



Mrunal's perspective
Actor Mrunal Thakur says the toughest part of acting is to move on from a character

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Positive progress
China and India have made 'positive progress' to resolve the border standoff, a senior Chinese foreign ministry official says

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Inflation cools
Retail inflation declines to a five-month low of 4.85 per cent in March mainly due to cooling food prices

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Yet another defeat
India's disappointing run in the five-match hockey Test series against Australia continues as they go down 1-3 in the fourth match

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SHORT TAKES

NIA arrests 2 for B'lore cafe blast

New Delhi/Kolkata: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) Friday arrested two key accused, including the mastermind, in Bangalore's Rameshwaram Cafe blast case from West Bengal, a development that triggered a war of words between the BJP and the state's ruling TMC. While the BJP alleged that the TMC has turned West Bengal into a 'safe haven for terrorists', Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said the accused were arrested due to the state police's prompt action. The accused, Abdul Matheen Ahmed Taahaa and Mussavir Hussain Shazib, were traced to their hideout near Kolkata. They were hiding under false identities, officials said. Taahaa was the mastermind behind the planning and execution of the blast and Shazib placed the Improvised Explosive Device at the cafe, they said. Officials said that "This pursuit was supported by coordinated action and cooperation among the NIA, Central intelligence agencies and the state police agencies of Bengal, Telangana, Karnataka and Kerala."

Don't travel to Israel, Iran: Govt to citizens

New Delhi: India Friday asked its citizens not to travel to Iran or Israel amid escalating tensions between the two countries following a strike on the Iranian consulate in Syria 11 days ago. Iran blamed Israel for the strike and there have been fears that Tehran may launch an attack on Israel soon. Iran has vowed revenge to avenge the attack. In an advisory, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) also urged Indians residing in Iran and Israel to exercise utmost precautions about their safety and restrict their movements to minimum. "In view of the prevailing situation in the region, all Indians are advised not to travel to Iran or Israel till further notice," it said. "All those who are currently residing in Iran or Israel are requested to get in touch with Indian Embassies there and register themselves," the MEA said. "They are also requested to observe utmost precautions about their safety and restrict their movements to the minimum," it added.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Our job is to make him believe that unemployment and inflation are issues, but not poll issues



REMEMBERING MARTYRS: Students create a 'rangoli' at Jallianwala Bagh Martyrs' Memorial on the eve of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre to create awareness ahead of Lok Sabha elections, in Amritsar, Friday

Heatwave from April 15; SRC alerts collectors

Bhubaneswar, April 12: The Special Relief Commission (SRC) in Odisha Friday put several districts on alert in the wake of the IMD forecasting return of heatwave conditions in parts of the state from April 15, officials said. The SRC said the weather office has issued a 'yellow warning' (be updated), and asked district authorities to take steps to circulate the warning message among people and make them aware about the health concerns related to the heat, especially for infants and the elderly. "People should be advised to take precautionary measures while going out during noon from 11 am to 3 pm. The situation should be monitored closely," it said in a letter to all the district collectors. The IMD has forecast heatwave in Angul, Dhenkanal, Cuttack, Nayagarh, Koraput, Malkangiri, Kandhamal, Boudh, Mayurbhanj, Balasore, Bhadrak, Keonjhar and Jajpur April 16. Meanwhile, the state government has said that polling officials who suffer from heatstroke will receive cashless treatment in private hospitals under Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana. Assembly and Lok Sabha polls will be held in the state in May-June amid hot and humid conditions.

No level playing field

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, April 12: The absence of a level playing field for Opposition parties contesting the Lok Sabha elections, scheduled to begin a week from now, has been flagged by a group of former civil servants.

Citing the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) action against the leaders of the Aam Aadmi Party and the I-T department's action against the principal Opposition party, the Congress, 87 ex-civil servants under the banner of the 'Constitutional Conduct Group' have written to the Election Commission of India (ECI) in this regard.

The group expressed concern over the ECI's lack of response to the Union government's alleged misuse of Central agencies to go after Opposition parties.

"In the Election Commission of India (ECI) meeting with officers nominated as Election Observers on 11 March 2024, the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) had stressed the importance of ensuring a level playing

CIC pulls up EC for no reply to query on EVMS

NEW DELHI: The Central Information Commission (CIC) has expressed 'severe displeasure' over the Election Commission (EC) not furnishing a reply to an RTI plea that had asked the poll panel about the action taken on a 'representation' given to it by eminent citizens, raising questions on the credibility of EVMS and VVPAT machines during elections. Terming it a 'gross violation' of the law, the CIC has also directed the EC to submit a written explanation. Former Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer M G Devasahayam, who was one of the signatories to the representation on the credibility of electronic voting machines (EVMS), voter-verifiable paper audit trail (VVPAT) and the vote-counting process, had filed an application with the poll panel under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, seeking details of the action taken on it. The representation was sent to the EC May 2, 2022.

field for all political parties and candidates and keeping the polls free from intimidation and inducements. Just ten days after his exhortation, Arvind Kejriwal, the Chief Minister of Delhi, was arrested, in what is known as the Delhi liquor policy case, under the draconian provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, where securing bail is extremely difficult. We are not questioning the right of law enforcement agencies to take steps to check corruption in high

places and bring to book the guilty. What we are concerned about is the timing of this arrest," the group wrote in the letter. "The arrest of a senior Opposition political functionary at a juncture when the Lok Sabha elections had been announced and the Model Code of Conduct was in place reeks, to our mind, of deliberate, motivated executive action," it added. Kejriwal's arrest is just one example of a troubling trend of targeting Opposition parties and

politicians in the run up to the general elections. This raises serious questions about the intentions of the probe agencies.

It is questionable as to why the I-T department is revisiting past assessments of the Congress and other Opposition parties right before the elections. Likewise, conducting raids on the properties of Mahua Moitra, a TMC candidate in the Lok Sabha elections, and sending notices to other Opposition candidates at this critical time is difficult to justify. Considering the slow pace of investigations and legal proceedings by Central agencies, the excessive focus on these cases suggests ulterior motives beyond just upholding justice.

On top of it, the national television media appears to have become subservient to the party in power at the Centre with most of its airtime going towards Opposition bashing.

Harassment by probe agencies, poor financial strength vis a vis the BJP and a hostile mainstream media - an uphill road lies ahead for the Opposition parties.

Study flags 'unacceptable deviations' in prescriptions

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 12: Around 10 per cent of prescriptions from tertiary care and teaching hospitals analysed as part of a year-long government study had 'unacceptable deviations' such as inappropriate prescription of medications or more than one diagnosis.

The potential consequences of these deviations could have led to increased cost for patients and probability of increase in the number of adverse drug reactions or even treatment failure, according to the study.

'Evaluation of prescriptions from tertiary care hospitals across India for deviations from treatment guidelines and their potential consequences' analysed 4,838 prescriptions which was published in the Indian Journal of Medical Research (IJMR).

The multicentric study which was carried out from August 2019 to August 2020, was conducted by 13 ICMR Rational Use of Medicines Centres (RUMCs) located in tertiary care teach-

ing hospitals and medical colleges across India including Delhi AIIMS and Safdarjung Hospital. A deviation that could result in a drug interaction, lack of response, increased cost, preventable adverse drug reaction (ADR) and/or antimicrobial resistance was labelled as an 'unacceptable deviation'.

"Against all the prescriptions assessed, about one tenth of them (9.8 per cent) had unacceptable deviations," the study said. All the prescribers were postgraduates in their respective disciplines and on average were in practice for four to 18 years.

Of the 475 prescriptions that had deviations, 102 had stated more than one diagnosis and in some of them drugs were prescribed inappropriately.

The drugs identified in prescriptions with unacceptable deviations were pantoprazole, rabeprazole and domperidone combination, trypsin/chymotrypsin, serratiopeptidase, ranitidine, azithromycin, cefixime, amoxicillin and clavulanic acid combination and aceclofenac.

Stardom no guarantee for political success

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 12: As Odisha is gearing up for the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections, several stars of the Odia film industry were seen changing parties for tickets.

Four actors quit the ruling BJD to join the BJP in less than a fortnight. Popular actor and two-time BJD MP from Berhampur Siddhant Mohapatra joined the BJP. Immediately after joining the party, Mohapatra bagged a BJP ticket to fight from Digapahandi Assembly seat.

Similarly, actor Akash Dasnayak who left the BJD and joined the BJP, got the saffron party's ticket for Korei Assembly seat. He was the MLA from Korei from 2014 to 2019.

Arindam Roy and Anubhav Mohanty also resigned from the BJD and joined the BJP. Sources said that they may be given MLA tickets soon.

Actor Manoj Mishra, who recently joined the Congress, will fight from Bolangir Lok Sabha seat in his electoral debut. However, unlike film stars of the south who got success not only in the celluloid world but also in politics, their counterparts in Odisha don't possess the same political acumen. In 2019 elections, Anubhav, Pinky Pradhan and Papu Pom contested, but only the former could manage to win from Kendrapara.

With the exception of Prashanta Nanda, no other actor has won Assembly or Lok Sabha polls on ticket from any other party except the BJD. Nanda

won on a BJP ticket in 2000 and later on an NCP ticket in 2009.

Actors Bijay Mohanty and Aparajita Mohanty contested Lok Sabha elections from Bhubaneswar and Cuttack in 2014 on Congress tickets respectively and both lost. Aparajita contested again for BJP in 2019 and lost again.

Only Anubhav, Akash and Siddhant have won elections on BJD tickets. The trio will now represent the BJP in 2024.

Political analyst Sudarshan Chhotoray said, "In Odisha, sustaining in politics requires grassroots connection, obliging party leadership and following party discipline. Merely having a large fan following or star value won't help you in politics."

Over the last few years, film actors elected to Assembly and



Parliament have failed to connect with their respective constituencies, he said. Only actor and director Prashanta Nanda could successfully transform himself into a seasoned politician, Chhotoray added. "Odisha is not south India where people idolise their matinee stars. In the south, actors such as NT Ramarao (NTR), MG Ramachandran (MGR) and Jayalalitha became Chief

Ministers while the likes of Rajinikanth, Kamal Haasan, Rajkumar, and Chiranjeevi enjoyed fan base bigger than any political figure."

"What we have seen in the state is that instead of taking up a political cause and sticking to an ideology, film stars keep their cards open and politicians use them in campaigns and take advantage of their star value," he added.

Filmmaker Swastik Choudhury said: "I personally do not subscribe to the idea of a star culture for it does more disservice than anything else especially in a fragile industry like ours. Quality and merit at times take a backseat. Having said that, while comparing with south stars, we have to keep in mind the maturity and professionalism with which these industries operate. Do those who are labelled as icons or stars here carry the same dedication and commitment professionally as their southern counterparts? When someone shifts to a different party it's more like switching a job for a better opportunity or position. In politics, I believe, one needs to have clarity over their ideologies and objectives."

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VALUE	VARIATION
SENSEX	74244.90	↓ 793.25
NIFTY	22519.40	↓ 234.40
DOLLAR	83.49	↑ ₹0.27
EURO	89.09	↓ ₹1.25
GOLD	₹72,786	↑ ₹1142
SILVER	₹84,660	↑ ₹1813

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	36.2°C	34.0°C
Min Temp	21.2°C	20.6°C
Humidity	63%	66%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

FORECAST
DRY WEATHER VERY LIKELY

leisure



CHERYL 'THANKFUL' SHE FOUND FAME BEFORE SOCIAL MEDIA

Opening up about how she thinks the technology has ruined celebrities' 'magic', English singer and TV personality Cheryl has admitted she is 'thankful' she found fame along with *Girls Aloud* before social media.

MOTHERHOOD HAS MADE DUNST A BETTER ACTRESS

Kirsten Dunst, who is the mother of Ennis, five, and two-year-old James, has been in Hollywood for more than three decades, has said that being a mother has made her a better actress.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
No matter what you do, today you are not going to have your way. The times when you have been selfish are finished. Besides, you are likely to solicit trouble today. It may actually turn out to be good for you, says Ganesha, provided you change the focus of your actions.

TAURUS
This is a productive day to deal in money matters, foresees Ganesha. You will probably enjoy both money and muscle power in the afternoon. A necklace or pendant is awaiting your sweetheart, so surprise her. Caution: There is a risk of your money being swindled.

GEMINI
You will feel some measure of loneliness today. You will need the company of someone close to you for reassurance. The evening will see you plagued by rapid mood swings. Meditative techniques can help calm your mind, says Ganesha.

CANCER
Your imagination and creativity will surpass new heights. You will try to find easy answers to the most difficult riddles. Your creativity will be beneficial. A favourable day for investors and traders, say Ganesha.

LEO
You will want some change in your daily surroundings, and this will manifest in the form of shopping for new clothes or home renovation projects and the like. You may also modify your daily routine. You need to take a closer look at your personal relationships today, says Ganesha.

VIRGO
You enjoy a strong position, but its foundations will be rattled today. In all probability you may have to encounter some unwanted problems which will be a cause for worry. However, Ganesha says you may still end up doing something beneficial if you get out of the rut and attempt to do something unusual.

LIBRA
Ganesha says you will be assigned the responsibility to organize a meeting, which will give you the opportunity to prove your efficiency. Those of you in research and development fields will find success by putting your knowledge to use. It is a good day for signing important documents or agreements.

SCORPIO
You are like one butterfly today, literally flying from one place to another either for work or for socialising. New projects and business agendas form the crux of your day. There are chances that good business proposals may come your way and you may think of considering it, says Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS
Work, work and more work will be your day's agenda. A power-packed performance is expected from you. Though hectic, the day will be easy going as your bosses are likely to be lenient on you. Love and affection from family is on the cards as well.

CAPRICORN
You're on the verge of losing hopes as you can't bear the weight of work and responsibilities any more. But, like the strong individual that you are, you are not going to put your arms down without fighting fiercely. Also, your mental strength and physical stamina will be acknowledged and appreciated by one and all, predicts Ganesha.

AQUARIUS
The day promises to be filled with freshness. You will apply your mind and find solution to some of the complicated questions. You will now get the clarity about your paths and directions. Try to meet as many people as you can and build new relations, so that you can add a fresh perspective to your life.

PISCES
There is a high chance that you will get closer to someone who has hitherto only been an acquaintance. There is also a distinct possibility of love at first sight and yet at the same time Ganesha advises you to take one wary step at a time and not let the fast pace of relationships overwhelm you.

Sara shatters myths about menstruation

New Delhi: Sara Ali Khan, a dazzling sensation among Gen Z, is known for openly sharing her life journey.

During a conversation with *IANSLife*, the *Kedarnath* actress busted a few myths surrounding menstruation.

Asked if she would change about the way society treats menstruation, Sara said, "First and foremost, it is critical to understand that menstruation is not an indicator of impurity. I believe it represents the pinnacle of femininity and fertility. Menstruation is the reason for everyone's existence."

The actress revealed that some of her hits and favourite songs, such as *Aankh Maare*, *Chaka Chak*, and *Ha Mei Galat*, were shot during her menstrual cycle days.

Does she ever miss her workout sessions during her periods? To this, she shared, "I try not to miss my workout any day. I exercise daily, even when I am on my period, as it boosts my mood and helps with pain relief. I incorporate light cardio and yoga during my period days."

Advising women dealing with PCOD and PCOS, the

Atrangi Re actress said, "Recognise the syndrome to make sure you are aware of the changes in the body, which may include weight loss and hair loss. Exercise regularly to minimise symptoms. Try to avoid binge eating and strive to live a healthier lifestyle."

IAN S

Mumbai: Actress Nidhhi Agerwal is all set to dazzle in her bikini avatar for the first time in the upcoming OTT debut film *Dunk - Once Bitten Twice Shy*.

The actress is now making a "triumphant return to Hindi cinema after a brief hiatus".

Produced by Perna Arora, the movie also stars Tusshar Kapoor and Shivin Narang in prominent roles, along with Suchitra Krishnamoorthi and Vinay Pathak.

Talking about it, Nidhhi, who was last seen in the Hindi film *Munna Michael* in 2017, said: "Having established my presence across three diverse industries—Telugu, Tamil, and Hindi—I'm now making a triumphant



Nidhhi on her return to Hindi cinema

return to Hindi cinema after a brief hiatus while simultaneously dominating the southern film scene."

The actress said that her plate is full of exciting projects.

"I'm currently immersed in the making of *Hari Hara Veera Mallu*, a captivating period film alongside the legendary Pawan Kalyan, and Raaja Saab, where I share the screen with the talented Prabhas, both of which I lead," she shared while adding, "Anticipation is high as both films are slated for release this year, promising to enthral audiences across regions."

The actress said that amid all this, she stumbled upon a "script by Perna that resonated deeply with me, igniting my eagerness to deliver an exceptional performance."

Nidhhi added: "With two heroes in the south and a promising script in hand, I am poised to rock the cinematic landscape."

IAN S



Mumbai: Actress Priyanka Chopra has heaped praise on Indian-origin British actor-film-maker Dev Patel for his impressive debut as a director with *Monkey Man*.

Priyanka took to Instagram stories and gave a shout out to Patel and the cast of the film, which also includes Sikandar Kher and Sobhita Dhulipala.

The actress wrote: "Bravo #DevPatel What an impressive debut!"

Priyanka

Dev earns PC's praise

also tagged Sobhita Dhulipala, Sikandar Kher, and producer Jordan Peele.

The film also stars Sharlto Copley, Makarand Deshpande, Ashwini Kalsekar, and others.

The action thriller follows the journey of a young man portrayed by Dev Patel, who embarks on a mission to seek justice for his mother's death, caused by corrupt leaders.

Monkey Man was scheduled to release April 19 in India, but the release has now been delayed indefinitely.

As for Priyanka, she is currently busy filming her upcoming film, *Heads of State*.

IAN S

'Toughest part of acting is moving on'

Mumbai: Mrunal Thakur has garnered much acclaim with standout performances in prominent films like *Hi Nanna*, *Sita Ramam*, *Jersey* and the second season of *Made in Heaven* among others.

During a recent interview with *Pinkvilla*, on being asked about the toughest part of acting, the *Dhamaka* actress replied that if someone is not in sync, that magic won't happen. What is difficult is when a movie ends and when someone comes back home, it feels like a heartbreak. It's like, she loves those characters and she'll never get to be them.

She further said that this heartbreak is crazier than an actual romantic heartbreak. There are days when she doesn't know what to do. If there's one character that she wants to be, it's Sita Mahalaxmi.

"So, the toughest part of acting is moving on," added Mrunal.

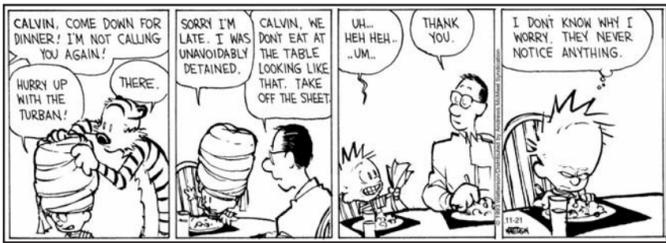
The actress has recently appeared in several films and shows, including *Lust Stories 2*, *Made in Heaven* season 2, *Super 30*, and *Pippa*.

AGENCIES

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

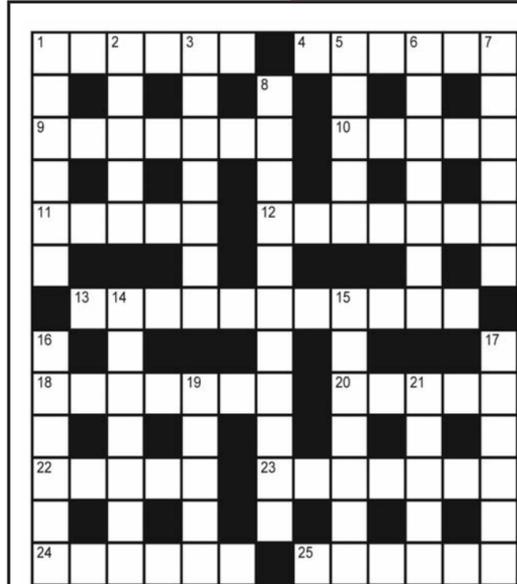


BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD



Across

- 1 Charge
- 4 Sharpshooter
- 9 Set apart
- 10 Craze
- 11 Lock site
- 12 Auto output
- 13 Disposition
- 18 Eyelet
- 20 African equine

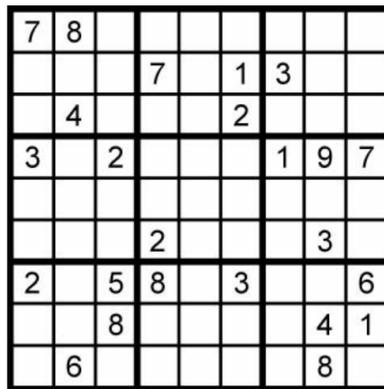
Down

- 1 Pricing word
- 2 Circus sight
- 3 Edible marine bivalve
- 5 Echo, for one
- 22 Not native
- 23 Uneasy
- 24 Irritates
- 25 Consortium

- 6 Batman villain
- 7 Dinner choices
- 8 Whooping it up
- 14 Love, e.g.
- 15 Polish folk dance
- 16 Large lizard
- 17 Sword knot
- 19 Squalid
- 21 Swell

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

downtown

HEATSTROKE

Cashless treatment for polling officials

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 12: Ahead of the simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly elections Odisha, which will be held amid expected hot and humid conditions in May-June, the state government Friday said polling officials who suffer from heatstroke will receive cashless treatment in private hospitals under the Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY).

Health and Family Welfare department Commissioner-cum-Secretary Shalini Pandit issued a directive to BSKY empanelled private hospitals to extend cashless treatment to affected poll officials.

"In addition to all BSKY package treatments, all persons on election duty shall also be provided cashless treatment in empanelled private hospitals in case of heatstroke during the polls," the letter said.

Polling officials can avail this benefit by presenting their appointment/engagement order, the letter said.

"The empanelled private hospitals should raise the bill in offline mode as per BSKY package rates to State Health Assurance Society for necessary payment," the letter said.

Elections in the state are scheduled in four phases, May 13, 20, 25, and June 1.

Earlier, the chief electoral officer (CEO) of Odisha had as-

sured arrangements to counter the heat in all polling booths, including adequate drinking water facilities, shelters, and other necessities.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD), meanwhile, predicted light to moderate rain or thundershowers at one or two places over the districts of Malkangiri, Koraput, Rayagada, Gajapati, Kandhamal, Kalahandi and Nabarangapur and prevalence of dry weather over the rest of the districts.

As per the mid-day weather bulletin, there will be no large change in maximum temperature during the next 24 hours. "The day temperature will rise sharply by 6 to 8 degrees Celsius during the subsequent four-five days at many places over the districts," it said.

According to the regional office of the IMD, hot and humid weather condition likely to prevail at one or two places over the districts of Cuttack, Nayagarh, Boudh, Angul and Khurda from April 14.

The weatherman also issued yellow warning for several districts from April 15.

"The heatwave condition is likely to prevail over the districts of Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Jajpur, Dhenkanal, Angul, Nayagarh, Boudh, Cuttack, Kandhamal, Koraput, Malkangiri, Balasore and Bhadrak from April 16," it said.



Burglars strike again in Pahala, loot house

DEBADURLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 12: Barely 72 hours after burglars looted four flats of an upscale apartment in Pahala area on the outskirts of the Capital City Monday leaving the Commissionerate Police red faced, another house under the jurisdiction of the same police station was burgled of cash and valuables worth lakhs of rupees in a similar fashion in the early hours of Friday.

Officers at the Pahala police station said they have little clues about the miscreants involved in the earlier incident neither do they have any lead about the accused involved in the Friday morning burglary.

Investigating officer of the second burglary incident, Biswabhusan Muduli said a total of ₹25,000 cash, one gold chain and four gold rings were looted by the miscreants from the house, located near Pahala Jagannath temple. He said the accused locked the entrance door of the bungalow while leaving after committing the loot in order to prevent the occupants from seeking immediate help from neighbours.

IIC Pahala police station Beauty Mohanty said the occupants of the house forgot to lock the terrace door before going to sleep Thursday night. She said the hoodlums gained entry into the house through that door.

Owner of the house, Sarat Mohanty said, "I was lying down on the sofa till around 1:45 am. Before going to bed, I heard the siren of the PCR van which was patrolling the area. The robbers must have entered the house after 2:30 am when I was fast asleep".

He said it was only after he woke up in the morning he found the house burgled and realised that the miscreants had locked the entrance door. Meanwhile, Muduli said that the CCTV footages collated from the nearby areas are being examined to identify the accused.

ART EXPO

Visitors at solo art exhibition 'DIMENSION' at Lalit Kala Akademi in Bhubaneswar, Friday

PICTURE BY BIKASH NAYAK



Excitement runs high among 1st-time voters

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Development of education infra, affordable healthcare, enhanced job opportunities, environmental sustainability, rural development, et al. constitute the bulk of expectations of young voters from political parties and candidates in the fray

The 2024 general elections, scheduled from April 19 to June 1, will have 1.85 crore young electors in the 18-19 age group who will be casting their vote for the first time. In Odisha, as per the Election Commission data, a total of 3.32 crore voters are eligible to exercise their voting rights. Of them, 7.54 lakh are in the 18-19 age group whose votes are going to play a crucial role in determining the fate of the candidates in the fray. India will go to the polls in a marathon seven-phase exercise to elect 543 members of the 18th Lok Sabha. This apart, Assembly elections will also be held simultaneously in Odisha and other states such as Andhra Pradesh, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh.

OrissaPOST spoke to a few new voters to find out what they expect of the future government and how important voting is for them.

Sruati Mishra (Economics student): I am very excited that I will be voting for the first time. I think voting is not just a right we have been given, but it is also a responsibility we must discharge wisely. I expect the government to fulfill the voters' expectations and demands. Some common demands include focus and prioritisation of education funding, student loans, scholarships, development of educational institutions, affordable healthcare, environmental protection, and social justice initiatives.

Ananta Prasad Pradhan (MSc student): Voting is our basic right in a democracy. Through this, we choose public representatives of our choice. I am very happy and optimistic to go to vote for the first time. I will opt for a leader who will focus on education, job opportunities, healthcare accessibility, environmental sustainability, and social justice. As a first-time voter, I feel a greater priority and need to consider actions that impact the future of our community and country. It is very important to give a chance to different political parties in order to evaluate who gives us more priority. I would also consider the integrity and character of the candidates, their leadership qualities, and ability to address the challenges facing our community and country. I believe all should vote judiciously rather than make it in a rush and regret for the next five years. Choose the right leader at the right time without any pressure. Don't fall to any kind of temptation like money or alcohol.

Swarupa Sutar (student): I am happy that I will be voting for the first time. I want the government should solve all the problems people are facing in rural areas. Currently, many rural areas don't have internet facility. If the government steps up internet connectivity in rural areas, it will help the needy immensely and they will be able to know about the world. Also, the government should in-



roduce schemes which will create more jobs for them.

Subham Kumar Kar (student): I am really excited about voting for the first time. It makes me feel grown up, and become a citizen of my country in true sense. Now, I have the power to make someone win in elections. I want the government to provide citizens the highest quality education at a very affordable cost. At the same time, it should value sports and recreation activities as well.



Bhagyashree Das (Microbiology student): We will vote for that person, and not the party, who is genuinely going to work for our area. S/he should particularly work towards development of education, scholarship eligibility for students, increase facilities for higher studies as well as create more job opportunities in every field. And also who facilitates health insurance schemes for people. Simultaneously, we will also vote for those who stand by us during emergencies, and makes rules after taking into consideration each and every citizen's concerns.

Sharmistha Mallick (student): I expect from the parties to support candidates and policies that align with my values and principles, such as promoting equality, sustainability, and social justice. I would also prioritise candidates who demonstrate integrity, competence, and a commitment to serving the public good. I also expect that the govt should take initiatives for people living in rural areas or slums. As I am voting for the very first time, it is going to be a memorable and pleasant experience for me.

Prabir Kumar Sahoo (Information Technology and Management student): As a young voter, my focus is to identify the political party that will excel in expanding the education system, provide enhanced job opportunities for youth, foster unicorn startups nationwide, develop college and university infrastructure into global standards, establish more institutes in line of IITs and NITs, and achieve milestones in IT, defense, and health sectors.

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CAPITAL FOUNDATION DAY TODAY



ALL DECKED UP: Several landmark locations in Bhubaneswar have been decked up on the eve of the 76th foundation day of the Capital City, Friday

PICTURES BY BIKASH NAYAK & MAUSAM NANDA

Ex-minister Kamala Das dies at 79; Prez condoles

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, April 12: Former minister Kamala Das died at a hospital in Cuttack in the early hours of Friday, her family said.

Das, 79, was admitted to a private hospital in Bhubaneswar two weeks ago after she complained of chest pain. During the course of the treatment, she was diagnosed with a lung infection, they said, adding that she was later shifted to a hospital in Cuttack.

Das was on ventilator support for the last three days. She died around 12.30 am.

She was first elected as an MLA in 1990 from the Bhograi seat in Balasore district on a Janata Dal ticket. She was re-elected in 1995, and then again in 2000 as a BJD candidate.

She served as MoS for Education and Youth Services, and MoS for Health and Family

Welfare in the Biju Patnaik government.

She was also the Women and Child Development Minister in the Naveen Patnaik government.

Das was dropped as a minister in 2001. Following that, she switched over to the Congress. She returned to the BJD in 2014.

Her body was taken to her hometown, Bhograi, where the last rites will be held, her family said.

Meanwhile, President Droupadi Murmu condoled the passing away Das.

"Saddened by the demise of senior political leader Dr. Kamala Das, who served as minister in Odisha government. In her long public career, she continuously worked for the progress of Odisha and its people. I extend my heartfelt condolences to her family members and followers," Murmu said in a post on X.



BJD moves CEO, seeks removal of cover from 'revered conch' in Puri

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, April 12: The ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Friday moved the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) seeking removal of cover from the 'revered conch' installed on the Grand Road in Puri.

Conch is the election symbol of the BJD.

A delegation of the BJD submitted a memorandum with the CEO and said that the EC covered the conch following a complaint lodged by the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

It has hurt the sentiments of people, the BJD claimed.

"The spiritual city of Puri is also known as 'Sankha Kshetra' (land of the conch). As per the tradition and spiritual fervour, a sankha (conch) was installed

at Badadanda (Grand Road) in Puri during the auspicious occasion of the inauguration of Srimandir (Jagannath temple) Parikrama Project," the BJD memorandum stated.

The conch is an emblem of both cultural and spiritual significance, the ruling party said.

In the memorandum, the BJD also mentioned that the 'double conch' logo of an affordable transport scheme was also covered on buses being run in the rural areas of the state.

Claiming that this is an attack on Odia pride, it said, "The BJP is so scared that it targeted the social and cultural symbolism of 'Jodi Sankha'."

The Opposition BJP, on the other hand, alleged that the state government has engaged the

ruling party workers to review the construction works under a government scheme.

BJP spokesman Satyabrata Panda said the government issued an official order April 10 directing its employees to review the works of 93 'Mo Schools' under the 5T (transformation) initiative.

"It has come to our notice that some BJD workers have been engaged in the review meeting. It is a violation of poll code of conduct, and we have drawn the attention of the CEO in this regard for necessary action," Panda said.

'Mo School' (My School) is an initiative to bring alumni, their alma mater and the community around government-run or government-aided schools together.

'Pratiharis' to prevent entry of non-Hindus to Srimandir

AGENCIES

Puri, April 12: In order to prevent entry of non-Hindus, the Srimandir administration has decided to deploy 'Pratiharis', a traditional servitor community, at the gates of the 12th century shrine, sources said, Friday.

The decision came in response to several incidents of non-Hindus gaining access to the temple, Pratihari Nijog Secretary Ramachandra Gochhikar said during a press briefing. Currently, Pratiharis are present from the opening to the closing of the temple, primarily working within its confines.

With the increasing number of non-Hindu visitors to Srimandir, Pratihari Nijog, in consultation with the temple administration, has decided to station two Pratihari servitors at the Lions Gate starting April 14.

Gochhikar said the service will eventually be extended to all four gates of the temple.



India among highest plastic waste producers



waste, with a yearly waste production of 147.7 kg per person. This is 16 times higher than in India, it said.

Oman tops the list of countries in terms of mismanaged plastic waste, with a projected 111 kg of mismanaged plastic per person in 2024. This is 30 times higher than Norway. India is in the bottom 12 countries.

The report said that by April 2024, almost half of the world's population will be living in areas where plastic waste has already exceeded the capacity to manage it.

On September 5, it said that the plastic waste produced worldwide will surpass the planet's waste management systems and will be called "Plastic Overshoot Day."

Each country has its own POD, determined by the amount of plastic waste generated and the country's capacity to manage it. India will reach its POD on April 23, it said.

"The data is unequivocal: improvements in waste management capacity are outpaced by rising plastic production, making progress almost invisible," Earth Action and Plastic Footprint Network Co-CEO Sarah Perreard said.

"The assumption that increased recycling and waste management capacity will solve the plastic crisis is flawed. Without aggressive reduction at the source, our struggle against plastic pollution will be a holding pattern at best," Perreard said.

end plastic pollution.

"Twelve countries are responsible for 60 per cent of the world's mismanaged plastic waste: China, India, Russia, Brazil, Mexico, Vietnam, Iran, Indonesia, Egypt, Pakistan, the United States and Turkey," it said. Though the report classifies India as a "low-waste-producing" polluter due to its low per capita plastic waste production (8 kg per capita per year), it said the country's expected mismanaged waste in 2024 will be 7.4 MT, which is "very high".

Still, India's mismanaged plastic waste will be less than one-fifth of China and one-third of the US.

The report also claimed India is estimated to release an average of 3,91,879 tonne of micro plastics into the environment and 31,483 tonne of chemical additives into waterways.

People living in Belgium are the top generators of plastic



AFTERNOON SIESTA: As temperature soars, camels take rest at Puri beach, Friday

OP PHOTO

SC CONFERENCE ON TECH & DIALOGUE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 12: The Supreme Court is organising a two-day conference on technology and dialogue, particularly focusing on the transformative role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in judiciary, between the apex courts of India and Singapore April 13 and 14.

A release issued by the top court said the conference aims to explore the intersection of technology and the legal system.

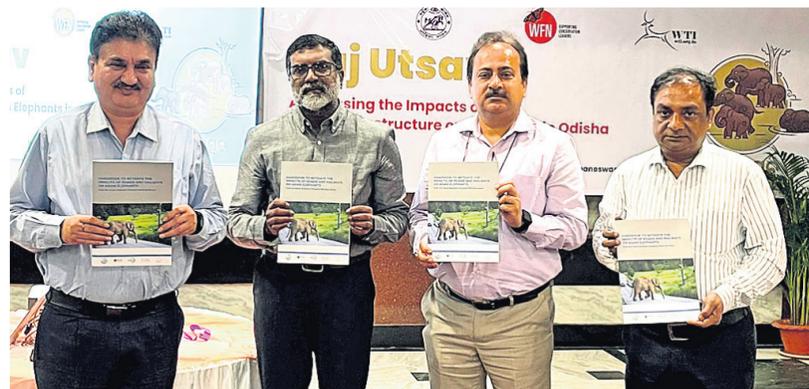
"Chief Justice of India Justice DY Chandrachud and Chief Justice of Singapore Justice Sundaresh Menon alongside judges, jurists and experts will engage in dynamic panel discussions covering a wide array of topics related to AI and its implications for the legal system, its potential to assist court proceedings, its role in judicial training, improving access to justice, ethical considerations surrounding its use and the future of AI," it said.

The release said the conference will serve as a platform for sharing insights, best practices and innovative ideas to facilitate a deeper understanding of how AI can enhance judicial processes and promote access to justice.

It said the event will promote meaningful dialogue and collaboration paving the way for future advancements in the intersection of technology and law.

The release said the conference aims at strengthening bilateral ties and create a shared commitment to the evolution of legal systems and potential use of AI to streamline legal processes, reducing time and costs associated with litigation and thereby making justice more accessible to citizens.

Forest dept gears up to mitigate jumbo deaths



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 12: In order to develop strategies and mitigate the negative effects of linear infrastructure on elephants and wildlife, the state government with Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) hosted a consultative meeting, 'Gaj Utsav' with 20 representatives from the Odisha Forest Department (OFD), East Coast Railway (ECR), Electricity board and Irrigation department here Friday.

Gaj Utsav Odisha, a vision-ary campaign by WTI, which was launched by former Forest, Environment and Climate Change department minister Pradip Kumar Amat in October 2023.

The meeting was presided over by OFD APCCF wildlife Manoj Nair. The discussions primarily focused on strengthening the policy guidelines for avoiding, reducing and mitigating the adverse impacts of linear infrastructure such as power lines, canals, pipelines, and railways on wildlife.

The meeting highlighted the ongoing conservation initiatives undertaken by the OFD and WTI's interventions, for safeguarding elephant populations. Additionally, brainstorming sessions were conducted to explore innovative approaches to restore connectivity for wildlife across linear intrusions. A Handbook on 'Mitigating the Impacts of Roads and Railways on Asian Elephants' by IUCN Asian Elephant Specialist Group (AsESG) was officially released by APCCF wildlife Manoj Nair, WTI chief of conservation Sandeep Tiwari, Odisha Power Transmission Corporation Limited director BB Mehta and Tata Power Central Odisha Distribution Limited chief of operations RK Rastogi.

On the occasion Nair said, "On behalf of the State Wildlife Wing, I thank WTI for organising this important brainstorming session and hope that there will be more such during the year-long Gaj Utsav. I am sure the deliberations will help us frame more informed policies as well

as strategies for mitigating impacts of linear infrastructure in the state."

Launched in 2018, the Gaj Utsav campaign seeks to raise awareness about safeguarding the future of India's national heritage animal, while also advocating for their essential right to passage, across different elephant ranges.

Odisha is home to over 1900 elephants, spanning 3 elephant reserves and having 12 identified elephant corridors. While these majestic animals roam freely across the country's vast landscapes, they face challenges in their right to move across their natural habitats.

One of the major concerns of linear intrusions is the alarming mortality rate of elephants, with approximately 45 to 50 elephants dying due to electrocution annually in the country and over 367 elephants falling victim due to train accidents since 1987 alone. Deliberations on finding solutions to mitigate elephant deaths from electrocution were central to the discussion.

CUTM celebrates World Health Day

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 12: The School of Paramedics and Allied Health Sciences at Centurion University of Technology and Management (CUTM) organised a seminar 'My Health, My Right' on the occasion of World Health Day, April 8. The event was a testament to CUTM's commitment to raising awareness about universal access to quality healthcare, education and essential resources.

Department of Management Sciences head at National Institute of Health and Family Welfare Mihir Kumar Mallick attended the event as chief guest and shared valuable insights into India's healthcare progress and emphasised the importance of healthcare access for all.

Bijay Kumar Mohapatra stressed the significance of preventing non-communicable diseases and promoting overall wellness. Other notable speakers included managing director of Kalinga Hospital Nilanjana Mukherjee, who highlighted the challenges in



healthcare sector and urged individuals to be proactive agents of change.

YPSOMED country manager Sanjay Rajpal engaged participants with an interactive quiz session, encouraging active participation and knowledge sharing among the attendees. Students also demonstrated their creativity through captivating poster presentations and a thought-provoking play titled "The Pandemic Era," shedding light on societal challenges during global health crises.

The event also celebrated excellence in public health, with SoPAHS director Sunil Kumar Jha, being honoured with the "Six Sigma Excellence Award 2024" for his outstanding contributions to capacity building and skill enhancement in healthcare sector.

STAR EXPLOSION PRODUCED BRIGHTEST GAMMA-RAY EVER

The brightest gamma-ray burst (GRB) ever recorded by scientists, in October 2022, was the result of a collapse and subsequent explosion of a massive star, or supernova, revealed a new study Friday.

The burst known as GRB 221009A, dubbed the BOAT ("brightest of all time"), is the largest explosion since the Big Bang.

It was found to occur once in every 10,000 years and was 70 times brighter than any yet seen.

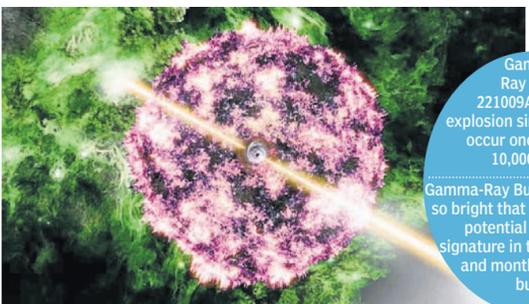
The supernova was discovered using the powerful next-generation James Webb Space Telescope (JWST), said researchers from Northwestern

University in the US, who were also among the international group of scientists to discover BOAT.

In the research, published in the journal Nature Astronomy, the team speculated that evidence of heavy elements, such as platinum and gold, might reside within the newly uncovered supernova.

The team's extensive search did not find evidence of these elements, yet they noted that the origin of heavy elements in the universe continues to remain one of astronomy's biggest open questions.

"When we confirmed that the GRB was generated by the col-



lapse of a massive star, that gave us the opportunity to test a hypothesis for how some of the heaviest elements in the uni-

verse are formed," said lead author Peter Blanchard, a post-doctoral fellow at Northwestern's Center for Interdisciplinary

Exploration and Research in Astrophysics (CIERA).

"We did not see signatures of these heavy elements, suggesting that extremely energetic GRBs like the BOAT do not produce these elements. That doesn't mean that all GRBs do not produce them, but its a key piece of information as we continue to understand where these heavy elements come from. Future observations with JWST will determine if the BOAT's 'normal' cousins produce these elements," he added.

Blanchard started his research, about six months after the GRB was initially detected.

It is because GRB was so bright that it obscured any potential supernova signature in the first weeks and months after the burst, he said.

Using the JWST's Near Infrared Spectrograph, he observed the object's light at infrared wavelengths and found the characteristic signature of elements like calcium and oxygen typically found within a supernova.

"Surprisingly, it wasn't exceptionally bright, like the incredibly bright GRB that it accompanied," he said.

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Sundargarh towns face drinking water shortage

Residents angry due to delay in completion of water supply projects



POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, April 12: Residents of Bonai, Lahunipara and other localities in Sundargarh district have always suffered due to lack of supply of drinking water. Currently they are very peeved at the tardy manner in which work is going on for construction of various drinking water projects by the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (RWSS) department. The RWSS department had earlier stated that a water supply system will be built which will ease the crisis in the entire Bonai Assembly constituency. However, it is yet to materialise. Bonai suffers from perennial crisis as

the groundwater level is shrinking rapidly.

However, residents of the constituency have no idea when the project will be completed. This is because of the absence of information regarding the project. There is no timeline providing information regarding the beginning and ending of the project, the cost involved and when water supply will start.

The RWSS department also began construction of projects at various places including Jhumbiband, Lahunipara, Lathikata, Bonaigarh and Kuanrunda under Biramitrapur municipality. However, no one knows when they will be operational. A

drinking water project is being constructed at Jhumbiband just adjacent to the Brahmani river. Huge water tanks are visible at the site, but those have remained dry since 'time immemorial', some residents said sarcastically.

It should also be pointed here that all the projects are being handled by a single company. This has raised doubts as to whether it has the ability to handle so many projects simultaneously. "May be, this is the main reason for the delay in completion," opined some residents. They added that despite seeking information from officials of the RWSS department regarding the projects they have not got any satisfactory answers.

Even though top officials of the RWSS were unavailable, a junior engineer pointed out that the projects were delayed due to some 'internal issues'. "Those have been sorted and work on projects will pick up pace soon," he said.



MATTER OF FAITH: Devotees perform rituals during Chadak Mela at Chandaneswar temple in Bhograi area of Balasore district, Friday

OP PHOTO

Bengal woman devotee dies at Balasore temple

POST NEWS NETWORK

Balasore, April 12: A woman devotee died while offering puja at the Chandaneswar temple at Bhograi in this district on the occasion of 'Chadak Mela' (fair), officials informed Friday. The deceased has been identified as Tulsu Mirzha of Gomariyapal village under Kharagpur police limits in East Medinipur district of West Bengal.

According to information available, thousands had gathered in front of the temple since early morning to offer puja to Lord Shiva. The line in front of the temple was moving forward at a tedious pace. Tulsu, while offering puja suddenly collapsed. Other devotees and temple staff brought her out and rushed her to a medical camp. She however, breathed her last while doctors were attending to her. Doctors later said that she must have suffered a heart attack leading to her death. Police have registered a case of unnatural death and sent the body for post-mortem after which her body will be sent to her native place, officials said.

Tulsu is not the only person to have fallen ill on the day. Another youth became unconscious while standing in the queue in front of the temple. However, he recovered after being treated promptly by the doctors at the medical camp.

Devotees have been thronging the Chandaneswar temple in this district for the 'Chadak Mela' which started approximately a month back. Daily thousands are visiting the temple to offer puja. Officials informed that the annual fair started more than 200 years ago.



Mystery shrouds deaths of 2 youths

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sundargarh/Banki, April 12: The body of a youth who had been missing from his home since Thursday afternoon was found Friday near the railway tracks near Bimalagarh railway station under K Balang police limits in this district. There were several injury marks on the body of the youth, including some on his head and neck. The deceased has been identified as Suraj Mahakud of Gouduniposh village in this district.

Officials said that personnel of the Government Railway Police (GRP) discovered Suraj's body lying besides the track during a routine patrolling duty. They sent the body for post-mortem and also informed the K Balang police station.

Police have registered a case



of unnatural death and have initiated a probe into the mysterious death of Suraj. Police are also searching for the mobile of the deceased youth as they believe it can help in investigation.

Meanwhile the family mem-

bers of the deceased alleged foul play and said that Suraj has been murdered. They informed that he did not have past enmity with anyone.

In a similar incident, police found the blood-stained body of a youth inside a club house at Harirajpur village under Banki police limits in Cuttack district. Locals after finding a sword laced with blood outside the club building informed the police. Cops broke open the door of the club and found the body of the deceased, identified as Sital Sahu, a resident of the same village.

Police have seized the sword, a mobile phone and slippers from the spot and sent the body for post-mortem. Meanwhile the family of the deceased alleged that Sital had been murdered and have lodged an FIR at the Banki police station.

Former sarpanch jailed for embezzling MGNREGS funds

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, April 12: Special Vigilance Judge Dr Arun Kumar Sahu Friday sentenced a former sarpanch to two years in prison after convicting him in a government fund embezzlement case. In addition, the judge also imposed a penalty of ₹5,000 on him. In case of default, the convict has to undergo three more months of rigorous imprisonment, the judge said.

The accused sarpanch has been identified as D Rama Rao (49) of Kidigaon panchayat under Kashinagar block of Gajapati district. During the trial of the case, another main accused, the gramsevak and executive officer of the panchayat, Adikand Raita, died. So he was dropped from the case.



POST NEWS NETWORK

In the 2006-07 financial year, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Guarantee Employment Scheme (MGNREGS) sanctioned funds for road construction and other works in the panchayat. A complaint was lodged with the Vigilance that the funds were embezzled in Kidigaon panchayat. A Vigilance team investigated the incident. During the investigation, the duo could not give the account of ₹1.41 lakh. It was found that the pan-

chayat had submitted a false bill of ₹59,023 for Sukarnpeta-Bairiguda road works. Similarly, it was found that another false bill worth ₹48,295 was given for Venkatpur-Apalanaidupeta road work. It was written in the cash-book that he had paid off the debt worth ₹10,000, the details of which were not found.

On the other hand, it was also found that a false bill of ₹13,973 was submitted for the purchase of rice. All these irregularities took place between August 15, 2009 and November 2, 2009. Berhampur Vigilance had filed a case (No-54/11) in this regard December 3, 2011. Statements of 12 witnesses were recorded during the trial of the case. Special Public Prosecutor Surendra Panda was advocating the case on behalf of the government.

Elderly man falls into abandoned well, dies

POST NEWS NETWORK

Champua, April 12: In a tragic incident, an old man here died after he fell into an abandoned well at Kalikaprasad village under this police limits in Keonjhar district Thursday. The body was found floating in the well Friday morning, police said. The deceased was identified as Gourishankar Rout, a resident of the same village.

According to sources, Gourishankar, after finishing his lunch, left home around 3.00pm Thursday. When he did not return home late into the night, his family members started searching for him frantically. However, they were unable to find him.

Other residents of the village spotted Gourishankar's body floating in the well Friday morning. They informed his family mem-



bers and as well as the fire brigade. A fire brigade team arrived at the village shortly afterwards and brought out Gourishankar's body from the well.

After being informed, personnel from the Champua police station reached the spot and sent Gourishankar's body for post-mortem. A case of unnatural death

was registered on a complaint lodged by Suprakash Rout, son of the deceased. After registering a case (No-13/24), police have initiated a probe into the incident. They are talking to villagers to find out how Gourishankar fell into the abandoned well. As of now, police have ruled out foul play and suspect it to be a case of an accident.

DDU ladies' hostel inmates protest over water shortage

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, April 12: Facing acute water shortage continuously, residents of the Ananya Ladies' Hostel under Dharanidhar University (DDU) here organised a sit-in protest in front of the gate. They demonstrated against the varsity administration for its failure to provide water by holding empty buckets and bottles. The students said that despite lodging complaints about the crisis, no remedial measures have been taken by the university authorities.

"There has been an acute shortage of water (both drinking and other purposes) for a long time in the hostel. Despite repeated complaints, nothing has been done. Till the issue is resolved,



we will continue our protests," said a protesting inmate.

Officer on Special Duty (OSD)-cum-Vice-Chancellor of DDU, Pratap Kumar Mohanty along with Registrar Narendra Kumar Sahu and other officials visited the hostel in an attempt to pacify the boarders. The inmates however, were adamant. They pointed out that they have to walk more than a kilometre to get drinking water.

The students however, called

off the strike when the OSD assured them that the water crisis will be resolved on a war-footing. He also promised that till the crisis is solved, water will be supplied to the hostel through tankers. To ease the problems of the inmates, Mohanty immediately contacted a drinking water supply company and asked it to send a tanker.

Sahu meanwhile blamed district administration for the shortage in water supply.

Non-functional FASTag holds up LAccMI bus at Keonjhar

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, April 12: The Odisha government launched the LAccMI (Location Accessible Multimodal Initiative) bus scheme to provide easy and affordable transportation to people from all strata of society. However, a bus operating under the scheme got stuck at the Banajodi toll gate under Sadar block on NH-20 for more than three hours Friday. The reason for which the vehicle remained stranded was peculiar indeed; the FASTag of the bus failed to pay the fare required at the toll gate.

The bus (OD 09 AB 1066) was travelling from this town with stops at villages under Palashapanga, and Raikala panchayats before terminating at Handibhanga panchayat. Students belonging to different schools, teachers, job holders of various other professions were



travelling in the bus. The bus got stranded at around 6.00am in the morning at the toll gate. The driver repeatedly tried to contact higher-ups over the mobile, but there was no response.

There were many persons who got tired of waiting and disembarked the vehicle. They availed of other means of transport to

reach their respective destinations and in the process had to shell out excess amount of money. Those who continued to wait finally breathed a sigh of relief when the problem was solved and the bus resumed its journey after approximately three hours.

Sources here pointed out that

63 LAccMI buses are plying through various panchayats and villages in this district. However, no proper timetable has been issued regarding the services. As a result, many people are not being able to avail the benefits LAccMI bus services offer, the sources added. "If people were aware of the bus timings in various panchayats, they would have benefitted," locals pointed out. "OSRTC and RTO should take necessary steps to publish a proper timetable so that passengers can conveniently travel," they added.

Gourav Jena, district transport manager, OSRTC Keonjhar, blamed server problem as the main reason for which the bus got stranded. "Many times due to server problems, the necessary amounts from the fast tags are not deducted at various toll gates. We will take appropriate steps to ensure that the problem is solved," he said.

FOCUS POLITICS

CAMBODIA'S NEW STRONGMAN



Since taking office, Prime Minister Hun Manet has strengthened the stranglehold on independent media that his father initiated by surveilling journalists and threatening to close outlets that criticise the regime

The large influx of Chinese money and manpower into Cambodia also threatens to stoke tensions with Vietnam. Hun Manet's government dances to all tunes. He congratulated Putin on his 'landslide' re-election, and he has finalised plans for the controversial, Chinese-financed Funan Techo canal, which would allow Cambodia to bypass Vietnam for its international trade and thus reduce its reliance on its neighbour.

Meanwhile, Hun has attempted to curry favour with the international community. In a speech at the most recent UN General Assembly, he claimed that Cambodia's "democratic building process has steadily advanced." So far, the West has given Hun the benefit of the doubt. But the US and European policymakers must wake up. For all their talk of countering a rising China, their passive acceptance of the Cambodian Prime Minister has given his government carte blanche to bulldoze what remains of the country's fledgling democracy while allowing China to expand its reach in Southeast Asia.

The US government, in particular, has numerous tools – including the Cambodia Democracy Act, the Global Magnitsky Act, and, if it passes, the proposed Transnational Repression Policy Act – that it could use to apply pressure on Hun's regime and hold it accountable for its abuses. These targeted sanctions should be coordinated with countries with similar legislation. American officials can and should bring the Hun family dynasty to heel by imposing sanctions on those who are undermining democracy and engaging in corruption. Stability in the region depends on it.

The writer is former Cambodian politician and Nobel Peace Prize nominee.
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ahead of Hun Manet's accession in August 2023. In addition to selecting Hun family loyalists as parliamentary candidates, the regime barred the opposition Candlelight Party from contesting last year's elections and viciously attacked its members. The government thus continued its systematic repression of the political opposition: those who stay in the country are routinely jailed, often on trumped-up technicalities and accusations of fraud, while those living abroad have been sentenced in absentia to decades of imprisonment.

Since taking office, Hun Manet has strengthened the stranglehold on independent media that his father initiated by surveilling journalists and threatening to close outlets that criticize the regime. Most worryingly, he has continued to court China, meeting with Xi in September. This suggests that his government, with the support of a powerful ally, will clamp down harder on democratic rights. The deployment of mass surveillance in major cities, including Phnom Penh, and internet shutdowns further underscore Hun Manet's determination to maintain control.

Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia, Hun Sen refused to cede power, even though the CPP finished second, and became one of two Prime Ministers under a power-sharing agreement. In a violent coup in 1997, Hun Sen deposed his co-Prime Minister and eliminated others who posed a threat to his rule. He went on to reintegrate hundreds of Khmer Rouge soldiers into Cambodian society, with many swapping their guerrilla garb for military uniforms as part of his 'win-win' strategy.

Under the pretext of maintaining stability, Hun Sen's government jailed and killed opposition activists, journalists, and trade unionists, while aligning with China to extend its hold on power. Last year, Chinese President Xi Jinping personally congratulated Hun Sen on 'winning' the rigged elections. Moreover, Cambodia's constitutional monarch, Norodom Sihamoni, refused to defy Hun Sen. The king often strategically absents himself from the country to avoid signing controversial legislation, allowing the president of the Senate to sign on his behalf.

The family dynasty and its supporters left nothing to chance

Although 2024 is being heralded as a banner year for elections, with dozens of countries – representing more than half the global population – holding polls, for some it marks the nadir of democracy. Cambodia is one such case.

Last July, after nearly 40 years in power, then Prime Minister Hun Sen announced that he would transfer power to his eldest son, Hun Manet. The hereditary succession was preceded by national elections that Hun Sen's ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) claimed to have won by a landslide; but the United States declared the vote as "neither free nor fair," while European Union officials said it was "conducted in a restricted political and civic space." Since then, however, the international community has more or less accepted Cambodia's dynastic autocracy.

Like his father before him, Hun Manet has sought to assert control over Cambodians by interfering in their daily lives. In March, for example, the new Prime Minister banned musical vehicle horns, which, as videos on social media have shown, encourage people to dance on the streets. Authorities fear that such public displays of joy could cause civil unrest.

Cambodians have suffered under iron-fisted rule for decades, a trajectory that began with Hun Sen's ascent to power in 1985. After serving as a middle-ranking officer in the Khmer Rouge, he defected to Vietnam, which installed a new government after invading Cambodia in 1979. First as foreign minister, and then as Prime Minister, Hun Sen worked to strengthen his grip on a country exhausted by war and decimated by the Khmer Rouge's genocidal rule, which murdered up to two million people.

When the first democratic elections were held in May 1993, under the watch of the United



Mu Sochua

AMERICAN OFFICIALS CAN AND SHOULD BRING THE HUN FAMILY DYNASTY TO HEEL BY IMPOSING SANCTIONS ON THOSE WHO ARE UNDERMINING DEMOCRACY AND ENGAGING IN CORRUPTION

Land Deal Drama

A buzz-worthy land deal in Haryana, featuring a senior female IAS officer, her spouse (who happens to be the state information commissioner) and a former additional chief secretary has hit a snag due to some red flags raised by Panchkula revenue officials.

It began in September last year when Ambala Divisional Commissioner Renu Phulia made a swift quasi-judicial decision to lift a decades-old injunction on the sale and purchase of a 14-acre land parcel near Panchkula, originally owned by a royal family. This decision, prompted by a petition from the brother of former additional chief secretary Shashi Gulati, was surprisingly expedited within a mere 16 days.

Shortly after this decision, Renu's husband, SS Phulia, the current state information commissioner and a former IAS officer, expressed keen interest in acquiring five acres of this prime land. According to official records, Shashi Gulati got hold of this land parcel, but here's the catch: some areas in Panchkula have been under a 20-year freeze on land transactions as the authorities grapple with determining surplus land under the Haryana Ceiling on Land Holdings Act.

The Punjab and Haryana High Court's directive in February 2023 added fuel to the fire, compelling Panchkula's SDM to reevaluate surplus lands, leading to a series of procedural actions.

In their plea to the Ambala Commissioner, Shashi Gulati's family argued to scrap the stay order, insisting the land didn't fall under surplus criteria. Renu Phulia's decision to overturn the stay order came through a quasi-judicial order in September 2023. She asserted that the land in question fell within permissible areas, further stressing that all necessary government permissions were secured for the purchase. But the controversy refuses to die down.

IPS officer repatriated amid allegations and investigations

An airport drama in Guwahati, complete with allegations, investigations and an IPS officer sent packing! Quite a spicy saga unfolded as a senior IPS officer was swiftly repatriated to his parent Uttar Pradesh cadre, with the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) giving him the boot. No reasons given, of course, but just a mysterious shuffle back to where it all began. The snap strike by Vistara Air pilots may have overshadowed this 'crisis'. Still, some tidbits are slowly emerging about what happened, which the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and the Home Ministry were tight-lipped about.

From what is now known, the Guwahati airport police chief complained to the state police claiming that a senior officer of CRPF in the Northeast Zone had harassed a female employee at the Guwahati airport. Sensing a potential scandal, a female police officer quickly conducted a preliminary investigation. It was discovered that the officer made not-so-subtle advances to the unwilling recipient. However, what saved the cop was that the lady in question decided not to pursue the matter further. A heart-felt apology was all it took to smooth things over. No case was registered.

While that matter has been hopefully settled, the officer found himself packing his bags and bidding farewell to his temporary posting. What'll happen to him now, the Home Ministry will likely decide. For now, he'll cool his heels (and romantic ardour) in his home state.



BABUDOM BYTES
Dilip Cherian

AP High Court aims at healthcare fund irregularities

The recent buzz around the alleged irregularities in setting up the AP MedTech Zone at Visakhapatnam and the mishandling of funds from the National Health Mission has set tongues wagging in Andhra Pradesh in the middle of poll fever. Further, the Andhra Pradesh High Court has served notices to several key officials, including Special Chief Secretary Poonam Malakondiah and AP MedTech Zone CEO Jitender Kumar Sharma.

The allegations swirling around the AP MedTech Zone have raised questions about accountability and oversight in the allocation and utilisation of public funds earmarked for crucial health initiatives. And, in poll season, the issue is likely to pose a problem for the state chief minister, YS Jagan Mohan Reddy who is fighting anti-incumbency.

The decision by the High Court to call for counter-affidavits within three weeks demonstrates a commitment to expeditiously address these concerns and ensure accountability. The state government is hoping that the issue will blow over quickly without causing serious damage to its reputation while its opponents would be happy to have it drag on. While this legal saga will occupy the time of the concerned officers, hopefully it will provide some much-needed answers to the people in the state.

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

WISDOM CORNER

- You will never do anything in this world without courage. It is the greatest quality of the mind next to honor. **ARISTOTLE**
- We all want to be famous people, and the moment we want to be something we are no longer free. **JIDDU KRISHNAMURTI**
- The whole problem with the world is that fools and fanatics are always so certain of themselves, and wiser people so full of doubts. **BERTRAND RUSSELL**

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1598:** King Henry IV of France promulgated the Edict of Nantes in Brittany, granting a large measure of religious liberty to his Protestant subjects, the Huguenots.
- 1640:** Charles I, king of Great Britain and Ireland, convened the Short Parliament, the first to be summoned in 11 years.
- 1870:** The Metropolitan Museum of Art was founded in New York City, and it became one of the leading art museums in the world.
- 1963:** Russian chess master Garry Kasparov, who became the world chess champion in 1985, was born.
- 1997:** Tiger Woods won the Masters Tournament, becoming the first golfer of African American descent and the youngest player to place first in the event.

LOL The very bad accident

Two men got out of their cars after they collided at an intersection. One took a flask from his pocket and said to the other, "Here, maybe you'd like a nip to calm your nerves." "Thanks," he said, and took a long



pull from the container. "Here, you have one, too," he added, handing back the whiskey. "Well, I'd rather not," said the first. "At least not until after the police have been here."

SPECTRUM UNEMPLOYMENT

Creation and quality of jobs vital

Providing jobs is indeed a big change for a populous country like India with a huge number entering the labour force every year. Moreover, with improvement in education, not just general education but technical too, there is an abundance of job seekers in the country.

The "India Employment Report 2024: Youth education, employment and skills" by the Institute for Human Development (IHD) and International Labour Organisation (ILO), recently released presents extremely concerning facts on India's labour market over the last decade. Each year, around 70-80 lakh youths are added to the labour force but between 2012 and 2019, there was almost zero growth in employment – just 0.01 per cent.

The report examines the challenge of youth employment in the context of the emerging economic, labour market, educational, and skills scenarios in India and changes over the past two decades and is primarily based on analysis of data from the National Sample Surveys and the Periodic Labour Force Surveys. It found that 60 per cent of casual workers across the nation find themselves denied the minimum wage they are entitled to.

Labour economist Ravi Srivastava, one of the key figures behind the report, highlighted the systemic exploitation faced by unskilled workers contracted through intermediary entities. These workers often find themselves short-changed as contractors siphon off a portion of their earnings, leaving them deprived of even the basic minimum wage.

Highlighting the scarcity of quality job creation in higher productivity manufacturing and services post 2019, the report found that though there was a notable shift in employment from low-productivity agriculture to relatively high productivity non-agricultural sectors, the first two decades of this millennium, the momentum slowed and ultimately reversed between 2019 and 2022.

As rightly pointed out by Srivastava and several other experts better quality jobs are concentrated among youths with a high level of education. It may also be pertinent to mention here that this education, which is mostly imparted from very well-known private institutions, are very costly and beyond the means of a major section of middle-income groups not to speak of the low-income segments. Thus, qual-

ity employment has been concentrated among the rich class who can afford high quality education to their children.

The problem of underemployment is also related to MGN-REGS programme, which is only for 100 days a year but poor allocation by the Centre can provide employment for not more than 50 days.

Experts have rightly pointed out that the minimum the government can do is to increase the allocation for the above programme and also start a similar programme for the urban sector.

In this connection, it may be pertinent to refer to a stark reality that found millions of women work in Indian households out of which over 67 per cent have been employed without written contracts, while 77 per cent face violence and 85 per cent have no social security, leading to a web of exploitative conditions that is masked by informality. The official figures, a cruel mockery of reality, thus miss up to 45 million workers. This vast discrepancy, reflecting the informal nature of the work, hinders efforts to monitor violations and enforce legal protections. Government initiatives, such as the e-Shram portal for in-

formal workers, have failed to make any headway.

According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey, over 80 per cent of these women journey from rural areas seeking better economic prospects. Around 70 per cent of these women fall in their prime working years and yet find themselves stuck in a low wage informal sector. It is debatable whether India's economic progress can stand on the broken backs and the bruised spirits of these women.

The situation is thus quite challenging, and the government is silent on how it envisages creation of employment opportunities. Technology-driven manufacturing with artificial intelligence expected to play a crucial role in the coming years obviously goes against employment creation and is indeed a crucial problem for a populous country like India with a huge workforce. It is imperative that with educational levels increasing the government just cannot ignore this vital sector and must come out with an effective plan of action. But before all this, recruitment in the government – both at the Centre and in the states – needs to be given top priority. **INFA**



Dhurjati Mukherjee

QUALITY EMPLOYMENT HAS BEEN CONCENTRATED AMONG THE RICH CLASS WHO CAN AFFORD HIGH QUALITY EDUCATION TO THEIR CHILDREN

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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Setting wrong precedence

Sir, While three of the close associates of Nainar Nagendran, the BJP contestant for the Tirumelveli MP seat, have been caught red-handed by the flying squad with Rs 4 crores in cash in the Tirumelveli bound train, and they seem to have confessed that the money was meant for distribution in Nainar Nagendran's Tirumelveli constituency, it is unfortunate that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is going to visit Tirumelveli April 15 to canvass votes for Nainar Nagendran. In all fairness, the EC should have by now debarred Nainar Nagendran from contesting the election. Despite being fully aware of the entire shoddy episode involving Nainar, Prime Minister Modi has preferred to canvass votes for the tainted contestant. Will it not send a very bad signal to all the other contestants of the BJP that they can also indulge in such nefarious activities and no action will be taken against them?

Tharcus S Fernando, CHENNAI

Demonstration unit

Sir, In view of the growing demand for eco-friendly houses, there is a need to establish a demonstration unit. In this context, if devices like rooftop solar plant systems, bio-gas plant systems, rainwater harvesting, and composting can be demonstrated in working conditions at one place, then users can get a preliminary idea before installation, and eco-friendly habits will increase significantly. Arrangements may be made to provide development training in repairing and maintaining equipment through appropriate agencies in this unit. Based on this, a few startups may come.

Nabnit Panigrahi, RAYAGADA

Big blow to Cong

Sir, The decks have been cleared for the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to take possession of assets worth Rs.751.90 crore belonging to the Congress-owned Associated Journal Ltd (AJL) and Young India. The PMLA Adjudicating Authority gave the green light to attach AJL's assets last year as part of a money laundering investigation. ED questioned multiple people, including Sonia and Rahul Gandhi, who own 76% of shares in Young India. Young India is the holding company of AJL, which publishes the National Herald newspaper. The development is a colossal blow to the 'Grand Old Party.'

NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE

Bangalore beware: Summer of 2024 is just a sneak peek



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, April 12: Bangalore's summer of 2024 is just a sneak peek into the future, if you go by what the experts predict.

The city, which lost its green cover by 66 per cent, water bodies by 74 per cent, and witnessed a growth of 584 per cent in built-up area - as per Centre for Ecological Sciences (CES) of Indian Institute of Science - buckled under the El Nino's assault this summer.

Things will get worse if the trend continues: By 2038, CES predicts that forests will be reduced to 0.65 per cent (as per last census in 2022, it is 3.32 per cent). Bangalore city will be choked with paved surfaces (more than 98 per cent) and 69.90 per cent (from 55.71 per cent in 2022) in Bangalore Urban will be paved areas by 2038, said a study by the CES.

"The increase in paved surfaces and reduction in green spaces have contributed to the urban heat island effect in Bangalore. For instance, it increased land surface temperature (LST) from 33.04 degree Celsius (1992) to 41.4 degree Celsius (2017) from March to May," said professor T V Ramachandra, coordinator of energy and wetlands research group at CES.

According to him, decline in

heat sinks (water bodies and green cover) has a negative impact on the local microclimate, evident from the reduced cooling effect and increase in land surface temperature. "The urban heat island effect would enhance the ambient temperature and humidity levels, resulting in heat stress and heat-related illnesses," added Ramachandra.

Bangalore's famed "mild weather" is not just nature's gift but also the prescience of its early settlers, who understood the pulse of nature, said Harini Nagendra, professor of ecology at Azim Premji University.

Nagendra's book, 'Nature in the City: Bangalore in the Past, Present and Future' compares the past and the present of the IT hub to give solutions to its future.

The inscription stones left behind by early settlers, said Nagendra, tell us that they had a 'three-dimensional sense' of the landscape. "For instance, when constructing a new lake, the 'plan' would include the wells below and the trees above," Nagendra told PTI.

So along with water bodies - the reason why Bangalore used to be riddled with lakes, like Swiss cheese with holes - the early settlers also put in place what is called 'gundathope', said

Nagendra. "Gundathopes are orchards or wood lots. Locals say rulers Hyder Ali and Tippu Sultan started the trend, which was later adopted by the British. Around every village there were three to four of these gundathopes where people would plant trees - they could be jackfruit or mango or other shade trees. They became gathering places for people. They were also ecological cool, offsetting the heat effects."

"The open wells and lakes that were part of these gundathopes provided water to people, especially during summer because Bangalore has always been this unusual semi-arid city which doesn't get a lot of rainfalls that it needed to harvest every drop of water that it gets," added Nagendra.

Science only proved what our ancestors already knew.

Way back in 2011, Shrinidhi Ambinakudige, a professor in the department of geosciences at Mississippi State University, used temperature values extracted from the Landsat satellite's Enhanced Thematic Mapper Plus thermal bands and a 'normalised difference vegetation index', to ascertain the relationship between vegetation cover and temperature in Bangalore.

He concluded that where the green cover is significant, like the city core, there is significantly lower mean temperature.

Nagendra also said the research done by her team in different parts of Bangalore has shown the relation between trees and air temperature.

"We found that trees reduce suspended particulate matter and soot in the air. But very importantly, they also cool the city. This is critical as we have lost wetlands and lakes to concrete. Concrete absorbs heat during the day and retains it at night. So, the next day is even hotter as the heat has not been released back to the atmosphere," said Nagendra.

UP district launches 'Har Ghar Sakora Abhiyan'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow/Gonda, April 12: The Gonda district administration in Uttar Pradesh has launched a unique initiative, linking elections with a bird welfare programme.

The district administration has launched the 'Har Ghar Sakora Campaign' on the occasion of National Pet Day April 11. As part of this campaign, clay pots adorned with voter awareness slogans are being installed throughout the city.

These slogans, inscribed on Sakoras (water bowls), not only aim to inspire voters to participate in the election but also serve to provide nourishment and hydration to birds.

The district administration is striving to engage both birds and voters, by installing an increasing number of Sakoras

The district administration has launched the 'Har Ghar Sakora Campaign' on the occasion of National Pet Day April 11

As part of this campaign, clay pots adorned with voter awareness slogans are being installed throughout the city

These slogans, inscribed on Sakoras (water bowls), not only aim to inspire voters to participate in the election but also serve to provide nourishment and hydration to birds



in urban and rural areas. District Magistrate Neha Sharma said that in urban areas, traditional earthen pots (Sakora) adorned with voter awareness

messages are being installed on trees. These Sakoras are designed to attract sparrows, parrots, cuckoos, munias, and other birds, providing them with water

and grains to alleviate their hunger and thirst during the summer.

Additionally, the slogans written on these pots aim to raise voter awareness.

This initiative is poised to create a significant impact on the history of voter awareness in Gonda. Neha Sharma further highlighted that this programme is aligned with the Systematic Voter Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) programme of the Election Commission.

This initiative serves to encourage the efforts of potters and local artists engaged in crafting clay toys. Sharma has instructed all department officers to place "Sakoras" around their offices and homes to display voter awareness slogans. This initiative aims to increase voter turnout in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls.

NLSIU gets JSW grant, aims to expand student intake by nearly 350 pc

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, April 12: The National Law School of India University Friday announced a grant from the JSW Group for a comprehensive redevelopment and expansion of its core academic block and precinct, as well as the establishment of the 'JSW Centre on the Future of Law'.

This grant will support the redevelopment of the new academic block (NAB), located in the southern part of the NLSIU campus at Nagarabhavi, Bangalore, a joint statement said.

The two-storeyed NAB was originally built in 2014 and accommodates lecture theatres, seminar rooms, office spaces and meeting rooms.

The JSW grant will help add four floors and redevelop the available two floors to provide flexible and technologically advanced learning and office spaces, along with collaborative research spaces for faculty, students, and researchers, it said.

The grant will also support a new research centre on campus: 'JSW Centre for the Future of Law'.

"This centre will anchor academic and policy research and curricular interventions that explore the effects of new technologies on the future of the legal system, the legal profession and legal education," the statement said. "This generous grant, the largest in the university's history, enables the successful implementation of the next phase of the NLSIU Inclusion and Expansion Plan 2021-25. Under this strategic plan, the university aims to expand student intake by nearly 350 per cent to facilitate greater opportunity for all while creating a socially inclusive student body," said NLSIU Vice Chancellor, Prof Sudhir Krishnaswamy.

Ex-K'taka Dy CM Eshwarappa at 'crossroads'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bangalore, April 12: Senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader KS Eshwarappa is one of the frontline members of the party in Karnataka and has played a key role along with former Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa in making the BJP a force to reckon with in the state.

The 76-year-old leader is the face of OBCs and the Kuruba community. The man who is regarded as one of the key leaders who built the BJP from scratch in Karnataka is today at 'crossroads', having vowed to defeat the candidate of his own party from the Shivamogga Lok Sabha constituency in the

upcoming Lok Sabha polls, in a strange turn of events.

Eshwarappa has announced that he will file his nomination Friday as an Independent candidate. He also asserted he would win the seat and "dedicate his victory on the feet of Prime Minister Narendra Modi". This decision has surprised everyone. Initially, everyone assumed that Eshwarappa would mellow down after the party high command spoke to him. However, his resolve to contest against the BJP candidate has become a major concern. The senior BJP leader would be contesting from Shivamogga as an Independent candidate against BJP candidate BY Raghavendra - the son



of Yediyurappa.

Eshwarappa wanted a BJP ticket from the Haveri Lok Sabha constituency for his son, KE Kanthesh. However, the party fielded former Karnataka CM Basavaraj Bommai from the Haveri seat - a development that made Eshwarappa upset, with the ex-Deputy CM eventually deciding to contest against

Yediyurappa's son in the Shivamogga Lok Sabha constituency.

Eshwarappa expressed his outrage against Yediyurappa for not ensuring a ticket for his son Kanthesh for the Haveri LS seat.

Following the incidents of the brutal murder of Bajrang Dal activist Harsha in Shivamogga and the suicide of a contractor Santhosh Patil, Eshwarappa was denied the ticket to contest Assembly election from Shivamogga seat, which he represented for five terms.

The "love-hate equation" between former Karnataka CM BS Yediyurappa and Eshwarappa is well known in Karnataka political circles.

No show-cause notice can be given to retired employees: High Court



While quashing the proceedings against the retired employee, Justice Neeraj Tiwari held that "in lack of provisions in rules and regulations, after retirement, no show-cause notice or departmental proceeding can be initiated against any employee"

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Prayagraj, April 12: The Allahabad High Court has held that in the absence of any rule or regulation in Uttar Pradesh Cooperative Society Employees Service Regulation, 1975 and Uttar Pradesh Rajya Sahkari Bhumi Vikas Bank Employees Service Rules, 1976, neither a show-cause notice can be issued nor departmental proceedings can be initiated against an employee after his retirement.

While quashing the proceedings against the retired employee, Justice Neeraj Tiwari held that "in lack of provisions in rules and regulations, after retirement, no show cause notice or departmental proceeding can be initiated against any employee." The Court further held that once the show cause notice has been issued and no action has been taken by the authorities for a long-time, a fresh show

cause notice for the same cause of action cannot be issued at very belated stage.

The petitioner was working as an Assistant Field Officer in Uttar Pradesh Sahkari Gram Vikas Bank Ltd. at Bhogaon Branch, Mainpuri till his superannuation in 2013.

A show-cause notice was issued to the petitioner in 2014 regarding recovery of Rs 2,74,380/- from him. In his reply, the petitioner stated that there was no provision under the 1976 Rules to issue a show cause notice after his retirement. No order was passed on his reply. Petitioner replied specifically stating that the Rules of 1976 did not provide for issuance of show cause notice to him after his retirement. Petitioner argued that his service was not pensionable and he was being paid gratuity retaining the amount of leave encashment and security.

In UP now, 6 yrs is minimum age for admission to Class I

Children completing six years of age April 1, 2024, will be eligible for admission to Class I, as per the instructions issued by the state government

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, April 12: On the directives of the Centre, the Uttar Pradesh government has issued instructions to all public schools mandating a minimum age of 6 years for Class I admissions.

Children completing six years of age April 1, 2024, will be eligible for admission to Class I, as per the instructions issued Wednesday by the state government.

The directives are in line with the NEP 2020 which emphasises developmental readiness and



uniformity nationwide.

Basic Education Director PS Baghel has asked all district education officers to bring back out-of-school children and carry out enrolment drives till the end of April.

The directives state that children below six years of age will be enrolled in kindergarten.

With the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009, the government has set the target of getting every child to school.

Accordingly, instructions have

been given regarding the enrolment process for students.

During enrolment, an Aadhaar number of students should be registered. In case students do not have Aadhaar, the details of parents would be used.

If the parents also do not have Aadhaar, they will have to get one within two weeks of enrolment.

The names of both the parents of the child should also be mentioned in the enrolment register. In the event of the death of both parents, the name of the legal guardian will be mentioned.

Dynastic politics rules the roost in Kalahandi

Bhawanipatna, April 12: Dynastic politics in Kalahandi district stands as a stumbling block on the path of political prosperity of the local leaders, a report said.

This has led to heated debate among the ruling party and opposition with leaders accusing each other of promoting dynasty politics. In Kalahandi, a leader's family members – father, son, wife, grandson, daughter-in-law and brother – have managed to get a foothold in politics by getting ticket.

It is alleged that family politics has deprived numerous leaders in various parties for years together of getting a ticket.

The first election in Kalahandi was held in 1952 when Giridhari Bhoi contested on a ticket from Ganatantra Parishad and remained as Kalahandi MP from 1952 to 1962. Later, Pratap Keshari Deo son of Pratap Keshari Deo family contested on the ticket of Swatantra Party and became an MP in 1962. He was a parliamentarian from 1962 to 1980.

Later, Rasha Bihari Behera was an MP from 1980 to 1984, Jagannath Patnaik from 1989 to 1991, Bhakta Charan Das from 1991 to 1996, Subhash Nayak 1996 to 1998, Bhakta Charan Das again from 1998 to 1999, Bikram Keshari Deo son of Pratap Keshari Deo of Kalahandi royal family from 1999 to 2009, Bhakta Charan Das from 2009-2014, Arka Keshari Deo son of Bikram Keshari Deo from 2014-2019 and Basanta Panda from 2019 to 2024.

Meanwhile, Kalahandi district, which witnessed over 17 Lok Sabha elections, has elected 11 MPs. Three members of the royal family – father, son and grandson



BHAKTA CHARAN DAS



MALAVIKA KESHARI DEO



PUSHPENDRA SINGHDEO



LALITA NAIK



MANOJ MEHER



SAGAR CHARAN DAS

- have been elected MPs for a period of 34 years. The sons and grandsons of remaining eight MPs have failed to taste success in the elections.

The royal family not only figures prominently in the list of winners in the Lok Sabha elections but also in Assembly polls. Pratap Keshari Deo was elected to state Assembly on a Ganatantra Parishad ticket from Junagarh Assembly constituency twice between 1951 and 1961. His elder son Udit Pratap Deo became an MLA from this constituency on a Swatantra Party ticket in 1974.

Later, in the three elections

It is alleged that family politics has deprived numerous leaders in various parties for years together of getting a ticket

held from 1985 to 2000, Pratap Keshari Deo's younger son Bikram Keshari Deo became an MLA. Another member of the royal family, Pattayat Bira Kishore Deo, was

peatedly elected to Lok Sabha and the state Assembly. Bhupinder Singh, Rasha Bihari Behera, Kiran Singh, Bir Sipka, Jagannath Patnaik, Maheswar Barad, Maheswar Naik, Trinath Saraf, Gobardhan Das and Dhaneswar Majhi like senior leaders have been repeatedly elected from their respective constituencies. However, these leaders have failed to build either their or their family members' political career, said sources.

However, former MP Bhakta Charan Das is an exception to this. Bhakta's elder brother Ajit Das was elected as an MLA from Bhawanipatna Assembly constituency on a Janata Dal ticket in 1990. Now, his son Sagar Das is struggling to build his political career while some leaders have managed to rehabilitate their family members like wife, sons and daughter-in-law in panchayat politics.

The district also sees dynastic politics in the upcoming elections as former MP Arka Keshari Deo's wife and daughter-in-law of Kalahandi royal family Malavika Keshari Deo has been fielded by BJP from the Lok Sabha seat. The Congress has fielded Bhakta Charan Das as an MLA candidate from Narla seat and his son Sagar Das from Bhawanipatna Assembly seat.

Similarly, the ruling BJD has fielded Pushpendra from Dharmagarh Assembly seat and former MLA Dushmant Nayak's wife Lalita Nayak from Bhawanipatna Assembly constituency. Similarly, Manoj Meher, the brother of former minister Himanshu Sekhar Meher, has been fielded by BJP like last time from Junagarh Assembly seat.

EVMs reach Udit Nagar



POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, April 12: Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) for the three Assembly constituencies reached Rourkela from Sundargarh Thursday and have been kept in the strong rooms here.

Like earlier elections, the machines brought in tight security of paramilitary forces reached the Udit Nagar Government High School where the strong rooms have been created.

Speaking about the arrival of EVMs, Rourkela sub-collector Bijaya Nayak said, "We have received constituency-wise EVMs last evening. They have been kept in the strong rooms created for the purpose."

Rourkela is the nodal point where EVMs for three constituencies Biramitrapur, Raghunathpali and Rourkela have been kept. He further informed that once the nominations are over, the machines will be dispatched to respective constituencies in the presence of the candidates or their representatives. The EVMs then will be arranged for booth-wise distribution. Besides, the machines

will be given on a randomisation basis in the presence of the candidates, so that transparency can be maintained.

"The randomisation of machines will be generated through computers in the presence of the candidates," said the sub-collector.

Regarding security of the machines, he said, "Two sections of armed police personnel have been deployed there to provide security for 24 hours. In addition, we have CCTVs installed at the strong rooms to further tighten the security."

Earlier, representatives of different political parties visited the strong rooms April 6. They were shown the security arrangements there. On April 8, the first randomisation of the machines was held at Sadhabana Bhawan at Sundargarh which was presided over by Collector Parag Gavali.

Representatives of different political parties were present during the arrival of the machines. Also present were returning officer and ADM Rourkela Ashutosh Kulkarni and sub-collector Bijay Nayak and other officials.



BJD leader and former Laxmipur MLA Kailash Kulesika joins BJP at the state office of the party in Bhubaneswar, Friday



Hundreds of activists from several parties joined BJD in a merger meet held at Annapurna Palace in Bargarh district Friday. Bargarh MLA Debesh Acharya and Bargarh Lok Sabha candidate Parinita Mishra were present



A press conference was called by Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) at Bargarh Pioneer Youth Association where the party announced that it will contest in all the seats in the district including Bargarh Lok Sabha for the upcoming elections

Home voting facility evokes positive response across country

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, April 12: Voters who availed home voting facility in the phase I and II of the Lok Sabha polls have expressed their gratitude towards the Election Commission of India (ECI) for extending the privilege for the elderly and Persons with Disabilities for the first time during the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Voters above 85 years of age and Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) with 40 per cent benchmark disability can avail the optional home voting facility. Voters in this category have already begun casting their votes for phase I and II of polling.

This initiative marks a significant stride towards ensuring inclusivity and accessibility of the electoral process and in bolstering democratic participation, a press note issued by the Press Information Bureau (PIB) stated.

There are over 81 lakh 85 plus aged voters and 90 lakh plus PwD voters registered across the country.

Earlier, Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar along with Election Commissioners Gyanesh Kumar and Dr Sukhbir Singh Sandhu had announced that by extending home voting facility to elders and PwDs, it is the Commission's expression of care and respect towards them.

Meanwhile, in Churu, Rajasthan eight PwD voters - all from the same family - exercised home voting facility.

In Chhattisgarh, 87-year-old Indumati Pandey and 86-year-old Sonmati Baghel, from Bastar and Sukma tribal districts, respectively, exercised



their franchise using postal ballots at home. In Maharashtra, ECI polling teams travelled 107 km to provide home voting facility to two elderly voters in Sironcha town in Gadchiroli district, a LWE affected area. BR Mishra from Jaysingh Nagar, Madhya Pradesh, after availing home voting conveyed joy and appreciation and said,



"The duty you (EC) have done is commendable. I can say that the way you have discharged your duties is extraordinary, if all of us work like this then we will make our country proud." Similar experiences were echoed in other parts of the country as well where home voting is being conducted. Another voter, Mittal, 85, said, "This is the best thing



about the elections.... I am very grateful for this." **What is home voting** The provision of home voting is aimed at empowering voters who encounter barriers to participating in the electoral process at the polling stations. Specifically, this facility is extended to two key demographic groups: persons with disabilities (PwDs) meeting the 40 per

cent benchmark disability criteria, and senior citizens aged above 85 years.

As per the procedure to avail this facility, within five days of the election notification, eligible voters must complete Form 12D and submit it to the returning officer. PwD voters submit a baseline disability certificate with their applications. Booth Level Officer (BLO) is

responsible for retrieving Form 12D from the elector's place of residence when the required documentation has been completed. Candidates receive a list of these electors in order to maintain accountability and transparency. They can choose a representative to supervise the process. Following this, a dedicated team of polling officials along with security officials visits the voter's residence to collect their votes. Crucially, voters are notified ahead of time of the planned visit, allowing them to be prepared to exercise their right to vote in a safe and comfortable manner. To further expedite the procedure and improve accessibility, voters can also receive notifications via SMS about the days when their home voting facility will be active. The complete process is videographed for transparency.

national

of the day quote

I have been with the BJP for long. We formed government in Bihar, in 2005, together. I may have gone hither and thither a couple of times. But now I am back, forever

Misa Bharti said that if their government comes to power, Modi will be sent to jail. Modi served as Gujarat chief minister for 12 years and as prime minister for 10 years without a blemish. He served the country considering it as a family. But Misa Bharti, the daughter of Lalu Yadav, is using such type of language

The exodus of leaders from the Congress continues. They are quitting the party one after another and joining the BJP

SHORT TAKES

Student found dead

Guwahati/Rangia: A second-semester student of IIT-Guwahati was found dead in his hotel room, police said Friday. Kamrup's Superintendent of Police Ranjan Bhuyan said the body was found hanging inside his room at Dihing hostel Wednesday. A suicide note was also found. "He stated in the note that no one is responsible for his death. Prima facie it does not look like any foul play is involved. However, we are continuing our investigation to find more details," he said. After post-mortem and due legal formalities, the body has been sent with his parents to his hometown Samastipur in Bihar, the SP said.

One injured

Imphal: One person was injured after a fresh gunfight broke out between armed village volunteers and unidentified gunmen near Heirok village in Manipur's Thoubal district Friday, police said. Unidentified gunmen fired towards Heirok village in the early hours of Friday prompting the village volunteers to retaliate, they said.

Student booked

Thane: A case has been registered against a 20-year-old college student in Navi Mumbai for allegedly beating up his classmate after the latter refused to help him during exams, police said Friday. A first information report (FIR) under sections 324 (voluntarily causing hurt by dangerous weapons or means), 504 (intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of the peace) and other relevant provisions of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) was registered at Nerul police station Thursday, an official said. As per the complaint, the accused sought his classmate's help during exams April 4, but the latter refused. The accused then assaulted the victim while leaving the college premises in Juinagar, he said.

Three killed

Noida: Three members of a family, including a teenager, died in a road crash while returning from a wedding function in Greater Noida Friday after their motorcycle was allegedly hit by an unidentified vehicle, police said. The fourth person, a girl, who was riding the same motorcycle has been hospitalised with injuries and is undergoing treatment, the police said. According to officials, the accident took place around 2:30 am at the Pari Chowk, under Beta 2 police station area.



The BJP government at the Centre scrapped the three 'black' farm laws after realising the strength of farmers
AKHILESH YADAV | SP PRESIDENT

MANN TO MEET KEJRIWAL

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann will meet the AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal in Tihar Jail April 15, officials said Friday. The meeting will be held in the afternoon inside the 'Mulakat Jangla' under tight security, as Mann is provided with Z+ security cover, the jail officials said



Centre will impose President rule in Delhi soon: Atishi

Reacting to the AAP leader's charge, the BJP said it was surprising that the fear of President's rule is haunting the AAP, which has 62 MLAs in the 70-member Delhi Assembly

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 12: Delhi Cabinet minister Atishi Friday alleged that a big political conspiracy is being hatched by the BJP-led central government to impose President's rule in the national capital.

"Arvind Kejriwal's arrest is a political conspiracy to topple his government. We have learnt from reliable sources that in the coming days, President's rule will be imposed in Delhi. But imposing President's rule in Delhi will be illegal and against the mandate of people," she said at a press conference here.

Reacting to the AAP leader's charge, the BJP said it was surprising that the fear of President's rule is haunting the AAP, which has 62 MLAs in the 70-member Delhi Assembly. At the press conference, Atishi claimed that in recent times, many events have taken place that indicates the possibility of the imposition of President's rule in the national capital.

In the last few months, no senior IAS officer has been posted in Delhi, she said. "Posts are lying vacant in departments but no postings have taken place. Bureaucrats have stopped at-



tending meetings called by ministers, citing the Model Code of Conduct. The lieutenant governor has been writing letters to the MHA (Ministry of Home Affairs) over the functioning of the Delhi government," she said.

Atishi further said the BJP already knows that it cannot come to power in Delhi. "The AAP defeated the BJP in the Delhi assembly elections in 2015 and 2020. That is why they want to topple the Delhi government. However, the imposition of President's rule would be illegal since the Delhi government enjoys a majority. We proved our majority through a floor test on February 17 this year," she said.

Later in the day, Atishi's cabinet colleague Saurabh Bharadwaj spoke in the same vein. "The BJP and the lieutenant governor are talking about a constitutional crisis in Delhi. This shows that there is a conspiracy to impose President's rule in Delhi. The BJP has been defeated twice in Delhi in 2015 and 2020 and it knows it cannot form the government in Delhi. Even if elec-

tions are held today, Arvind Kejriwal will win," he said.

"President's rule was imposed in Delhi throughout 2014. We had approached the Supreme Court at that time. Subsequently, elections were held and the AAP came to power in 2015." People gave them a reply for imposing President's rule. If President's rule is imposed in Delhi, the people of Delhi will again give them a reply," he said.

Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva hit out at the AAP, saying it was surprising that the fear of President's rule is haunting the AAP, even though it has a majority in the assembly. "Atishi's usual false narrative of her victimisation and the 'Operation Lotus' story were replaced by a new story early this morning. Today, she has said that President's rule is likely to be imposed in Delhi," he said.

Sachdeva also demanded the resignation of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who has been arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in a money laundering case.

Kavitha to stay in CBI custody till April 15

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 12: A Delhi court Friday sent Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) leader K Kavitha to CBI custody till April 15 in the alleged Delhi excise policy scam.

Special Judge Kaveri Baweja passed the order after hearing arguments of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) as well as Kavitha's counsel. Kavitha, 46, was arrested by the CBI in Tihar jail, where she was lodged after her arrest by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in a money laundering case linked to the alleged excise policy scam, Thursday.

The CBI, while seeking Kavitha's custody for five days, told the court that she was not cooperating in the investigation and was evasive in her replies. "During her questioning, she didn't give satisfactory replies regarding her role. Her replies were contrary to the documents recovered by the CBI during the investigation. Kavitha is concealing facts which are exclusively in her knowledge. Earlier also she did not join the investigation despite summons (being issued to her). So, we need her five days' custodial remand to unearth the conspiracy," the CBI said.

Advocate Nitesh Rana, Kavitha's counsel, opposed the CBI's plea and termed the arrest illegal. He further accused the probe agency of violating Kavitha's fundamental rights. He told the court that the CBI arrested Kavitha while an application filed by her opposing the agency's plea to interrogate her in judicial custody was already pending before the court.

While seeking Kavitha's custody, the CBI also stated that a liquor businessman of the "South Group" met Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and sought his support for business in the national capital.

Omar to contest LS poll from Baramulla

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, April 12: National Conference (NC) vice president Omar Abdullah Friday challenged the BJP to contest Lok Sabha polls in the Kashmir Valley, saying he will quit politics if the national party's candidates do not lose their security deposits.

"If the BJP was confident of its claims on 'development and normalcy', then the party should field its candidates in the three seats in the Kashmir Valley," Abdullah said at a press conference here.

At the press conference, the party announced that Abdullah would be the party's Lok Sabha candidate from Baramulla and Shia leader Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi would contest from Srinagar. When asked about the BJP's charge that the NC, PDP and Congress had done no good work in Jammu and Kashmir, Abdullah said, "I don't think I need to react. Let the people do that. If what the Prime Minister says has so much power, then let them field BJP candidates and seek votes in the name of the BJP."

"What you (BJP) did on Article 370, what you claim about development or normalcy... then field BJP candidates and see how many votes the BJP candidates would get. Your attempts to prop up A or B or C teams, leave that then. When you say

that you have done so much work and that we have done nothing in Jammu and Kashmir, then we should lose our security deposits in the elections," he said.

The NC vice president, who was flanked by his father and NC president Farooq Abdullah, and senior leaders of the party, asked why the BJP was trying so many things to defeat them. Referring to the reported meeting between BJP general secretary and in-charge J-K Tarun Chugh and Apni Party chief Altaf Bukhari here, he said, "What was the need for Tarun Chugh to bring all of these on one stage to defeat us? If we have done nothing, people will not accept us. If the people would not accept us, then why are you taking our names in your speeches regularly? In that case, why are you using your agencies against us?"

"If you have done so much, then please field BJP candidates on these three seats (in Kashmir). If they do not lose their security deposits, then I will quit politics," he added.

Asked why he chose the Baramulla seat instead of Srinagar which he has represented in Lok Sabha several times, Abdullah said the assembly segment he last represented - Beerwah - is now a part of Baramulla Lok Sabha seat after the delimitation. "So, I am technically a north Kashmir contestant," he added.

Patanjali Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj 'katha' enters 3rd day



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar: The Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj 'katha' being organised by Baba Ramdev's Patanjali Yogpeeth in Haridwar entered its third day, Thursday.

Speaking on the occasion, Acharya Balkrishna underlined that Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj not only provided political leadership to the nation but also paved the way for social, economic, religious, spiritual, cultural, and intellectual growth.

Acharya Balkrishna stated that the sacred invocation of the narratives of the flag-bearer of Indian culture and tradition, the great warrior, and guardian of culture, Chhatrapati Shivaji

Maharaj, is flowing from Patanjali University.

He said that the sacred, colossal and divinely grand institution in the form of Patanjali has been created due to the penance and efforts of Baba Ramdev. Acharya Balkrishna stated that the attributes of Chhatrapati Shivaji is mirrored in Baba Ramdev.

Acharya said some may question why Baba Ramdev finds himself in the midst of controversies. "Rather Swamiji confronts the trouble makers head on in order to save the entire nation and society," he said.

Among others present on the occasion included, NP Singh, Dr Sadhvi Devpriya, Prof. Mahavir Agrawal and other officials of Patanjali Yogpeeth.



Students of Trichy Holy Cross College release helium balloons as part of a voter awareness campaign for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, in Tiruchirappalli, Friday

Bengal's animals encouraging people to vote this election

BENGAL TIGER 'BAGHU' IS URGING THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH 24 PARGANAS DISTRICT, THE HOME TO SUNDERBANS, NOT TO MISS THEIR CHANCE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, April 12: From 'Gendū' to 'Baghu' - this election season, the animals of Bengal are encouraging people to exercise their democratic rights, besides guiding them at polling stations.

The District Elections Sections across the state are using various mascots to draw voters to the polling booths, and most of them are animals.

The Alipurduar district has come up with 'Gendū', inspired by the rhinoceros of Dooars, for the purpose. In Coochbehar district, it is 'Mohanbaō' - a turtle who guides people at the polling booths.

Bengal tiger 'Baghu' is urging the people of South 24 Parganas district, the home to Sunderbans, not to miss their chance to participate in the democratic process. In the Darjeeling



hills, a red panda is doing the job. "Bengal's rich cultural diversity is highlighted through our campaign, aiming to motivate voters to participate in the elec-

toral process," an election official said. "Instead of formal language, we are trying to reach out to voters with characters that are closer to their hearts. We be-

lieve the effect will be much more," she added.

The election mascot of Jalpaiguri district is 'Teesta', a girl named after the river which is the lifeline of the region. In the Kolkata Uttar constituency, 'Tenida' - a fictional resident of the Potoldanga area motivates first-time voters to exercise their franchise.

The 'Vote Gopal' mascot of Nadia is based on the immortal court jester Gopal Bhar of medieval Bengal. The comic strip character of 'Batul the Great' is encouraging voters of Howrah, the birthplace of his creator Narayan Debnath.

In the coastal district of Purba

Medinipur, a character based on crabs is promoting voter turnout, while in Hooghly, the Jagannath Rath of Mahesh is accompanying the Election Commission's messages for voters in hoardings and posters.

'Ghotknath', based on the famed terracotta horses of Bankura, is urging people to cast their votes, besides reminding them of the district's cultural heritage. "Such initiatives raise awareness among the people not only about elections but also about their area's heritage, culture and natural resources," said Anjana Brahma, a professor of Bengali at KK Das College in Kolkata.

international



To change our destiny is to Re-Think, Reset, Alt-De, Clean the slate, Re-Start
ARIF ALVI | FORMER PRESIDENT OF PAKISTAN

SELF-DETERMINATION LAW

German lawmakers Friday approved legislation that will make it easier for transgender, intersex and nonbinary people to change their name and gender in official records



of the day quote

A direct Iranian attack on Israeli territory will require an appropriate Israeli response against Iran
YOAV GALLANT | ISRAELI DEFENCE MINISTER

This is the most existential, consequential and important election of our lifetime
KAMALA HARRIS | VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

I will propose granting Spain's recognition to the Palestinian state. I do this out of moral conviction, for a just cause and because it is the only way that the two states, Israel and Palestine, can live together in peace
PEDRO SANCHEZ | PRIME MINISTER OF SPAIN

SHORT TAKES

Ford is under investigation

Detroit (US): The US government's auto safety agency has opened an investigation into a Ford recall for gasoline leaks from cracked fuel injectors that can cause engine fires, saying in documents that the remedy doesn't fix the leaks. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration said in documents posted on Friday that the probe will "evaluate the adequacy and safety consequences of the remedy" that Ford specifies in the recall. The agency moved with unusual speed, posting documents detailing the "recall query" just two days after the recall was made public.

No political media coverage in Mali

Bamako: In a deepening crackdown, Mali's ruling junta Thursday banned the media from reporting on activities of political parties and associations, a day after suspending all political activities in the country until further notice. The order, issued by Mali's high authority for communication, was distributed on social media. The notice said it applied to all forms of the media, including television, radio, online and print newspapers.

Dozen killed in Kenya floods

Nairobi: Heavy rains pounding different parts of Kenya led to the deaths of at least 13 people and displaced some 15,000 people, the United Nations said, as forecasters warn that more rains can be expected until June. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, citing the Kenya Red Cross Society, said nearly 20,000 people were affected, including an estimated 15,000 people displaced due to heavy rains and flash floods across the country.

Hindu temple demolished in Pak

Peshawar: A historical Hindu temple near the Pakistan-Afghanistan border has been demolished and construction for a commercial complex has started at the site in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province that was closed since 1947 when the original occupants migrated to India. The 'Khyber Temple' was situated in the border town of Landi Kotal Bazaar in the Khyber district but had been vanishing brick by brick over the years. The construction at the site started about 10-15 days ago. Officials from various administrative departments either denied they were aware of the existence of the Hindu temple or claimed the construction was happening according to the rules.

Positive progress made to resolve border row with India, says China



Beijing, April 12: China and India have made "positive progress" to resolve the border standoff, with both sides maintaining close communication through diplomatic and military channels, a senior foreign ministry official said here Friday.

Foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning's remarks were further elaboration on China's reaction to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent statement in which he said that for New Delhi, ties with Beijing are important and the "prolonged situation" at the borders should be addressed urgently. In an interview with Newsweek magazine, Prime Minister Modi expressed hope that through positive and constructive bilateral engagement at the diplomatic and military levels, the two countries will be able to restore and sustain peace and tranquility at their borders. "China and India are in close communication through diplomatic and military channels to address issues related to the border situation, and have achieved positive progress," Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao told a media briefing here in response to a question on Modi's interview with Newsweek. "China believes that a sound

China believes that a sound and stable relationship is in the interest of both China and India
MAO NING | FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESPERSON OF CHINA

and stable relationship is in the interest of both China and India," she said.

"We hope that India will work with China to place the boundary question appropriately in bilateral relations and manage it properly, and put the relationship on a sound and steady track," Mao said.

The relations between India and China have been frozen except for trade ties ever since the eastern Ladakh border standoff erupted May 5, 2020, following a violent clash in the Pangong Tso (lake) area.

The two sides have so far held 21 rounds of corps commander-level talks to resolve the standoff.

This is the second time in as many days that China has reacted to Modi's interview. "It is my belief that we need to urgently address the prolonged situation on our borders so that the abnormality in our bilateral interactions can be put behind us," Modi said in his interview.

"Stable and peaceful relations between India and China are important for not just our two countries but the entire region

and world," he said in a statement.

Mao while responding to a question on Modi's interview Thursday said that China noted Prime Minister Modi's remarks.

"Sound and stable China-India relations serve the interests of both countries and are conducive to peace and development in the region and beyond," she said.

On the boundary question, Mao Thursday reiterated China's oft-repeated stand that it does not represent the entirety of China-India relations, and it should be placed appropriately in bilateral relations and managed properly.

However, India has maintained that there cannot be restoration of normalcy in its relations with China as long as the state of the borders remains abnormal.

Mao said both countries maintain close communication through diplomatic and military channels on handling issues related to the border situation and have made positive progress.

"We hope that India will work with China, approach the bilateral relations from a strategic height and long-term perspective, keep building trust and engage in dialogue and cooperation, and seek to handle differences appropriately to put the relationship on a sound and stable track," she said.

According to the Chinese military, the two sides so far agreed to disengage from four points, namely the Galwan Valley, the Pangong Lake, Hot Springs, and Jianan Daban (Gogra).

India is pressing the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to disengage from the Depsang and Demchok areas, maintaining that there cannot be restoration of normalcy in its relations with China as long as the border remains tense.



French President Emmanuel Macron, right, shakes hands with Albania's Prime Minister Edi Rama prior to a working lunch at the presidential Elysee Palace in Paris

Israel on edge for Iranian retaliation



Jerusalem, April 12: Israel Friday nervously awaited an attack by Iran or its proxies as warnings grew of retaliation for the killing last week of a senior officer in Iran's embassy in Damascus.

Countries including India, France and Russia have warned their citizens against travel to the region, already on edge over the war in Gaza, now in its seventh month.

The Israeli military said Thursday it had not issued fresh instructions to civilians, but that its forces were on high alert and prepared for a range of scenarios.

Israel's foreign ministry did not comment on reports that some Israeli diplomatic missions had been partially evacuated and security stepped up.

"The revenge will come," wrote Israel's largest daily newspaper, Yedioth Ahronoth. "For the moment, the premise is that it will be very soon, in the next few days."

The Israeli military said it had not issued fresh instructions to civilians, but that its forces were on high alert and prepared for a range of scenarios

Israel did not claim responsibility for the airstrike April 1 that killed Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Zahedi, a senior commander in the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps' overseas Quds Force, and six other officers as they attended a meeting in the Damascus embassy compound.

But Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, accused Israel and said it "must be punished and shall be" for an operation he said was equivalent to an attack on Iranian soil. "It's going to be very difficult for Iran not to retaliate," said Raz Zimmt, senior researcher at Israel's Institute for National Security Studies.

Russian military trainers arrive in Niger as relations deteriorate with US

Dakar (Senegal), April 12: Russian military trainers arrived this week in Niger to reinforce the country's air defences as the west African nation pulls away from close cooperation with the US in counterterrorism efforts, turning instead to Russia for help as it fights Islamic insurgents.

State television in Niger Thursday broadcast footage of Russian military trainers arriving in the country aboard a plane equipped with military supplies. Two Russian trainers were filmed in front of the plane wearing military uniforms, caps and face coverings.

"We are here to train the Nigerian army to use the military equipment that is here," one of the Russian trainers said in the broadcast, speaking in French. "We are here to develop military cooperation between Russia and Niger." Niger's ruling military council, known as the CNSP, has yet to order American troops out, US officials have said. But the arrival of Russian forces makes it complicated for the US forces, along with diplomatic and civilian personnel, to remain in the country and throws into doubt the future of joint Niger-US counterinsurgency operations.



TIDBITS

Russian city calls for mass evacuations

Orenburg: Authorities in the Russian city of Orenburg called on thousands of residents to evacuate immediately Friday due to rapidly rising flood waters after major rivers burst their banks due to a historic deluge of melting snow. Water was also rising sharply in another Russian region - Kurgan - and in neighbouring Kazakhstan the authorities said 100,000 people had been evacuated so far, as rapidly warming temperatures melted heavy snow and ice. The deluge of melt water has forced over 120,000 people from their homes in Russia's Ural Mountains, Siberia and Kazakhstan as major rivers such as the Ural, which flows through Kazakhstan into the Caspian, overwhelmed embankments.

US, Japan and South Korea hold drills

Washington: A US carrier strike group led by the USS Theodore Roosevelt has held a three-day joint exercise with its allies Japan and South Korea as US President Joe Biden met for talks with leaders from Japan and the Philippines at the White House. The duelling military and diplomatic maneuvers are meant to strengthen the partners' solidarity in the face of what they see as China's aggressive military actions in the region. A number of US and South Korean guided missile destroyers and a Japanese warship joined the April 10-12 drill in the disputed East China Sea, where worries about China's territorial claims are rising. The Associated Press was one of several news organisations allowed a front-row look at the drills. Rear Adm. Christopher Alexander, commander of Carrier Strike Group Nine, said the three nations conducted undersea warfare exercises, maritime interdiction operations, search and rescue drills and work focused on communication and data sharing.

Americans dissatisfied with Biden, Trump

ASSOCIATED PRESS

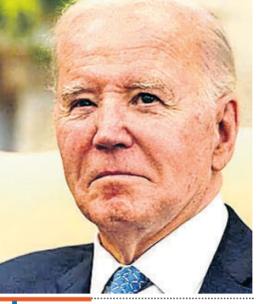
Washington, April 12: There's a reason why President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump are spending so much time attacking each other — people don't think either man has much to brag about when it comes to his own record. Americans generally think that while they were in the White House, both did more harm than good on key issues.

But the two candidates have different weak spots. For Biden, it's widespread unhappiness on two issues: the economy and immigration. Trump, meanwhile, faces an electorate where substantial shares think he harmed the country on a range of issues.

A new poll from the AP-NORC Centre for Public Affairs Research finds that more than half of US adults think Biden's presidency has hurt the country on cost of living and immigration, while nearly half think Trump's presidency hurt the country on voting rights and



A recent poll highlights dissatisfaction with both Biden and Trump's records, as Americans believe they did more harm than good on crucial issues



Biden is criticised for his handling of the economy and immigration, while Trump faces criticism on various fronts

election security, relations with foreign countries, abortion laws and climate change.

The polling underscores why certain issues — such as abortion for Biden and immigration for Trump — have been persistent focal points for each of the campaigns. The former President regularly decries the number of asylum-seekers who have ar-

them, roughly one-third say Donald Trump and about one-quarter say Joe Biden. Yet 30 per cent of adults said neither Biden nor Trump benefitted them. It's another data point reflecting an electorate that has been largely disappointed with this year's general election choices, generating little enthusiasm among key parts of the Biden and Trump political coalitions.

Americans rate Biden particularly negatively on a few specific issues. Only about 2 in 10 Americans think Biden's presidency helped "a lot" or "a little" on cost of living, and 16 per cent say that about immigration and border security. Nearly 6 in 10 say his presidency hurt a lot or a little on these issues. Nearly half, 46 per cent, of Americans, by contrast, say that Trump's presidency helped a lot or a little on immigration or border security. Four in 10 say it helped on cost of living.

The pandemic hurt Trump in terms of employment as the economy lost 2.7 million jobs

under his watch. But the pandemic lockdowns also dramatically curbed inflation. At the same time, low interest rates and historic levels of deficit-funded government stimulus left many households feeling better off under Trump.

Coming out of the pandemic, Biden gave the economy a boost with additional aid that helped spur job gains of 15.2 million under his watch. But supply chain issues, Russia's war in Ukraine and Biden's aid package are judged by many economists as having contributed to rising inflation, hurting the Democrat's approval ratings.

Trump's advantage on the cost of living and immigration is driven partially by Democrats' lack of enthusiasm about Biden's performance.

About one-third of Democrats, for example, think Biden's presidency hurt on cost of living, and another third think Biden neither helped nor hurt. Just one-third of Democrats think Biden's presidency helped on cost of living.

of the day quote

Leaving advertisers have no control over ad relevance and reach on Meta. No surprise we are onboarding so many new advertisers on X now

ELON MUSK | OWNER, X

In the coming decade, India's economic ascent will be marked by an unprecedented surge, with the real estate sector poised to be a cornerstone of this transformative journey

GULAM ZIA | SENIOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, KNIGHT FRANK

Despite offering unique benefits and healthy profit-sharing practices, a concerning trend of disparity emerges within banking, financial services and insurance workplaces, which cannot be ignored

YESHAVINI RAMASWAMY | CEO, GREAT PLACE TO WORK



The expansion and enhancement of ITC exemplify our unwavering commitment to innovation, harnessing India's rich talent pool

FRIEDRICH EICHLER | CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER, CNH

WORLD'S FASTEST CHARGING E3W

In a push towards the electric mobility dream, India Friday saw the launch of a passenger electric three-wheeler that is touted as the world's fastest-charging EV within 15 minutes. Omega Seiki Mobility forged a partnership with Exponent Energy to launch the electric three-wheeler with rapid-charging capabilities



Indices snap record run

Stock markets plunge as US inflation dashes rate cut hopes; Sensex, Nifty lose 1%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 12: Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty plunged by 1 per cent Friday due to across-the-board profit taking by investors after a recent record-breaking rally as US inflation data dashed hopes of a rate cut by June.

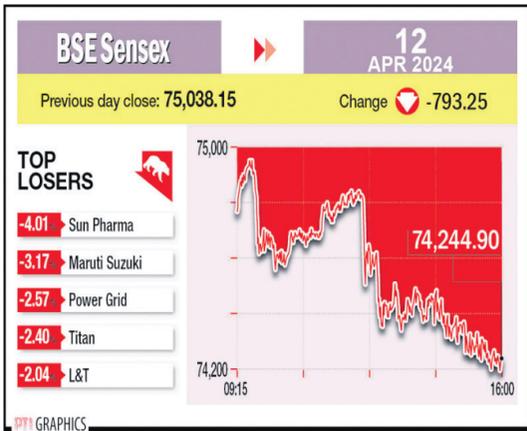
The 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 793.25 points or 1.06 per cent to settle at 74,244.90 with 27 of its components ending in the red. During the day, it dropped 848.84 points or 1.13 per cent to 74,189.31.

The NSE Nifty declined 234.40 points or 1.03 per cent to close at 22,519.40 with 45 of its constituents settling lower. All Nifty sectoral indices closed in the red.

From the Sensex basket, Sun Pharma, Maruti, Power Grid, Titan, JSW Steel, Tech Mahindra, Larsen & Toubro and State Bank of India were the major laggards.

Tata Motors, Tata Consultancy Services and Nestle were the gainers.

"US inflation soared by 0.4% MoM, surpassing expectations and triggering a spike in US Treasury yields. Investors are questioning the feasibility of the US Fed's anticipated three rate cuts this year, leading to underperformance in EMs. Meanwhile, European markets excelled as the ECB maintained policy rates but hinted at a potential rate cut soon. Indian markets consolidated amidst worries over delayed US rate cuts, escalating Middle East tensions driving oil prices up, and subdued Q4 earnings projections," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services. In Asian markets,



Investors poorer by ₹2.52L-crore

Investors' wealth Friday plunged by ₹2.52 lakh crore as the benchmark Sensex tanked 793.25 points due to heavy selling after a recent record-breaking rally. The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies declined by ₹2,52,301.16 crore to ₹3,99,67,051.91 crore (\$4.79 trillion). A sharp rise in crude oil prices and rupee's downward spiral also dampened the sentiment and contributed to the overall slump.

Tokyo settled in the positive territory while Seoul, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended lower.

European markets were trading in the positive zone. Wall Street ended mostly with gains Thursday.

"Nifty ended sharply lower on April 12 on profit booking across the board. Asian stocks fell on Friday as traders priced in less monetary policy easing by the US Fed this year," said Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge declined 0.60 per cent and midcap index dipped 0.49 per cent.

All the indices ended lower, with oil & gas falling by 1.28 per cent, utilities (1.02 per cent), realty (0.96 per cent), bankex (0.91 per cent) commodities (0.84 per cent), IT (0.84 per cent) and financial services (0.81 per cent).

A total of 2,373 stocks declined while 1,466 advanced and 104 remained unchanged.

Post-market hours, TCS announced its Q4 earnings. Industrial production for February and inflation data for March were scheduled for release later in the day.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.95 per cent to \$90.56 a barrel.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) bought equities worth ₹2,778.17 crore Wednesday, according to exchange data.

The BSE benchmark climbed 354.45 points or 0.47 per cent to settle at an all-time high of 75,038.15 Wednesday. The Nifty advanced by 111.05 points or 0.49 per cent to reach a record closing peak of 22,753.80. During the day, it jumped 132.95 points or 0.58 per cent to hit a lifetime intra-day peak of 22,775.70.

GOOD MINING SHOW IIP GROWS TO 4-MONTH HIGH OF 5.7% IN FEB

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 12: India's industrial production growth accelerated to a four-month high of 5.7 per cent in February 2024, mainly due to the good performance of the mining sector, according to official data released Friday.

The factory output growth measured in terms of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) was 6 per cent in February 2023.

The previous high of IIP was recorded at 11.9 per cent in October 2023, which slowed to 2.5 per cent in November, 4.2 per cent in December and 4.1 per cent in January 2024.

During the April-February period of 2023-24, IIP growth touched 5.9 per cent, up from 5.6 per cent in the year-ago period.

India's Index of Industrial Production grew by 5.7 per cent in February 2024, according to a release by the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation.



As per the latest data, the mining output growth accelerated to 8 per cent in February against 4.8 per cent in the year-ago month.

The manufacturing sector's output growth decelerated to 5.9 per cent in February against 5.9 per cent a year ago.

The power generation growth also slowed to 7.5 per cent in February from 8.2 per cent growth in the same month of last year.

Safe-haven demand bolsters gold rally



GOLD GAINS ₹1,050 TO BREACH ₹73K-MARK; SILVER TOO HITS FRESH PEAK

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 12: Gold and silver prices rallied for the fourth straight session and hit fresh peaks Friday, with the yellow metal gaining sharply by ₹1,050 to breach ₹73,000 per 10 grams level amid bullish global trend.

According to HDFC Securities, gold price surged ₹1,050 to hit its lifetime high of ₹73,350 per 10 grams in Delhi. It had closed at ₹72,300 per 10 grams in the previous session.

Similarly silver prices zoomed ₹1,400 to hit a new record of ₹86,300 per kg.

"Spot gold (24 carats) prices in the Delhi markets are trading at a record high of ₹73,350 per 10 grams, up by ₹1,050, taking positive cues from overseas markets," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

Commodity markets were partially closed Thursday on account of Eid-ul-Fitr.

In the global markets, spot gold at Comex traded at \$2,388 per ounce, up \$48 from the previous closing level.

Gold reached a new all-time

high in the early hours of the European trading day Friday. Safe haven demand supported the spike in precious metals following heightened Middle East tensions and the possibility of Iran retaliating against an Israeli strike on its embassy in Syria, Gandhi said.

In addition, silver was also quoting higher at \$28.95 per ounce. In the previous session, it had settled at \$28.05 per ounce.

Meanwhile, in the futures trade on the MCX, gold climbed to an all-time high of ₹72,828 per 10 grams in the intra-day trade. The most-traded June contract of the yellow metal was trading at ₹72,681 per 10 grams, up by ₹1,037 or 1.45 per cent.

According to Praveen Singh, Associate VP, Fundamental Currencies and Commodities at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, upcoming macroeconomic numbers to be announced by the UK and Germany as well as Chinese trade data will provide further direction for gold prices.

"The European Central Bank (ECB), as expected, kept the benchmark rates unchanged, but gave the indication that it could cut interest rates in June. The ECB President Christine Lagarde signalled that growing confidence on cooling inflation would lead the central bank to cut rates at its next policy meeting on June 6," Singh said.

SHORT TAKES

TCS net profit rises 9% in Q4

Mumbai: Country's largest software services company TCS Friday reported a 9.1 per cent growth in its March quarter net profit at ₹12,434 crore. The Tata Group company's post tax profit during the January-March period last year stood at ₹11,392 crore. In the fiscal year 2023-24, the company's net profit grew 9 per cent to ₹45,908 crore, as per an exchange filing. In the March quarter, its revenue grew 3.5 per cent to ₹61,237 crore year on year. Its operating profit margin expanded by 1.50 per cent to 26 per cent. TCS scrip closed 0.45 per cent higher at ₹4,000.30 apiece on the BSE Friday as against a 1.06 per cent correction in the benchmark.

Bharti Hexacom shines on debut

New Delhi: Shares of Bharti Airtel's arm Bharti Hexacom Ltd listed with a huge premium and ended with a gain of nearly 43 per cent against the issue price of ₹570 Friday. The stock started the trade at ₹755.20, registering a gain of 32.49 per cent from the issue price on the BSE. During the day, it climbed 54.36 per cent to ₹879.90. Shares of the company later ended at ₹813.75, up 42.76 per cent. On the NSE, the stock made its debut at ₹755, rising 32.45 per cent. It ended at ₹814, a jump of 42.80 per cent. The company's market valuation stood at ₹40,687.50 crore. In traded volume terms, 20.94 lakh shares of the company were traded at the BSE and over 534.65 lakh shares at the NSE during the day.

India's fintech sector logs robust 59% growth in Q1

Bangalore led the funding in Indian fintech space, followed by Mumbai, Hyderabad

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 12: India secured the third position globally in terms of funding raised for the fintech sector in the first quarter (Q1) of this year, a report showed Friday.

Total funding received by the fintech sector increased by 59 per cent in Q1 2024, compared to Q4 2023, emphasising the robustness of the Indian fintech landscape amid a dynamic economic environment.

Q1 2024 witnessed a total funding of \$551 million compared to the \$346 million raised in the previous quarter, according to the report by Tracxn, a leading market intelligence platform.



"The sustained investor interest emphasises the importance of nurturing startups and R&D, aligning with the 'Startup India' Initiative. This surge reflects the industry's dynamism and innovation, positioning India as a leading global fintech player," said Neha Singh, co-founder of Tracxn.

The fintech growth as the Indian economy exhibited a robust performance in the previous quarter, with a growth rate of 8.4 per cent.

According to the IMF, India will become the third-largest economy in the world by 2027, with a GDP of over \$5 trillion.

5-MONTH LOW Retail inflation cools to 4.85%

Inflation inches close to RBI's target of 4%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 12: Retail inflation declined to a five-month low of 4.85 per cent in March mainly due to cooling food prices, inching towards the Reserve Bank's target of 4 per cent, according to official data released Friday.

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) based retail inflation was 5.09 per cent in February and 5.66 per cent in March 2023. Previously, CPI-based inflation was the lowest at 4.87 per cent in October 2023.

The inflation in the food basket was at 8.52 per cent in March, down from 8.66 per cent in February, according to the data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO).

According to the data, inflation in eggs, spices, and pulses, among others, eased on a month-on-month basis. However, there was



an uptick in fruits and vegetables segments in March compared to February. The retail inflation was also lower in the 'fuel and light' segment.

The government has tasked the Reserve Bank to ensure inflation remains at 4 per cent, with a margin of 2 per cent on either side.

According to the Reserve Bank, which factors in consumer inflation while arriving at its bi-monthly monetary policy, food price uncertainties continue to weigh on the inflation trajectory going forward. The central bank has projected retail inflation at 4.5 per cent for the current fiscal assuming a normal monsoon.

The highest inflation was recorded in Odisha (7.05%) and the lowest in Delhi (2.29%)

Continuing geopolitical tensions also pose an upside risk to commodity prices and supply chains.

The RBI projected inflation at 4.9 per cent for the April-June quarter and at 3.8 per cent for the September quarter.

Commenting on the CPI data, Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist, ICRA said an intensification of the impending heatwave may worsen the seasonal uptick in prices of perishables, heightening the criticality of a favourable monsoon in 2024 to keep food inflation in check and inflationary expectations well-anchored.

"At best, we foresee 50 bps of rate cuts from the Monetary Policy Committee, in the second half of fiscal 2024-25," she added.

FOREX KITTY JUMPS TO NEW HIGH OF \$648.562 BILLION

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 12: India's forex reserves jumped by \$2.98 billion to a fresh peak of \$648.562 billion for the week ended April 5, the RBI said Friday.

In the previous reporting week, the forex kitty had increased by \$2.951 billion to \$645.583 billion, which was an all-time high.

In September 2021, the country's forex kitty reached an all-time high of \$642.453 billion, a level that was breached in March this year.

The reserves took a hit as the central bank deployed the kitty to defend the rupee amid pressures caused majorly by global events, but there has been a steady accretion over the past few months.

For the week ended April 5, the foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, increased by \$549 million to \$571.166 billion, the data released Friday showed.

Air traffic likely rose 13% in 2023-24

AVIATION INDUSTRY'S NET LOSS EXPECTED TO HAVE DECLINED TO ₹3,000 TO 4,000 CRORE

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 12: Domestic air passenger traffic is likely to have witnessed an annual growth of 13 per cent at around 15.4 crore in 2023-24 and the aviation industry's net loss is expected to have declined to ₹3,000 to 4,000 crore during the same period, says a report.

Credit rating agency Ica Friday also said the airlines' ability to raise yields proportionate to their input cost increases will be key to expand their profitability margins while supply chain challenges and engine failure issues pose near term headwinds.

For FY24, it said domestic air passenger traffic is estimated at around 154 million, an Year-on-Year (YoY) growth of about 13 per cent.



"The domestic air passenger traffic in FY2024, thus, surpassed the pre-Covid levels of around 142 million in FY2020. For March 2024, domestic air passenger traffic was estimated at around 135.2 lakh, around 6.9 per cent higher than around 126.4 lakh in February 2024. Further, it grew

by around 4.9 per cent on a YoY basis," Ica said in a report.

According to the report, the country's aviation industry is expected to report a significantly lower net loss of ₹30-40 billion in FY2024 and FY2025 over ₹170-175 billion in FY2023.

In this context, the industry

refers to AIX Connect, Air India, InterGlobe Aviation, Tata SIA Airlines, and SpiceJet.

In March, the airlines' capacity deployment was higher by around 2 per cent compared to the year-ago period and about 9 per cent as against February.

For the 11 months ended February 2024, the international passenger traffic for Indian carriers stood at around 270.1 lakh, a YoY growth of around 25 per cent, and higher than the pre-Covid (April-February 2020) levels of around 218.1 lakh by 24 per cent.

The rating agency said it has a stable outlook for the aviation industry amid continued recovery in domestic and international air passenger traffic, and relatively stable cost environment and expectations of the trend continuing in FY2025.

BIG AIMS

Mega fundraiser: VI announces ₹18K-cr FPO

New Delhi: Struggling telecom operator Vodafone Idea Friday said it plans to raise up to ₹18,000 crore through share sale in the biggest follow-on public offer as it scrambles to mobilise resources to stay afloat. Voda-Idea shares will be issued, under the FPO, in a price band of ₹10-11 apiece against Friday's closing price of ₹12.96 on the BSE. The share sale will open April 18 and close April 22, Vodafone Idea, the country's third-largest telecom carrier, said in a stock exchange filing. This will be the largest FPO after the previous best of ₹15,000 crore share sale by Yes Bank in 2020. VI's blockbuster fundraising -- which comes close on the heels of a ₹2,075 crore capital infusion by Aditya Birla group via a preferential share issue earlier this month -- would give the ailing telco the ammo to improve its positioning in the Indian telecom market, where it currently trails larger rivals like Reliance Jio and Bharti Airtel by a wide margin.



Adani Group targets 20% share in cement market

New Delhi: Gautam Adani-led Adani group, which owns Ambuja Cements and ACC Ltd, is targeting to capture around one-fifth of the Indian cement market by FY28. Adani Cement business will implement its accelerated capex program through internal accruals and the business will continue to "remain debt free," said an investor presentation shared by Ambuja Cements. Besides, Adani Cement also amplifies the pace of capacity expansion and is expected to have an accelerated growth rate of 16 per cent to reach 140 MTPA (million tonne per annum) by FY2028. "Adani Cement market share targeted to be 20 per cent by FY28 from current 14 per cent," the Adani group firm said. Presently, Adani Cement is the second leading company in the sector after the Aditya Birla group firm UltraTech Cements. Ambuja, with its subsidiaries ACC Ltd, has the capacity to produce 77.4 million tonnes of cement annually from 18 integrated cement manufacturing plants and 18 cement grinding units across the country. It had recently acquired Sanghi Industries Ltd.



Delhi ease past Lucknow

RR focus on execution of plans against PBKS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, April 12: Jake Fraser-McGurk (55, 35b, 2x4, 56x) announced his arrival in the IPL in style as his splendid half century on debut helped Delhi Capitals beat Lucknow Super Giants by six wickets here, Friday.

Ayush Badoni smashed a quick-fire unbeaten half century to help LSG recover to a respectable 167/7 after left-arm spinner Kuldeep Yadav sizzled with a three-wicket haul. In response, LSG rode on Australian Fraser-McGurk's superb knock to secure a crucial win as they finished on 170/4 in 18.1 overs.

Fraser-McGurk and skipper Rishabh Pant (41, 24b, 4x4, 2x6) struck a 77-run partnership to take the match away from the hosts and secure DC's second win of the season.

The 22-year-old Australian, known for his aggressive approach, smoked a shot of length delivery off Yash Thakur over deep mid-wicket to get his first-ever runs in the IPL. He followed that with another six in the next over.

Prithvi Shaw (32, 22b, 6x4) was looking in good nick but Ravi Bishnoi (2/25) made an instant impact as he entered the game, getting rid of the opener, as DC fell to 63/2. The LSG bowlers were able to dominate the visitors for sometime as Fraser-McGurk also struggled to find the boundaries.

But Pant hoisted the ball over Bishnoi's head for a straight six to not only reach the 3,000-run milestone in IPL but also collected Delhi's first boundary in 29 deliveries in the 11th over.

The dashing wicketkeeper-batter gave a glimpse of his vintage self, playing some audacious shots, including a reverse scoop off Marcus Stoinis. Pant's power-hitting eased the pressure of Fraser-McGurk who slammed compatriot Stoinis for a hat-trick of sixes to bring the



Kuldeep Yadav



Jake Fraser-McGurk

equation to almost a run a ball.

Earlier, returning to the side after missing three matches due to a groin niggle, Kuldeep made a stunning return with figures of 3/20 conceding no boundaries in his quota of four overs. His victims included skipper KL Rahul (39, 22b, 5x4, 1x6), Marcus Stoinis (8) and the dangerous Nicholas Pooran (0).

Khaleel Ahmed (2/41), who landed the early blow, Ishant Sharma (1/36) and Mukesh Kumar (1/41) also took wickets to leave LSG reeling at 94/7.

But then Badoni took the onus

upon himself to resurrect the LSG innings. He smashed five boundaries and a six and alongside Arshad Khan (20 n o) stitched a 73-run unbeaten stand.

Opting to bat, Quinton de Kock had started strong with four boundaries but was dismissed by Khaleel with a leg-before wicket decision in the third over.

Devdutt Padikkal's wretched run continued as he became Khaleel's second victim of the day. Khaleel had the opportunity to make it two out of two but the pacer dropped Marcus Stoinis on zero off his own delivery in

the very next ball.

However, Rahul continued to collect boundaries at the other end, taking his side to 57/2 in the powerplay. But the introduction of Kuldeep in the eighth over helped trigger a batting collapse.

The left-arm spinner first dismissed Stoinis, before bamboozling the in-form Pooran, who looked clueless as the ball uprooted the off stump. Kuldeep then picked up his third wicket in eight balls to get rid of Rahul, completely deflating the LSG batting.

Delhi bowlers choked the LSG batters as the boundaries dried up. Ishant and Mukesh, who also returned to the Delhi playing XI after recovering from an injury, joined the act accounting for Hooda and Krunal Pandya respectively.

BRIEF SCORES

LSG 167/7 (Ayush Badoni 55 n o, KL Rahul 39; Kuldeep Yadav 3/20, Khaleel Ahmed 2/41) lost to DC 170/4 (Jake Fraser-McGurk 55, Rishabh Pant 41, Prithvi Shaw 32; Ravi Bishnoi 2/25) by 6 wickets.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mullanpur, April 12: A disappointed Rajasthan Royals will have to focus on better execution of their strategies for a swift turnaround when they face a highly inconsistent yet capable Punjab Kings in their IPL match here Saturday.

The Royals had an excellent chance to register their fifth win on the trot and consolidate their totem pole position, but Rashid Khan's daring assault helped Gujarat Titans snatch a last-ball victory Wednesday.

It might have come as a rude shock for the Royals at Fort Jaipur, and as such, they would want to treat it as an aberration and dish out a more refined outing against the Punjab side. But it also highlighted some muddled thinking.

The Sanju Samson-led Rajasthan outfit lost to the Titans because of the below-par effort from Kuldeep Sen (19th over) and Avesh Khan (20th over) at a vital passage, when they conceded 35 runs across 12 balls.

Here, the Royals made a slight tactical error by not letting Trent Boult complete his quota in that match as the veteran left-arm pacer ended the match at 2-0-8-0. There is no gainsaying that Boult could have made a change in the script, but Samson leaving that option unused was a tad perplexing.

Of course, Boult has been largely used with the new ball in this iteration of the IPL, but in

crunch situations nothing counts more than experience. So, the Royals will be looking for an improvement in the strategising and execution part against the Kings.

The Shikhar Dhawan-captained side has blown hot and cold so far in the tournament, winning two and losing three out of five matches. The primary reason for their middling run this year is the patchy form of their fancied batsmen as Punjab relied on cameos by uncapped Shashank Singh and Ashutosh Sharma to boost their batting.

On the contrary, the Punjab bowlers have done marginally better, but their propensity to concede big runs while bowling first will be a concern.

Outside the match calculations, the Royals will have another bigger worry to nullify. Over the last few editions of the IPL, the Royals had begun strongly, just as they did this year, before tapering off after the mid-season.

As a result, they have managed to qualify for the play-offs only twice across the last six seasons. Royals would dearly hope that the defeat against GT was not the beginning of another meltdown.

MATCHDAY

Indian Premier League

PBKS vs RR

Time: 07:30 pm

Telecast: Star Sports Network

Stream: Jio Cinema

Pragg holds Caruana, Gukesh suffers 1st loss

India's dismal run continues in Australia



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Toronto, April 12: Grandmaster D Gukesh slipped from the joint top spot after suffering his first defeat, at the hands of Frenchman Firouza Alireza, but teen prodigy R Praggnanandhaa played out an easy draw with American Fabiano Caruana in the seventh round of the Candidates chess tournament here.

Following the loss, the 17-year-old Gukesh was down to the joint second spot on four points along with Caruana and Praggnanandhaa.

Russia's Ian Nepomniachtchi regained his slender half-point lead inching to 4.5 points out of a possible seven at the half-way stage following a draw with American Hikaru Nakamura.

After a draw with Nijat Abasov, Vidit Gujrathi took his tally to 3.5 points to share the fifth spot with Nakamura while Alireza pulled himself up a little on 2.5 points to take the seventh spot. Abasov with two points is still in the last place.

In the women's section, R Vaishali seemed to have run out of steam as she suffered her third loss in the event. Tingie Lei of China proved too good for the Indian on a day when the other three games ended in draws.

Zhongyi Tan of China remained half a point ahead of the pack after drawing with closest rival Aleksandra Goryachkina of Russia. Kateryna Lagno, Russia, played out a draw with Nurgyul Salimova of Bulgaria and in the other game of the day, Anna Muzychuk signed peace with India's Koneru Humpy.

The Indian challenge in the women's section might already have ended as Zhongyi stood firmly ahead on five points while Goryachkina had 4.5 points in her kitty. Lagno and Lei shared the third spot on four points each and Salimova, on three, was occupying the sole fifth position.

Humpy, Vaishali and Muzychuk need a miracle in the second half of the event to make a comeback as the trio has just 2.5 points.

Praggnanandhaa employed the French defense and it was already a surprise for Caruana who went for the advance variation. The 18-year-old Indian did not have much trouble in maintaining the balance in the ensuing middle game as the players reached an equal endgame with no chance of a breakthrough. The draw was agreed to after 41 moves.

Alireza was a bit lucky to beat Gukesh out of a London system. It was one of those days for Gukesh when things did not go as planned and even though the Indian enjoyed a good position in the middle game, going for unwarranted complications proved costly.

Gukesh ended up losing a piece but his position would still have been holdable despite the material deficit. However, as things unfolded, Alireza won this race with some timely checkmate threats.

The players got their second rest day of the event Friday. There are seven rounds still to be played in the double round robin event that will decide the next challengers for the World Championships.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Perth, April 12: India continued their dismal show in the crucial tour Down Under, losing 1-3 against Australia to suffer their fourth consecutive defeat in the five-match men's hockey Test series, here Friday.

Contrary to the final result, it was a much-improved performance from the Indians but the Kookaburras were simply too strong. All the four goals in the match, which started 40 minutes late due to lightning, came from penalty corners.

India took the lead in the 12th minute through skipper Harmanpreet Singh but Jeremy Hayward's (19th, 47th) brace and Jack Welch (54th) strike handed Australia yet another win in the series. India were decimated 1-5 in the opening Test, while they lost the second and third Tests 2-4 and 1-2 respectively.

It was an entertaining first quarter with both the teams matching each other. India had the first shy at the goal in the opening minute through Mandeep Singh, whose hit from the top of the circle off skipper Harmanpreet's Singh's pass from the deep was saved by an alert



Australian keeper.

The Kookaburras were not to be left behind as they secured back-to-back penalty corners in the second minute but veteran India goalkeeper PR Sreejesh was superb under the bar, making twin saves to deny their opponents.

Unlike the previous three games where they relied more on aerial long passes to penetrate the Australian defence, the Indians used the midfield smartly, building their attacks with fine ball transfer. It worked well as India

secured their first penalty corner in the 10th minute but Jugraj Singh failed to convert the chance.

India took the lead in the 12th minute when Harmanpreet converted their second penalty corner with a low and hard flick to the left of the goalkeeper.

Down a goal, the Kookaburras put relentless pressure on the Indians and drew level in the 19th minute when Hayward converted their fifth penalty corner with a powerful flick. There

was nothing to separate the two teams in the first half as both matched each other stick for stick.

Minutes after the change of ends, India secured another penalty corner but Harmanpreet failed to breach the Australian defence. Thereafter, it was a mid-field slugfest with both India and Australia seemingly in no mood to give an inch as the 1-1 deadlock continued.

Two minutes into the final quarter, Australia earned back-to-back penalty corners, the second of which was converted by Hayward with another fierce low flick to the right of reserve keeper Karkera, who replaced Krishan Bahadur in the team.

The hosts kept up the pressure on the Indian goal and secured two more penalty corners in the next minute but couldn't utilise. Six minutes later, Australia secured another penalty corner and this time Welch sounded the board.

India had their chances as well in the form of three penalty corners in the last four minutes but wasted the opportunities. The final Test of the series will be played here Saturday.

Mary Kom pulls out

NEW DELHI: Six-time World Champion boxer MC Mary Kom Friday stepped down as Paris' chef-de-mission for the upcoming Paris Olympics, saying she is "left with no choice" due to some personal reasons. Indian Olympic Association (IOA) President PT Usha announced that Mary Kom had asked to be relieved from her position in a letter addressed to her. The IOA had announced her appointment March 21. The celebrated boxer was to be the logistical in-charge of the country's contingent at the July 26-August 11 Games.

Liverpool stunned

LONDON: Gianluca Scamacca struck twice as visiting Atalanta upset Liverpool 3-0 in the first leg of the Europa League quarterfinals. The loss Thursday damages Liverpool's hopes of a treble of trophies in manager Jurgen Klopp's final season at Anfield. Mario Pasalic finished the scoring seven minutes from time. Bayer Leverkusen got late goals from substitutes Jonas Hofmann and Victor Boniface to top West Ham 2-0 and extend their unbeaten streak to 42 games in a season that can also end up with a treble of trophies. In an all-Italian matchup, Gianluca Mancini headed in a winner off a corner kick from Paulo Dybala to upset AC Milan 1-0 at San Siro.

VINESH ACCUSES WFI CHIEF OF TRYING TO END HER PARIS OLYMPICS DREAM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 12: Wrestler Vinesh Phogat Friday accused the WFI of trying to stop her from competing in the Olympic Qualifiers by creating logistical hurdles for her support staff, a charge vehemently denied by the federation which claimed that she applied after the deadline to send entries had expired.

The 29-year-old Phogat also said she is fearful of being trapped in a doping case. Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) said Phogat's request mail (for accreditation of her coach and physio) came March 18 but by then it had already sent the entries of the players, coaches and medical staff to the world governing body UWW as the registration deadline was March 11.

A WFI official said the federation sent the entries around March 15 after UWW relaxed the dead-



line a bit on its request because the trials were completed only on the last day of the deadline.

Phogat is eyeing an Olympic quota in the 50kg category in the Asian qualifying tournament next week in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. At the selection trials in Patiala, she had also competed in the 53kg category after the authorities allowed her but lost in the semifinals.

"Brij Bhushan and his dummy Sanjay Singh are trying in every way to stop me from playing in the Olympics. All the coaches who have been appointed with the team are the favourites of Brij

Bhushan and his team, so it cannot be denied that they may mix something in my water and make me drink it during my match?" Phogat said in lengthy post on his 'X' page. "If I say that there could be a conspiracy to trap me in doping, then it will not be wrong."

Phogat alleged that her personal coach and physio were being denied accreditation for the Asian Olympic qualifying tournament starting April 19. "No stone is being left unturned to mentally harass us. How far is it justified to torture us like this before such an important competition?" she asked.

Making the Federation's stand clear, a WFI official, who did not wish to be named, told PTI that it had no objection if Phogat wants to travel with her personal coach and physio but she herself has to get the accreditation from the UWW since the deadline to send entries is already over.

Akash reaches bronze-medal round in Asian Championships

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), April 12: Indian wrestlers Akash Dahiya and Anirudh Kumar kept themselves in contention for bronze medals at the Asian Championships but three of their teammates exited the tournament after losing at different stages in their respective categories, here Friday.

Competing in the non-Olympic 61kg category, Akash began with a close 10-8 win over Sardor Ruzimov from Uzbekistan and followed it up with a comfortable 7-3 victory over Korea's Sanghyeon Son in the quarterfinal.

However, Kazakhstan's Assyl Aitakyn proved to be too strong for the Indian in the semifinal and could not score a single point, losing his bout by technical superiority. He will now fight it out with Mongolia's Enkhbold Enkhbat.

Yash Tushir (74kg) went out of

contention after losing his repechage round by technical superiority to Syrbaz Talgat from Kazakhstan. Also bowing out early was Sandeep Singh Maan (86kg), who lost his qualification bout 0-5 to Japan's Tatsuya Shirai.

Vinay (92kg) also fizzled out in the 92kg qualification round, losing his bout by fall to veteran Kazakhstan wrestler Adilet Davlumbayev. In 125kg, Anirudh Kumar began with a 3-0 win over Pakistan's Zaman Anwar but was outplayed by Iran's Amir Hossein Abbas Zare in the quarterfinal, losing by technical superiority.

Since the Iranian reached the final, it kept the door open for Anirudh and now he will fight for bronze against Bahrain's Shamil Magomed A Sharipov.

India had won three medals Thursday through Udit (57kg, silver), Abhimanyou (70kg, bronze) and Vicky (97kg, bronze).