to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, the Delhi High Court Tuesday dismissed his petition challenging his arrest in a money laundering case stemming from the alleged excise scam, saying there was no contravention of legal pro-



visions. Besides his arrest, Kejriwal, who is currently in judicial custody in Tihar jail, had also challenged his subsequent remand in Enforcement Directorate's (ED) custody, which the court said was not illegal. Justice Swarna Kanta Sharma said the ED was in possession of 'enough material' which led to Kejriwal's arrest, and the trial court remanded him in the custody of the agency by a well-reasoned order. "The court is of the view that the arrest of Arvind Kejriwal was not in contravention of legal provisions. The remand can't be held to be illegal," said Justice Sharma while delivering the verdict. She read out the judgement

for 25 minutes and also explained certain portions of her decision in Hindi. The court clarified that it was not dealing with Kejriwal's bail plea but his writ petition challenging the arrest on certain grounds.

It emphasised that law applied equally to all and courts were concerned with constitutional morality and not political morality, apparently referring to Kejriwal and his AAP claiming that he was arrested to put his party's Lok Sabha poll campaign in jeopardy.

"This court observed that political considerations and equations cannot be brought before a court of law as they are not relevant for legal proceedings. In the case at hand, it is important to clarify that the matter before this court is not a conflict between the Central government and petitioner Kejriwal. Instead, it is a case between Kejriwal and Directorate of Enforcement," Justice Sharma said.

The court said the statements of approvers against the AAP national convenor would be judged during trial as it cannot hold a mini trial at this stage. Following the verdict, senior AAP leader and Delhi minister Saurabh Bharadwaj said Kejriwal will move the Supreme Court soon against his arrest, and maintained the excise policy case was the 'biggest political conspiracy of the country' to finish the party.

## MVA seals election pact in Maharashtra

AGENCIES

**Mumbai, April 9:** The Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi Tuesday announced its seat-sharing formula for the Lok Sabha polls with the Shiv Sena (UBT) getting the major chunk of 21 seats, while the Congress will contest 17 seats and the NCP (SP) 10.

The Congress gave up its claim on the contentious Sangli and Bhiwandi seats, which will now be contested by the Sena (UBT) and the NCP (SP), respectively.

While the Sena (UBT) said the goal of the alliance was to defeat the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Congress said it has decided to be 'large-hearted' to achieve this objective.

NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Uddhav Thackeray and state Congress president Nana Patole announced the poll pact for the 48 parliamentary seats in the state after weeks of hectic negotiations.

Addressing a press conference at 'Shivalaya', the Shiv Sena (UBT) office in south Mumbai, party head and former state chief minister Uddhav Thackeray said the seat-sharing deal has been reached and 'in an alliance, winning is important and defeating the BJP is the goal'.

"When victory against the BJP is the larger goal, we have to set aside certain differences," he said when asked about the Shiv Sena (UBT) refusing to give Sangli seat to the Congress.

## Burglars loot 4 flats in City apartment

DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

**Bhubaneswar, April 9:** Throwing the much touted security build up ahead of the forthcoming elections to the wind, burglars struck four flats in an upscale residential apartment on the outskirts of the Capital City and decamped with cash and valuables worth lakhs of rupees, Tuesday. The incident came as a crude reminder of the ever deteriorating law and order situation in the City and the failure of the Commissionerate Police in maintaining the same.

Police said the incident took place at Metro Satellite apartments under Pahala police station limits in the wee hours, Tuesday. The burgled flats are split in the four blocks of the residential complex, they said. The police are making an estimation of the loot by recording the statement of the flat owners.

DCP Bhubaneswar Prateek Singh said CCTV footage has revealed that the miscreants pulled off the series of burglaries around 3:30 am. "It appears that the gang members had made a recon of the area before striking at these homes," he added.

According to preliminary investigations, Singh said, the burglars gained entry into the residential complex by scaling the low



boundary walls in its rear portion. The inmate of one of the flats said she woke up to a noise at around 4 am. When she peeped through the door hole, she saw four men exiting the neighbouring flat.

Besides, several residents in the apartment alleged that the society has deployed a solitary security guard for four blocks of the complex which offers little protection against such incident.

Another resident said she arrived in the early morning hours after receiving a phone call from the cops that her flat had been swept clean. "My family was away since March 29 as we went to my daughter's place in Bangalore," she said. "We feel there is a complete void of security in the City," she added.

It may be noted that last month the Commissionerate Police had convened a meeting of flat owners from across the City to brief them about the steps they should initiate at their apartments to curb any instance of burglary.

Meanwhile, DCP Singh said efforts are being made to identify the burglars and arrest them at the earliest.

# El Nino: March 2024 warmest ever

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 9:** The world experienced the warmest March ever due to a combined effect of El Nino conditions and human caused climate change, making it the 10th consecutive month since June last year to set a new temperature record, the European Union's climate agency said, Tuesday.

The Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) said the average temperature of 14.14 degrees Celsius in March was 1.68 degrees Celsius higher than the month's average for 1850-1900, the designated pre-industrial reference period.

It was 0.73 degrees Celsius above the 1991-2020 average for March

and 0.10 degrees Celsius above the previous high set in March 2016.

"The global average temperature for the past 12 months (April 2023-March 2024) is the highest recorded, at 0.70 degrees Celsius above the 1991-2020 average and 1.58 degrees Celsius above the 1850-1900 pre-industrial average," the climate agency said.

C3S said the global average temperature breached the 1.5 degrees Celsius threshold for an entire year for the first time in January.

A permanent breach of the 1.5 degrees Celsius limit specified in the Paris Agreement, however, refers to long-term warming over many years. According to climate scientists, countries need to limit



the global average temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial period to avoid the worst impacts of climate change.

Earth's global surface temperature has already increased by around 1.15 degrees Celsius compared to the average in 1850-1900, a level that hasn't been witnessed since 1,25,000 years ago, before the most recent ice age. This warming is considered the reason behind

record droughts, wildfires and floods worldwide. The rise in global average temperature is attributed to the rapidly increasing concentration of greenhouse gases - primarily carbon dioxide and methane - in the atmosphere.

"March 2024 continues the sequence of climate records toppling in both air temperature and ocean surface temperatures, with the 10th consecutive record-breaking month. "The global average temperature is the highest recorded, with the past 12 months being 1.58 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Stopping further warming requires rapid reductions in greenhouse gas emissions," said Samantha Burgess, deputy director of C3S.

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# leisure



## COUGHLAN WANTED TO BE 'GAY ICON'

Bridgerton star Nicola Coughlan never wanted to be a romantic leading lady. It doesn't look very funny, she says. "Rather, I wanted to be a gay icon," she told Britain's *Harper's Bazaar*.

## RICHIE'S FAVOURITE STAGE OF PARENTING

Reality star Nicole Richie has admitted being a mother to teenagers is her favourite stage of parenting so far. "I love bonding with my teenage daughter over 'drama' with her friends," said the 42-year-old.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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#### ARIES

If you're looking to get married, buy the ring today. But before you take the leap, weigh all the pros and cons carefully, says Ganesh. All in all, this may be a day filled with activities related to your relationship and by the time the day ends, you may be on cloud nine!

#### TAURUS

You may face conflicts on the personal front and find your thoughts leaning towards aggression today, says Ganesh. There is a possibility of suffering losses due to loved ones. Exercise restraint in arguments with relatives and siblings, advises Ganesh.

#### GEMINI

You are desirous of perfection in everything that you do, and you practice this philosophy in every aspect of your life. You make sure that all of your energies are concentrated on taking forward your efforts in the right direction. You need to replenish your energies and increase your awareness today, to be able to continue your efforts, says Ganesh.

#### CANCER

Today, your ability to think clearly in the most adverse conditions will be your key weapon as you get cornered by unrelenting assaults of work and deadlines. The clarity will reflect in your work as you deal with inhuman work pressure. Your mind will save the day for you as well as your peers.

#### LEO

Your children's health may be a cause of concern today, says Ganesh. The best way to put your and your family's fears to rest would be by paying a quick visit to the doctor. As always, kids remain a surprise package of delights; the happiness of your children shall double your joy as a parent. But then, Ganesh reminds, only a healthy kid is a happy kid.

#### VIRGO

Expenses will mount uncontrollably today, and they will be mostly wasteful in nature. However, positive energies are gathering momentum, and Ganesh says you would do well in making full use of them, both in your personal and professional spheres.

#### LIBRA

Ganesh says that that this is the right time to enhance your personality and prove your talents to the world. Today you will be able to buy new clothes too. It is essential that you pay attention to people close to you. Today is the day you will spend in your dream world.

#### SCORPIO

It's the same old rut today, says Ganesh. Nothing new, nothing exciting. People from the opposite sex, however, may bring you out of the routine and try to enliven your spirits, predicts Ganesh.

#### SAGITTARIUS

Ganesh foresees business expansion on your cards. Your friends, relatives and other contacts across seven seas will lend a helping hand to develop your business. And thanks to your super communication skills that make the task easier. The leader in you is all set to conquer the world. Way to go!

#### CAPRICORN

If at first you don't succeed, try again. Many people underestimate the power of perseverance and patience. But, these qualities will lead you success. Rather than exploding with anger and anxiety, keep your faith in your plans intact, especially when the results are not as per your plans, advises Ganesh. If you fail to do as per the advice, you may spoil your image in the society.

#### AQUARIUS

Things have become stagnant but it fails to frustrate your spirit. Slow and steady wins the race and it seems you have imbibed it very well. You will be able to seize opportunities coming your way and march ahead on your path. Financially, you will be on a stable ground, says Ganesh.

#### PISCES

While you like cooperating with your colleagues, there is nothing like a little competition to spice things up. You will nonchalantly take on the challenges coming your way, and thrive on the sweet smell of success today. Luck is in your favour as well. Make the most of it, says Ganesh.

## Pracchi talks about missed opportunities

Mumbai: Actress Pracchi Desai is known for her breakout role in the 2006 television hit *Kasamh Se*. She later went on to make her Hindi film debut in *Rock On*, but her career had a lot of breaks.

Despite appearing in several commercially successful films, the actress has maintained a reputation for being highly selective.

In a recent interview with a news portal, Pracchi opened up about her career choices and revealed that she has become more comfortable declining offers over the years.

"Since I don't do a lot of work, people know that I might say no to them, and so, they're prepared," she explained.

Pracchi, who is set to appear in *Silence 2: The Night Owl Bar Shootout* on ZEE5, added that she feels no pressure to accept every role that comes her way.

She further acknowledged that her selective nature has resulted in missed opportunities, with some filmmakers hesitant to approach her for

roles they assume she may not be interested in.

However, Pracchi thinks that there has been a shift in such perceptions after her foray into OTT platforms. "I'm doing different things on OTT and so, they know that I'm absolutely open to listening to anything," she said.

Pracchi was last seen in the Telugu series *Dhootha*.

AGENCIES



Zeenat for living together before marriage

The *Qurbani* actress further revealed that she has given the same advice to her sons, Azaan and Zahaan.

"This is the same advice I've always given my sons, both of whom have had, or are in, a live-in relationship. It just seems logical to me that before two people get their families involved in their equation, they first put their relationship to the ultimate test," the post read.

"It's easy to be the best version of yourself for a few hours a day. But can you share a bathroom? Weather the storm of a bad mood? Agree on what to eat for dinner every night? Keep the fire alive in the bedroom? Work through the million tiny conflicts that inevitably arise between two people in close proximity? In short - are you actually compatible?" she further said in the post.

"I'm aware that Indian society is a little uptight about 'living in sin' but then again, society is uptight about so many things! Log kya kahenge?," concluded Zeenat.

Mumbai: Veteran actress Zeenat Aman Tuesday shared a relationship advice, saying she strongly recommends living together before getting married.

Taking to Instagram, the actress known for her work in movies like *Yaadon Ki Baaraat* and *Dostana*, wrote, "One of you asked me about relationship advice in the comments section of my last post. Here's a personal opinion I haven't previously shared - if you're in a relationship, I strongly recommend that you live together before getting married."

IANS

## Ananya triggers break-up rumours

Mumbai: Ananya Panday and Aditya Roy Kapur have been rumoured to be dating for a while, though they have never confirmed that they are in a relationship. But now Ananya's latest cryptic note has sparked rumours of their break-up.

The actress shared a post that read, "If it is truly meant for you, it will come back to you. It will leave only for the sake of teaching you the lessons you

only learn on your own."

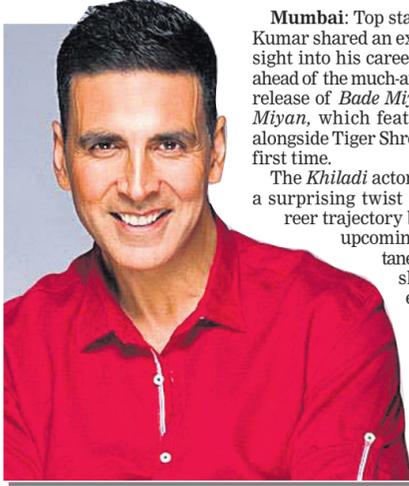
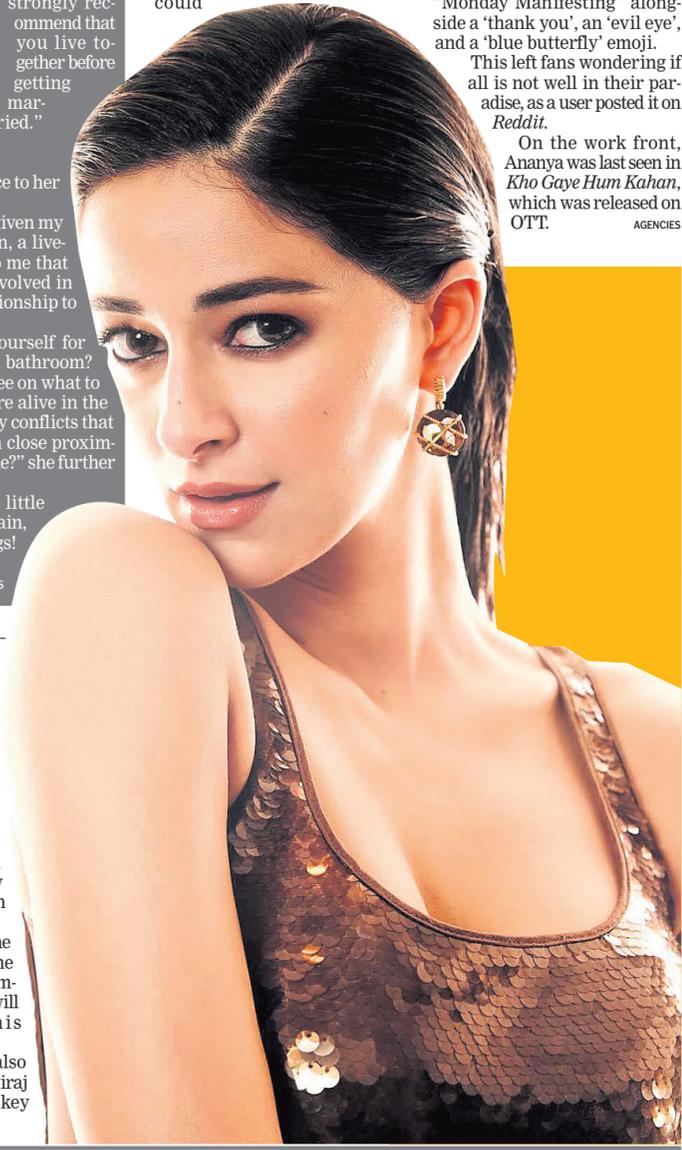
The note further mentioned, "If it is truly meant for you, it will return, even if you have pushed it away, even if you are in denial, even if you assume something so beautiful could never be truly yours—because if it's truly meant for you, it is never not a piece of you. It is never not intricately tied into the depths of your soul."

She captioned this note "Monday Manifesting" alongside a 'thank you', an 'evil eye', and a 'blue butterfly' emoji.

This left fans wondering if all is not well in their paradise, as a user posted it on *Reddit*.

On the work front, Ananya was last seen in *Kho Gaye Hum Kahan*, which was released on OTT.

AGENCIES



Mumbai: Top star Akshay Kumar shared an exciting insight into his career journey ahead of the much-anticipated release of *Bade Miyan Chote Miyan*, which features him alongside Tiger Shroff for the first time.

The *Khiladi* actor revealed a surprising twist in his career trajectory before his upcoming high-octane role as he shared his early aspirations to join the army.

For the unversed, Akshay's father was a notable Indian army officer and hence the actor expressed his desire to follow his footsteps, if he didn't have a thriving career in the acting profes-

## Akshay shares his early career aspirations

sion.

He said, "If I wasn't in films, I'd definitely join the army. I wanted to be in the Navy or Air Force, but destiny led me to films."

Interestingly, Akshay has played the role of a cop as well as an army officer in his reel-life in the past.

And now yet again, he is gearing up to essay the character of an agent in the forthcoming *Ali Abbas Zafar* directorial, which will feature Tiger as his junior.

Apart from the duo, the film will also stars Manushi Chhillar, Alaya F, Prithviraj Sukumaran and Sonakshi Sinha in key roles.

IANS

### FUN post

#### PEANUTS



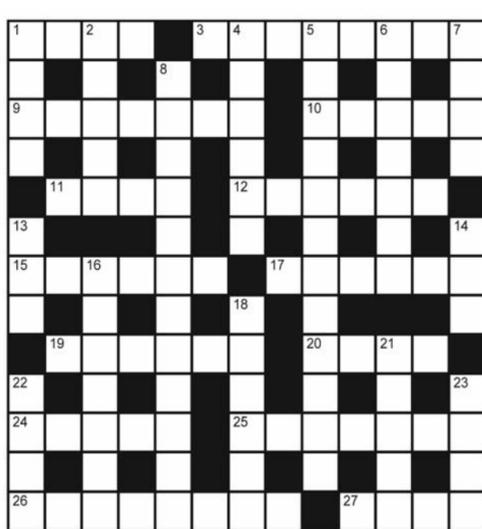
#### CALVIN AND HOBBS



#### BREVITY



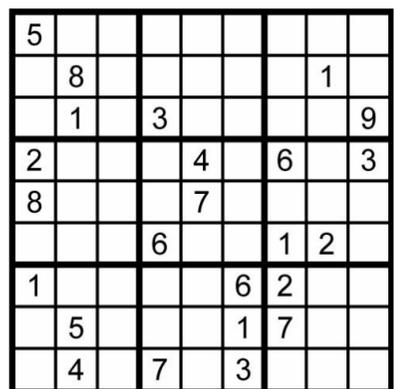
#### CROSSWORD



- Across
- 1 Nymph spurned by Narcissus
  - 3 Plot of spy novels
  - 9 Not lacking funds
  - 10 Antlered animal
  - 11 Hang glide
  - 12 Grand Canal site
  - 15 Infuriate
  - 17 Relative of 10
  - 19 Oddities
  - 20 Insightful
  - 24 Food fish
  - 25 Cigar type
  - 26 Morel
  - 27 Ill-tempered
  - 6 Italian dumpling
  - 7 Water pitcher
  - 8 Household appliance
  - 13 Cozy room
  - 14 Objective
  - 16 Rowdy
  - 18 Hitchcock classic
  - 21 Overact
  - 22 Gossip tidbit
  - 23 Stupefy
- Down
- 1 Direction
  - 2 Conversation starter
  - 4 Indigenous
  - 5 Fireworks (5,7)

#### 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.

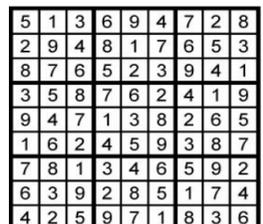


#### SOLUTIONS

##### CROSSWORD



##### SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

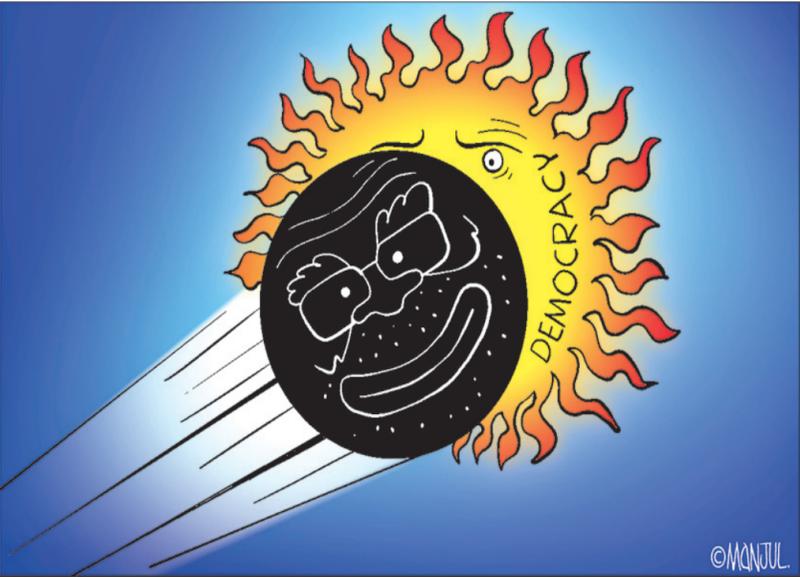
As temperature soars, people enjoy at a water park in Puri, Tuesday



PIC: YAGNESWAR MOHANTY

downtown

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Plug holes in admissions: HC

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, April 9: The Orissa High Court Tuesday directed the state government to ensure that the norms regarding reservation of 25 per cent seats for admission of children belonging to the economically weaker section (EWS) category in private schools are complied with.

Hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by Odisha Parents' Federation (OPF), a division bench of Chief Justice Chakradhari Sharan Singh and Justice Murahari Sri Raman asked Elementary Education director Jyoti Ranjan Mishra to address the loopholes in the process and make sure the norms mandating 25 per cent reservation in private school seats are implemented in letter and spirit.



State govt will go for a third round of lottery to allow registration of more students for the admissions

process will continue till June, the HC directed the state government to file a report in this regard by May 16, the next hearing of the case.

According to sources, the high court had Monday sought the virtual appearance of the School and Mass Education principal secretary Tuesday in connection with the alleged violation of the admission norms, as claimed in the PIL.

LKG and UKG in private schools under the Right to Education Act was being done through lottery system.

Accordingly, the state government has been publishing a list of private schools on a dedicated web portal. While there were 4,264 such schools last year, the figure dropped to 2,700 this year.

Following much hue and cry by Odisha Parents' Federation (OPF) over the significant decline, the state government enhanced the number of schools. However, due to the delay in enhancement of additional schools, many children were deprived of the admissions.

This apart, lottery was held twice though norms mandate it for thrice.

Alleging violation of norms, the OPF had moved the HC.

₹49-crore ganja seized in 3 months

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 9: The Odisha Police has seized ganja worth Rs 49 crore and arrested 529 people for their alleged involvement in the illegal trade of the contraband in the last three months, an official said, Tuesday.

During a massive drive against the trafficking of narcotic substances in the state, police officials have seized over 49,400 kg of ganja during the January-March period this year, which is one of the highest in the first quarter for any calendar year.

The figure did not include the recovery and arrest made by the state Excise department, the official pointed out.

"As many as 425 cases of ganja seizure have been registered and 529 traffickers, including interstate kingpins who hail from Maharashtra, Kerala, West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, arrested during the period," the official added.

MAN HELD FOR JOB FRAUD

DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 9: More than one-and-a-half years of investigation, the Cyber police station here Tuesday claimed to have arrested a man who had allegedly duped a youth of Rs 5.5 lakh on the pretext of a job.

The police also seized Rs 55,000 in cash and two mobile phones from the possession of the accused, identified as Suryakanta Barik, 40, a native of Pankapal village under Jagatsinghpur district, said Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) Anjana Tudu.

A case was made out against Barik on a complainant lodged by Trisakti Dhar Nayak of Jagatsinghpur district September 20, 2022, said Tudu. The complainant came in contact with Barik when the former came to the Capital city in search of a job in 2019.

The police also seized ₹55,000 in cash and two mobile phones from the possession of the accused, identified as Suryakanta Barik, 40, a native of Pankapal village under Jagatsinghpur district

Barik promised Trisakti a job at a private company here and introduced himself as an employee of a private bank, to win his trust, the ACP said. "Following this, Trisakti made several online transactions to the PhonePe

account of Barik till December 2021. When Trisakti enquired about his job, Barik took petty excuses several times and asked him to be patient. Later, Barik said he could not find a job and assured Trisakti to return his Rs 60,000. Then the accused went uncommunicated around early 2022. When Trisakti reached Barik's office, he was told that the latter has already resigned," said Tudu.

Tudu said that Barik later escaped to Bangalore, where he did several odd jobs for survival. The Cyber police station was tipped off two days back that Barik would arrive at his native place Tuesday. The cops laid a trap and arrested him, Tudu added.

The Cyber police station has booked Barik under Sections 419 and 420 of IPC along with Section 34 of Information Technology (IT) Act and produced him before a local court for remand.

'Balanced lifestyle key to counter Parkinson's'

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 9: The rise in patients suffering from Parkinson's disease has become a critical problem, but it can be countered through a well-balanced lifestyle, noted neurosurgeon Prof. Ashok Kumar Mahapatra said, Tuesday. Speaking at an awareness program organised by the Institute of Medical Sciences and SUM Hospital here on the occasion of World Parkinson's Disease Day, Mahapatra said this progressive neurodegenerative disorder occurs because of a lack of dopamine hormone in the brain.

"This hormone controls memory, sleep, concentration of mind, and emotion, and this condition surfaces with the advancement of age," he said.

"However, it can be countered through a well-balanced lifestyle, physical exercise and proper diet," Mahapatra said.



SEEKING BLESSINGS: Governor Raghubar Das pays obeisance to Goddess Cuttack Chandi on the occasion of Chaitra Navratri and Hindu New Year, Tuesday

Sportswoman found dead; mom cries foul

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 9: A day after the body of Sarojini Sundar, a boxer and kho-kho player of Jagadapur village in Puri district, was found hanging in her hostel room in Badagada area here, her mother Tuesday claimed that she was forced to take the extreme step, said sources.

Sarojini was working at a hotel here for livelihood and staying in a rented accommodation, said her mother, adding that she suspects

some foul play in the incident. "After receiving a call from the hostel owner at around 5pm, we reached her room and knocked on the doors but she did not respond. When forced entry was made inside the room after breaking the door, we found that she was hanging," said Trupti Ranjan Nayak, IIC of Badagada police station. The body was sent for post-mortem. The exact reason behind the death can be ascertained after receiving the autopsy report, he said.

Eid celebrations Thursday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 9: Eid-ul-Fitr, which marks the culmination of the fasting month of Ramzan, will be celebrated in the country Thursday as the Moon was not sighted this evening.

Eid will, however, be celebrated across Kerala and in Leh and Kargil Wednesday. Delhi's Fatehpuri Masjid Imam Mufti Mukarram Ahmad told PTI that the Ruet-e-Hilal Committee of the mosque contacted many places and was informed that moon was not sighted.

Therefore, Eid will be celebrated in India on Thursday and Wednesday the 30th fast of Ramzan will be observed, he said.

Former Imam of Shahi Jama Masjid Syed Ahmed Bukhari said there is no news of sighting of the moon of Shawwal.

"Contacts were made in different parts of India - Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, West Bengal and Bihar, but the moon was not sighted anywhere," he said. "Eid will be celebrated Thursday, April 11," Bukhari said.

Lucknow's Markazi Chand Committee also declared that Eid will be celebrated April 11 as the Moon has not been sighted this evening.

Eid-ul-Fitr is celebrated across the world on different days and it is determined by the sighting of the crescent moon which is supposed to denote the start of the Shawwal month in the lunar Islamic calendar. It marks the end of the fasting month of Ramzan.

India likely to record normal monsoon this year

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 9: India is likely to experience a normal monsoon this year, private weather forecasting agency Skymet said Tuesday and predicted more rainfall in the second half of the season.

Scientists at the India Meteorological Department (IMD) have also detected early signs of a favourable monsoon season this year with fading El Nino conditions and reduced snow cover over Eurasia. The Met office will issue a monsoon forecast later this month.

However, normal cumulative rainfall does not mean uniform temporal and spatial distribution of rain across the country, with climate change further increasing the variability of the rain-bearing system.

Climate scientists say the number of rainy days is declining while



Skymet says the eastern states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal, however, are at risk of deficit rainfall during the peak monsoon months of July and August

heavy rain events - more rain over a short period - are increasing, leading to frequent droughts and floods. Skymet said the upcoming monsoon is expected to be 'normal', accounting for 102 per cent (with an error margin of 5 per cent) of the long-period average (LPA) of 868.6 mm for the four months from June to September.

Rainfall between 96 per cent and 104 per cent of the LPA is considered normal.

Skymet expects sufficiently good rains in the south, west, and north-

west regions. The core monsoon rain-fed zones of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh will receive adequate rainfall.

However, the eastern states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, and West Bengal are at risk of deficit rainfall during the peak monsoon months of July and August. Northeast India is likely to observe less than normal rains during the first half of the season.

According to Jatin Singh, the managing director at Skymet, "El Nino is swiftly flipping over to La

Nina. And, monsoon circulation tends to be stronger during La Nina years." "Also, the transition from Super El Nino to strong La Nina has historically tended to produce a decent monsoon. However, the monsoon season may start with a risk of impairment, attributable to the remnant effects of El Nino. The second half of the season will have an overwhelming edge over the primal phase," he said.

India received 'below-average' cumulative rainfall - 820 mm compared to the long-period average of 868.6 mm - in 2023, an El Nino year. Before 2023, India recorded 'normal' and 'above-normal' rainfall in the monsoon season for four years in a row. El Nino conditions - periodic warming of surface waters in the central Pacific Ocean - are associated with weaker monsoon winds and drier conditions in India.

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SBI HOME LOANS SBI DESH ka FAN. Advertisement for SBI Home Loans featuring a family and a smartphone. Includes text in Odia and English.

# Chhenapoda Dibasa to be celebrated April 11

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, April 9:** Nayagarh Vikas Manch (NVM) and Odia Media Private Limited (OMPL) will host a series of cultural programmes to celebrate 'Chhenapoda Dibasa' April 11. The programme aims to initiate a campaign for getting Geographical Recognition (GI) tag for the famous sweet dish.

Addressing a press meet, Tuesday, the organisers informed that the main event will be held at Souchana Bhawan where visitors will get an opportunity to savour the dessert, apart from being treated to cultural programmes.



The festival is celebrated to mark the birth anniversary of Sudarshan Sahu, who is believed to have first prepared the dessert.

The programme will be attended by many eminent personalities, including writer Dash Benhur, singer Tansen Singh, writer Karunakar Patnaik and former PM advisor Umakanta Mishra. NVM convenor

Shubhranshu Panda will preside over the event.

"The forum has been making efforts for the last few years to secure GI status for Chhenapoda and the campaign will be further intensified," the organisers said.

Born April 11, 1931 at Satapatana under Daspalla block in Nayagarh district, Sudarshan had moved out of his village and set up a sweet stall in the heart of Nayagarh in 1947. Along with his father Bidyadhar Sahu, he came up with the recipe of this great delicacy. Subsequently, Chhenapoda gained popularity and became a symbol of Odia culture and identity.



**PATH OF PENANCE:** Devotees walk on fire at Jhadeswari temple in Puri as part of Chaitra rituals, Tuesday

OP PHOTO

## CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

I, Sibanika Sarangi, D/o Mahendra Nath Sarangi, resident of Plot No- 3610, Lane 5A, Gouri Nagar, Bhubaneswar, P.O./P.S.- Old Town, Dist.- Khordha, PIN- 751002 Odisha declare by this affidavit No.- CF-22/23 dtd- 05.08.2023 that now onwards I shall be known as **Shivanika Sarangi** for all future purposes.

By the virtue of an affidavit before the Court of Executive Magistrate, Jatni, I Snehalata Bihari have changed my name to Snehalata Misra according to my husband's surname i.e. Sandeep Misra for all future purpose.

## LOST

I Parau Tudu, aged 56 years, S/o Late Dubraj Tudu, At : Chhitratarang, PO: Hesada, Dist : Mayurbhanj, by Affidavit No. 3107, Dt.27.03.2024 and FIR No. 24 lodged in Rairangpur PS dt.28.03.2024 inform that original Land Registration deed No.164, 165 & 167 dated 01.03.2002 relating to Sale of Plot No.1489/1616 of Mouza Nuagaon Ac 0.17 dec. of Tahasil Rairangpur executed by Bandhua Mohanta in favour of Bimal Kumar Mohanta and Saroj Kumar Mohanta which is under my possession has been lost. If any person or concern having any claim and objection over the aforesaid property may contact Rajat Kumar Kar, Advocate LIC HFL BALASORE Mobile No. 9937943086 within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

I, Anita Bagarty, W/o. Brundaban Pande, R/o. Village- Brahmanipali, P.O.-Kharjura, Dist.- Balangir have purchased a land by virtue of a registered sale deed bearing E.Doc No. 10312101837 dt. 14.07.2021. That the original interim sale deed which was handed over to me vide E.Doc No. 10311203311 and RSD No. 3056 dt. 05.11.2012 has been lost somewhere while I was coming from Mahadev Mandir Chowk to Rajendra College Chowk, Balangir. Inspite of my thorough search I could not find the same. If anybody found the documents pls. contact to Advocate Mr. Ashutosh Patnaik, Mob. No.- 7008043907.

# UN hails state's food security initiatives

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, April 9:** In a meeting with Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Tuesday, the United Nations Resident Coordinator in India Shombi Sharp lauded state government's initiatives towards food security and disaster management and said they are globally recognised.

Taking to X, the CM said, "Pleasure meeting Shombi Sharp, UN Resident Coordinator in India. Thank him for his appreciation for Odisha's global model of disaster management, pioneering work in food security, 5T governance and Odisha Millets Mission (OMM)."

During the interaction, Sharp said, "We in the UN are so privileged to be working with you. We have had a long history of fantastic work on disaster reduction and you are making incredible progress on the human development indicators. We saw the 5T and you have been recognised globally for the work on food security. Also OMM is noteworthy."

The state government last year announced that the State Food Security Scheme (SFSS) will be extended by five more years till December 31, 2028. The proposal was approved by the CM. Earlier, the beneficiaries were entitled to

get five kg of free rice till December 31, 2023.

A total of 9,97,055 people from 3,14,923 families in the state are covered under the SFSS.

The state is currently more resilient in facing natural disaster. Years of planning and preparation paid off, as fatalities from powerful cyclones never crossed double digits. When cyclone Phailin struck the coast in 2013, the state carried out one of the most successful disaster management efforts in the world, evacuating close to one million people ahead of the strongest cyclone to hit the country, since the Super Cyclone.

In 2019, when another powerful cyclone Fani struck, the state government showed a high degree of preparedness and effectively evacuated around 1.2 million people.

In 1999, in the wake of the Super Cyclone, Odisha became the first state in India to establish a disaster management authority. In fact, the body, now known as the Odisha State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA), was set up well before the establishment of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) in 2005. Importantly, the state departed from the conventional approach to disaster management by placing local communities at the heart of the effort.

# Temp to rise again; isolated rain likely

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, April 9:** The India Meteorological Department (IMD) Tuesday predicted light to moderate rain or thundershowers at a few places over the districts of Odisha. Dry weather is also likely to prevail over some districts during the next 24 hours, said the mid-day weather bulletin.

According to MeT regional office, moderate rain is likely at Nuapada, Bargarh, Bolangir, Subarnapur, Boudh, Kandhamal, Kalahandi and at one or two places over the remaining districts of South Odisha, Jagatsinghpur, Jharsuguda, Sambalpur, Sundargarh, Angul, Dhenkanal, Cuttack, and Deogarh.

On April 11, light rain is likely at one or two places in Koraput, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur, Bolangir, Subarnapur, Nuapada, Gajapati, Kandhamal, Kalahandi, and Rayagada.

Meanwhile, as per IMD report, Paralakhemundi recorded the highest maximum temper-



ature of 39.2 degrees Celsius.

The maximum temperature was 37.5 degrees Celsius at Malkangiri, 37.4 degrees Celsius at Chandbali and Baripada, 36.7 degrees Celsius at Paradip, 36.6 degrees Celsius at Bhadrak, 36.5 degrees Celsius at Jagatsinghpur and Rourkela and 36.4 degrees Celsius at Kendrapara.

The Capital recorded the maximum temperature of 36.5 degrees Celsius while Cuttack recorded 35.2 degrees Celsius.

Northwesterly winds induced rain, thundershower and lightning brought the mercury levels down by several notches, in-

cluding Bhubaneswar and Cuttack, recording below normal temperature in the last couple of days.

"The maximum temperature (day) is likely to rise gradually by two to four degrees Celsius at many places across the state during the next three days. There will be no large change in the maximum temperature thereafter. The sky will be partly cloudy. Maximum and minimum temperature very likely to be around 37 degrees Celsius and 24 degrees Celsius respectively," said the IMD regional centre today.

# 2-day workshop of DEOs held

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, April 9:** A two-day review-cum-capacity building workshop of District Education Officers (DEO) and District Programme Coordinators (DPC) was organised by Odisha School Education Programme Authority (OSEPA), School and Mass Education (S&ME) department at Pantha Nivas here, Tuesday. S&ME Commissioner-cum-Secretary Aswathy S inaugurated the workshop.

On the first day of the meeting, the focus was on service matters related to employment, Odisha Civil Services (OCS) (CC & A) Rules-1962, rules relating to pensions, Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE), PGI (Performance Grading Index) and Sustainable Development Goals.



# GPS-enabled devices to aid visually impaired

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, April 9:** Ashish Mahana from Rengali, Sambalpur developed the concept of two assistive devices that can reduce human dependency among the visually impaired persons.

One is a GPS-enabled obstacle sensor device which can detect any obstacle from five feet and another is a multi sensor device which can detect fire, electricity, metal and obstacles. Mahana demonstrated both the devices before SSEPD department Principal Secretary Bishnupada Sethi, re-

cently. Sethi appreciated Mahana's invention.

He had earlier developed a victim detection camera that can record audio and video up to a depth of 50-feet. Last year, a newborn was rescued from a borewell in Laripalli village by using the device.

Mahana is a true example of an engineer with enthusiasm for inventing devices that can transform human lives. Earlier, he invented devices like weather helmet, robotic nurse. He has done MBA and holds a diploma in Electronics and Computer Hardware.

# Antarctic meteorites at risk due to climate change

About 5,000 meteorites are being lost in Antarctica because of ice melting caused by climate change, new research has found.

Scientists are calling for a major international effort to preserve the scientific value of meteorites as these space fragments provide insights into the origin of life on Earth, along with "secrets of the universe".

The scientists said the Earth is losing meteorites at five times the rate at which these are being recovered from Antarctica - the most prolific place to find meteorites - and urged for a need to "accelerate and intensify" recovery efforts.

Using satellite observations, AI and climate models, the research team also calculated that

for every tenth of a degree rise in global temperatures, an average of roughly 9,000 meteorites disappear from the ice sheet surface.

They further projected that by 2050, about a quarter of the Antarctic meteorites - estimated to be between 300,000-800,000 - could be lost to glacial melt and about three-quarters could be lost under a high-warming scenario before the end of the century.

Rapidly cutting greenhouse gas emissions is the only way to preserve the remaining unrecovered meteorites, the researchers said.

"We need to accelerate and intensify efforts to recover Antarctic meteorites. The loss of Antarctic meteorites is much like the loss of data that scien-



tists glean from ice cores collected from vanishing glaciers - once they disappear, so do some of the secrets of the universe," said Harry Zekollari, who co- led the study while working at the

Department of Civil, Environmental and Geomatic Engineering at ETH Zurich, Switzerland.

Meteorites absorb more heat compared to the surrounding

ice. As some of this heat transfers to the ice, some of it melts locally, causing the space fragments to sink underneath the ice sheet surface. Having sunk in, even at shallow depths, the meteorites cannot be detected anymore and are thus "lost for science", the researchers explained.

"Even when temperatures of the ice are well below zero, the dark meteorites warm so much in the sun that they can melt the ice directly under the meteorite. Through this process, the warm meteorite creates a local depression in the ice and over time fully disappears under the surface," said Veronica Tollenaar of the Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium, and co-lead of the study published in the Nature Climate Change journal.

"As atmospheric temperatures increase, the surface temperature of the ice increases, intensifying this process, since less heat from meteorites is required to locally melt the ice," said Tollenaar.

To date, about 60 per cent of all meteorites ever found on Earth have been collected from the surface of the Antarctic ice sheet, the researchers said.

They explained that the flow of the ice sheet concentrates meteorites in "meteorite stranding zones", where their dark crust allows easy detection.

Data-driven analysis for identifying unexplored meteorite stranding zones, along with mapping areas exposing blue ice where meteorites are often found, could improve the efficiency of meteorite recovery, the team said.

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# Prawn mafia destroying Bhitarkanika

**CHEMICALS PRODUCED IN GHERIES HARMING ANIMALS AND MARINE CREATURES**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kendrapara, April 9:** People have heard about the term 'mafia raj' quite often. Well in the case of a few districts in Odisha, the term 'prawn mafia raj' is a more appropriate term. The vast coastline stretching from Dhamra in Bhadrak district to Paradip in Jagatsinghpur district and the Bhitarkanika National Park in Kendrapara district has completely been taken over by the prawn mafia. The illegal mushrooming of prawn gheries flouting all norms is the order of the day at present.

As per an Odisha High Court order, illegal prawn farms have to be demolished as they affect human beings, wildlife and marine creatures. However, just the opposite is happening, with new prawn farms being established on a daily basis. It is also important to note that people involved in the prawn business are not sparing the Bhitarkanika National Park. They have en-



croached even on forest land to set up prawn gheries. The toxic chemicals and gas produced by prawn farms are having an adverse effect on all and sundry.

Locals alleged that the district administration is blatantly violating the high court order as they have a tacit understanding with the owners of such gheries. Environmentalists Hemant Kumar Rout, Dolagobind Jena, Pratap Kumar Padhi, Sunil Kumar Gantayat and Pratap Kumar Tripathy also expressed concerns over the issue.

Locals pointed out that the en-

tire coastline near the sanctuary has been taken over by owners of the gheries. They added that many more such gheries will soon be added to the existing ones as prawn farming is a lucrative business. They informed that no one dares to protest as the prawn gheri owners have unleashed a reign of terror in the entire area.

Sources pointed out that use of motor pumps and other equipment in the gheries pollute the atmosphere and have an adverse effect on wildlife. They said that while setting up the prawn farms, large tracts of green cover are

being destroyed. Hence animals in the sanctuary are suffering.

Sources informed that approximately 14 types of chemicals are used in the prawn gheries turning the water toxic. When this chemical-laced liquid is discharged into nearby water bodies and the sea, it has an adverse effect on marine life. The sources added that toxic waste is seriously hampering production of fish and other marine animals. With the food basket decreasing, various types of birds that once used to frequent Bhitarkanika, have stopped coming.

Some environmentalists suspected that the toxic water which is being discharged in the sea has also affected the dolphin population. They pointed out that the dolphin census ended in January, but till now the report hasn't been disclosed. The only reason why facts have been suppressed must be because of decrease in dolphin population, they opined.

When contacted, Kendrapara sub-collector Rabindra Kumar Pradhan informed that the process of demolition of illegal gheries is on. He added that as per the state government's instructions permission for saltwater fish cultivation has been given to a few people only.

# Hanuman Jayanti rallies banned in Sambalpur



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sambalpur, April 9:** The district administration here ordered Tuesday a complete ban on processions and bike rallies during the Hanuman Jayanti celebrations Sunday. A decision to this effect was taken keeping in mind the violence that broke out last year during the festival.

A meeting was convened Tuesday under the chairmanship of District Collector Akshay Sunil Agrawal regarding the Hanuman Jayanti festival. Also present at the meeting were senior district administration officials, SP Sambalpur, Mukesh Kumar Bhamoo and representatives of various communities.

Others attending the meeting were Sambalpur Municipal Corporation Commissioner Vedbhushan, Additional Collector (General) Sucharu

Kumar Bal, Additional Collector (Revenue) Ajambar Mohanty, Zilla Parishad executive officer Dharmendra Mallik and senior police officers.

It was decided during the meeting that all religious rituals will be followed during Hanuman Jayanti. However, public processions and bike rallies will not be allowed. The decision has been taken keeping in mind that elections are knocking at the door and maintaining peace is of prime importance, said officials.

Hanuman Jayanti celebrations in this city had turned violent last year. The main procession was pelted with stones by a group of people at Motijharan locality resulting in injuries to a large number of participants. The violence also left a number of cops injured. To control the situation, the Odisha government had to impose curfew in the

district and suspend internet services for a few days.

"The decision to ban processions and bike rallies was taken keeping in mind the tension which flared up last year. All the stakeholders have agreed to the decision. The main aim is to avoid violence just ahead of the polls," Agrawal told mediapersons.

Agrawal also informed that security has been beefed up in the town keeping in mind the various religious festivals on the anvil. Processions and public prayers for all other religious festivals have also been banned. Agrawal advised people to follow the rituals in their respective homes or at places of worship. He added that along with the police, CRPF jawans will also be deployed in this town during the Hanuman Jayanti celebrations to keep a watch on the situation.

# BIKER DEAD IN ROAD MISHAP



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Boudh, April 9:** A biker was killed while the pillion rider sustained critical injuries Tuesday morning after a LAccMI bus hit their two-wheeler near Lambasari Chowk under Kantamal police limits in this district.

The deceased was identified as Valmiki Mahanandia while the critically injured as Prasant Mahanandia of Bichika village under Kantamal block in the district.

As per reports, Valmiki and Prashant were travelling on the motorcycle to attend to some urgent work at Palasagora when a Kantamal-bound speeding LAccMI bus hit their two-wheeler. The mishap was so severe that the two were flung far off their bike.

Locals rescued them and rushed them to the Kantamal community health centre (CHC) where doctors pronounced Valmiki dead.

Later, Prasant was shifted to the Sonepur district headquarters hospital after his condition deteriorated.

On being informed, personnel from Kantamal police station reached the spot and launched an investigation. The body was sent for post-mortem to the Manamunda hospital. However, a delay in post-mortem created tension among the kin as they staged a road block on National Highway-57. Police later persuaded the family members to withdraw the protest.

# Elephant kills man in Banki

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Banki, April 9:** In yet another case of human-animal conflict, a man was trampled to death by an elephant at Gayalabanka village under Damapada block in Cuttack district late Monday night. The deceased was identified as Manoranjan Sahu alias Banka, 40, son of Gopal Sahu, a resident of Mohanty Sahi locality in the same village.

Locals informed that, Manoranjan had gone to the backyard of his house to attend nature's call when he was attacked by the tusker and trampled to death on the spot. He did not have any chance to escape as the elephant attacked him suddenly.

On being informed, Damapada ranger Niranjan Mohapatra along with a Forest department team reached the spot and managed to drive away the elephant from the village.

Tension prevailed in the village following Manoranjan's death. Other residents demanded compensation for the deceased's family. Mohapatra told villagers that an amount of ₹10,000 will be provided to the family of Manoranjan to conduct the last rites. Police meanwhile, sent the body for post-mortem before handing it to his family for cremation.

Mohapatra said that he would request higher authorities to provide compensation of ₹6 lakh to the deceased's family.

# 2-day business conclave ends

**Balasure:** A two-day 'International Business Conclave-2024', organised by the Business Studies and Management department of Fakir Mohan University (FMU) concluded here Tuesday. The conference which began Monday was inaugurated under the chairmanship of the Vice-Chancellor of FMU, Professor Santosh Kumar Tripathy. The theme of the conclave was: "Managing Contemporary Business: An Integrated Approach". Head of Business Studies and Management department, Prof Padmalita Rautray, talked on the major objectives of the conclave and Dr Debadutta Das introduced the eminent guests. Prof Kshiti Bhushan Das, Vice-Chancellor of Jharkhand Central University, harped on the importance of survival strategy, sustainability and growth to develop any form of business. Professor and Director, Department of Management, St Ambrose University (USA), Dr Monica Foret, was the key speaker at the event.

# Das asks students to take India forward

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sambalpur, April 9:** The National Education Policy-2020 has been prepared by incorporating ancient knowledge and history. In the 21st century, talented and resourceful students have a greater role to play to take India to the top of world economy, Odisha Governor, Raghubar Das stated here Monday while addressing the 33rd Convocation of Sambalpur University. It was held at the Biju Patnaik Auditorium at Jyoti Vihar here.

A total of 78 students were awarded PhD and post-PhD degrees while 56 students were awarded gold medals for their results in various disciplines in the academic year 2022-23. The university also conferred D.Litt on Dr Suresh Prasad Sarangi in Political Science and Dr Sachin Gupta in Management Studies.

Among the gold medal winners was Debdutta Kanungo, who got first class in Master of Law. Debdutta who is currently pursuing a Doctorate in Law at the varsity is also a team member of eminent Supreme Court lawyer



A student receives his gold medal and certificate from Odisha Governor Raghubar Das during the Convocation ceremony

OP PHOTO

Prashant Bhushan.

Das, who is also the Chancellor of Sambalpur University, emphasised on the importance of discipline in student life. "Habits formed during the student period are carried all through life. As a result, it is important for students to learn while remaining disciplined," Das said.

"I urge the youth to recognise their heritage and make it their source of strength. Now the time has come for educational institutions and students to make India a developed nation and keep working with dedication until the goal

is achieved," Das added.

Vice-Chancellor of Central University of Odisha, Professor Chakradhar Tripathi, was the chief speaker on the occasion. He said that Sambalpur University has a glorious past and a large number of students who have passed out of it have created a niche for themselves.

Sambalpur University Vice-Chancellor Bidhu Bhusan Mishra delivered the welcome address. Among others Registrar Nruparaj Sahu, syndicate members and several dignitaries were present at the function.

# 'Chaiti Festival' begins in Keonjhar

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Keonjhar, April 9:** The 88th seven-day long 'Chaiti Festival' at 'Maa Tarini' temple in Ghatagaon of this district kicked off Tuesday with religious fervour and gaiety. Thousands of devotees from various parts of Odisha and outside the state thronged the shrine to witness the colourful festival which is locally called 'Chaiti Parba'.

Organisers of the festival said priests and servitors performed various rituals like 'marjana', 'mangal alati' and 'sodasa upachar' of the deity early Tuesday morning on the first day of the festival. Later the temple gates were opened for the devotees to have darshan of the deity which has been decked up in gold ornaments.

Devotees offered puja and had darshan of the Goddess in 'Suna Beshra' (gold attire). It is believed that 'Maa Tarini' showers her blessings on devotees during darshan in 'Suna Beshra', said Rajendra Pattanayak, a former member of the trust body of the temple.



In view of the large congregation, the temple and local ad-

ministration have put in place various arrangements for devotees to ensure smooth conduct of the festival. Measures like demarcation of lanes and setting up of barricades have been done for smooth movement of devotees. A large number of cops also ensured that devotees had smooth and 'hassle-free darshan' of the Goddess.

Though the weather has remained cool in the past two days, the administration has taken special measures to protect devotees against the heat. Drinking water facilities and a medical camp have been set up close to the temple. Devotees were provided with 'pana', a type of summer drink to mitigate the heat wave. The arena of the temple premises has been covered with tarpaulin to protect the devotees from the scorching sun.

Cultural programmes like 'Palla', 'Sankirtan', devotional songs and dance programmes were also staged on the day and will continue during the entire duration of the festival, officials stated.

# Maoists, security forces exchange fire in Bargarh

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bargarh, April 9:** A gunfight broke out between Maoists and security forces in this district, police said Tuesday. The exchange of fire took place inside a dense forest on Gandhamardan hills under Paikmal police station area, the cops informed.

The elite Special Operations Group (SOG) along with the District Voluntary Force (DVF) launched a search operation Sunday after getting a tip-off about the presence of Maoists in the area. Around 5.40 pm Monday, as the Maoists spotted the security forces, they opened fire, police said. Soon, a gunfight broke out but the Maoists managed to flee, police informed.

"After the gunfight, the area was searched thoroughly and several items were found. Among the incriminating materials founds were gelatine sticks, ammunition and pamphlets. Police have intensified the search operations," an officer said.

Even though there was no report of any injury or casualty in the gunfight, the Maoists have fled the spot, the officer stated. Additional forces have been mobilised to intensify the search in the area, he added.

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A smile acts upon the difficulties as the sun upon the clouds - it disperses them.

THE MOTHER



## Novel Campaign

As India is gearing up for Lok Sabha a few weeks away, a major campaign is being conducted in the electronic media to promote awareness among citizens about the importance of their right to vote. Well known public personalities have been roped in to tell people that their vote is an expression of self-respect and a democratic right to speak their mind about governance. However, this campaign, compared to the one launched by US President Joe Biden to drum up support for him in the November presidential election, appears too stereotyped and bland. In contrast, the campaign managers of Biden have fielded two ordinary women to speak to fellow-countrymen and women, drawing upon their own personal experiences. The novel electoral campaign is already getting traction since the women have been shuttling from one state to another to articulate their views on a key issue that Biden and his Democratic Party have made their main election plank - the federal restrictions on abortion.

Amanda Zurawski of Texas and Kaitlyn Joshua of Louisiana say their personal experiences are driving them to campaign for Biden in North Carolina and Wisconsin over the next two weeks. Zurawski had gone into premature labour, developed sepsis and nearly died and Joshua had been prevented from getting medical help for a miscarriage. Their unspeakable sufferings, they say, were due to the federal restrictions on abortion. The Biden campaign finds in their stories powerful first-hand accounts of the growing medical peril for many women as abortion restrictions pushed by Republicans complicate health care.

The two women are sharing with the voters their personal traumatic experiences caused by the ruling of the Supreme Court overturning the Roe v. Wade case that abolished the ban on abortion. The judges appointed by Biden's rival Donald Trump during his tenure as President played a crucial role in the judgement.

The Democrats have drawn up their election strategy for Biden in such a manner that one of the main electoral issues seems to have got a fresh lease of life from these two women. Thirty-one year-old Joshua is telling the people that abortion is "a very heavy topic" and her understanding is that "the Biden and Harris administration is the only administration that could do anything remotely close to addressing the abortion bans and understanding women's health in general."

Such is the force of the campaign that Republicans are now clueless as to how to tackle the issue. Trump, who had taken credit for the overturning of Roe v. Wade case, is now on the back foot and has promised to make a statement outlining his policies this week.

Support for abortion access drove women to the polls during the 2022 midterm elections helping Democrats make unexpected electoral gains. According to an opinion poll, about two-thirds of Americans say abortion should generally be legal, about one-quarter say abortion should always be legal and only about 1 in 10 say it should always be illegal.

Joshua and Zurawski say they felt compelled to get into politics after their own experiences. People do not realise how bad it is nor do they figure out how bleak it is, says Zurawski and asserts the more she and Joshua continue to share their stories, the more awareness of the problem would spread.

Biden and the Democrats have found a novel method of sending out powerful messages to the electorate by letting the voters tell their life stories to endorse and condemn government policies of the incumbent and its challenger respectively. Here is a lesson for Indian politicians campaigning full throttle for the LS polls.

### WISDOM CORNER

If you are vigilant and make a stern effort to reject every thought when it rises, you will soon find that you are going deeper and deeper into your own inner self, where there is no need for your effort to reject the thoughts.

RAMANA MAHARSHI

As we grow in our consciousness, there will be more compassion and more love, and then the barriers between people, between religions, between nations will begin to fall. Yes, we have to beat down the separateness.

RAM DASS

The most intense conflicts, if overcome, leave behind a sense of security and calm that is not easily disturbed. It is just these intense conflicts and their conflagration which are needed to produce valuable and lasting results.

CARL JUNG

### THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- **1815:** Mount Tambora explodes in one of the largest volcanic eruptions in recorded history. At least 71,000 people were killed by the eruption. The explosion was heard up to 2000 km (1200 mi) away.
- **1849:** The safety pin was patented by Walter Hunt in the United States; he later sold his rights to the fastener for just \$400.
- **1912:** The RMS Titanic embarked on its maiden voyage, which ended in tragedy several days later when the luxury liner struck an iceberg and sank.
- **1925:** American author F. Scott Fitzgerald published *The Great Gatsby*, which became a literary classic.
- **1938:** Anschluss approved in Austria. In a controlled plebiscite in Austria this day in 1938, soon after Adolf Hitler's invasion of the country, 99.7 per cent of Austrians approved the Anschluss (German: "Union")—the political unification of Austria and Germany.
- **1957:** The courtroom classic *12 Angry Men* was released in the United States; it starred Henry Fonda as a juror who tries to convince the others that the accused murderer may be innocent.
- **1970:** The Beatles break up as Paul McCartney leaves the band. In their ten years of existence, the British rock group became one of the most successful bands of all time, selling over a billion albums, according to EMI. McCartney's announcement came a week before the release of his debut solo album, the starting point of a successful solo career.

- **1972:** The development, production, and stockpiling of biological weapons were outlawed by the Biological Weapons Convention, signed by more than 150 countries.
- **1986:** Halley's Comet reached the perigee (point nearest Earth) of its most recent passage near the planet.

### LOL

#### Safe to swim here?

While sports fishing off the Florida coast, a tourist capsized his boat. He could swim, but his fear of alligators kept him clinging to the overturned craft. Spotting and old beachcomber standing on the shore, the tourist shouted, "Are there any gators around here?!" "Naw," the man hollered back, "they



ain't been around for years!" "Feeling safe, the tourist started swimming leisurely toward the shore. About halfway there he asked the guy, "How'd you get rid of the gators?" "We didn't do nothin'," the beachcomber said. "The sharks got 'em."

### FOCUS BIODIVERSITY

# SAVING THE AMAZON

The Amazon rainforest, one of the world's most vital natural resources, plays a crucial role in maintaining climate stability and safeguarding biodiversity. As global warming and deforestation push the Amazon toward a catastrophic tipping point, the question on everyone's mind is how to preserve it.

The emerging consensus seems to be that the best way to protect the Amazon is to cultivate a "bioeconomy." Over the past few years, this idea has been endorsed by conservationists and various stakeholders, including Brazil's government, private philanthropies like the Moore Foundation, bilateral donors such as the United States Agency for International Development, multilateral lenders like the Inter-American Development Bank, and prominent organisations such as the World Economic Forum and the World Resources Institute.

The bioeconomy framework aims to foster the sustainable use of forest resources and promote the welfare of local communities. This includes, for example, harvesting non-timber forest products like Brazil nuts, açai berries, and rubber, as well as producing and marketing creams and perfumes under the Amazon 4.0 label. The hope is that further research will discover more valuable applications, enabling conservationists to counter destructive practices that contribute to deforestation, such as cattle ranching.

Although well-intentioned, this approach is likely to backfire. The bioeconomy's potential has been overstated, and its actual impact is often misunderstood. First, despite being fashionable, açai berries and Brazil nuts represent niche markets valued at about \$1 billion, or roughly 0.05 per cent of Brazil's GDP. Such a small market cannot sustain the Brazilian Amazon's 30 million inhabitants.

Second, even if the market for sustainable Amazon-sourced goods were to expand, local farmers would struggle to compete with farms that mass-produce their crops through less envi-



While the bioeconomy model is unlikely to create livelihoods, owing to the limited scope of local endeavours and fierce external competition, scaling it up might inadvertently make deforestation more profitable

ronmentally friendly methods. Moreover, if there were a significant increase in demand for açai, specialised monoculture farms would likely emerge to meet it, which in turn would accelerate deforestation and lead to significant biodiversity loss.

Third, developing the Amazon's bioeconomy will require infrastructure, skills, roads, housing, social services, property rights, and financial resources that are lacking in much of the region. Introducing them could increase the land's value, thus incentivising deforestation. Recent research by the World Bank's Marek Hanusch finds a striking correlation between deforestation and exogenous shocks, such as exchange-rate and commodity-price fluctuations, that affect the profitability of agricultural activities. By contrast, productivity gains in non-commodity sectors tend to make land-clearing less attractive, thereby reducing deforestation.

Similarly, a 2023 study of the Colombian Amazon by Harvard's Growth Lab highlights the connection between deforestation and road infrastructure, showing that more than 80 per cent of deforestation occurs within 7.2 kilometres (4.5 miles) of tertiary roads. The construction of such roads frequently falls under the purview of local mayors, who often build them to improve their chances of reelection.

The Harvard study also underscores the vital importance

of property rights, showing that deforestation is significantly less likely in national parks and indigenous reserves than in areas governed by the property-rights regime for so-called "national wastelands." By providing a route to private ownership of occupied lands, this regime increases the profitability of land-grabbing and deforestation.

A better way to protect the Amazon would be to boost the productivity of the region's urban centres and surrounding non-forested areas. Given that most people prefer the comforts of urban living to the hardships of forest life, this strategy moves individuals seeking stable and quality jobs from forested regions to the cities.

This is evident in Brazil and Colombia. Brazil's rural population has declined by more than 15 million since the early 1970s, whereas Colombia's has fallen by over 800,000 people since 2000. As the rural population declines, the amount of arable land per person increases. When combined with increased productivity per hectare, this demographic shift should be enough to improve the well-being of those living off the land without disturbing the forest. And yet, deforestation rates remain high, suggesting that deforestation is not driven by population pressure.

Moreover, urbanisation and development are closely linked. By facilitating specialisation and knowledge-sharing, cities make

it easier for people with different skills to collaborate, thereby boosting productivity. For governments, it is easier to provide infrastructure, public services, and security to densely populated urban areas than to dispersed rural communities. Agricultural value chains have also largely moved to cities, where the majority of tool and agro-chemical production, logistics, support services, agro-processing, and distribution now occur.

But when urban amenities are inadequate, as is the case in numerous towns and cities across the Amazon, more people are willing to relinquish the comforts of urban life. In Colombia, for example, rural residents often shy away from cities and prefer land near local processing facilities and support services. By contrast, in regions with high deforestation rates like Colombia's Guaviare and Caquetá, most of the population already live in urban areas. Yet, these cities need primary and secondary roads that connect them to the rest of the country. They also need expanded public housing and urban development programmes, as well as strategies to boost their competitiveness. In more successful Amazonian cities, such as Manaus (Brazil) or Iquitos (Peru), the urban population has access to more attractive employment opportunities than farming. Consequently, deforestation rates in these regions are extremely low.

Complex urban production is crucial to reducing poverty. In the Amazon, it would come with the added benefit of protecting the rainforest. Developing a bioeconomy, on the other hand, would attract resources and people into the rainforest instead of driving them away. While the bioeconomy model is unlikely to create livelihoods, owing to the limited scope of local endeavours and fierce external competition, scaling it up might inadvertently make deforestation more profitable.

The writer is a professor at Harvard Kennedy School and Director of the Harvard Growth Lab.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

### IN JEST THIS

# We can all benefit from more touching

If you enjoy going to museums and galleries, you've probably come across many signs that say "Please do not touch." Sometimes the wording is slightly different. For example: "Please look but don't touch," "Touching is strictly prohibited" and "Keep your grubby hands to yourself."

Despite these signs, there's a lot of touching going on. Humans love to touch, and we especially love to touch things we're not supposed to touch. This is known, of course, as inappropriate touching.

Inanimate objects in museums and galleries are sometimes victims of inappropriate touching, but so are humans, which is why you might spot a woman on a crowded bus wearing a T-shirt that says "You may look but don't touch."

It's important to say "no" to inappropriate touching. But it's also important to say "yes" to appropriate touching.

Just ask researchers at the Netherlands Institute for Neuroscience and University Hospital Essen, Germany. They'll tell what they found from com-

bining hundreds of individual studies into a large-scale analysis: touch is good.

But how good is it? Well, according to a report in *Science Daily*, the researchers found that "touch substantially improves both physical and mental well-being." It can help reduce pain, depression and stress in adults and is particularly beneficial to people with physical or mental health problems.

"A key question of our study is to leverage the hundreds of individual studies out there to identify what type of touch works best," said Professor Christian Keysers, director of the Social Brain Lab at the Netherlands Institute for Neuroscience. "What if you don't have a friend or partner close by to hug you? Would touch from a stranger or even a machine also help? And how often?"

The researchers found that frequency is more important than duration. Getting a daily hug from a friend can have a bigger impact on your health than a weekly massage from a therapist. Yes, daily hugs are good. Hourly hugs are even better, but

not if your friend decides to ghost you.

A backrub or other touch from a healthcare worker (or other stranger) can be as effective as a touch from a loved one, the researchers found. But if you find yourself in the hospital, make sure touch therapy is part of your treatment plan before you pester the nurse for some touching.

What about touch from a non-human? The researchers found that a touch-robot or weighted blanket can be as effective as human touch in improving physical wellbeing. But for mental wellbeing, human touch is vital, which suggests the "importance for an emotional component associated with the touch," said Frédéric Michon, one of the study authors.

This begs the question: what about animals? My dog, Lulu, loves to be touched, and she also loves to touch humans, often appropriately.

"It would be useful to see whether an animal's or pet's touch could improve wellbeing, and inversely if they also benefit from

it, but unfortunately there simply aren't enough studies, or properly controlled ones, for us to draw any general conclusions on these topics," Michon said.

Not enough studies on animal-human touch? That surprises me, considering our close relationship with so many animals. Of course, we like some animals to touch us (dogs, cats, and rabbits) but not others (rats, snakes, and alligators).

One of the most important findings is that touch significantly benefits newborn babies, especially when parents are doing the touching.

"This finding could be impactful," said Julian Packheiser, another study author. "Death rates due to premature births are high in some countries and the knowledge that a baby benefits more from the touch of their own parent offers another easily implementable form of support for the baby's health."

If you're a parent of a newborn baby, please set aside time to do some touching - and not just the buttons on your baby monitor.

## 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](mailto:edit@orissapost.com)

OrissaPOST

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### Tinted trouble

Sir, Tinted sunglasses, to cut off the light entering the interiors of cars, was borne out of necessity until a Supreme Court judgement of 2012 changed that. These tinted glasses fell into disrepute after a few unscrupulous elements used them for nefarious activities. Several crimes against women were committed under the protection of tinted glasses. Besides, law enforcers could not clearly decipher whether or not drivers followed rules. Although only seventy per cent of visual light transmission (VLT) is allowed for front and rear windscreens of cars, and fifty per cent for the windows, car owners are found to be flouting this requirement under the law quite often much to the consternation of the police. When the intention is evil, can the action be virtuous? The present fine of Rs 100 for first time offenders and Rs 300 for subsequent offenders is too meagre. Provisions for stringent punishment under the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, have to be made.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

### Upset exporters

Sir, Amid a Centre-imposed extended ban on onion exports, Indian farmers and traders are upset that certain onion exports permitted by the government to markets such as the UAE have been sold at very low prices. This is even as global onion prices have soared, resulting in windfall profits for some importers. Exporters have alleged that an Indian farmer is being paid Rs 12 to Rs 15 for a kilogram of onions which are then exported and sold in UAE for more than Rs 120 per kg. The government had imposed a ban on export of onions in December, to avert a potential domestic shortage of the bulb. The ban extended indefinitely "till further orders" last month. It, however, kept a window open for exports to countries following requests through diplomatic channels. Typically, in trade deals, local exporters of onions are expected to bid for the lowest price they can offer, and buyers are picked on the basis of the highest price offered. This, however, is not the case in this situation.

CK Ramani, MUMBAI

## Now get square-shaped watermelons this summer

**Prayagraj (Uttar Pradesh), April 9:** A new hybrid and export variety of watermelon and melon 'Saraswati' is all set to hit UP markets this summer. This variety of watermelons and melons is not only smaller in size but also in a square shape, using a hybrid variety of seeds. Interestingly, the Saraswati variety of watermelons and melons, cultivated by farmers in Prayagraj, have a higher content of TSS (Total Solid Sugar) value, and are being cultivated in around 1,000 acres of land in

Prayagraj, Kaushambhi and Fatehpur districts, using the mulch film cultivation technique. Generally, people have an idea of ordinary watermelons (exterior green and bright red interior) but these hybrid varieties will have other colours like yellow exterior and bright red interior or green exterior and yellow interior. Agriculture expert Manoj Kumar Srivastava said, "Farmers are cultivating seeds being brought from Taiwan to yield a good crop in limited resources. The small and medium-sized watermelon and melon in round and square



shapes are more sought after by fruit lovers across the country as they have a total solid sugar (TSS) value up to 14 to 15 per cent."

Farmers growing watermelon and melon, however, point out that they have grown new varieties of watermelon and melon with technical guidance and this hybrid variety of watermelons and melons are giving better profits to farmers. A farmer can earn a profit up to ₹80,000 to ₹90,000 per acre. Currently, a hybrid variety of watermelon and melon is being cultivated in trans-Ganga and Yamuna (Prayagraj), Mooratganj in Kaushambhi and Khaga in Fatehpur district. The Saraswati variety of watermelon will soon be exported to other states.

## Reason behind Mayawati's silence



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Lucknow, April 9:** Bahujan Samaj Party President Mayawati has been ignoring allegations by rivals, does not respond to invitations of alliances and maintains a studied silence in the din of elections. The BSP headquarter in Lucknow is deserted and BSP's blue flags are missing. The crowds of party workers that throng party offices during polls are also missing.

Mayawati's actions create a furore but her silence is deafening and is unnerving her friends and foes alike. However, it is amply clear that though she may seem inactive and suspiciously silent, Mayawati has been quietly working overtime to target her rivals - mainly the Samajwadi Party and the Congress in Uttar Pradesh. The BSP is apparently keen to reclaim its lost space by edging out these two parties. The BSP has declared only about two dozen candidates so far and if sources are to be believed, she is waiting for SP and Congress to declare their candidates so that she can respond with her list. The BSP list includes seven Muslim candidates on the seats that have a sizeable Muslim population. The candidates include Majid Ali from Saharanpur, Zeeshan Khan from Rampur, Shaikat Ali from Sambhal, Irfan Saifi from Moradabad, Mujahid Hussain from Amroha, Abid Ali from Aonla and Anis Ahmad Khan from Pilibhit. The move is designed to sabotage the ambitions of the INDIA

alliance to consolidate Muslim votes in western Uttar Pradesh constituencies having a strong Muslim presence. Muslims constitute 19.26 per cent (3.85 crore) of Uttar Pradesh's total population - which stands at 19.98 crore. There are at least 20 Lok Sabha and 85-100 Assembly constituencies where the population of Muslim voters varies between 25-50 per cent. Muslims form 20-25 per cent of the total population in another 10 of the 80 Lok Sabha seats and 60 Assembly seats. There are around 30 Lok Sabha constituencies and 150 Assembly segments in the state where Muslims decide electoral outcomes. In the previous general elections, when the BSP and SP contested in alliance, the two parties had fielded 12 Muslim candidates. In the 2022 Assembly polls, the SP-RLD-Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party (SBSP) alliance fielded 63 Muslim candidates of whom 34 won. "Once the SP-Congress coalition announces its candidates for all 80 seats, BSP's list will be released without delay," a party functionary told IANS. As for Dalits, Mayawati seems to be confident that her base among Dalits is intact. She does perceive some degree of threat from Bhim Army Chief Chandra Shekhar which is evident from the fact that her nephew Akash Anand devoted an entire election rally in Bijnor on Saturday, targeting 'that fellow' (read Chandra Shekhar). For Mayawati, her main political rivals in Uttar Pradesh are SP and Congress - and certainly not the BJP. She is fiercely protective of her Dalit and Muslim vote base and will not allow SP-Congress to make a dent in it. She is aware that the BSP's fortune is inversely proportionate to the fortunes of SP and Congress and to ensure the survival of her party, she will go all out to damage the prospects of the INDIA bloc in the elections.

## Delhi's power demand set to hit new high

**WITH HIGH TEMPERATURES PROJECTED FOR THE SEASON, DELHI'S PEAK POWER DEMAND IS EXPECTED TO CROSS 8,000 MW FOR THE FIRST TIME, REACHING UP TO 8,200 MW, ACCORDING TO STATE LOAD DISPATCH CENTRE DATA**



power demand in the areas covered by BSES Rajdhani Power Limited's (BRPL) - South and West Delhi - which were 3,250 MW and 3,389 MW in the summers of 2023 and 2022 respectively, are expected to reach around 3,679 MW this summer, a BSES spokesperson said. The other BSES discom BYPL recorded the peaks of 1,670 MW and 1,752 MW during the summers of 2023 and 2022 respectively, in its distribution areas of Central and East Delhi. This year it is expected to reach 1,857 MW, he said. The BSES discoms are geared up to ensure reliable power supply to meet the power needs of around 50 lakh consumers of

the company, said the company spokesperson. These arrangements include around 2,100 MW of green power that will play an important role in meeting the demand in summer months, he said. Besides, long-term power purchase agreements and banking arrangements with other states and deployment of latest technologies such as artificial intelligence and machine learning to predict power demand will be used, he added. The BSES has made power banking arrangements with many states, from where its two discoms in the national capital will get upto 670 MW of power, the spokesperson said.

A Tata Power Delhi Distribution Limited (TPDDL) spokesperson said that Delhi's summer peak power demand is expected to surge above 8,000 MW and the company expects its own peak demand to scale up to 2,351 MW this season. Last summer, TPDDL saw a peak power demand of 2,218 MW in August 2023, she said. "The peak load of the national capital is projected to reach 8,000 MW in late June or early July amid anticipation of scorching temperatures this year," she said. "As we approach the summer season, we anticipate the peak demand to reach approximately 2,351 MW within our jurisdiction and we are well-prepared to meet this demand," said Ganesh Srinivasan, chief executive officer of the discom. "Our proactive approach includes rigorous safety measures and maintenance initiatives across our distribution network," Srinivasan said. The TPDDL spokesperson said load balancing at sub stations, deployment of additional manpower, mobile transformers, quick reaction teams, bilateral agreements, reserve shutdown, power exchange, battery storage systems for key customers during exigencies, are part of the summer action plan for uninterrupted power supply.

## Delhi govt issues order on dry days from April - June

**New Delhi, April 9:** The Delhi government has declared dry days on account of the Lok Sabha elections and religious festivals during April-June, officials said. An order issued by the excise department said that the liquor stores in Delhi will be closed on Id-ul-Fitr (April 11), Ram Navami (April 17), Mahavir Jayanti (April 21), Buddha Purnima (May 23), and Id-ul-Zuha (June 17). In a notification issued recently, the department said that dry day will be observed (before 48 hours of end of poll) from 6 PM of April 24 to 6 PM of April 26 on account of Lok Sabha polls in Baghpat, Ghaziabad and Gautam Budh Nagar districts of Uttar Pradesh. It will be applicable for all the licensees whose vends/premises are situated within 100 metres of the border with Baghpat, Ghaziabad and Gautam Budh Nagar districts of Uttar Pradesh. In a separate notification the excise department said that different kinds of liquor stores and other licensed premises in the National Capital Territory of Delhi will be closed (before 48 hours of end of poll) from 6 PM of May 23 to 6 PM of May 25 due to voting in the seven Lok Sabha seats in the city.

## Elections in Uttar Pradesh are unusually quiet this time

**Lucknow, April 9:** The familiar sound of 'Jitega bhai jitega bhai' over the loudspeakers is missing in the state of Uttar Pradesh, which sends the highest number of MPs to the Parliament, this time. There is no colour visible on the ground and even posters and hoardings are nowhere to be seen. Even the messages on the mobile phones are hard to come by. It is only the television that keeps up the momentum with speeches and debates. Electioneering in Uttar Pradesh this time around is unusually quiet and subdued. In fact, it does not seem like election time at all. Campaign in the largest state of the country, in the true sense of the term, is yet to begin. While the BJP is focussing



on the national campaign and is going ahead full steam, opposition parties are keeping a low profile - with most of their candidates not yet declared. Slogans, once the mainstay of campaigning, are also conspicuous by their absence. "The BJP has one slogan 'Abki baar 400 paar' and every candidate is banking on it. No candidate has coined a slogan for himself because he wants to ride high on the Modi wave. The slogan is catchy and has al-

ready caught on," said a BJP candidate from central UP. The Congress slogan 'Ab Hoga Nyay' has failed to catch the fancy of the people. "It does not convey exactly what the Congress wants to say. The slogan should be short and catchy - one that can say everything in a few words," said Ravish Mathur, a young psephologist. The SP and BSP have not yet found slogans of their choice for this season. The change in the style of campaigning has also done away with flags and posters. Most candidates are also using social media for campaigning in a very cautious way. For instance, much before the elections were announced, the SP candidate from Lucknow, Ravidas Mehrotra, put out his audio message via phone to the voters.



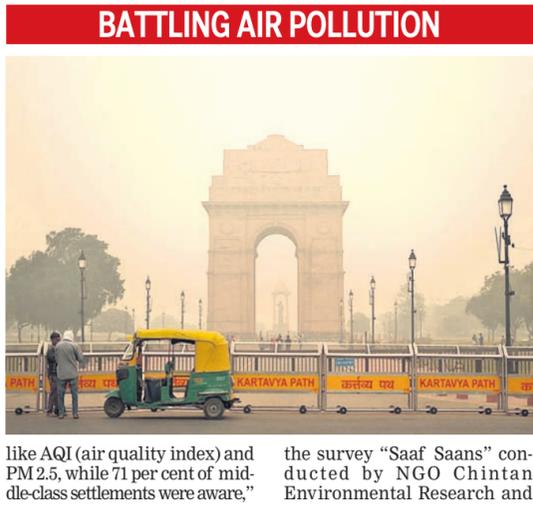
An exhibition titled 'Mithila Ramayan' at Lalit Kala Akademi in New Delhi features 100 Madhubani paintings by award-winning women artistes from Bihar's Mithila region

## 'Kanyadaan' not necessary: Court

**Lucknow, April 9:** The Allahabad High Court has held that 'kanyadaan' is not necessary for solemnisation of marriage under the Hindu Marriage Act, and only 'saptapadi' is an essential ceremony. A bench of Justice Subhash Vidyarthi made the observation while hearing a revision petition filed by one Ashutosh Yadav, who had stated that his marriage under the Act mandated a 'kanyadaan' (giving away the bride) ceremony, which was not performed in his case. In its order March 22, the court said the Hindu Marriage Act merely provides for 'saptapadi' (seven steps) as an essential ceremony of a marriage. Considering the overall circumstances, kanyadaan is not necessary for solemnisation of Hindu marriage, the court said. Yadav had challenged an order passed by Lucknow additional sessions judge March 6 while contesting a criminal case filed by his in-laws.

## Awareness low among urban poor in Delhi-NCR: Study

**New Delhi, April 9:** Awareness about air pollution-related terminologies such as air quality index and particulate matter is "significantly" low among the urban poor in Delhi-NCR, according to a survey. The study conducted from December 2023 to January 2024 covered 500 people in Delhi and National Capital Region (NCR) cities of Noida, Ghaziabad, Faridabad and Gurugram. For the survey, they were divided into two groups - residents of informal settlements and slums, and formal middle-class settlements. "Awareness of air pollution-related terminology was significantly lower among the urban poor. Only 10 per cent of people were aware of air pollution terms



like AQI (air quality index) and PM2.5, while 71 per cent of middle-class settlements were aware," the survey "Saaf Saans" conducted by NGO Chintan Environmental Research and

Action Group said. PM 2.5 levels are fine particles that have a diameter less than 2.5 micrometers, more than 100 times thinner than a human hair and remain suspended in the air for longer durations and pose health risks as they can enter into the respiratory tract. The study's findings also highlighted that 33 per cent of urban poor respondents perceived vehicles as the main cause of air pollution, 27 per cent construction activities and 20 per cent stubble burning. Social media was found to be the most reliable source of

information among 29 per cent of urban poor respondents and 26 per cent of middle-class respondents, the survey said. "Middle-class respondents used air purifiers and indoor plants as measures to reduce exposure to air pollution, while the urban poor depended on face masks and increased water intake," it added. Campaigns on social media and enforcing stricter regulations against "open burning" and construction violations among other measures could check air pollution the respondents said, according to the survey report.

## Food safety drive in Delhi markets

**New Delhi, April 9:** The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) recently launched an extensive awareness and sensitisation drive on food safety in major markets in the national capital. Kicking off from the popular Khan Market and INA Market of Delhi, the awareness campaign is focused particularly on the detection and mitigation of pes-

ticide residue and contaminants in food products. Market associations and traders were actively engaged and educated on the harmful effects of pesticide residue, mainly on fruits and vegetables. FSSAI also introduced its pioneering initiative, the "Food Safety on Wheel" mobile lab, equipped with various rapid testing kits capable of detecting approximately 50 pesticide residues in fruits, vegetables, milk and cereals.

**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER  
MINOR IRRIGATION DIVISION, DHENKANAL**

No. 1546 e-mail ID: eemidkl@yahoo.co.in Dt.04.04.24

**1st Corrigendum to Tender Call Notice No. 16 of 2023-24**

No. A-5: It is to notify that the Tender Call Notice No. 16 of 2023-24 of M.I. Division, Dhenkanal through Online has been Postponed due to Model Code Conduct of General Election - 2024 and the tender process will be resumed after removal of Model Code Conduct.

Sd./- Superintending Engineer  
M.I. Division, Dhenkanal

OIPR-32027/11/0002/2425



Bhadrak Municipality chairperson Gulmaki Dalawzi Habib, who became the first Muslim women in the state to helm a municipality after winning the civic body polls in 2022, joined the Biju Janata Dal at Sankha Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday



Kantabanji's sitting legislator Santosh Singh Saluja addressing a party workers' meeting at Hari Bhawan in Kantabanji of Bolangir district, Tuesday

## Development our major poll plank: Sarada Nayak

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rourkela, April 9:** Minister for Labour and Employees State Insurance Sarada Prasad Nayak, who reached here from Bhubaneswar to a rousing welcome, said Tuesday that BJD will go to the voters with developmental initiatives of the state government.

The entire Rourkela Railway station was bustling with more than a thousand supporters waiting for his arrival. As soon as he got down, the station reverberated with slogans like "Sarada Bhai Zindabad, Naveen Pattnaik Zindabad and BJD Zindabad."

The incumbent Rourkela MLA then proceeded to Sankat Mochan Temple, adjacent to the railway station and offered prayers there.

He also paid tributes at the statue of Utkal Gourab Madhusudan Das and garlanded it. Former Indian Hockey team captain and BJD's MP candidate for Sundargarh Lok Sabha seat Dilip Tirkey was also present.

Thereafter, he started his rally that covered the township on the southern side of Durgapur Hill Range.

Speaking to the media, Nayak said, "I am really astonished that all of you, my media friends, have assembled here. I never expected this. I am really grateful to all of you. Rourkela was once declared a dead city. People were not ready to purchase land or houses here. But today it is the most happening city. It is the city of the World Cup and city of

development. I am thankful to honourable Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik."

He further said, "If Sarada becomes strong then Rourkela will not become stronger. If Rourkela becomes stronger then all its residents will be prosperous. So, let us unite and take a pledge to make Naveen our CM for the sixth time."

About Dilip Tirkey, he said, "A son of the soil and president of Hockey India Dilip Tirkey has been given the responsibility to contest as the MP candidate of Sundargarh. All of us shall unite together to help him emerge victorious."

"It is only development and nothing else which is our major poll plank. There is no end to development because this is a continuous process," Nayak added.

Asked about the opposition, he said, "This sea of humanity should be the answer to the opposition, and I don't have anything to say. As far as poll results in Sundargarh are concerned, just wait, you will see it. We will create history."

He said, "Rourkela is witnessing immense development. And for that our loving CM sir is responsible. And we will fight on the platform of development, which is our main weapon." He further added, "It is due to our CM sir Rourkela is known in the world today. Communication, health, education and sports are some of the fields where development is clearly visible. All these have happened due to honourable CM sir."

## Bijoy may dampen BJP's poll show in Kendrapara

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kendrapara, April 9:** With his son contesting on a BJD ticket from Patkura Assembly seat, BJP leader and former minister Bijoy Mohapatra might be an obstacle to the success of BJD candidates under this parliamentary constituency as the latter is attending felicitation ceremonies of his son at several places, political observers said.

While BJD has fielded old leaders for the upcoming elections, BJP has fielded new faces for three Assembly seats. Congress is yet to decide on its candidates. As campaigning gathers pace, political analysts believe that Bijoy is turning out to be a problem for BJP rather than a solution.

The ruling BJD has fielded Bijoy's son Arabinda Mohapatra by dropping sitting MLA Sabitri Agarwal from Patkura Assembly seat. Bijoy's presence in the meetings organised in the area to felicitate Arabinda might impress BJP supporters. Political analysts have claimed that Bijoy's presence in his son's felicitation ceremony might alter the political equations in the district.

BJP's Lok Sabha candidate Baijayant Panda has been contesting from Kendrapara Lok Sabha seat since 2009 and has also got a ticket from the same seat this time. He is pitted against BJD's Anshuman Mohanty. Baijayant was twice elected as an MP on a BJD ticket in 2009 and 2014. He left BJD and contested on a BJP ticket in 2019 but lost to BJD's Anubhav Mohanaty by a margin of over 1.5 lakh votes.



The saffron party has fielded Tejeshwar Parida from Patkura, Dr Durga Prasanna Pattnaik from Mahakalapara and Krushna Chandra Panda from Aul Assembly constituency.

Krushna played a major role in the agitation against Kharasrota drinking water project. However, it has become difficult for the BJP to reap the political benefits of this agitation as the residents of Kanika were unsuccessful in taking the agitation to a logical end.

Political analysts claimed that Bijoy has been attending the felicitation ceremonies of his son despite remaining in BJP, though he maintains mum over coming back to BJD. However, Bijoy's presence at functions held to felicitate his son (a BJD candidate) has posed serious threat to the electoral success of BJP candidates in the district, said the political observers.

Recently, Bijoy and BJD's Atanu Sabyasachi Nayak were seen attending the 11th day death ceremony of a BJP leader's mother. The two leaders were seen having a free-wheeling dis-

ussion at the function.

Political analysts claimed that Bijoy has a separate support group in the district which is apparently stronger in Mahakalapara and Patkura Assembly constituencies.

Meanwhile, silence of Bijoy might prove help BJD candidates during the election. It is apprehended that this might lead to a drop in vote share of BJP in the Lok Sabha election.

The vote share of BJP candidate Tejeshwar Parida may also decline, if Bijoy's supporters choose to vote for his son in the election. Moreover, supporters of sitting Patkura MLA Sabitri Agarwal are yet to make their stand clear.

Similarly, former Derabish block chairman Sarojkanta Sahu recently joined BJP but the saffron party did not give him a ticket.

The BJD has fielded Atanu Sabyasachi from the Mahakalapara Assembly seat.

Political analysts claimed that local problems are acute but Bijoy's tacit support to his son may work against BJP candidates.

## 1st phase randomisation of EVMs held in Rourkela

Post-randomisation, the EVMs will be securely transferred to dedicated strong rooms in their respective constituencies, adhering to stringent security protocols

RAJESH MOHANTY, OP

**Rourkela, April 9:** The first phase of electronic voting machine (EVM) randomisation for the ensuing Lok Sabha and Assembly elections was held at Sadbhavana Bhawan of Sundargarh, Tuesday. The randomisation process was done under the guidance and overall supervision of Sundargarh district election officer (DEO) Parag Gavali. Returning Officers, officials from district election offices and representatives from recognised national and regional political parties participated in it.

During the first phase, EVMs, ballot units, control units and VVPATs were impartially allocated through the randomisation process, thereby ensuring a free and fair electoral process.

Following the completion of the randomisation process, the report of randomisation for all the seven Assembly constituencies was handed over to the representatives of all the political parties for their review.

Post-randomisation, the EVMs will be securely transferred to dedicated strong rooms in their

respective constituencies, adhering to stringent security protocols. Prior to the randomisation process, political representatives were briefed about the procedures, instilling confidence in the fairness of the poll process and affirming their commitment to maintaining the sanctity of the polls.

The DEO reiterated the commitment to upholding integrity, transparency and utilising dedicated software to minimise human intervention throughout the randomisation process.

Meanwhile, representatives of the electoral processes and political parties were taken around the strong rooms March 4. In Rourkela, the Udit Nagar Government High School has been turned into a strong room and a counting centre. EVMs and other poll materials for three Assembly constituencies - Biramitrapur, Raghunathpalli and Rourkela - will be kept there.

Subsequent phases of randomisation will continue to ensure the equitable allocation of EVMs to polling stations while upholding the highest standards of security and transparency.



**DRUMMING UP SUPPORT:** BJP workers take out a bike rally in support of the party's Simulia Assembly constituency nominee Padmalochan Panda and Bhadrak Lok Sabha candidate Abhimanyu Sethi at Khaira in Balasore district, Tuesday

## BEATING THE HEAT

### Air coolers, fans at polling stations in Punjab

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chandigarh, April 9:** Polling stations in Punjab will have air coolers, fans, sweetened water and shades, among other facilities, for voters exercising their franchise to beat the summer heat.

Polling for Punjab's 13 Lok Sabha seats will be held June 1.

Chief Electoral Officer Sibin C Tuesday said deputy commissioners have been asked to arrange the facilities on the poll day amid the likelihood of extreme heat.

"There will be drinking water, sweetened water and shades at polling stations. Coolers or fans will also be arranged," he told PTI.

There will also be waiting areas where voters can wait their turn. Volunteers will be deployed at polling stations to help the voters, he added.

Last month, the Election Commission asked for "strict compliance" with its directive of



providing assured minimum facilities at polling stations, including drinking water and shade, for the Lok Sabha polls in the backdrop of the India Meteorological Department (IMD) predicting a harsh summer.

temperatures during the summer, "which may translate into stronger and longer spells of heat wave, especially during the months of March to June".

Sibin said a target of achieving more than 70 per cent voter turnout in the state has been set for the Lok Sabha elections.

**PUNJAB CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER SIBIN C SAID A TARGET OF ACHIEVING MORE THAN 70% VOTER TURNOUT HAS BEEN SET FOR THE LOK SABHA POLLS**

"This time, we have set a target voting percentage of more than 70," he said, referring to the "Iss Vaar, 70 Paar" slogan.

Punjab's voting percentage during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections was 65.96 per cent, much lower than the national average.

Sibin also said that of Punjab's 24,433 polling stations, 4,976 have been declared as 'vulnerable' with a maximum 624 in Amritsar, followed by 472 in Jalandhar and 458 in Ludhiana.

A total of 1,33,535 (1.33 lakh) people have been identified as vulnerable voters and 4,242 as persons causing vulnerability, according to data.

The 'vulnerable' polling stations fall in areas susceptible to the misuse of money and muscle for influencing or intimidating voters.

Sibin also said his office has so far received 779 complaints, most relating to the defacement of property. Of the total, 540 complaints have been addressed.

# national

of the day **vote**

The conspiracy of the BJP-led Centre to defame its political opponents by misusing democratic institutions has been unearthed and the public will see that cases lodged to defame the Congress will also be quashed in a similar manner

During the Chinese aggression of 1962, Nehru had said 'bye-bye' to Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. People of these states can never forget that. But now, China could not encroach even a single inch of our land. Even in Doklam, we pushed them back

I always say that getting votes is a different thing. We want to see real development for the minority community. Now, whether they give me votes or I ask for their votes -- that is immaterial

## SHORT TAKES

### Bhupatinagar case: NIA moves HC

**Kolkata:** The National Investigation Agency (NIA) Tuesday moved the Calcutta High Court, seeking the quashing of an FIR against its officials who went to West Bengal's Bhupatinagar for a raid in connection with the agency's probe into a blast case. Justice Jay Sengupta granted permission to file the application and move his court in the post-recess session of the day, NIA counsel Arun Kumar Mohanty said. The petition also seeks interim protection from any coercive action by the state police against the NIA officials.

### Sandeshkhali police camp attacked

**Kolkata:** A Constable was seriously injured after he was attacked by unidentified miscreants at a police camp in Sandeshkhali area of West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district in the early hours of Tuesday, an officer said. The injured police constable, identified as Sandip Saha, is undergoing treatment at a city-based hospital, and his condition is "very critical", he said. "Saha has grievous injuries in his head and his condition is very critical at the moment," the police officer said. Three persons, known in the locality as Trinamool Congress leaders, were arrested for their alleged involvement in the attack on Saha at Sitalia police camp, he said, adding that police have lodged a suo moto case in this connection.

### 11 killed, 20 injured

**Durg:** At least 11 people were killed and around 20 injured -- all employees of a private firm -- as the bus they were travelling in fell into a 'murum' soil mine pit in Chhattisgarh's Durg district Tuesday night, police said. The accident took place around 8:30 pm near Khapri village under Kumhari police station limits when the victims, all employees of a distillery company, were returning home after work, City Superintendent of Police (Chhavni area) Harish Patil said.

### Bizman arrested

**Panaji:** Police arrested a local businessman Tuesday morning after a massive blast at his cashew farm in a village in North Goa district where forensic experts have started an investigation, an official said. The entire area was sealed following the incident in Ansoleim village Monday evening.



The BJP has not only used the Kashmiri Pandits as a vote bank but as a weapon as well. It has used the pain of the Kashmiri Pandits as a weapon and then used that weapon to garner the votes of others

MEHBOOBA MUFTI | PDP CHIEF

## CAREFUL MONITORING

The Election Commission has decided to install GPS location tracking system in all vehicles that will be used for polling purposes in West Bengal, an official said. A communication in this regard has been sent to the poll workers



# TMC LEADERS END PROTEST



TMC leaders, who were detained by Delhi police while staging a dharna outside the Election Commission's office, shout slogans during their protest at Mandir Marg police station, in New Delhi, Tuesday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 9:** Raising slogans against the BJP, Trinamool Congress (TMC) leaders ended their 24-hour protest at the Mandir Marg police station here Tuesday evening, a day after they were detained while staging a dharna outside the Election Commission's office.

Sudip Raha, announced that they were sitting on a 24-hour dharna. The delegation urged the commission to ensure a level-playing field in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls and stop the "misuse" of central agencies against opposition parties and leaders. The leaders were asked to disperse by the police, but as they continued their protest, the security personnel forcibly evicted them and detained them.

Leaders of the Aam Aadmi Party, including Saurabh Bharadwaj and Dilip Pandey, met with the protesting TMC leaders who camped overnight at the police station to extend support.

The TMC leaders Monday met with the full bench of the Election Commission (EC) and urged the poll body to change the heads of the Enforcement Directorate (ED), Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), National Investigation Agency (NIA) and income-tax (I-T) department, alleging that they are acting at the behest of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at the Centre.

Later, the 10-member delegation of the party, including Derek O'Brien, Mohammed Nadimul Haque, Dola Sen, Saket Gokhale, Sagarika Ghose, MLA Vivek Gupta, former MPs Arpita Ghosh, Santanu Sen and Abir Ranjan Biswas and the party's West Bengal students' wing vice-president

They were made to board a bus, which O'Brien said drove around for about an hour and a half, after which they were taken to the Mandir Marg police station, where they decided to continue their protest. Police, however, said the TMC leaders were released Monday night but they stayed up at the police station throughout the night and continued their dharna.

"Today, they again came back to the police station. They are still allowed to go but they did not leave," a police officer said. While all TMC leaders sat inside the police station premises, Haque and Ghose, who had gone out briefly, were not allowed to re-enter. They sat on a dharna outside the boundary of the building. "I was here all night and had gone home in the morning. Now we are not being allowed to enter the police station," Haque said.

# Kavitha's judicial custody extended

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 9:** BRS leader K Kavitha's judicial custody was extended Tuesday by two weeks in the Delhi excise policy-related money laundering case after the ED alleged that she made attempts to influence the witnesses and tampered with evidence.

Special judge for ED and CBI cases Kaveri Baweja extended Kavitha's custody till April 23 after she was produced before the court on the expiry of her judicial remand granted earlier. The judge took note of ED's submission that Kavitha made attempts to influence the witnesses and tampered with the evidence.

"Hence, her judicial custody should be extended," the ED told the court. Advocate Nitesh Rana, appearing for Kavitha, opposed the ED's plea seeking an extension of her custody, saying that there was nothing new in probe agency's application since she was arrested.



Special judge for ED and CBI cases Kaveri Baweja extended Kavitha's custody till April 23 after she was produced before the court on the expiry of her judicial remand granted earlier

The judge took note of ED submission that Kavitha made attempts to influence the witnesses and tampered with the evidence

"There is no new ground. The application does not mention anything," the counsel told the court.

The judge had Monday denied interim bail to Kavitha, saying prima facie she not only destroyed evidence but was also instrumental in influencing wit-

nesses and there is "every likelihood" of her continuing to do so in case the relief is granted.

Meanwhile, sources said Tuesday that the CBI has questioned Kavitha in Tihar jail where she is lodged after her arrest by the Enforcement

Directorate. The agency was permitted by the special court to question her on the 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 to swing excise policy in favour of a liquor lobby.

The agency officials had gone to Tihar Jail Saturday where she was questioned on these aspects of the case, the sources said.

The court's permission was mandatory to question her in Tihar jail because she was in judicial custody.

The ED has alleged that Kavitha, an MLC and daughter of former Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao, is a key member of the "South Group", which has been accused of paying the ruling AAP in Delhi kickbacks of Rs 100 crore in return for a big share of liquor licences in the national capital.

# Patanjali organises Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Katha

**Bhubaneswar:** Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Katha, a discourse on the glorious events in the life of Shivaji, the founder of Maratha kingdom in India, kicked off at the Yoga Bhawan of Yogapitha-2 in Haridwar. The event also marked with the beginning of Chaitra Navaratri, Ram Navami and the 30th anniversary of Yoga guru Ramdev's Sanyas Divas. On being requested by Ramdev and Acharya Balakrishna, Swami Govinddev Giri conducted the programme. Giri discussed various important chapters of Indian history starting from Shivaji Maharaj's ascendance to throne to Ram Lalla's Pran Pratistha ceremony at Ayodhya. On the occasion, Baba Ramdev asked the participants to follow the path shown by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. The differences among castes, religions, communities and beliefs in the country should be resolved amicably, he added. Officials of various branches of



the Yogapitha, department heads, teachers and students of Patanjali University, Acharya

Gurukul, Patanjali Ayurveda College, Patanjali Gurukul, Patanjali Research Institute,

Patanjali Balika Gurukul, and Vedic Gurukul participated in the event in large numbers.

# EC issues notice to Surjewala

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 9:** The Election Commission Tuesday issued a show-cause notice to Congress leader Randeep Surjewala for his alleged 'undignified, uncivilised and vulgar' remarks against BJP MP Hema Malini.

Moving a step further, the poll body also sought a response from Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on the steps taken to ensure strict compliance with its advisories on upholding the honour and dignity of women during public discourse by its leaders. Both have been asked to submit their responses to the Election Commission. While Surjewala has been asked to respond by April 11 evening, Kharge has



been given time till the following evening. In a video posted by BJP IT department head Amit Malviya on X, Surjewala was seen purportedly making some objectionable remarks about the actor-politician while attacking the ruling BJP. The BJP moved the EC against the Congress general secretary for his "vulgar, sexist and disparaging public utterances" against Hema Malini

while campaigning in Haryana. However, Surjewala has said the undated video was edited and distorted and he never intended to insult or hurt the BJP MP.

In its notice, the EC told Surjewala that on careful examination, the comments were found to be "highly undignified, vulgar and uncivilised" and to be prima facie violative of the provisions of the Model Code of Conduct and the poll panel's advisory issued to parties last month. In a separate letter to Kharge, the EC said its advisory "very unambiguously states that the political parties and candidates should refrain from any deeds or actions or utterances that may be construed as being repugnant to the honour and dignity of women".

# Verify Rajeev's affidavit: EC to CBDT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 9:** The Election Commission Tuesday directed the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) to verify any mismatch in affidavit details submitted by Union Minister and BJP candidate from Thiruvananthapuram Lok Sabha seat Rajeev Chandrasekhar, sources said.

The Congress had moved the poll panel claiming a mismatch in actual and declared assets in the affidavit filed by Chandrasekhar, who is in the fray against former UN diplomat Shashi Tharoor.

According to procedure, the EC has directed the CBDT to verify any mismatch in affidavit details submitted by Chandrasekhar, the sources said.



Any mismatch and falsification of affidavit is dealt with under Section 125 A of the Representation of the People Act 1951, they said.

As per the law, concealing any information in nomination papers or affidavit is punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to six months, or with a fine, or both.

# Birender Singh joins Congress

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 9:** Former Union Minister Birender Singh and his ex-MLA wife Prem Lata joined the Congress Tuesday, a decade after quitting the party.

Their joining comes a month after their son Brijendra Singh, an outgoing MP from Hissar, joined the Congress after quitting the BJP. Birender Singh (78) is the maternal grandson of farmer leader Sir Chhotu Ram and had quit the Congress in 2014 to join the BJP.

He was Union Minister for steel in the first government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He also held the charge of rural development, panchayati raj, and drinking water and sanitation. On his return to the Congress, Birender Singh said, "It is not just my 'ghar wapsi' but also 'vichar wapsi'."

"It is the return of my ideology. If we have to save democracy, we have to rise and speak up against the government," he said. "The mood is changing in the country and it is because of the wrong policies of the government," he said.

He said he had met Sonia Gandhi the day he left the Congress and said for some reason he had to quit the Congress. "I have done politics by annoying my superiors in the party," he admitted. "I tried to resolve the farmer issues during their agitation. What has the farmer or the poor got even 33 years after economic reforms. Farmers have not got justice yet. But, the BJP is far from reality and one should not expect anything from the BJP. They shed artificial tears for the poor and do not mean anything for them," Singh alleged.

He said five hours before he was inducted into the Cabinet, the Prime Minister met me, and "I told him that I am not one of those who would badmouth leaders and the party I have left behind."

# ANTONY HOPES SON ANIL LOSES IN LS POLLS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Thiruvananthapuram/Pathanamthitta, April 9:** Veteran Congress leader and former Defence Minister AK Antony said Tuesday that his son, Anil K Antony, who is contesting as a BJP candidate in the Pathanamthitta Lok Sabha seat in Kerala, should not win the election.

Antony said that his son's party should lose, and his rival, the Congress candidate in the south Kerala constituency, Anto Antony, should win with an absolute majority. "The Congress is my religion", Antony said, reacting to repeated queries about his son's politics.

The 83-year-old former Kerala Chief Minister said he has put his health issues aside to address the media as he thought he has to come out and make his stand clear as this is an election to "safeguard the idea of India and its constitution."

longest-serving Defence Minister. He cited health issues as a reason for not travelling out of Thiruvananthapuram for campaigning for the Congress party and said that even if he did not go for campaigning in Pathanamthitta, Anto Antony would win with an absolute majority.

"For me, family and politics are different. This stance isn't new; I have maintained it since my days in KSU," Antony said. The Kerala Students Union (KSU) is the student organisation of Congress in Kerala. Sharply reacting to his father's remarks, Anil Antony said that the Congress has outdated leaders and only sympathises with his father, a former Defence Minister, for backing sitting MP and Congress member Anto Antony, who had recently stirred up controversy by making statements on the Pulwama terror attack. Talking to reporters, Anil further stated he will emerge victorious in Pathanamthitta.



AK Antony's stand comes as a big boost to the Congress, as the party has been on the defensive after Anil and late Congress stalwart K Karunakaran's daughter, Padmaja Venugopal, switched over to the BJP in Kerala. There were allegations from certain quarters of Antony's political opponents that Anil had moved to the BJP with the silent blessings of his family, especially after a video of his mother,

Elizabeth Antony, speaking at a church meeting where she said she knew her son would join the BJP, surfaced.

In one of his lengthy press conferences post-Covid, Antony took on the BJP and the Left Front government in Kerala, reiterating why people should rally behind the Congress to 'rein-

vent' India and to protect the spirit of the Indian Constitution. "The party that rules at the Centre has been trying to destroy the very concept of India, and the important question is how to stop this danger," Antony said.

He said the golden years of BJP in Kerala are already over, and the NDA will finish in the third place in all constituencies in the state. "Please write this down and keep it. They will finish in the third place in all constituencies in Kerala," Antony said.

He said the golden era of BJP was during the 2019 general elections due to the Sabarimala women's entry controversy, and they could garner some additional votes. "This year, there is no factor that favours BJP, and they are going to get a reduced share of votes," Antony said.

If BJP comes to power, the Constitution of India will be sabotaged, and it would be the end of democracy. We need to put away that danger

AK ANTONY | CONGRESS LEADER

# international



We would like to express our highest appreciation and admiration for the successes that you have achieved over the years and, above all, over the last decade under your leadership

## KING CHARLES III ON NEW BANKNOTES

Britain's King Charles III was Tuesday presented with the first set of banknotes bearing his portrait by Bank of England representatives at Buckingham Palace in London. The 75-year-old monarch, was pictured with Bank of England Governor Andrew Bailey and Chief Cashier and Executive Director of Banking Sarah John



## of the day quote

The daily assault on the human dignity of Palestinians is creating a crisis of credibility for the international community



ANTÓNIO GUTERRES | SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS

The violence and instability in Haiti have consequences far beyond the risk of the violence itself. The situation is creating a child health and nutrition crisis that could cost the lives of countless of children



CATHERINE RUSSELL | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF UNICEF

Spreading pessimistic views on China will end up harming oneself, and misjudging China will result in missed opportunities



WANG YI | CHINESE DIPLOMAT

# Russia battles 'worst flood in decades'

AGENCIES

Orsk, Russia, April 9: Russia and Kazakhstan ordered more than 100,000 people to evacuate after swiftly melting snow swelled mighty rivers beyond bursting point in the worst flooding in the area for at least 70 years.

The deluge of melt water overwhelmed scores of settlements in the Ural Mountains, Siberia and areas of Kazakhstan close to rivers such as the Ural and Tobol, which local officials said had risen by metres in a matter of hours to the highest levels ever recorded.

The Ural River, Europe's third longest which flows through Russia and Kazakhstan into the Caspian, burst through an embankment dam Friday, flooding the city of Orsk just south of the Ural Mountains.

Downstream, water levels in Orenburg, a city of around 550,000, rose towards the critical level of 9.3 metres as sirens warned major floods were imminent. The water level is currently 9.14 metres.

Sirens in Kurgan, a city on the Tobol river, a tributary of the Irtysh, warned people to evacuate immediately. An emergency was also declared in Tyumen, a major oil producing region of Western Siberia - the



An aerial view shows flooded area in Orenburg

REUTERS

largest hydrocarbon basin in the world. "The difficult days are still ahead for the Kurgan and Tyumen regions," Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters. "There is a lot of water coming."

President Vladimir Putin spoke to President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev of Kazakhstan, where over 86,000 people have been evacuated due to flooding. Tokayev said the flooding was probably the worst in 80 years. The most severely hit areas

are Atyrau, Aktobe, Akmol, Kostanai, Eastern Kazakhstan, Northern Kazakhstan and Pavlodar regions, most of which border Russia and are crossed by rivers originating in Russia such as the Ural and the Tobol.

In Russia, anger boiled over in Orsk when at least 100 Russians begged the Kremlin chief to help and chanted "shame on you" at local officials who they said had done too little.

The Kremlin said Putin was

Evacuate immediately - residents told in flood zone  
Russia and Kazakhstan evacuate thousands  
Water levels rising in major rivers in Russia and Kazakhstan  
Kremlin - The worst is still to come for Kurgan and Tyumen

## Missing Indian student found dead in Cleveland; 11th case in US this year



Mohammad Abdul Arfath, hailing from Nacharam, Hyderabad, arrived in the US last year in May to pursue a Masters in IT from Cleveland University

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New York, April 9: A 25-year-old Indian student who had been missing since last month was found dead in the US city of Cleveland, the second death within a week in the country as the community grapples with a string of such tragedies.

"Anguished to learn that Mr Mohammed Abdul Arfath, for whom search operation was underway, was found dead in Cleveland, Ohio," the Consulate General of India in New York said in a post on X. Offering "deepest condolences" to Arfath's family, the Consulate said it is in touch with local agencies to ensure a thorough investigation into his death. "We are extending all possible assistance to the bereaved family to transport his mortal remains to India," the Consulate added.

dent. According to a report in WKYC 3News last week, Arfath left his home at Reserve Square March 5 and had not returned. Cleveland police told the news outlet that "they have concerns for his safety." Police had also issued a "missing person" alert for Arfath that had described him as being 5'8" tall, weighing 150 pounds, with black hair and brown eyes. He was last seen wearing a white t-shirt, red jacket and blue jeans.

The WKYC 3News report cited a statement from Cleveland State University which said that university records showed that Arfath "was no longer a registered Cleveland State student as of January 2024, nor did he live on campus while attending Cleveland State."

Cleveland State University Police Department was providing information as needed to assist the Cleveland Division of Police with their active investigation of Arfath's disappearance.

# Swiss women win landmark climate case

REUTERS

Strasbourg, France, April 9: Europe's top human rights court ruled Tuesday that the Swiss government had violated the human rights of its citizens by failing to do enough to combat climate change, in a decision that will set a precedent for future climate lawsuits.

The European Court of Human Rights's ruling, in favour of the more than 2,000 Swiss women who brought the case, is expected to resonate in court decisions across Europe and beyond, and to embolden more communities to bring climate cases against governments.

But in a sign of the complexities of the growing wave of climate litigation, the court (ECHR) rejected two other climate-related cases on procedural grounds. One of these was brought by a group of six Portuguese young people against 32 European governments and another by a former mayor of



Human rights court: Swiss climate policies fell short  
Case brought against Bern by 2,000 senior Swiss women  
Mixed ruling as court throws out two other climate cases

a low-lying French coastal town. The Swiss women, known as KlimaSeniorinnen and aged over 64, said their government's climate inaction put them at risk of dying during heatwaves. They argued their age and gender made them particularly vulnerable to such climate change impacts.

In her ruling, Court President Siofra O'Leary said the Swiss government had failed to comply with its own targets for cutting greenhouse gas emissions and had failed to set a national carbon budget. "It is clear that future generations are likely to bear an increasingly severe burden of

getting updated constantly on the situation but that he had no immediate plans to visit the flood zone as local and emergency officials were doing their best to cope with the deluge.

## EVACUATE NOW

In Kurgan, a region with around 800,000 residents, drone footage showed traditional Russian wooden houses and the golden kupolas of Russian Orthodox Churches stranded among a vast expanse of water.

In Orenburg, a city of more than half a million, residents paddled along roads as if they were rivers. Dams and embankments were being strengthened as the Ural river rose to nearly 10 metres high.

Russian officials have said some people ignored calls to evacuate. Kurgan Governor Vadim Shumkov urged residents to take the warnings seriously.

"We understand you very well. It is hard to leave your possessions and move somewhere at the call of the local authorities," Shumkov said.

"It's better that we laugh at the hydrologists together later and praise God for the miracle of our common salvation. But let's do it alive."

In Kurgan, water levels were rising in the Tobol and Russia said 19,000 people were at risk in

## Bus swept away by floodwaters in northern Kenya

Nairobi (Kenya): Fifty-one passengers were rescued after the bus they were travelling in was swept away by floodwaters on a river bridge in northern Kenya, authorities said Tuesday. The bus is still stuck in the river some 30 metres away from the bridge, although the waters are continuing to subside, Tana River county commander Ali Ndiema told The Associated Press. Ndiema said the road has now been closed indefinitely. He said anyone found violating the order will be arrested and charged. He said all passengers are accounted for. Police are looking for the driver of the bus who ignored passengers' concerns and insisted on driving through the water.

## Peter Higgs, who discovered Higgs boson, dies at 94



ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, April 9: Nobel prize-winning physicist Peter Higgs, who proposed the existence of the Higgs boson particle, has died at age 94, the University of Edinburgh said Tuesday.

The university, where Higgs was emeritus professor, said he died Monday "peacefully at home following a short illness." Higgs predicted the existence of a new particle — the so-called Higgs boson — in 1964. But it would be almost 50 years before the particle's existence could be confirmed at the Large Hadron Collider.

Higgs' theory related to how subatomic particles that are the building blocks of matter get their mass. This theoretical understanding is a central part of the so-called Standard Model, which describes the physics of how the world is constructed.

Higgs won the 2013 Nobel Prize in Physics for his work, alongside Francois Englert of Belgium.

## SHORT TAKES

### Earthquake jolts Indonesia

Jakarta: A 6.0 magnitude quake hit Indonesia's eastern province of West Papua Tuesday, but did not trigger a tsunami warning, the country's meteorology, climatology and geophysics agency said. The agency initially reported the quake's magnitude to be 6.1 before revising it, Xinhua news agency reported. The earthquake occurred at 07.02 a.m. Jakarta time (0002 GMT) with its epicenter situated 46 km southeast of Ransiki town, and a depth of 11 km under the seabed, the agency said.

### Gillani becomes Senate chairman

Islamabad: Veteran Pakistan Peoples Party leader and former Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gillani was elected unopposed as chairman of the Senate Tuesday, as lawmakers from jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan's party boycotted the elections to the key posts in the upper house of Parliament. Saital Khan Nasir of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) was also elected as the deputy chairman. No one had filed nomination papers against the two candidates supported by the ruling alliance led by the PML-N.

### SK's President to face major test

Seoul: South Koreans vote to Wednesday in a hotly contested parliamentary election that's largely seen as a referendum on conservative President Yoon Suk Yeol and a possible sign of a deepening domestic divide. Regardless of the results, Yoon will stay in power and his major foreign policy agenda will likely continue. But a failure by his governing People Power Party to restore a parliamentary majority could make him a lame duck for the remaining three years of his single five-year term, experts say.

### 3 dead after blast at Italian power plant

Milan: An explosion Tuesday at a hydroelectric plant in northern Italy killed at least three workers and seriously injured five others, a regional fire chief said. At least four other people were missing. The blast occurred between 30 and 60 meters (between 100 and 200 feet) below the water level at the Bergi plant in the Apennine Mountains south of Bologna. The explosion collapsed two levels of the underground structure, provoked a fire and caused flooding, regional fire chief Francesco Notaro told SKY TG24.



A combination of pictures shows the beginning to the end (top L to bottom R) of the eclipse as seen from Mazatlan, Mexico

REUTERS

## TIDBITS

### China to oppose AUKUS treaty

Beijing: China Tuesday said it will resolutely oppose any plan by the Biden administration to connect the AUKUS pact between Australia, the UK, and the US to the Taiwan issue, saying it will risk nuclear proliferation and exacerbate the arms race in the Asia-Pacific. Reacting to reports quoting US Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell's recent remarks suggesting linking the AUKUS pact to the Taiwan issue to deter any Chinese aggression, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told a media briefing here that the American official's remarks fan the flames of conflict, and are malicious in intent. "China is strongly dissatisfied with this and resolutely opposes it," she said in a statement.

### One of China's top leaders will lead a delegation to NK

Beijing: A top Chinese leader will lead a delegation to North Korea this week, both countries announced Tuesday, in what would be the highest-level meeting between the two countries since the pandemic began. Zhao Leji, who is chairman of the National People's Congress and considered the No. 3 official in the ruling Communist Party, will visit North Korea from Thursday to Saturday, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said. No details were released on what was described as a goodwill visit, except that the delegation would attend the opening ceremony for the "China-North Korea Friendship Year". "The specific arrangements for the visit are still under negotiation," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said. A dispatch from North Korea's official KCNA news agency also announced the trip.

### UK's Cameron, Blinken press Congress on aid to Ukraine

Washington: Secretary of State Antony Blinken and British Foreign Secretary David Cameron urged Congress Tuesday to approve new military aid for Ukraine, saying the stalled funding is critical for US, European and world security. Speaking after a meeting at the State Department, Blinken repeated long-standing appeals for lawmakers to unblock the assistance that President Joe Biden has sought for months, while Cameron said he would make the same case in meetings on Capitol Hill "as a great friend" of the United States. "I come here with no intention to lecture anybody or tell anybody what to do or get in the way of the process of politics and other things in the United States," he said in a statement.

## Setback for Trump as he loses bid to delay hush money trial



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New York, April 9: A New York appeals court judge Tuesday rejected former President Donald Trump's latest bid to delay his hush money criminal trial while he fights a gag order, clearing the way for jury selection to begin next week.

Justice Cynthia Kern's ruling is yet another loss for Trump, who has tried repeatedly to get the trial postponed.

Trump's lawyers had wanted the trial delayed until a full panel of appellate court judges could hear arguments on lifting or modifying a gag order that bans him from making public statements about jurors, witnesses and others connected to the hush-money case.

The presumptive Republican nominee's lawyers argue the gag order is an unconstitutional prior restraint on Trump's free speech rights while he's campaigning for president and fighting criminal charges.

"The First Amendment harms arising from this gag order right now are irreparable," Trump lawyer Emil Bove said at an emergency hearing Tuesday in the state's mid-level appeals court. Bove argued that Trump shouldn't be muzzled while critics, including his former lawyer and fixer Michael Cohen and porn actor Stormy Daniels, routinely assail him. Both are key prosecution witnesses.

Steven Wu, the appellate chief for the Manhattan district attorney's office, said there is a "public interest in protecting the integrity of the trial."

the consequences of present failures and omissions to combat climate change," O'Leary said.

One of KlimaSeniorinnen's leaders, Rosmarie Wylder-Walti said she was struggling to grasp the full extent of the decision.

"We keep asking our lawyers, 'Is that right?'. And they tell us 'it's the most you could have

had. The biggest victory possible'." The Swiss Federal Office of Justice, which represented the Swiss government at the court, took note of the ruling.

"Together with the authorities concerned, we will now analyse the extensive judgment and review what measures Switzerland will take in the future," it said in a statement.

## CLIMATE LITIGATION ON RISE

The cases before the 17-judge panel in Strasbourg, France, are among the increasing number of climate lawsuits brought by citizens against governments that hinge on human rights law. The verdict in the Swiss case, which cannot be appealed, will have international ripple effects, most directly by establishing a binding legal precedent for all 46 countries that are signatories to the European Convention on Human Rights. It indicates Switzerland has a legal duty to take greater action on reducing emissions. If Switzerland does not update its policies, further litigation could follow at the national level and courts could issue financial penalties, Lucy Maxwell, co-director of the non-profit Climate Litigation Network, said. Switzerland has committed to cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 50% by 2030, from 1990 levels. Bern had proposed, stronger measures to deliver the goal, but voters rebuffed them in a 2021 referendum as too burdensome. The verdict could also influence future rulings at the Strasbourg court, which had put six other climate cases on hold pending Tuesday's decisions. These include a lawsuit against the Norwegian government that alleges it violated human rights by issuing new licences for oil and gas exploration in the Barents Sea beyond 2035.

# business

## of the day quote

We aim to nearly double our capacity to 4 million vehicles per annum over the next 7-8 years and this capacity addition of 1 lakh vehicles per year is a step towards this goal

There are multiple reasons for growth. The weather forecast for the season is good and favourable for the cooling industry and there is an upbeat mood on the overall economy of the country and general elections are also happening

As we enter a new era fuelled by rapid technological progress, I am energised by the possibilities ahead for our company and our industry. I look forward to working with all our 240,000 Wiproites around the globe and taking this iconic company to its next phase of growth

## New Zonal Manager of PNB, Bhubaneswar



**Bhubaneswar, April 9:** Rajesh Kumar, General Manager, has joined as the new Zonal Manager of Punjab National Bank, Bhubaneswar Zone. Prior to this, he was working as Circle Head of Bardhaman Circle. Kumar started his career in 1995 and during his successful journey of over 29 years, he has worked in different capacities of the bank in different geographies viz. Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Mumbai (Maharashtra), Delhi and Odisha. PNB, the second largest nationalised bank, having a wide network of 344 branches across Odisha has marked contribution in socio-economic upliftment of the state populace by way of extending banking facilities especially in the agricultural and MSME sectors. Kumar expressed his hope and commitment for acceleration of the growth momentum of the bank in the state in every sector including retail, agricultural and MSME and popularisation of digital banking facilities in order to make PNB the preferred destination for the gen-next customers.

## SHORT TAKES

**PPBL CEO quits**  
**New Delhi:** Beleaguered Paytm Payments Bank's MD and CEO Surinder Chawla has resigned from the company, a regulatory filing said Tuesday. Chawla's resignation comes amidst Paytm Payments Bank facing prohibitory action from banking regulator RBI. Chawla joined PPBL in January last year after the payments bank received approval from the Reserve Bank of India.

## IIHL-Invesco deal

**Mumbai:** Industind International Holdings (IIHL) Tuesday said it will partner with Invesco, and pick up a 60 per cent stake in Invesco Asset Management India (IAMI). IIHL is a Mauritius-based investment holding company with several investments in banking and financial services firms, including private sector lender Industind Bank, while IAMI is the Indian arm of the global investment management firm Invesco having over \$1.6 trillion in assets under management.



It's a natural progression to provide Tesla electric vehicles in India  
ELON MUSK | TESLA CEO

## DGTR FOR ANTI-DUMPING DUTY

The Commerce Ministry's arm DGTR has recommended imposition of anti-dumping duty on imports of hydraulic rock breakers from China, and Korea for five years to protect the domestic industry from cheap inbound shipments.



# Steel industry red-flags surge in imports

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 9:** The Indian steel industry has expressed concern over India becoming a net importer of steel in 2023-24, saying it is a 'warning signal' for the country which strives to become 'Atmanirbhar'.

As per the steel ministry's Joint Plant Committee, India has registered a 38 per cent surge in imports of finished steel to 8.319 million tonnes (MnT) over 6.022 MnT imported during the preceding 2022-23 fiscal.

"The surge in predatory imports from China is a big threat to the Atmanirbharta in steel. The country becoming net importer is a warning signal to our march towards Atmanirbharta (self-reliance)," Alok Sahay, secretary general of apex industry body Indian Steel Association (ISA), said. Looking at the situation, it is very important to arrest predat-



tory imports, he said and demanded for a trade remedial action on an urgent basis to arrest the inbound shipments. "Lesser duty rule helps importers. It needs to be removed and notified without delay, so that China or any other steel surplus country do not use India's growth momentum for sup-

porting their own steel mills, while India suffers in expanding steel capacity," Sahay said. Ranjan Dhar, Chief Marketing Officer - ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel, said India's steel industry faces threat from predatory imports. Restricting steel imports is crucial to safeguard investments and ensure robust GDP growth.

Anubhav Kathuria, Director - Synergy Steels, said: "In the context of stainless steel as well, we have witnessed a rise in imports over the past year, primarily from countries like China and Indonesia. As we witness this trend, it becomes imperative for the industry to strategise ways to enhance the cost competitiveness of products."

In the near-term, the focus should be on reducing import duties on key raw materials such as ferro nickel, molybdenum concentrate, and ferro molybdenum.

Vinod Kumar, President, India SME Forum, said the industry has been continuously requesting the government to review free trade agreements with several countries to check imports.

Under the National Steel Policy, India aims to scale up its annual steel production capacity to 300 MnT by 2030 to cater to its domestic requirement.

# EV retail sales grow across segments in FY24: FADA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 9:** Electric vehicle retail sales in India increased last fiscal with all the segments, including passenger vehicles and two-wheelers, witnessing enhanced registrations, according to automotive dealers' body Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA).

The overall sales of electric passenger vehicles rose to 90,996 units in 2023-24 as compared to 47,551 units in FY23, registering an increase of 91 per cent.

Tata Motors led the segment with registrations of 64,217 units, up 66 per cent over 38,728 units in the 2022-23 financial year.

Similarly registrations of electric two-wheelers rose by 30 per cent to 9,47,087 units in 2023-24 fiscal as compared to 7,28,205 units in FY23.

Ola Electric led the space with retail sales of 3,29,237 units, fol-

lowed by TVS Motor Company with registrations of 1,82,969 units. Electric three-wheeler retail sales rose 56 per cent to 6,32,636 units last fiscal as against 4,04,430 units in FY23.

Mahindra Group retailed 60,618 units last fiscal, registering a growth of 69 per cent over 35,916 units in the 2022-23 fiscal.

Similarly, retails of electric commercial vehicles rose to 8,571 units last fiscal as against 3,111 units in the 2022-23 financial year, up three-fold over the 2022-23 fiscal.

Tata Motors sold 5,590 units in FY24, followed by JBM Auto with registrations of 530 units.

"While the base for EV adoption in India is still expanding, these figures underscore the accelerating shift towards electric mobility and highlight the market's potential for sustainable transportation solutions," FADA president Manish Raj Singhania said.

# Sensex, Nifty hit fresh intraday peaks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, April 9:** Benchmark equity indices hit new peaks Tuesday with Sensex breaching the historic 75,000-mark for the first time during intraday before ending the session marginally lower on profit-booking at higher levels.

Putting a break on its record-breaking rally, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 58.80 points or 0.08 per cent to settle at 74,683.70. During the day, it climbed 381.78 points or 0.51 per cent to reach the all-time peak of 75,124.28.

The NSE Nifty closed 23.55 points or 0.10 per cent lower at 22,642.75. During the day, it climbed 102.1 points or 0.45 per cent to hit the record peak of 22,768.40.

From the Sensex basket, Titan, Reliance Industries, Asian Paints, Tech Mahindra, Industind Bank, UltraTech Cement, Wipro and ITC were the major laggards.

ICICI Bank, Infosys, Bajaj Finserv, Tata Steel, Axis Bank, Bajaj Finance, Nestle and Mahindra & Mahindra were among the major gainers.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge dipped 0.47 per cent and the smallcap gauge declined 0.15 per cent.

Among the indices, consumer durables went lower by 1.10 per

## IN THE BROADER MARKET, THE BSE MIDCAP GAUGE DIPPED 0.47 PER CENT AND THE SMALLCAP GAUGE DECLINED 0.15 PER CENT

cent, industrials declined 0.55 per cent, capital goods (0.48 per cent) and telecommunication (0.29 per cent).

Metal jumped 0.53 per cent, realty (0.50 per cent), financial services (0.22 per cent) and teck (0.10 per cent). In Asian markets, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled in the positive territory while Seoul ended lower.

European markets were trading mostly lower. Wall Street ended on a mixed note Monday. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹684.68 crore Monday, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.18 per cent to USD 90.54 a barrel.

The BSE benchmark jumped 494.28 points or 0.67 per cent to settle at a new closing peak of 74,742.50 Monday. The NSE Nifty climbed 152.60 points or 0.68 per cent to 22,666.30.

# EU carbon tax may have limited impact on Indian aluminium cos

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 9:** Rating agency Icr Tuesday said that the proposed European Union's carbon tax may have a limited impact on the domestic primary aluminium producers.

The CBAM (Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism) or carbon tax (a kind of import duty) will come into effect from January 1, 2026.

"The Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) ruling on exports to the European Union (EU) will have a limited impact on the domestic primary aluminium producers. This is because the present notification covers the financial impact w.e.f January 1, 2026, on direct process-related emission only, while excluding the indirect emission, which contributes 80 per cent to the total emissions in the primary aluminium production process," Icr Tuesday said in a statement.

The indirect emission primarily results from the production of electricity that is sub-



sequently consumed in the smelting process.

India exported around 0.7 metric million tonnes (24 per cent of exports) of primary aluminium to European countries in FY23. However, unlike steel, the carbon tax is not expected to materially impact the export competitiveness of the domestic primary aluminium players, as the taxes arising from CBAM are likely to remain in the range of \$50-140 per metric tonne between

2026 and 2034, which would be 2-6 per cent of the current aluminium prices, Jayanta Roy, Senior Vice-President and Group Head, Corporate Sector Ratings, ICRA said.

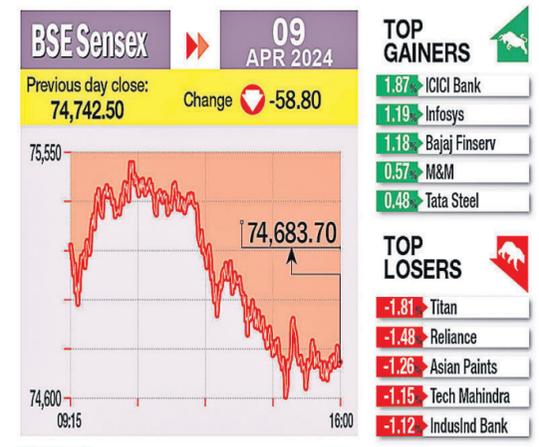
However, in case the indirect emission is also included in future, then the impact would be severe, equivalent to 27-30 per cent of the current aluminium prices, as domestic entities are significantly dependent on the coal-fired power

plant for sourcing electricity. This is unlike the situation in the EU, which has mostly switched to hydro power with almost 60 per cent lower carbon intensity, he explained.

The EU, the second largest aluminium-consuming block globally, signed the CBAM regulations in May last year, laying the framework for the imposition of taxes on embedded carbon imports from six sectors, which include aluminium, steel, cement, hydrogen, electricity, and fertiliser.

In CBAM's 'Transitional Phase' between October 1, 2023 and December 31, 2025, the focus will be on the reporting of carbon, but without any financial adjustment for EU importers.

However, from January 1, 2026, the EU importers will have to buy CBAM certificates, corresponding to the embedded emissions above the EU Emission Trading System (EU-ETS) benchmark levels. The price of these certificates will be linked to the weekly average carbon prices at the EU-ETS.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 9:** Ride-hailing services provider Ola has decided to shut down operations in the UK, Australia and New Zealand and will continue to focus on India business, its promoter ANI Technologies said Tuesday.

The Softbank-backed company said that it sees immense opportunity for expansion in India.

"Our ride-hailing business is growing rapidly, and we remain profitable and segment leaders in India. The future of mobility is electric - not just in personal mobility, but also for the ride-hailing business and there is immense opportunity for expansion in India. With this clear focus, we have reassessed our



priorities and have decided to shut down our overseas ride-hailing business in its current form in the UK, Australia and New Zealand," an Ola Mobility spokesperson said. The company had launched these operations in phases in 2018.

ANI Technologies has reported a narrowing of consolidated net loss to ₹772.25 crore in the fiscal 2023, according to a regulatory

filing. The company posted a consolidated loss of ₹1,522.33 crore in the financial year (FY) 2022. The consolidated revenue from operations increased by about 48 per cent to ₹2,481.35 crore in FY23 from ₹1,679.54 crore in the year-ago period.

On a standalone basis, ANI Technologies, which comprises a ride-hailing business, has reported a narrowing of loss to ₹1,082.56 crore in FY23 compared to a loss of ₹3,082.42 crore in FY22.

"We remain very excited and focused on our mission to serve 1 billion Indians. As a technology-first business, leading with innovation, we are confident to spearhead the country's mobility ambitions and lead the next phase of growth in the industry at large," the spokesperson said.

## MSCI India index rebalancing could see inflow of \$2.7bn

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, April 9:** MSCI India Standard Index rebalancing announcement scheduled for May 14 is expected to see one of the largest inclusions of 18 stocks with inflows of \$2.7 billion.

JM Financial Institutional Securities said the price cut-off date for the rebalancing is any of the last 10 business days in the month of April.

JM Financial Institutional Securities said the price cut-off date for the rebalancing is any of the last 10 business days in the month of April

# EU, India pact to nurture EV battery recycling startups

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, April 9:** In a fillip to the country's electric vehicle (EV) goals, the European Union (EU) and India Tuesday joined hands to promote startups working in the area of battery recycling technologies for EVs.

The collaboration aims to boost the cooperation between European and Indian Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and startups in the clean and green technologies sector.

The latest initiative took place under the India-EU Trade and Technology Council (TTC) announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Ursula von der Leyen,



President of the European Commission, at their meet-

ing in New Delhi in April 2022. "The match-making event is

a step ahead to unlock innovative possibilities leading to a green and circular economy. We encourage innovators from the EU to seize this opportunity and explore potential collaborations with their Indian counterparts," said Marc Lemaitre, Director-General for Research and Innovation at the European Commission.

As part of the initiative, 12 startups - six each from India and the EU - will be selected and get a pitching opportunity during the 'Matchmaking Event', scheduled in June.

Six finalists (three from the EU and three from India) will be selected following their presentations and awarded the possibil-

ity to visit India and the EU, respectively.

"We are dedicated to fostering a collaborative environment where sustainability and innovation form the cornerstone of a flourishing circular economy," said Professor Ajay Kumar Sood, Principal Scientific Adviser to the government.

The deadline for submitting Expressions of Interest (EoI) for the startups is April 30.

The TTC will help boost EU-India bilateral trade, which is at historical highs, with 120 billion euros worth of goods traded in 2022.

In 2022, 17 billion euros worth of digital products and services were traded.

# SRH PREVAIL OVER KINGS

## Royals look to continue their winning run vs GT



Pat Cummins celebrates after disturbing Jonny Bairstow's stumps



NITISH KUMAR REDDY



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jaipur, April 9:** Yashasvi Jaiswal would be desperate to let his bat do the talking when an unbeaten Rajasthan Royals take on an under pressure Gujarat Titans in the Indian Premier League here Wednesday.

RR could not have asked for a better start to the season, registering four consecutive wins from as many games. But Jaiswal, who has been terrific for the national team of late, has tallied just 39 runs in four games.

If he is back amongst the runs, it will be icing on the cake for RR as his opening partner Jos Buttler returned to form with an unbeaten century against Royal Challengers Bengaluru. Sanju Samson has been leading RR from the front, scoring 178 runs from four games including two fifties.

But it is Riyan Parag's performance with the bat that has been a revelation for RR. The all-rounder from Guwahati is the third highest run-getter in the tournament so far with 185 runs, including two unbeaten half centuries. The likes of Shimron Hetmyer and Dhruv Jurel also need to contribute more in the middle-order.

Rajasthan also boast of potent bowling attack in the form of pacers Trent Boult and Nandre Burger, and leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal, who has been their stand-out performer with eight wickets, the second highest so far.

But Ravichandran Ashwin's patchy form is a surprise. He

has taken just one wicket from four matches while giving away eight runs per over.

GT, on the other hand, witnessed a mixed bag campaign so far with two wins and three losses out of five games. The Shubman Gill-led side would look to avoid a hat-trick of losses on Wednesday but it would be easier said than done against an opponent on rampage.

They would be looking to bounce back after a 'poor' effort with the bat against Lucknow Super Giants. Gill, personally, have had a decent outing with the bat so far, scoring 183 runs from five games with a strike rate close to 147.

His opening partner B Sai Sudharsan too has been among runs but is yet to register a fifty in the tournament. He replaced Wriddhiman Saha at the top in the previous and is expected to bat alongside Gill also Wednesday.

Veterans Mohit Sharma and Umesh Yadav have been the stand-out performers with the ball for GT but they fell flat in front of little-known Punjab Kings cricketers Shashank Singh and Ashutosh Sharma in a thrilling tie. The Afghan trio of Azmatullah Omarzai, Rashid Khan and Noor Ahmad also need to raise their game.

### MATCHDAY

Indian Premier League

RR vs GT

Time: 07:30 pm

Telecast: Star Sports Network

Stream: Jio Cinema

**Mullanpur, April 9:** Young Nitish Reddy showed tremendous character during a vital 37-ball 64 (4x4, 5x6) as Sunrisers Hyderabad eked out a two-run win over Punjab Kings, surviving a daring attack by Shashank Singh (46 n o, 25b, 6x4, 1x6) and Ashutosh Sharma (33 n o, 15b, 3x4, 2x6) in a see-sawing IPL match here Tuesday.

Sent in to bat, the 20-year-old Reddy lifted SRH to 182/9 after PBKS had the visitors reeling at 66/4 in the 10th over. PBKS were stopped at 180/6, but they wouldn't have gone that far had it not been for a whirlwind 66-run partnership between the heroes of their last match, Shashank and Ashutosh.

Needing 29 runs in the last over bowled by Jaydev Unadkat, SRH dropped three catches as Shashank and Ashutosh came within touching distance of pulling off another stunning win.

Left-arm seamer Arshdeep Singh (4/29) was the standout

bowler for PBKS, but SRH still eventually finished with a total that looked improbable at one stage. Abdul Samad chipped in with a 12-ball 25 before Unadkat ended the SRH innings with a last ball six.

In reply, the hosts were off to a disastrous start as they lost three wickets with only 20 runs on the board, one of them being captain Shikhar Dhawan (14) who was stumped brilliantly by Heinrich Klaasen despite standing up to seamer Bhuvneshwar Kumar (2/32).

The run rate pressure got to Dhawan after the early dismissals of his opening partner Jonny Bairstow and Prabhsimran Singh. Bairstow was bowled by SRH skipper Pat Cummins (1/22) for a three-ball duck, while Prabhsimran (4) was sent back by Bhuvneshwar. Sam Curran was dismissed for a 22-ball 29 by T Natarajan (1/33) thanks to a stunning catch by Cummins at mid-off.

Earlier, the match got underway on an eventful note as Travis Head (21) would have been out

first ball after a clear edge. But the opener must thank Kagiso Rabada for prolonging his stay in the middle.

Jitesh Sharma went up straightaway but Rabada didn't join his colleague loudly enough, as the batter got a reprieve with PBKS refusing to take a review. Replays showed a clear edge, and it was strange on Rabada's part.

Despite living a charmed life, Head failed to capitalise, thanks to PBKS skipper Dhawan, who ran back and kept his eyes on the ball to complete an excellent catch, which was followed by his trademark thigh-slap celebration.

Two balls later, Aiden Markram was walking back to the dugout for a duck after edging an away going Arshdeep delivery to Jitesh. Abhishek Sharma fell to a Curran delivery after coming down the wicket in search of a big one leaving SRH in a spot of bother at 39/3 in the fifth over.

The Powerplay yielded only 40 runs for the loss of three wickets as PBKS dominated the vis-

itors, forcing SRH to alter their plans and send Rahul Tripathi as the impact sub. Tripathi replaced Head.

Tripathi (11) and Klaasen (9) failed to get going to leave SRH tottering at 100/5 in the beginning of the 14th over. The onus was then on Reddy to bail the team out, and the youngster did that with aplomb and picked 22 runs of a Harpreet Brar over to lift his side, while adding 50 runs in

quick time with Samad.

### BRIEF SCORES

SRH 182/9 (Nitish Kumar Reddy 64, Abdul Samad 25, Travis Head 21; Arshdeep Singh 4/22, Harshal Patel 2/30, Sam Curran 2/41) beat PBKS 180/6 (Shashank Singh 46 n o, Ashutosh Sharma 33 n o, Sam Curran 29, Sikandar Raza 28; Bhuvneshwar Kumar 2/32, Pat Cummins 1/22) by two runs.

# AISHWARYA'S BRONZE TO BE UPGRADED TO SILVER

# India look to keep series alive against Oz

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



mixed 4x400m relay team that won gold as well the women's 4x400m relay team that bagged a bronze in the championships. India had won 27 medals, including six gold, to finish overall third in the competition.

**New Delhi, April 9:** Top Indian athlete Aishwarya Mishra's 400m bronze medal at 2023 Asian Championships will be upgraded to silver as original second-place finisher Farida Soliyeva of Uzbekistan failed a dope test.

Soliyeva's urine sample collected July 13, during the Asian Athletics Championships in Bangkok last year, contained prohibited substance Meldonium and the Athletics Integrity Unit, the international federation's body for combating doping, disqualified all her results from that date.

"The AIU has banned Farida Soliyeva (Uzbekistan) for 3 years from 13 September 2023 for Presence/Use of a Prohibited Substance (Meldonium). DQ (disqualify) results from 13 July 2023," the AIU said.

Soliyeva had finished second with a time of 52.95 seconds while Mishra was third in 53.07 seconds. Nadeesha Ramanayake of Sri Lanka had won gold with a time of 52.61 seconds.

Mishra was also part of the

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**Perth, April 9:** The Indian men's hockey team would aim for a cohesive effort to avoid a hat-trick of losses when it takes on a formidable Australia in the third Test of the five-match series here Wednesday.

The Indians were drubbed 1-5 and 2-4 by Australia in the first two matches of the series, which is a part of preparations for this year's Paris Olympics for both the sides.

The tour is of huge significance for India as it will provide valuable inputs about the areas to improve to chief coach Craig Fulton. And the first two matches have already done that as the Indian defence was put under continuous pressure by quick turnovers by the Kookaburras.

The Indian defence, led by skipper Harmanpreet Singh, did not have the best days in the first two games as it wilted when put under pressure and conceded both penalty corners and soft field goals.

The lack of ideas from the forwards inside the opposition circle is another area the Indians would need to address. The likes



## NWHL TO KICK OFF APRIL 30 IN RANCHI

**New Delhi:** The inaugural National Women's Hockey League (NWHL) will be played in Ranchi from April 30 till May 10, the Hockey India announced Tuesday. Haryana, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Bengal, Mizoram, Manipur, and Odisha - the eight quarterfinalists at the Senior Women's National Championships in Pune will compete in the first phase of the league. The league will also witness participation of U21 players. The event will provide the selectors the opportunity to identify and nurture talent for future international tournaments. The dates of second phase of the league are yet to be announced. The second phase of the League will be held next year.

of Mandeep Singh, Abhishek, Lalit Kumar Upadhyay, Gurjant Singh and Sukhjeet need to make use of the chances they get if

they are to outplay a strong side like Australia.

The Indian mid-field, however, has been decent so far. Vice-

captain Hardik Singh has been the backbone of the mid-field, which combined well with the strikers, to create plenty of opportunities.

With a world renowned drag-flicker in skipper Harmanpreet, Jugraj Singh, Sanjay and Amit Rohidas in the rank, India boast of a potent force in penalty corners and all their three goals in the tour came from set pieces. But Fulton would be expecting more direct strikes from his penalty corner specialists.

## CL games still on

**Nyon (Switzerland):** This week's Champions League games will go ahead as scheduled despite an Islamic State terror threat, the governing body of European football Tuesday. A media outlet linked to the terror group has issued multiple posts calling for attacks at the stadiums hosting quarterfinal matches in Paris, Madrid and London Tuesday and Wednesday. "UEFA is aware of alleged terrorist threats made towards this week's UEFA Champions League matches and is closely liaising with the authorities at the respective venues," UEFA said in a statement. "All matches are planned to go ahead as scheduled with appropriate security arrangements in place." Real Madrid host Manchester City Tuesday and Atletico Madrid welcome Borussia Dortmund Wednesday. Arsenal play Bayern Munich in London on Tuesday and PSG host Barcelona the following day. French and Spanish ministers have said there will be enhanced security measures at the stadiums. Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack on the Crocus Hall concert venue outside Moscow on March 22 in which 144 people were killed.

## CR7 faces suspension

**Abu Dhabi:** Cristiano Ronaldo is facing a two-game suspension after receiving his first red card in Saudi Arabia for elbowing an opponent as Al-Nassr lost 1-2 to Al-Hilal in the Saudi Super Cup semifinals. The five-time Ballon D'Or winner was dismissed in the 86th minute for striking Al-Hilal defender Ali Al-Bulaihi. According to media reports in Saudi Arabia, the 39-year-old great may receive further punishment after seeming to mock the referee as he left the field in Abu Dhabi Monday.

## Stunning show on cards

**Paris:** The Olympic rings will be displayed on the Eiffel Tower, organizers said in a statement Tuesday, as the French capital prepares to mark 100 days until the start of the Paris Games. A 29 meters (95 feet) long and 15 meters (49 feet) high structure of five Olympic rings, made entirely of recycled French steel, will be displayed on the south side of the 135-year-old historic landmark in central Paris, overlooking the Seine River. About 10,500 athletes will parade through the heart of the French capital on boats on the Seine along a 6-kilometer (3.7-mile) route in the opening ceremony at sunset July 26.

# Indians in hunt, Nepomniachtchi still favourite

# Malvika, Panda sisters reach BAC main draw

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R Praggnanandhaa (L) and D Gukesh have done well so far in the tournament

**Toronto, April 9:** The great Viswanathan Anand felt Indians were "a long shot" in the Candidates Chess Tournament but the duo of D Gukesh and R Praggnanandhaa have done surprisingly well to withstand the early storm as the prestigious event took its first rest day of the ongoing edition.

The Indians were never the favourites in the bigger scheme of things but yet, Gukesh has held his own and so has Praggnanandhaa. However, the same cannot be said about Vidit Gujrathi, who became a favourite after his stunning win over World No.3 Hikaru Nakamura.

With four rounds done out of 14, there are 10 more games still to play. Things have been going well for the Indians but not in the purest way possible.

Ian Nepomniachtchi of Russia, who has to play under the FIDE flag due to sanctions against his country, is sitting firmly at the top of the table on three points

out of a possible four and he could not have hoped for a better start to his campaign.

With victories against Gujrathi and Firouza Alireza of France and two draws, the Russian got a heads-up to what could possibly be a third attempt to fight for the crown of world champion. Historically, no one has ever won the candidates three times in a row.

Nepomniachtchi became the first sole leader in the event fol-

lowing his second victory with white pieces and he is now followed by Fabiano Caruana and Gukesh on 2.5 points apiece.

Praggnanandhaa is not far behind on two points holding the fourth spot while Gujrathi, Abasov, Alireza and Nakamura have an identical 1.5 points each. The youngster has his mother, Nagalakshmi, travelling with him like usual and counts her as a big emotional support.

If anyone had asked Gukesh

about his start in the tournament, he would probably have settled for 2.5 out of four but then it is hard to imagine that he would have envisaged Nepomniachtchi being just ahead of him.

However, the Indian stalwart is close and has shown steely nerves especially when he beat Praggnanandhaa out of a no man's land kind of position. His chances depend on whether or not he collapses after a bad day.

One person who gives a knee-jerk reaction to bad result is the 18-year old Praggnanandhaa. Bouncing back from a bad loss against Gukesh, Praggnanandhaa has earned the respect he deserves at the highest level and his chances will depend on his acumen to deal with any position that arrives on board.

Caruana still remains a feared contender given his history and pedigree. However, one cannot rule out the fact that he has not had a dominating start despite being the hot favourite and top seed.



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**Ningbo (China), April 9:** Rising Indian shuttler Malvika Bansod won both her matches to qualify for women's singles main draw of the Badminton Asia Championships here Tuesday.

She first defeated Nurani Ratu Azzahra of UAE 21-18, 21-10 and then outclassed Sofiya Zakirova of Uzbekistan 21-4, 21-5 to win both her group B qualifying matches. The 22-year-old world

ranked 50 will face South Korea's Sim Yu Jin in her round of 32 match Wednesday.

The Panda sisters - Rutaparna and Swetaparna - also won both their doubles group A qualifying matches to make the main draw where they will take on Chinese Shu Xian Zhang and Yu Zheng.

Rutaparna and Swetaparna thrashed Bangladeshi pair Urmi Akter/Nasima Khatun 21-6, 21-6 before beating Weng Chi NG and Pui Chi Wa of Macau 21-18, 21-16.