

Debunking myth

Actor Ananya Panday says there is no truth behind so called 'catfights' among female actors in the film industry

LEISURE | P2

New sanctions on Iran

The US and UK impose a new round of sanctions on Iran as concern grows that Tehran's unprecedented attack on Israel could fuel a wider war

INTERNATIONAL | P10

Milestone moment

Vedanta group firm Hindustan Zinc says it has become the third-largest producer of silver globally

BUSINESS | P11

Eyes on semis berth

Unbeaten at home, Odisha FC aim for semifinals when they take on Kerala Blasters in the ISL playoffs today at Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar

SPORTS | P12

BATTLE BEGINS TODAY

The first phase of the world's largest electoral exercise will begin today when as many as 16.63 crore citizens in 102 constituencies across 21 states and UTs will cast their votes to elect representatives to the Lok Sabha. Moreover, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim will witness simultaneous polls for Assembly as well as the Lower House

PHASE-I POLLS

- 16.63cr TOTAL VOTERS
- 35.67L 1ST-TIME VOTERS
- 18L PERSONNEL DEPLOYED
- 1.87L POLLING STATIONS

NOMINATION FILING STARTS

Bhubaneswar: With the Election Commission of India issuing notification for the simultaneous polls for Lok Sabha and Assembly, the nomination paper filing process started, Thursday. The candidates can file nomination papers for state's four Lok Sabha constituencies and 28 Assembly segments between 11am and 3pm from April 18 to April 25. Voting will be held for four Lok Sabha seats - Berhampur, Nabarangpur (ST), Kalahandi and Koraput (ST) May 13. Polling for the 28 Assembly segments under the four Parliamentary constituencies will also be held on the same day. P3

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 18: The 2024 Lok Sabha polls will kick off Friday, with voting for 102 seats spread across 21 states and Union Territories (UTs) in the first of the seven phases of the world's largest electoral exercise, official sources said, Thursday.

While the BJP wishes to emerge as a force challenging the Dravidian parties in Tamil Nadu and determined to retain its strongholds across the nation, the Opposition INDIA is facing a Herculean task in dislodging the BJP-led NDA.

Over 16.63 crore people are eligible to vote Friday. The country has nearly 97 crore registered voters for elections to the 543-member Lok Sabha. In the first phase, there are 35.67 lakh

first-time voters and 3.51 crore young voters in the age group of 20-29. Counting of votes in the elections that will conclude June 1 will be taken up June 4.

Polling will be held for all seats of Tamil Nadu (39), Uttarakhand (five), Arunachal Pradesh (two), Meghalaya (two) and one seat each in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Mizoram, Nagaland, Puducherry, Sikkim and Lakshadweep. Besides, there will be voting in 12 seats in Rajasthan, eight in Uttar Pradesh, six in

Madhya Pradesh, five seats each in Assam and Maharashtra, four in Bihar, three in West Bengal, two in Manipur, and one seat each in Tripura, Jammu and Kashmir and Chhattisgarh. Simultaneously, Assembly elections will be held in Arunachal Pradesh (60 seats) and Sikkim (32 seats).

Among the prominent candidates in fray in the first phase are Union Ministers Nitin Gadkari and Sarbananda Sonowal, Gaurav Gogoi of Congress and DMK's Kanimozhi. An aggressive

K Annamalai, who is steering the BJP campaign in Tamil Nadu, is also among the contestants.

Seven other Union Ministers - Bhupender Yadav, Kiren Rijiju, Sanjeev Baliyan, Jitendra Singh, Arjun Ram Meghwal, L Murugan and Nisith Pramanik - are also in the poll fray in the first phase.

Polling will begin at 7am and end at 6pm. The voters comprise 8.4 crore men, 8.23 crore women and 11,371 from third-gender.

The Election Commission of India has deployed over 18 lakh personnel across 1.87 lakh polling stations.

While the NDA, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is seeking a stronger majority, the constituents of INDIA are hoping for a rebound after facing reverses in the 2014 and 2019 elections.

In 2019, the UPA had won 45 of the 102 seats at stake Friday and the NDA 41. Six of these seats have been redrawn as part of the delimitation exercise.

Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar urged people to cast their ballot and reminded all of the significance of each vote, saying there have been instances when one vote has mattered in a critical contest.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I'm heading for ground reporting... in a helicopter

EXTRA VOTE IN FAVOUR OF BJP IN MOCK POLL

Parties convinced, says EC

AGENCIES

Kasaragod, April 18: The Election Commission (EC) Thursday said it has resolved the issue of some Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) showing an extra vote in favour of BJP during a mock poll here and that it has convinced political parties/agents about it.

The Returning Officer (RO) of Kasaragod Lok Sabha constituency in his letter to the CEO of Kerala said that at the time of 'self checking', four EVMs printed out an additional slip other than the usual slips.

The RO said that according to the engineers who examined the

SC reserves verdict

The Supreme Court Thursday reserved its verdict on a batch of pleas seeking complete cross-verification of votes cast using EVMs with VVPAT. A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta reserved its verdict after hearing the response of Election Commission on the pleas.

machines, at the time of printing the standardisation slips, some EVMs were taken to the commissioning table without the printing of the slips being completed.

"When the machines were restarted at the commissioning table, the remaining standardisation slips were printed. That is

how the issue was reported at the commissioning table," the letter said. The issue was resolved by carrying out a mock poll of 1,000 votes using one of the four EVMs and the VVPAT slips were tallied with the machine count.

"Political parties/candidate agents were then convinced and signed the Annexure 22 certificate," the letter said. The letter was sent by the RO to the CEO following complaints that some EVMs were wrongly recording votes in favour of the BJP during mock poll. Earlier in the day, the EC told the Supreme Court that the allegation of EVMs showing one extra vote during the mock poll in Kasaragod was false.

MARKET WATCH

| INDEX | VARIAION |
|--------|-------------------|
| SENSEX | 72488.99 ↓ 454.69 |
| NIFTY | 21995.85 ↓ 152.05 |
| DOLLAR | 83.54 ↓ ₹0.07 |
| EURO | 89.21 ↑ ₹0.25 |
| GOLD | ₹72,519 ↓ ₹4 |
| SILVER | ₹ 83,300 ↓ ₹199 |

WEATHER

| | BBSR | CTC |
|----------|--------|--------|
| Max Temp | 43.6°C | 41.4°C |
| Min Temp | 27.0°C | 27.0°C |
| Humidity | 64% | 68% |
| Rainfall | Nil | Nil |

FORECAST
Heat wave to Severe heat wave condition very likely

ED ATTACHES ₹98 CRORE ASSETS OF SHILPA, HUBBY

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 18: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) Thursday said it has attached assets worth around ₹98 crore, including a bungalow in Pune and equity shares, of actor Shilpa Shetty and her husband Raj Kundra as part of a money laundering investigation.

The attached properties include residential flat in Juhu (Mumbai) presently in the name of Shetty and residential bungalow in Pune and equity shares in the name of Kundra, the ED said.

A provisional attachment order has been issued under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) to attach these properties worth ₹97.79 crore, it said.

The money laundering case stems from FIRs of the Maharashtra Police and Delhi Police against a company named Variable Tech and a few others, where it was alleged that they had collected huge funds in the form of Bitcoins (worth ₹6,600 crore in 2017) from gullible public with the false promises of 10 per cent per month return in the form of Bitcoins.

Bhubaneswar hottest at 43.6°C

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 18: The Capital City here Thursday recorded the highest temperature in the state at 43.6 degrees Celsius, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

According to the IMD's evening bulletin, the entire state was reeling under intense heatwave conditions, with temperatures crossing the 40 degrees Celsius mark at 32 places, of which 17 recorded mercury levels above 42 degrees Celsius.

Boudh recorded the second-highest temperature at 43.5 degrees Celsius, followed by Angul

We expect the peak phase of the heatwave within the next two days, with temperatures reaching 45 degrees Celsius at some places like Angul, Kalahandi, Jharsuguda, Bolangir, Boudh and Nayagarh

UMASHANKAR DAS | WEATHER SCIENTIST

(43.3), Jharsuguda (42.8) and Baripada (42.6), it said. Similarly, Titlagarh, Malkangiri and Khurda recorded a maximum temperature of 42.5 degrees Celsius each, followed by Jagatsinghpur (42.3), Nuapada, Balasore, Sambalpur and Talcher

(42.2), and Nayagarh, Dhenkanal, Bolangir and Bhawanipatna (42). The IMD predicted that the prevailing heatwave conditions would continue in the state for the next four days.

"We expect the peak phase of the heatwave within the next two days, with temperatures reaching 45 degrees Celsius at some places like Angul, Kalahandi, Jharsuguda, Bolangir, Boudh and Nayagarh," weather scientist Umashankar Das said.

The weather office has issued an Orange Warning (be prepared) for 18 districts and Yellow Warning (be updated) for five other districts for April 19.

SHORT TAKES

Cong names 4 more Assembly candidates

Bhubaneswar: The Congress Thursday announced the names of four more candidates for the Assembly polls in the state. Debendra Kumar Sahoo will contest from Mahanga, Manoj Rath (Satyabadi), Prakash Chandra Jena (Bhubaneswar-Central) and Ashok Kumar Das (Bhubaneswar-North), the party said. The Congress has so far announced candidates for 123 Assembly seats of the 147. P3

Woman sailor returns home

New Delhi: Ann Tessa Joseph, a woman cadet who was among the 17 Indians onboard container vessel MSC Aries that was seized by Iranian military over the weekend, returned to Cochin Thursday. The Ministry of External Affairs said the Indian mission in Tehran is in touch with the remaining 16 Indian crew members of the container vessel.

Man stabbed to death

Kendrapara: A 35-year-old man was stabbed to death over a trivial issue at Balarampur under Town police limits here, Thursday. The deceased was identified as Akshaya Khatua of Saranga, while the accused Aditya Behera of Chandia Palei, both under Sadar police limits here. Sources said Akshaya and Aditya were standing at a betel shop at Balarampur when they picked up a quarrel over some petty issues. Soon, an infuriated Aditya stabbed Akshaya at least 16 times, killing him instantaneously.

5,500-year-old skeletons reveal mafia-style killings

AGENCIES

Paris, April 18: More than 5,500 years ago, two women were tied up and probably buried alive in a ritual sacrifice in southwest France using a form of torture associated today with the Italian mafia, an analysis of skeletons discovered at an archaeological site in the country showed, the CNN reported.

Researchers investigated the unusual position of three female skeletons found in 1985 at the site in the town of Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux, and concluded that two of them probably died from a form of torture known as 'incaprettamento',

which involves tying a person's throat and ankles so that they eventually strangle themselves due to the position of their legs.

The researchers also reviewed skeletons found at other archaeological sites across Europe and identified 20 other probable instances of similar sacrificial killings. The practice may have been relatively widespread in Neolithic, or late Stone Age, Europe, according to the study, published in the journal Science Advances last week.

"The third woman found at the site was in a normal burial position and we don't know how she died," Eric Crubézy, one of the paper's lead authors and a bio-



logical anthropologist at Paul Sabatier University in Toulouse, told CNN. "But we can say that they put the three women in the grave at the same time," Crubézy said.

The women's burial place was aligned with the sunrise at summer solstice and sunset at winter solstice, leading the study's authors to hypothesise that this site acted as somewhere people gathered to mark the turning of the seasons, which may have involved human sacrifices.

"There is always this idea that somebody is dying and that the crops will grow," Crubézy added, referencing that belief appearing in other cultures such as the Inca practice of human sacri-

fice in South America.

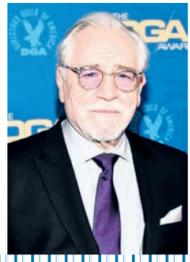
Crubézy was part of the original team that excavated the site in 1985 but it wasn't until the break caused by the Covid-19 pandemic that he and his colleagues set about re-searching other instances of such sacrifices.

By reviewing the existing literature, researchers pinpointed 20 other probable examples of people being sacrificed in the same way over 2,000 years in the Neolithic period. The study said the actual number was probably higher but there was insufficient information about skeletons at other archaeological sites to draw firm conclusions.

"In different parts of Europe, it was the same type of sacrifice," Crubézy said, adding, "This sacrifice is very particular because it's a cruel one ... and you have no blood and no people who killed another; the people killed themselves."

Though it is impossible to prove definitively that the women in the grave at Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux died in situ, their position "stacked atop each other and entwined with fragments of grindstones" implies that they were placed there forcefully and deliberately, "strongly suggesting that their demise likely occurred" in the grave, the study said.

leisure



I WOULD HAVE PLAYED NAPOLEON BETTER THAN PHOENIX: BRIAN COX

Actor Brian Cox wasn't impressed with fellow actor Joaquin Phoenix's performance in *Napoleon*. The *Succession* star, called Phoenix's performance as Napoleon 'terrible'. In a conversation Cox said, "I would have played it a lot better than Joaquin Phoenix."

SYDNEY LASHES OUT AT PRODUCER WHO CALLED HER UNWATCHABLE

Actress Sydney Sweeney, who garnered significant acclaim for her role in *Euphoria*, slammed Hollywood producer Carol Baum after she claimed in a scathing review that Sydney can't act and is not pretty, reports *Mirror.co.uk*.



FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshSpeaks.com
accuracy • reliability • trust
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

ARIES
Your sportsman spirit will find its way into both your professional and personal life. Today may be an important day in your life, and Ganesh says you must not forget your special quality.

TAURUS
You will put your heart and soul into whatever you do today, says Ganesh. But there may still be dark clouds hovering over the results. Don't let that bother you. You must keep up the hard work throughout the day. Finally, you will hit the deck with a feeling of happiness and satisfaction, predicts Ganesh.

GEMINI
Dress to kill today! People around you may or may not comment, but they will definitely notice you. Your sense of style and taste will bowl everyone over. People would scramble for a glimpse of you. In short, you will be a celebrity. Most probably, your beloved will share the limelight with you. Enjoy!

CANCER
You are at your industrious best today. You will be able to think the unthinkable, achieve the unachievable, and impress an emotionally impregnable boss. Your confidence level will be sky-high; in fact, it will make overconfidence wallow in self-doubt.

LEO
The thing with skills is that they are not static; they are as dynamic as anything else. It is akin to being on a treadmill – you need to continuously keep moving just to stay in the same place, says Ganesh. So keep refreshing yourself by learning new things in order to sustain your progress.

VIRGO
Get out of your self today, for a change, and try to look at things from a loved one's perspective. It's good to be confident, but over confidence is a different matter altogether, reminds Ganesh. Listening to others, absorbing their expressions and viewing things differently shall do you and your loved ones a world of good.

LIBRA
Today promises to be a joy ride for your hidden gourmand side. Relish what you eat, and thank God for the good luck. Career wise, however, you may find yourself standing at a crossroads. But, the good part about that is there shall be many paths to choose from. And, who knows the art of balancing better than you.

SCORPIO
Today promises to be a joy ride for your hidden gourmand side. Relish what you eat, and thank God for the good luck. Career wise, however, you may find yourself standing at a crossroads. But, the good part about that is there shall be many paths to choose from. And, who knows the art of balancing better than you.

SAGITTARIUS
Your dedication to work is set to shift to the top gear. Find yourself swamped by excess of workload in the forenoon. Things, however, will lighten as the afternoon progresses. Expect a fun-filled, exciting evening.

CAPRICORN
Opportunities are rare, and good opportunities rarer still. Today, you will run to grab an opportunity and will make the most of it, says Ganesh. This move will yield instant results, and place you better in comparison with your opponents. Rivals, in fact, will try to do you down but will fail miserably in their attempt.

AQUARIUS
You roar with absolute bliss today! Simplicity is your new avatar, and naturally, friends and acquaintances are mystified. You may wish to commune with the higher spirit and will seek solace in a quiet temple. Ganesh approves and predicts peace in plenty.

PISCES
Staying afloat needs about as much effort as swimming. Cryptic as this may sound, what it means is you need to constantly reinvent yourself if you wish to keep going. You will shine in your profession only if it is also your passion, says Ganesh.

Prachi reflects on her failures

Mumbai: Actress Prachi Desai, recently discussed her career and aspirations. She admitted that she could have made better decisions in the past if she had been more mature.

Reflecting on her journey in the film industry, the *Azhar* actress said, "My first acting break happened when I was 17. *Rock On* happened at the age of 19. In between shows and the movie, I got many offers, and I thought of them intuitively. *Rock On* was like a dream come true. I knew it would do well, especially when there was no commonality between the real me and my character. I have always been very sorted in my head, so I could gauge what is worth doing for me. But a few decisions I made in the past could have been better if I had been more mature."

She further elaborated, "The roles being written today are way better and far from the stereotypical way of portraying women on screen. Audiences are exposed to so much content that they have become much smarter. It really makes a huge difference for me in making my choices now. Today, I don't have to worry about playing the antagonist or protagonist, as it is only about doing interesting roles."

On the work front, Prachi is currently seen in the OTT series *Silence 2*.

AGENCIES



Ananya blows lid off showbiz 'catfights'

Mumbai: Actress Ananya Panday, who garnered rave reviews for her performance in her last release *Kho Gaye Hum Kahan*, recently blew the lid off the so called 'catfights' in the film industry.

In a chat with women's magazine *Femina*, Ananya said that the ongoing talk about women being pitted against each other in the industry, called 'catfights', is something created by a certain set of people or the media.

She cited an example by talking about her friends like Suhana Khan and Shanaya Kapoor. "We feel comfortable in our circle, and we love and support each other without such ego," the

actress said and added that women within the industry can help each other a lot.

Ananya emphasised that every female actor she had met will always say that the women they've encountered in the industry are some of their good friends. According to her, anyone outside the industry never understands this.

She found it lucky to share the screen with Deepika Padukone, Bhumi Pednekar, and others so early in her career. She admitted that she could learn a lot from them. She could feel the friendship, warmth while shooting, and they still keep in touch with each other.

Ananya is expected to collaborate with Vikramaditya Motwane, and act in *Shankara* with Akshay Kumar and R Madhavan. She also has *Call Me Bae* in her kitty.

AGENCIES



Mumbai: Actress Kiara Advani, who will soon be seen in the Telugu political action thriller *Game Changer* has a penchant for baking.

The actress took to her Instagram Thursday and

shared a video of baking a cake and garnishing it with biscuits and choco chips, wearing a black T-shirt, a blue striped shirt, and a pair of denim.

She wrote in the caption, "Baking with my favourite snakk (sic)."

Kiara is sharing the screen with Telugu star Ram Charan in her next *Game Changer*. The film directed by S Shankar features Charan in a triple role, leading an ensemble cast of Anjali, SJ Suryah, Jayaram, Sunil, Srikanth, Samuthirakani, and Nassar.

The actress also has *Don 3* in the pipeline, which has Ranveer Singh in the titular role.

IANS

Kiara's love for baking



NOTED ACTOR, DIRECTOR SACHCHI DAS NO MORE

Bhubaneswar: Eminent Odia actor, director, and playwright Sachchi Das passed away at a hospital in Cuttack, Thursday. He was 91.

Das, who had been ailing for a long time, breathed his last around 9.30 am while undergoing treatment, according to family sources.

Born in a Zamindar family of Bari in Jajpur district in 1936, Das began his acting career with the play *Tipachinha* in his village. During his studies at Ravenshaw Collegiate School and Ravenshaw College, he learned classical singing and tabla from Guru Shyamsundar Dhir. Later, he got associated with Janata Rangamanch in 1958 and founded the theatre troupe *Ebam Ame*. In a career spanning over 50 years, he has directed more than 50 dramas and 400 jatras. His *Shaguna Basichi Dena Melai* is one of the most popular shows in Odisha so far. Das also worked as an assistant director in movies like *Ta'apoi*, *Meghamukti*, and *Agni Parikhya*, and acted in several others.

He had bagged the prestigious Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 2000-01 and Kabi Samrat Upendra Bhanja Samman in 2015-16 for his lifelong contribution to the field of performing arts.

Several eminent people expressed their condolence at his death.

BIJAY MANDAL, OP

Chandra Kumar Mohanty honour for Saqti, Hemant

Bhubaneswar: Two young poets – Saqti Mohanty and Hemant Dalapati – have been nominated to receive the prestigious Chandra Kumar Mohanty Kabita Puraskar-2024.

This was stated Thursday by Krushna Kumar Mohanty, the convener of the Chandra Kumar Mohanty Memorial Committee.

Saqti's works are based on society and relationships, while Hemant writes about the helplessness and pain of the deprived section of society.

Both the poets will be honoured July 6 at the 8th memorial ceremony of the late poet to be held at Venya Paradise Kalyan Mandap in Balasore.

A poetry anthology titled *Amlet: Eka Bhrunahatyara Katha*, written by Utpal Mohanty, will be released on the occasion.

The committee has been conferring the honour on poets less than 50 years of age since 2018.

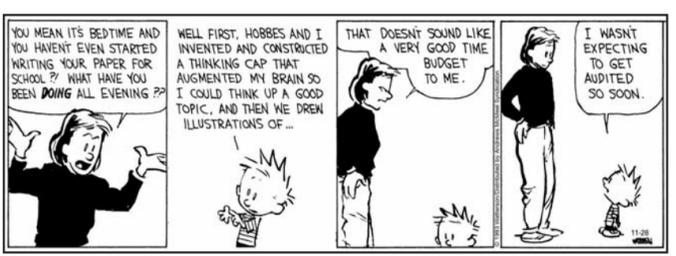
Past recipients of the award include Shubhashri Lenka, Saroj Bal, Kishore Panigrahi, Lipika Das, Pratikshya Jena, Angurbala Parida and Manoj Kumar Meher.

PNN

PEANUTS



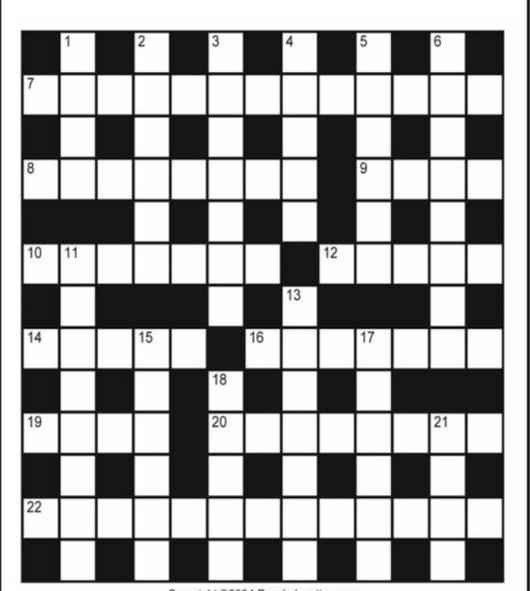
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



FUN post CROSSWORD



Across
7 Roughly speaking
8 Grappler in the ring
9 Fleur-de-lis
10 Reflux in the ocean
12 Winery process
14 Crow
16 Coach

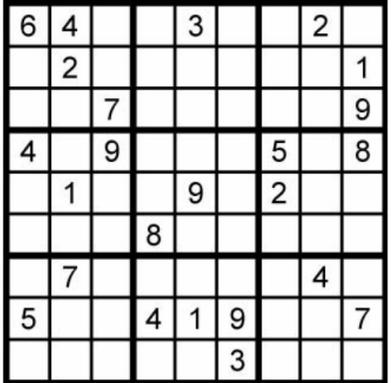
Down
19 Cuba's ___ of Youth
20 Camouflage
22 Shame

Across
5 Guitar part
6 Coalition
11 Flowerets
13 Keep going no matter what
15 Teeter-totter
17 Friendly
18 Cherish
21 Baroness
Dudevant's aka, George ___

Copyright ©2024 PuzzleJunction.com

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

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

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

Danseuses perform at Lingaraj Festival-2024, at Old Town, Bhubaneswar, Thursday



downtown

FIRST PHASE POLL IN STATE MAY 13

Women voters outnumber men in 4 Lok Sabha seats



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, April 18: Women voters outnumber men in the four Lok Sabha constituencies in Odisha that go to polls May 13, the first phase in the state and the fourth across the country.

Briefing reporters, chief electoral officer (CEO) Nikunja Bihari Dhal said Berhampur, Koraput, Kalahandi and Nabarangpur Lok Sabha constituencies and 28 Assembly seats coming under these parliamentary segments will go to polls May 13, the nomination process for which began Thursday.

According to Dhal, out of

62,84,649 voters in these four Lok Sabha constituencies, 31,87,771 are women, 30,96,243 men and 635 transgenders.

The CEO said different enforcement agencies have seized cash, liquor, drugs and other items worth ₹118.65 crore in the state during the pre-election period from March 1 till date.

He said police confiscated cash, narcotics, and liquor totaling ₹61.6 crore, while the state excise department seized narcotics worth ₹30 crore. Additionally, the state goods and services tax (GST) department seized items valued at ₹17 crore, the department of revenue and intelligence seized

Different enforcement agencies have seized cash, liquor, drugs and other items worth ₹118.65 crore in the state during the pre-election period from March 1 till date

items worth ₹6.4 crore, and the transport department seized items worth ₹1.19 crore. The Income Tax department recovered ₹73 lakh, and the Forest department recovered ₹95 lakh, he added.

A total of 7,289 polling booths and 14 auxiliary polling stations have been set up in the four Lok Sabha seats. Additionally, 75 companies of central paramilitary forces have been deployed in the state, with plans for further deployment of CAPF personnel in the coming days, Dhal added.

The CEO said they have received over 3,873 complaints about Model Code of Conduct violations through the C-vigil app in the state, of which 3,854 have been disposed of.



WAR ZONE: Angry BJP workers vandalise the state office of the party in Bhubaneswar, Thursday, protesting the decision to field Baidhar Mallick from Kakatpur Assembly seat in Puri

Odisha cadre IPS officer takes VRS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 18: NCB deputy director general (DDG) Sanjay Kumar Singh, who headed an SIT that gave a clean chit to actor Shah Rukh Khan's son in the drugs-on-cruise case, has taken VRS.

The 1996-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer from the Odisha cadre is currently heading the Narcotics Control Bureau's (NCB's) south-west and southern region as its DDG.

He is also holding an enquiry against former NCB zonal director Sameer Wankhede on charges of alleged irregularities while conducting investigation into two drugs cases when the latter headed the NCB Mumbai office. Singh told PTI that he sought voluntary retirement from service (VRS) on purely 'personal grounds' and that he has applied for the same February 29. His VRS is effective from April 30.

"I will continue doing the job till April 30," he said. A special investigation team (SIT) headed by Singh had given a clean chit to Aryan Khan and five others in May 2022 citing 'lack of sufficient evidence' against them in the drugs-on-cruise case.

Social media, influencers at centre stage of campaigning

Parties such as Biju Janata Dal (BJD), Bharatiya Janaty Party (BJP) see the influencers with a sizeable fan base as effective medium to reach out to millennial voters and push their messages

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 18: The election season is here and all political parties are extensively tapping social media and influencers - having sizeable fan base on various platforms - to push their messages through subtle campaigns to woo voters.

In fact, social media seems to have transformed the very nature of elections and campaigns, offering a place for news, discourse and election information as heat-wave conditions make it difficult for parties, or candidates, to carry out effective outdoor canvassing.

Parties such as the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) are busy tapping those with a sizeable fan base as an effective medium to reach out to millennial voters and push their messages.

Recently, Social media influencers Rashmita Dash and Neha Panigrahi Dash - popular for their 'Meals on Wheel Car Khana' - joined BJP and have started promoting the party on social media.

Several Odia film personalities such as Babushaan Mohanty, Amlan Das, Swaraj Barik, Sailendra Samantaray, Bhoomika Dash, Supriya Nayak, Sivani Sangita, Devasis Patra, Jyoti Ranjan Nayak and Poonam



Mishra recently called on BJD supreme Naveen Patnaik at the latter's residence. Emerging out of the meeting, some of them said that the discussions also included their involvement in the campaign for the BJD for the upcoming elections.

Incidentally, Poonam and Saillendra have already started sharing videos about the BJD-led state government's flagship initiatives like the Srimandir Parikrama project, 5T School Transformation, disaster management, sports development et al on various platforms which have reached thousands of their followers.

Social media influencers are not far behind the matinee idols. Many popular local social media influencers have started sharing political videos regularly.

Joyeeta Roy, a Digital Marketing Consultant said, "Social media these days plays significant role in political campaigning in India offering parties a direct way to engage with voters, share their platforms, and mobilize support. Parties can reach out to a broad audience quickly and engage directly with them, fostering a sense of connection and participation."

She said social media allows highly targeted messaging, reaching specific demographics with tailored content. "Compared to traditional media, social media campaigns can be more cost-effective, making it accessible to

parties with smaller budgets," she said.

She went on to add, "The influencers' endorsement can lend credibility and reach to a party's campaign. However, their influence also raises questions about transparency and authenticity, as audiences may be skeptical of sponsored content."

Content creator and social media influencer Satyabrata Mohapatra who had created promotional videos for both Central and state government schemes, and also is currently promoting the state government's different finished projects, said "The promotion of government projects which are beneficial for people is okay. But the problem occurs when some influencers just promote whatever the parties tell them to say without thinking. That might create problem and spread fake news, which is unethical"

Devi Ranjan Tripathy, president, Biju Chhatra Janata Dal, said that social media fields tremendous power. "All parties understand this and use it for connecting with the audience. During elections, the government uses it for showcasing its projects and initiatives, while others showcase their plans if they come to power. But most importantly, it is the responsibility of voters to save themselves from getting manipulated and take their own decision," he added.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Couple among 4 held for running fake job racket

DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 18: The Commissionerate Police Thursday claimed to have busted an online fake job racket and arrested four persons, including a couple, for allegedly duping a man of ₹11 lakh over telegram application.

Bhubaneswar DCP Prateek Singh identified the accused as Trupti Ranjan Patra, 31, Banalata Sahoo, 27, Manas Ranjan Suna, 35, and Nihar Ranjan Paikray, 35. "The couple, Trupti and Banalata, natives of Ganjam dis-

trict, had created 42 mule accounts in numerous banks to commit the fraud", Singh added.

Revealing the modus operandi of the syndicate, Singh said, initially the scammers would contact random users on telegram platform and offer them money in exchange of reviewing products online. After several exchanges, the victim/s would place their trusts with the scammers.

Later, Singh said, the scammers would manipulate the victims into making investments in fake schemes. Following the payments, they would block them

and go incommunicado.

Singh added the racket came under the scanner of cops after the complainant, Abdul Akbar Khan, registered an FIR at Cyber police station, alleging that the accused members had swindled ₹11 lakh from him on the pretext of providing him a job.

"After Abdul transferred the money, the scammers were found to have split it in 11 different bank accounts," he said adding that the police contacted the branches of the banks and obtained their address before rounding them up today.

Preliminary probe has revealed that the accused couple hired several youths in the Capital City for ₹5,000 to ₹7,000 per month, for creating mule accounts using genuine persons' credentials.

So far, the cops have traced the highest deposit of ₹46 lakh in one of these accounts.

The Cyber police station booked the foursome under Sections 66C and 66D of Information Technology Act, along with other provisions of IPC and produced them before a local court for remand.

3°C global warming may result in 10% GDP loss

POORER, TROPICAL COUNTRIES COULD SEE THE WORST EFFECTS -- UP TO 17 PER CENT GDP LOSS

Extreme heat, with heat waves being the most impactful among the extreme events analysed.

"Impacts are more severe in the Global South and highest in Africa and the Middle East, where higher initial temperatures make countries particularly vulnerable to additional warming," the authors wrote.

The researchers further found that the cost of climate change increased around the world after accounting for changes in rainfall and temperatures occurring within a short span at a location.

"If we take into account that warmer years also come with changes in rainfall and temperature variability, it turns out that the estimated impact of spiking temperatures is worse than previously thought," said doctoral researcher and economist Paul Waidelich from ETH



Zurich and lead author of the study.

Limiting the rise of global temperatures to 1.5 degrees Celsius could cut these projected economic damages by two-thirds, the researchers found.

"Some people still say that

the world cannot afford rapid decarbonisation but the global economy will also suffer from the impacts of climate change," said Sonia Seneviratne, co-author of the study and a vice-chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Working

'HER' to combat crime against women in City

DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 18: In a bid to curb the rising instances of crime against women in the Capital City, the Commissionerate Police Thursday announced a specialized team - HER (High Efficiency and Response) to deal with cases related to eve-teasing, stalking, harassment and misbehaviour, particularly for women travelling home in late hours.

Along with that, the police have launched dedicated helplines 6372500400 and 112 where victims can lodge impromptu complaints. They can also lodge complaints over e-mail at: hersteam.bbsr@gmail.com

Bhubaneswar DCP Prateek Singh said Thursday that the HER team will be managed by female cops who would remain

alert round-the-clock and provide immediate assistance to those seeking help. "The move would be of great help to women travelling at late hours or returning home late at night," he added.

ACP Anjana Tudu, who is heading the team, said assistance would arrive at the spot within 15 minutes of the receipt of the complaint. "Otherwise, the team will coordinate with the nearest police station for timely action," she said. For complaints made from the City outskirts, the team would contact local police stations for assistance, she said.

According to the 2022-23 NCRB report released by Union Ministry of Home Affairs, Bhubaneswar recorded a total of 564 cases of crime against women, including 31 cases of assault.

WORLD HERITAGE DAY

Naveen urges people to preserve state's heritage



the programme, were given information about the history of the temple structure situated near the lake. Joining the programme as chief guest on this occasion, Utkal University of Culture VC Prasan Kumar Swain said that awareness must be created among the new generation about art and architecture of the state.

He further said, "Odisha has a rich religious and cultural heritage that goes back more than two thousand years. The state is full of historical places to visit and has many heritage monuments that reflect its history and culture."

The state boasts of several historical monuments such as Konark Sun Temple, Barabati Fort, Jagannath Temple, Dhuli, Lalitgiri, Kapileswar Temple, Lingaraj Temple, Rajarani Temple and Udayagiri and Khandagiri Caves among others.

Recently, the Cabinet headed by the chief minister, had approved the Integrated Development of Heritage and Monuments and Tourist Destination at a cost outlay of ₹1412.79 crore.

A total of 159 heritage sites will be redeveloped with a blend of modern amenities and the state government will spend the said amount till 2027.

treasures and preserve the trousseau of heritage for future generations."

Notably, April 18 is observed as International Monuments and Sites Day, traditionally called the World Heritage Day, to celebrate and promote the cultural heritage across the world.

Odia Language, Literature and Culture department in association with Aithiya, an outfit dedicated to heritage conservation, organised a Padyatra near Bindusagar Lake. Several students, who participated in



SURVIVAL NEEDS: Labourers toiling hard amid rising temperature in the Capital City, Thursday, flouting restrictions on working hours imposed by state government
PIC- MANORANJAN MISHRA

NHAI to monetise 33 highway stretches in FY25

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 18: National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has identified 33 highway stretches including in Odisha, cumulatively spanning 2,741 km to monetise during the current financial year through toll operate transfer (TOT) and infrastructure investment trust (InvIT) modes.

The identified stretches include Panikoli-Rimuli in Odisha, Lucknow-Aligarh, Kanpur-Ayodhya-Gorakhpur and Bareilly-Sitapur in Uttar Pradesh,



Gurugram-Kotputli-Jaipur bypass and Jaipur-Kishangarh in Rajasthan, Chennai bypass in Tamil Nadu and Muzaffarpur-

Darbhanga-Purnia highway in Bihar.

The asset will be monetised through ToT/InvIT modes. "NHAI will have discretion to review and change the above list and modes of monetisation," the agency said.

NHAI has raised ₹40,314 crore through various modes of asset monetisation in 2023-24 against the target of ₹28,868 crore.

NHAI's asset monetisation has crossed ₹1 lakh crore till date.

The Ministry of Road, Transport and Highways

(MoRTH) had raised ₹32,855 crore in 2022-23 through various modes of asset monetisation.

Currently, MoRTH monetises its assets under three modes - TOT model, InvIT and project-based financing to provide all categories of investors an opportunity to invest in assets pertaining to highways and associated infrastructure.

InvIT is an instrument on the pattern of mutual funds, designed to pool money from investors and invest in assets that will provide cash flows over a period of time.

2-day int'l conference at CUO from today

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 18: On the occasion of World Heritage Day, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Thursday asked people to preserve the richness and diversity of Odisha's heritage. Taking to X, the CM said, "Odisha is blessed with wealth of timeless monuments and sites that narrate stories of our glorious past, rich history and vibrant culture. On International Day for Monuments and Sites, let's celebrate these timeless

Artist turns Jaipur home into gallery

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 18: Noted writer and painter Prafulla Mohanti, who is a British citizen of Indian origin, recently converted his two-storey house in Nanpur village of Jaipur district into an art gallery, which was recently opened on his 90th birthday. The gallery titled 'The Creative Hands' houses hundreds of paintings made by Mohanti and other artists.

The artist reportedly said that the conversion of his house into a gallery was prompted by his desire to teach art, painting, dance, song and other cultural activities to children in his home town in an institutional way.

Born in Nanpur in 1936, Mohanti completed his graduation from Bombay University and then received a diploma in Town Planning from Leeds University in the UK, where he also had his first solo exhibition of paintings in the 60s. The influence of his birthplace and



childhood experiences can be seen clearly in his art. It was the repeated practice of making circles with mud chalk on the ground that has helped refine his skills. He not only drew good pictures, but also perfected his handwriting for both Odia and English scripts.

The vermilion spot of his mother's forehead got mirrored in his rising and setting sun, defusing crimson colour in the sky, and the circle turned into the cosmos or Brahmanda. The abstract renditions of his artworks include the Bindu or dot, signifying Shunya, floating blue clouds

and the blue ocean. The artist has had several exhibitions in many parts of the world including Europe, America, Japan and India. His paintings have been part of several international travelling exhibitions organised by National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi.

His works are in the collection of The British Museum at London, Leeds City Art Gallery, Wakefield City Art Gallery, Brighton Art Gallery, University of Leeds, University of Sussex, University of Kent, Museum of Modern Art at Berkeley, Academy of Fine Arts at Kolkata, Air India, First National City Bank at Manila, Indian Council for Cultural Relations, the National Gallery of Modern Art and Lalit Kala Academy, all three in New Delhi and many other public and private collections. The artist has also authored a couple of books and runs an NGO in the state. He lives mostly in London and works from his studio at home.

EMPOWERING WOMEN FARMERS THROUGH FPC

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 18: With the objective of enhancing livelihoods of women farmers in the state, International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and Dvara E-Registry have come together, embarking on a significant initiative to establish a women-led Farmer Producer Company (FPC) in Ganjam.

This partnership is a part of the Climate Smart Rice-based Systems for Prosperity and Resilience (ClimatePRO) project supported by Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare (DA & FW), Government of India and Odisha Integrated Irrigation Project for Climate Resilient Agriculture (OIIPICRA).

The purpose of the collaboration is to empower smallholder farmers, particularly women, by introducing them to climate-resilient and high-yielding varieties of rice, pulses, oilseeds and other profitable crops. The adop-

tion of climate-smart agricultural practices aims to improve farmers' resilience to climate change, thereby ensuring sustainable farming systems throughout the state.

The Doorishti platform, developed by Dvara E-Registry, plays a pivotal role in this context by improving access to agricultural services for all stakeholders within the agricultural value chain. This mobile and web-based platform enables the digitisation of FPO lands and business activities, offering farm and crop-specific products and services through a digital mode of information sharing.

IRRI principal scientist and ClimatePRO project head Ranjitha Puskur said, "This would be the third women-led FPC we are incubating in Odisha. These market-oriented collectives play a critical role in enabling women to become resilient and be at the forefront of driving sustainable transformations of agriculture and food systems."

WORLD LIVER DAY TODAY

Excess sugar, oil consumption as harmful for liver as alcohol

While alcohol is known to be bad for liver health, consuming foods rich in sugar and oil may be equally dangerous for the organ as well as for overall health, said doctors Thursday, ahead of World Liver Day.

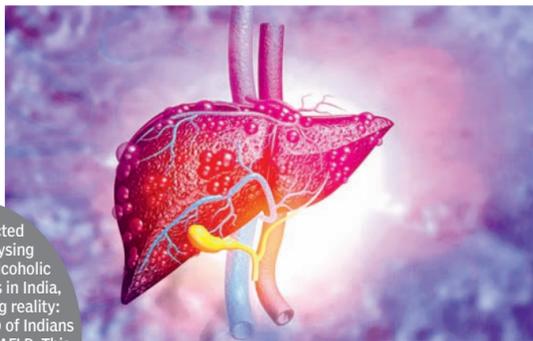
World Liver Day is observed April 19 every year to highlight the importance of a healthy liver for the normal functioning of the body. The theme this year is 'Be vigilant, get regular liver check-ups, and prevent fatty liver diseases'.

The liver acts as the body's warehouse, processing everything one consumes. Eating more calories can accumulate in the liver, leading to fatty liver disease, which can trigger diabetes and other metabolic disorders.

"While the dangers of alcohol-related liver disease are well-

known, there is a rising concern over non-alcoholic liver disease caused by high-calorie foods, such as sugars and fats. This condition can lead to the same severe complications as alcoholic liver disease, including liver cirrhosis, which might eventually require a liver transplant," Dr Shreevidya, Medical Director, Apollo ProHealth, told IANS.

"Excess sugar and oil intake, like alcohol, give rise to fat droplets scattered through the liver tissue leading to a cascade of liver injury due to inflammation



leading to liver failure," explained Dr Pavan Dhole, Junior Consultant - Gastroenterology, PD Hinduja Hospital & MRC, Mahim.

Excess sugar and oil intake fuels obesity leading to adverse liver health, including non-alcoholic fatty liver diseases (NAFLD).

Data shows nearly one out of every four Indian adults are ei-

“ Liver diseases have emerged as critical public health concerns in India. NAFLD often remains unrecognised in its early stages as it may not manifest symptoms. However, it can progress to severe liver diseases

DR RAHUL ROY | CONSULTANT - LIVER TRANSPLANT AND HEPATOPANCREATIC BILIARY SURGERY, RN TAGORE HOSPITAL AND NARAYANA HOSPITAL, HOWRAH

ther overweight or obese (at risk of fatty liver disease) and alcohol use is also on the rise.

A study conducted by AIIMS, analysing reports on NAFLD in India, revealed a startling reality: over one-third (38 per cent) of Indians have fatty liver or NAFLD. This phenomenon extends to affect nearly 35 per cent of children as well, as per the Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hepatology and calls for attention to addressing lifestyle-related health issues from an early age.

"Liver diseases have emerged

as critical public health concerns in India. NAFLD often remains unrecognised in its early stages as it may not manifest symptoms. However, it can progress to severe liver diseases," Dr Rahul Roy, Consultant - Liver Transplant and Hepatopancreatic Biliary Surgery, RN Tagore Hospital and Narayana Hospital, Howrah told IANS.

"The westernisation of diets, characterised by increased fast food consumption and a lack of fruits and vegetables, plays a pivotal role in the rise of fatty liver diseases," he added.

CLASSIFIED

AFFIDAVIT

I Ashok Mohanty, S/o Late Kasinath Mohanty, resident of Village-ATAMALA, PO/PS/ Dist.- Jagatsinghpur, Pin-754103, declare by this affidavit No. 541 Dt.06.04.2024 that now onwards I shall be known as 'ASHOK KUMAR MOHANTY' for all future purposes.

FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS

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

Flight-test of indigenous cruise missile successful

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh congratulated DRDO for the successful flight test of the ITCM



Sensors like Radar, Electro Optical Tracking System (EOTS) and Telemetry deployed by ITR at different locations to ensure complete coverage of the flight path.

This successful flight test has also established the reliable performance of the indigenous propulsion system developed by Gas Turbine Research Establishment (GTRE), Bangalore.

The missile is developed by Bangalore-based DRDO laboratory Aeronautical Development Establishment (ADE) along with contributions from other laboratories and Indian industries. The test was carried out in the presence of many senior scientists from various DRDO laboratories along with representatives from the production partner.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh congratulated DRDO for the successful flight test of the ITCM and stated that the successful development of indigenous long-range subsonic cruise missile powered by indigenous propulsion is a major milestone. DRDO Chairman Samir V Kamat congratulated the entire team of DRDO on the successful conduct of the ITCM launch.



NOBLE GESTURE: Members of Mahavir Foundation tying water filled pots on trees for birds to quench their thirst at Tinikoshia reserve forest on the foothills of Kuldihia wildlife sanctuary in Balasore district, Thursday

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi/Balasore, April 18: DRDO has conducted a successful flight test of Indigenous Technology Cruise Missile (ITCM). The missile is equipped with advanced avionics and software to ensure better and more reliable performance.

The flight of the missile was also monitored from the Su-30-Mk-I aircraft of the Indian Air Force.

The Ministry of Defence informed Thursday that the test was conducted from the Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur, off the coast of Odisha April 18, 2024.

During the test, all subsystems performed as per expectation. The missile demonstrated very low altitude sea-skimming flight.

Man awarded life in jail for minor's rape

PNN & AGENCIES

Keonjhar, April 18: A court in Keonjhar district Thursday sentenced a 29-year-old man to life in jail for raping and impregnating a minor girl, who tragically died after delivering a still-born.

Keonjhar POCSO Court Judge Bijay Kumar Mishra pronounced the verdict against convict Ansuman Mohapatra of Saras village in this district after hearing the testimony of 16 witnesses and reviewing medical reports, the public prosecutor (PP) Gyanendranath Jena said.

The prosecution said after the victim's mother passed away, her father remarried, and abandoned his daughter. Eventually, the convict Anshuman's wife



brought the girl to their house. However, instead of facilitating her education, she employed the victim as domestic help, the PP added.

Meanwhile, taking advantage of his wife's absence in the house, Anshuman raped the girl repeatedly. The girl was rescued when town police raided Anshuman's house in connection with a civil case. Upon intervention by local social activists, the victim was relocated to a shelter home.

She was taken to the district

The victim minor was later found to be pregnant and died tragically after delivering a stillborn

headquarters hospital by 'Sakhi-One Stop Centre' and during the medical examination, she was found to be pregnant. During the counselling there, the victim disclosed that Ansuman had repeatedly assaulted her in the absence of his wife, the PP added.

Tragically, the victim succumbed after delivering the still-born. Social activist Monika Sahu, who rescued her, filed a case at Keonjhar town police station in June 2021, leading to the arrest of the accused.

2 drown in river in separate incidents

Kendrapara: In a tragic incident, two people, including a sexagenarian widow, drowned in two separate incidents in Kendrapara district Thursday.

Police said a 23-year-old youth, Sebak Rath of Talakusuma village under Kudanagari police limits, had gone to the Chitropala river along with his friends to take a bath when the mishap took place. The body of Sebak was later fished out from the river water during a search and rescue operation by the fire tender personnel and locals. The youth was rushed to Patkura CHC by his family members, but the doctor declared him dead. The Kudanagari police later seized the body and sent it for autopsy. In another incident, a 66-year-old widow, Satyabati Malik, of Bandhakuda village under Khurushia GP, went missing while bathing in Paika river Thursday. The local fire tender personnel launched a search and rescue operation but failed to trace the widow.

Ex-MLA sells land to fund daughter's poll expenses

PNN & AGENCIES

Kendrapara, April 18: Struggling to meet the rising expenses of the upcoming Assembly elections, a former Congress MLA in state recently sold off a portion of his ancestral land to fund his daughter who is contesting as a candidate.

Debdra Sharma, who represented Aul Assembly constituency in Kendrapara district from 2014 to 2019, sold off five decimal homestead land in his native village recently.

Facing formidable challenges including financial constraints and a well-funded opposition, Sharma expressed concerns over

the lack of monetary support from the Congress party, citing the freezing of party accounts by the Income Tax department.

"My daughter, Debasmita Sharma (28), is contesting the polls from the constituency where both my father and I were previously elected as MLAs," he said, highlighting the financial strain on the family due to the heavy campaign spending by rival candidates, making it challenging to meet the necessary poll expenses.

Debasmita, following in the footsteps of her father and grandfather, left her job as a government doctor to pursue a career in public service.

Sharma explained that the campaign funds provided by the party for his daughter were insufficient. "Consequently, faced with compelling circumstances, I made the difficult decision to sell a piece of our ancestral land in the village to generate additional resources for her campaign," he said.

Despite being pitted against prominent opponents like minister Pratap Keshari Deb of BJD and BJP's Krushna Chandra Panda, Sharma remains hopeful that voters will place their trust in his daughter. Debasmita was unavailable for comment due to her busy campaign schedule.

BSF personnel bust 2 Red dumps

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 18: In a breakthrough, the BSF personnel Thursday recovered huge cache of explosive materials and arms from two Maoist dumps in the Bejaniwada Reserve Forest area in Malkangiri district.

Official sources said a joint operation was carried out by BSF troops of COB- Bodigetta, COB- MPV 21, Tactical Headquarters of 142 Bn BSF, and Intelligence Team of Sector HQ BSF Malkangiri, in the Bejaniwada Reserve Forest area to eradicate insurgency from the heartlands of Odisha.

A meticulously planned joint operation conducted April 18 yielded significant results.

On reaching the targeted area, the security forces located two Maoist dumps, side by side, con-

cealed within rock cavities nestled in the jungle, at about 1.8 km from the connecting road axis of village Sana Tekguda - Bejaniwada, near Elakanur village under Kalimela police station in Malkangiri district.

The security forces have recovered and seized seven SBML guns, sealed two tiffin IEDs (each approximately 3 litre), 36 hand grenades, four solar electric panels, two domestic LPG cylinders, 500 steel balls (fragmented), and 20 meters of electric wire.

Earlier these areas were highly influenced by Maoists and their sympathisers. The Maoist outfits used to keep IEDs, IED-making materials, and arms in isolated places to harm the SFs/Police operating in this area.

BSF is actively operating in Malkangiri district and extensively dominating the area.

Woman organ donor given guard of honour

POST NEWS NETWORK

Hatadihi, April 18: A woman from Sadha village under this block in Keonjhar district, whose organs were donated following her death with the written consent of her family members, was given a guard of honour during her funeral Thursday by the district administration.

The deceased woman was identified as Sanjukta Jena, 48, wife of Rabindra Jena of Sadha village.

As per reports, Sanjukta fell down in the bathroom after her leg slipped and sustained critical injury on her head a week back. She was taken to a private hospital in Bhubaneswar for treatment where she died last Tuesday.

After the untimely death, family members decided to donate



her organs. The deceased woman's husband Rabindra then informed the doctors about their wish to donate his wife's organs. Rabindra along with her two daughters Shubhashree and Dibyashree and his brother-in-law Prashant Mahapatra all gave written consent for organ donation at the respective medical centre.

The woman's body reached

her village Thursday after organ donation. Keonjhar ADM Lalit Soren, Anandapur Sub-Collector Falguni Majhi, SDPO Prashant Behera, Hatadihi Tehsildar Habil Khakha, Nandipada PS IIC Rabindra Patra, Soso PS IIC Bijaya Bihari and many other dignitaries along with a large number of local residents were present during the guard of honour.

Ram Navami celebrations pass off peacefully

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, April 18: With the district administration making elaborate security arrangements to tackle any unpleasant situation, Ram Navami celebrations in Sundargarh district remained peaceful.

Contrary to other areas in the district, the procession was taken out Thursday in Rourkela. "This is the tradition we have been following from the beginning," said one Shankar of Daily Market Akhada. A total of 15 akhadhas participated in the procession here which starts from Bisra Chowk and continues till Udit Nagar.

The celebration was continuing peacefully when the report was filed. To maintain law and order, the district administration has deployed over 15 platoons of men in uniform, sources said.

The atmosphere was electrifying as over 30,000 people were present on either side of the nearly 3-km stretch to witness the procession. Delicacies and drinks were being offered to all.

"We are ensuring that all akhadhas abide by the guidelines given by the administration. We are able to do this because of our good relation with all the participating akhadhas," said Satyananda Mohanty, a former scribe and member of the integration forum.



Goldi Singh, a member of another akhadha said, "The Model Code of Conduct is in force and we have promised that everything will go as per the instructions of the administration."

The procession was held Wednesday at Rajgangpur during which 24 platoons of police force were deployed by the administration. Given the town's past records of communal tension, more than 30 officers of DSP and IIC ranks were pressed into service. A huge statue of Lord Hanuman measuring 15 feet in height was taken around the town and was immersed Thursday in the artificial pond created by the Rajgangpur Municipality.

At Biramitrapur, five platoons of police personnel were present with

15 officers pressed to control the situation Wednesday. The administration was extra cautious because of the communal tension that had gripped the town a few days back during a religious celebration. However, everything went off peacefully. Biramitrapur SDPO Susant Das said, "We took adequate measures to manage law and order in the town. Besides, the organising committee and members of all communities assured that they would help in maintaining peace." There were five akhadhas participating in the celebration.

In other parts of the district like Bonai and Talsara the celebration was peaceful and passed off without any issues.

EAST COAST RAILWAY
ENGAGEMENT OF
STATION TICKET BOOKING AGENTS (STBA)

No. C/SBP/STBA/NSG-5 Catg./Stns/01/24/02 Date : 12.04.2024

Applications are invited for engagement of Station Ticket Booking Agents (STBA) on commission basis at 01 (One) NSG-5 category stations over Sambalpur Division of East Coast Railway for issuing unreserved tickets round the clock through Unreserved Ticketing System (UTS). Interested persons fulfilling the stipulated conditions may apply in the prescribed format to the Divisional Railway Manager (Commercial), East Coast Railway, Sambalpur Division.

NON-SUBURBAN GRADE-5 CATEGORY STATION (NSG-5) AMBODALA (AMB).

COMMISSION PAYABLE : From the applicants fulfilling the eligibility conditions, the candidate(s) who opts for the least commission on the slab-3 (i.e. on the 4% commission slab) will be selected as STBA. The commission payable shall be as follows :

● Slab-1 : ₹ 1/- to ₹ 20,000/- : 25% (Minimum of ₹ 2,500/-). ● Slab-2 : ₹ 20,001/- to ₹ 1,00,000/- : 15%. ● Slab-3 : above ₹ 1,00,000/- : 4% or the rate quoted whichever is lower.

The details and the prescribed format for filling application may be obtained from website of East Coast Railway i.e. www.eastcoastrail.indianrailways.gov.in and in the office of the Divisional Railway Manager (Commercial), East Coast Railway, 2nd floor, DRM Office Complex, Sambalpur Division, Post - Modipara, Dist. - Sambalpur, Pin-768002 (Odisha) on any working days from 1000 hrs. to 1800 hrs. upto 01.05.2024. The last date for submission/dropping of duly filled application is 02.05.2024 at 1100 hrs. in the above address.

Notwithstanding above, the Railway Administration has the right to reject any or every application without assigning any reasons. The decision thereof will be final.

Any application received after the above period or incomplete in any manner will not be entertained/considered and no correspondence in this regard will be entertained.

PR-26/P/24-25 Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager, Sambalpur

बैंक ऑफ बड़ोदा
Bank of Baroda

Regional Office, Sambalpur,
1st Floor, At: Christian Para, G.M. College
Chowk, Dist.: Sambalpur, Odisha, PIN - 768001

VEHICLE AUCTION
SALE NOTICE

Applications are invited from interested bidders for purchase of following vehicles, seized by the Bank on "As is where is basis" as per terms and conditions listed below. This public notice will be treated as a notice to the borrowers/guarantors/mortgagors of the loans. They are hereby advised to be present at the auction venue on the auction date and are free to liquidate their entire dues before the auction date, failing which the vehicles will be auctioned and balance dues, if any will be recovered from them with interest and cost.

| Sl. No. | Branch/Contact Number | Name of Borrower | Vehicle No. / Chasis No / Engine No | Make & Model | Month / Year of Manufacturing | Reserve Price / EMD/Bid Increase Amount | EMD deposit A/c. No., IFSC Code |
|---------|-----------------------|--|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| 1. | BARGARH / 7752050824 | PADMABATI ENTERPRISES, PROP: MOHAN LUHA | OD-15M-3754 | EICHER PRO 5035 D CBC | December-2018 | ₹ 9,00,000/- / ₹ 90,000/- / ₹ 2,000/- | 32550015181219/ BARB0BARGRH |
| 2. | BARGARH / 7752050824 | M/S. N.M. ENTERPRISES, PROP: NANDAN NANDANANDA | OD-15M-3752 | EICHER PRO 5035 BS IV | December-2018 | ₹ 9,00,000/- / ₹ 90,000/- / ₹ 2,000/- | 32550015181219/ BARB0BARGRH |

Parking Yard : Ram Vatika, Kendaghati, Deogarh Road, Sambalpur, Odisha

- Vehicles Inspection Date: 04.05.2024, Time: 1.00 PM
- Last date of submission of online EMD 04.05.2024 latest by 2:30 PM
- The schedule date of auction to be held on 06.05.2024 from 11.00 AM to 1.00 PM
- Bid and declaration form along with self-attested Aadhar, PAN, EMD deposit with UTR number to be submitted to Authorised officer on or before 04.05.2024 for getting user ID & password from Auction tiger. (Help Desk No.: 9265562821/9265562819)

TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

1) Applications accompanied by ID/address proof copy (originals to be verified) and EMD of 10% of Reserve price as applicable for each vehicle in shape of Banker's cheque/Draft drawn in favour of **Bank of Baroda, payable at Concerned Branch** should reach on or before 04.05.2024 upto 2.30 P.M. 2) However the bank reserves the right to accept/reject/cancel the auction process of any/all vehicles at its own discretion at any point of time without assigning any reason whatsoever. 3) Bid amount does not include any statutory tax pending and applicable RTA fees. All these cost are additional and must be borne by the successful bidder. 4) Dispute pertaining to year of manufacture, documents, condition of vehicle/assets, etc. will not be consider after successful bid. 5) Entry to the event is strictly restricted to the registered bidder only. 6) The refund of EMD will be made immediately after the closure of the bidding process to the unsuccessful bidders. 7) Successful Highest bidder has to deposit a minimum amount of 25% of the bid amount inclusive EMD on the same day, failing which the bid taken will not be considered as EMD amount will be forfeited without further intimation. 8) The balance should be paid by the successful bidder within next 15 days from the date of auction. 9) Delayed interest @18%p.a. will be charged against any amount due and payable by the successful bidder beyond 15 days from the date of the event, subject to a maximum waiting period of 22 days from the date of auction. 10) Default in payment beyond the stipulated 22 days, will lead to deal cancellation and forfeiture of EMD paid and the vehicle/equipment/machinery will be resold without further information. Acceptance of payment on later date will be sole discretion of Bank. 11) Successful Bidders are fully responsible for taking delivery of all vehicles or equipment from Stockyard after full payment is made. 12) Successful bidders must remove the vehicles/equipments within 7 days from the date of release order along with RC Transfer in to their name.

Place : Sambalpur, Date: 18.04.2024 Authorised Officer, Bank of Baroda

Sin and virtue are a game of resistance we play with God in His efforts to draw us towards perfection.

SRI AUROBINDO



Beacon of Hope

There was a time, not so long ago, when the depletion of Earth's ozone layer seemed like an insurmountable challenge. Decades of using harmful chemicals, such as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), had threatened to cause irreparable damage to our planet. Without swift action, we faced the risk of climate destabilisation, ecosystem collapse, and the breakdown of our food system. Consequences that were once almost unthinkable became painfully real.

But then, the most remarkable thing happened: humanity united to protect the ozone layer. Heeding the warnings of Nobel laureate scientists Paul Crutzen, Mario Molina, and Sherwood Rowland, whose research underscored the severity of the threat, we did not ignore or dismiss the scientific evidence, nor did we bury our heads in the sand and claim that the challenge was too daunting. Instead, the global community recognised the urgent need for collective action.

By harnessing scientific knowledge, entire industries have been transformed, and equitable policies have been put in place to shield countries that did not contribute to the problem. Thanks to the Montreal Protocol, ratified by 197 countries, nearly 99% of ozone-depleting substances have been phased out. This includes the reduction and replacement of CFCs, which has slowed climate change by at least a decade.

The successful global effort to protect the ozone layer should serve as a beacon of hope for all of us. It is one of humanity's greatest environmental achievements, showing what we can achieve when we act together with commitment, respect, and determination.

But it can also serve as a warning. A 2023 study by Johan Rockström and 28 other leading climate scientists revealed a startling new reality, underscoring the need to adopt a collaborative approach to protecting the planet before it is too late.

The planetary boundaries model, introduced by Rockström and others in 2009, provides a useful framework for assessing the planet's health. It identifies nine interconnected factors - including climate, freshwater availability, biodiversity, and land use - that are crucial for the planet's stability and habitability. In their recent study, Rockström and his co-authors found that six of these nine boundaries have already been breached, putting Earth on a dangerous course that undermines the planet's resilience and jeopardizes human well-being. Notably, the ozone layer is the only area showing signs of improvement.

Given that Earth functions as an interconnected system, we cannot solve one problem without addressing the others. Despite being aware of the critical role of planetary boundaries in preserving our Earth's habitability, we have not acted decisively enough to halt our slide toward catastrophe.

For example, we know that more than a million species are on the brink of extinction, potentially triggering the collapse of entire ecosystems. We also know that nitrogen and phosphorous runoff leads to the proliferation of toxic algae blooms in oceans and freshwater systems, thereby breaching the biogeochemical flow boundary. Similarly, tolerating dangerous levels of chemical pollution and allowing our children to ingest microplastics compromise the life-support systems necessary for humanity's survival.

To restore Earth's stability, governments must recognise the need to respect the nine planetary boundaries. This requires a steadfast commitment to reducing greenhouse-gas emissions and protecting biodiversity and water resources. Moreover, our chances of success increase exponentially when we cooperate: if the international community can unite as it did when it agreed to repair the ozone layer, there is hope.

But first, we must heed the advice of indigenous peoples and local communities and listen to what nature is telling us. Despite making up less than 5% of the global population, indigenous communities act as the planet's wise custodians, protecting at least one-quarter of the world's land and seas and 80% of its biodiversity.

To advance this approach, we have joined forces with Planetary Guardians, an independent collective of global leaders, scientists, and environmental advocates championing the planetary boundaries model. Our goal is to promote its adoption as a framework for assessing and guiding collective climate action.

By bringing together leaders from various countries, industries, age groups, genders, and cultures, Planetary Guardians aims to leverage our diverse backgrounds and experiences to find solutions to protect the planet. While our planet's resources are finite, there is no limit to human ingenuity and our capacity for solving complex problems. The real question is what Earth we wish to leave to future generations.

To be sure, there are no simple answers or quick fixes. Our future hinges on the steps each of us is willing to take. But in saving the ozone layer, we have already shown that taking swift, informed, collective action can facilitate the changes needed to sustain human life on Earth.

Robert Redford, Co-Founder of the Redford Center, is an actor, director, and producer. Xiye Bastida, a climate-justice activist from the Otomi-Toltec indigenous community in Central Mexico, is Co-Founder of the Re-Earth Initiative.

PROJECT SYNDICATE



Robert Redford & Xiye Bastida

Our future hinges on the steps each of us is willing to take.

But in saving the ozone layer, we have already shown that taking swift, informed, collective action can facilitate the changes needed to sustain human life on Earth

FOCUS DEVELOPMENT

TIME TO SHIFT GEARS

Odisha is one of the poorest states in the country. According to NITI Aayog's report, Odisha is placed among the top ten states with a significant share of population living under poverty. The southern and western parts and undivided KBK districts are home to a majority of poor people. People from these districts often migrate to Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and other states.

In the above context, following are some of the points which should be focus areas of the government to drive growth of the state. i) Technical intervention in rural areas: Technology is a great leveller. Rural development using science and technology based solutions, and technology interventions for addressing societal needs are necessary. More specifically, location-specific interventions are required to address issues related to livelihood, health and nutrition and local resource management.

ii) Education: Govt should fill vacant teaching posts in schools, colleges and universities. Some of the districts which do not have any government degree colleges so far should get one. Each district should have at least one government medical college, engineering college, and a university for human resource development. Even though Bhubaneswar has emerged as an education hub in eastern India; at present, pursuing a BEd course in Odisha is extremely difficult for many Odia students. For some unknown reason, in Odisha, private colleges are not allowed to start BEd courses. As per reports, over 90,000 students had applied for BEd for around 2,400 seats in 2023. Owing to a limited number of seats, lakhs of students from Odisha are forced to do BEd in Andhra Pradesh through agents by paying hefty sums. Since there is a crisis of trained teachers in schools, the government should allow private universities and colleges to start BEd



Relying on social schemes alone can bring temporary relief to people, but for long-term growth inclusive and sustainable industrialisation is necessary

course. The Odisha State Open University in-collaboration with IGNOU can impart quality Doctoral, M.Phil, Master, Bachelor, and Diploma courses.

iii) Capacity building: It is worth mentioning that in several industries of Odisha, most of the skilled trade jobs are filled with people from outside Odisha. It is apparent that there is an urgent need to open better schools to train people in various skills. The way forward should be establishing community colleges and opening ITIs/polytechnics at gram panchayat level.

iv) Healthcare: People in Odisha are deprived of quality healthcare. Recent airlifting of two well-known politicians from western Odisha to Bhubaneswar to avail medical treatment has ignited a public debate about the lack of medical facilities in most of the district headquarters hospitals. As per available data, Maharashtra has 30 government and 33 private medical colleges for its 35 districts. Similarly, Rajasthan has 21 government and 9 private medical colleges for 33 districts, Gujarat has 23 government and 13 private medical colleges for 33 districts; whereas, Tamil Nadu has 38 government and 33 private medical colleges for 38 districts. This year total medical colleges in UP will exceed 75

for its 75 districts, since it aims to add 12 new medical colleges. Along this line, the Odisha government should work towards opening at least one medical college in each of its districts and needs to upgrade old ones to facilitate the supply of trained healthcare professionals. Bargarh and several other districts of Odisha are under the shadow of cancer, infertility, and kidney related diseases because of pesticide overuse and water contamination. The government needs to conduct tests for water and is required to take preventive measures.

v) Agriculture and milk production: The state should aggressively push for implementing farm mechanisation to reduce drudgery and production costs. Moreover, focus should be on micro-irrigation, water harvesting, water management, improved rural electrification, and diversification of high-value crops. India is the world's largest milk producer. However, Odisha is lagging far behind other states in dairy sector growth. The Amul Model of dairy development can be replicated in Odisha.

vi) Tourism: Odisha government has identified three hundred tourist spots for developing them as attractive destinations for domestic and international tourists. But thus far only a

handful of tourist places are developed in the Bhubaneswar, Cuttack and Puri region. To tap the limitless tourism potential, the government should build infrastructure in tourist spots located across the state.

vii) Entrepreneurship: In general Odisha does not have entrepreneurial culture and lacks an ecosystem for startups. Business enterprises driven by science and technology have potential to create long-term sustainable employment and wealth. Such enterprises can significantly contribute in providing social mobility to disadvantaged communities. Top most agenda of the government should be to inject entrepreneurial and scientific temper among the youths. In addition, funds should be allocated to institutions to conduct cutting-edge research, up-scaling/down-scaling of technologies for appropriation, and field implementation. Greater emphasis should be paid to collaboration with industries. Encouraging patent filing can attract young innovators and help develop new technologies and products that are competitive globally. Science and technology parks, industrial corridors, and incubation centres should be built to support companies in the areas of IT, clean technology, renewable energy, waste management, resource recovery, agriculture and food technology, pharma, biotechnology, electronics and telecommunication, cyber security, and artificial intelligence.

The above mentioned things should be implemented in a timely manner. Time has come for Odisha to shift from being a consumer state to an entrepreneurial and manufacturing state. Furthermore, the government should look beyond Bhubaneswar; if it wants the state to prosper. Relying on social schemes alone can bring temporary relief to people, but for long-term growth inclusive and sustainable industrialisation is necessary.

The writer is a scientist. Views are personal.

TOP MOST AGENDA OF THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE TO INJECT ENTREPRENEURIAL AND SCIENTIFIC TEMPER AMONG THE YOUTHS



Sanjib Kumar Karmee

SPECTRUM ECONOMY

Viksit Bharat: A sobering reality

Ahead of the seven-phase Lok Sabha polls beginning on 19 April, the BJP unveiled its long-awaited manifesto titled the BJP's Sankalp Patra with the tagline "Modi ki Guarantee," on Ambedkar Jayanti. The manifesto outlines a roadmap to transform India into a "Viksit Bharat" by 2047, including a pledge to introduce a "one nation, one election" system and a common electoral roll.

But the manifesto does not tell how far BJP has realised the promises made before the last two elections. It does not tell how to tackle various social, economic malaises plaguing the masses. It does not tell how much people are enjoying a decent life. While in power for the past 10 years, the BJP has not fulfilled its promises like bringing back black money stashed abroad, crediting ₹15 lakh each to bank accounts of people, generating two crore jobs each year and doubling the income of farmers.

Making India a developed country by 2047 is an illusion. Nobody has seen tomorrow and "in the long run we are all dead." India continues to be a lower middle-income country. According to the

IMF World Economic Outlook (October - 2023), GDP (nominal) per capita of India in 2024 is projected at \$2,848 at current prices. India is at 143rd position out of 195 economies in terms of GDP (nominal) per capita. The per-capita income growth has dropped to 5.1 percent in this fiscal which is 21 years' lowest. Since 2011, India has become the third largest economy in terms of purchasing power parity and no further improvement has been seen since then.

The 2023 report on food security and nutrition released by the five UN agencies earlier this week said 74.1% of Indians, or 104.3 crore people were unable to afford a healthy diet in 2021. The report also estimated India's proportion of undernourished population at 16.6% during 2020-2022.

What is disquieting is that Income and wealth inequality today is higher than that of British Raj. The Indian income tax system is regressive when viewed from the lens of net wealth. The burden of tax is falling on the poor.

Employment generation is a mammoth challenge for a country where millions of young people enter the job market every year. India is witnessing jobless

growth. The economy is witnessing a stagnating employment growth rate, weakening employment elasticity, slow structural transformation, and brewing structural problems in the labour market such as low female labour force participation and a rise in the unemployment rate with education levels, according to a study by D. Tripathi Rao of the Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Lucknow.

India's youth continue to grapple with soaring unemployment rates, with nearly 83% of the jobless population belonging to this demographic, as per the India Employment Report 2024 jointly published by the ILO and the Institute of Human Development (IHD).

What is alarming is that India's household debt soared to an unprecedented level of 40% of GDP by December 2023, from 38% of GDP for 2022-23. This indicates a significant escalation in financial strain and distress. Earlier estimates from the RBI had already raised alarms, indicating that households' net financial savings had plummeted to an alarming 5.1% of GDP in 2022-23, representing a 47-year

nadir from 7.2% in 2021-22.

A nation is evaluated not in terms of GDP or a few amassing wealth by hook or crook, but by the state of human development. But the same has worsened further since 2014. In human development index, India is placed 134 out of 193 countries in 2023-24 down from 130 out of 188 in 2014.

As per government records, poverty might have declined, but in reality, the yardstick on which poverty is being measured shows starvation or deprivation. The \$2.15 a day poverty line reflects the value of national poverty lines in some of the poorest countries and is often referred to as the extreme poverty line. If the poverty rate at \$6.85 a day (2017 PPP) of upper-middle-income countries is used, then 82.98% of Indians are found to be poor in 2021.

Instead of resorting to publicity blitzkrieg, the government should try for greater empowerment for the poor and deprived sections through better education, healthcare, gender equity and job creations. No attempt should be made to evoke emotions.

The writer is an Odisha-based economist and columnist. Views are personal.



Santosh Kumar Mohapatra

EMPLOYMENT GENERATION IS A MAMMOTH CHALLENGE FOR A COUNTRY WHERE MILLIONS OF YOUNG PEOPLE ENTER THE JOB MARKET EVERY YEAR

WISDOM CORNER

There may be a great fire in our hearts, yet no one ever comes to warm himself at it, and the passers-by see only a wisp of smoke. VINCENT VAN GOGH

Keep your eyes open to your mercies. The man who forgets to be thankful has fallen asleep in life. ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Waiting is painful. Forgetting is painful. But not knowing which to do is the worse kind of suffering. PAULO COELHO

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1775: The American Revolutionary War begins. The Battles of Lexington and Concord marked the beginning of the armed conflict between the Kingdom of Great Britain and 13 colonies of British North America. The war resulted in U.S. independence.
- 1943: The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, an act of resistance by Polish Jews under Nazi occupation, began this day and was quelled four weeks later, on May 16.
- 1960: Students in South Korea began demonstrating against President Syngman Rhee, who had declared victory in the national election, which many claimed was marred by fraud; the unrest grew, ultimately forcing Rhee to resign.
- 1975: Aryabhata, the first uncrewed Earth satellite built by India, was launched from the Soviet Union by a Russian-made rocket.

Surge in drunk driving

Sir, A surge in cases of drunk driving has been reported from across the country, and the recent Mahendragarh school bus accident is a pointer. Alcoholism is now more of a socioeconomic problem. Since there is literally no organ in the body which is spared of the ill-effects of alcoholism, the danger is manifold especially for drivers whose psychosomatic reflexes tend to slow down. It's easy to increase patrolling and hasten checking process of drivers who drive intoxicated. But tipsy drivers can easily dodge these check points. Besides, the authorities need to curb convenient access and easy availability of alcohol. Enhanced fines, adequate punishment and control over carefree proliferation of liquor shops are important. Fellow-drivers cannot turn a blind eye to happenings around them: they have to report the erring drivers to the police.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Avoid escalation

Sir, The tension in West Asia has escalated since Iran directly launched missile attacks on Israel. The region is already facing challenges due to Israel's war in Gaza after the 7 October attack by Hamas. More than 30,000 people have already died in Gaza due to the war; the majority of them being women and children. The US and regional players like the Hezbollah and the Houthis have also been involved in the conflict in these six months. Further escalation of war can lead to serious consequences in the region and for the whole world. West Asia is often termed as the energy basket of the globe due to its potential to produce oils. Many important sea trade routes connecting Asia to other parts of the world also go through this region. Any direct war between Tehran and Tel Aviv can pause oil supply and disrupt the sea routes. The war can also pull other regional powers into it. Global organisations and leaders should mediate between the countries and convince them to avoid future intensification of conflict. The leaders of both Iran and Israel should also stop provoking each other. The humanitarian crisis in Gaza also needs to be stopped immediately as it is the root cause behind the conflict in the region.

Deba Prasad Nayak, DHENKANAL

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

OrissaPOST

B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010



In a first, UP prepares question banks 'Congress will return to power'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Prayagraj (UP), April 18: In a first, the Uttar Pradesh (UP) basic education department has prepared question banks for more than 25 lakh students of Classes 9 and 10 studying in more than 27,000 schools affiliated with the UP Board.

These question banks aim to enhance students' preparation for competitive examinations such as engineering and medical entrances.

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), New Delhi, along with the State Institute of Science Education (SISE) and subject experts from select universities, colleges, and secondary schools, has jointly prepared these question banks for science and mathematics, according to officials of the state secondary education department.

Former state project director of Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, Vijay Kiran Anand, had entrusted the responsibility of creating the question banks to the State Science Education Institute, Prayagraj, officials said.

Manjusha Gupta, the science



coordinator at SISE-Prayagraj, said that 12 and 13 chapters had been included in the science question bank of Classes 9 and 10, respectively.

Each chapter comprised around 70 questions, including various multiple choice, very short, short, and long answer questions of cognitive, perceptual, application, and skill types. Thus, there was a compilation of about

THESE QUESTION BANKS AIM TO ENHANCE STUDENTS' PREPARATION FOR COMPETITIVE EXAMINATIONS SUCH AS ENGINEERING AND MEDICAL ENTRANCES. FORMER STATE PROJECT DIRECTOR OF SAMAGRA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN, VIJAY KIRAN ANAND, HAD ENTRUSTED THE RESPONSIBILITY OF CREATING THE QUESTION BANKS TO THE STATE SCIENCE EDUCATION INSTITUTE, PRAYAGRAJ, OFFICIALS SAID.

840 questions for Class 9 and another 910 questions for Class 10 students, she said.

All the questions in the question bank will reinforce the vital concepts of science in the students, and they will be able to understand and practice them automatically, she said. SISE-Prayagraj's mathemat-

ics coordinator, Arvind Kumar Gautam, said that the mathematics question bank for Classes 9 and 10 consisted of 12 and 14 chapters, respectively. There was a compilation of approximately 912 questions for class 9 and 1,064 questions for class 10 students. At the beginning of each type of question, sample questions had also been given to generate interest among the students, he added.

The question banks prepared based on the NCERT syllabus has been sent by SISE-Prayagraj to the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) of Uttar Pradesh in Lucknow. They are expected to become available to students soon. At present, only question banks prepared and published by private publishers are available in the market.

These question banks aim to provide practice opportunities to achieve desired teaching-learning outcomes and assist students in succeeding in exams. Undoubtedly, these exercises will help clarify concepts among students and enhance their understanding of the subjects.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, April 18: Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah Thursday said the response from voters towards Congress is 'very good' and the party would win up to 20 seats in the state in the coming Lok Sabha polls.

The guarantee schemes launched by his government will not be stopped for any reason, Siddaramaiah asserted as he claimed that the Congress will return to power after completing the current term, and they would continue.

"The response is very good from the voters in Karnataka, but

The response is very good from the voters in Karnataka, but I do not know about the other parts of the country. As far as Karnataka is concerned, we will win up to 20 seats this time

SIDDARAMAIAH | KARNATAKA CM

I do not know about the other parts of the country. As far as Karnataka is concerned, we will win up to 20 seats this time," Siddaramaiah said here.

Karnataka has 28 Lok Sabha constituencies. In the 2019 par-

liamentary elections, the Congress and its then alliance partner JD(S), which were running a coalition government at the time, had won just one seat each, while the BJP secured 25, and had also ensured the victory of an independent supported by it.

This time, the JD(S) is in an alliance with the BJP, and is contesting in three seats, and the saffron party in the remaining. Congress is contesting in all 28 seats. Responding to a question about BJP state president B Y Vijayendra's comments that the guarantee schemes are "temporary", the chief minister said, "Vijayendra doesn't know things, what does he mean by temporary? Is he a fortune teller? In Karnataka we will be (in power) this term and the next term too, and will not stop guarantee schemes for any reason."

"Guarantee schemes will be continued and for this we have set aside Rs 52,000 crore in the budget," he added. Karnataka is going to the polls in two phases. While polling for 14 Lok Sabha segments in the southern part of the state will be held on April 26, the second phase of voting in northern districts will be held May 7.

Farmers to make climate-smart decisions soon UP has the most GI-tagged items

AKSARA PROMISES TO ENABLE FARMERS WITH THE RIGHT KIND OF INFORMATION, HYPER-TUNED TO LOCAL CONDITIONS AND CROPS, SO THAT THEY CAN MAKE CLIMATE-SMART DECISIONS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, April 18: Imagine a tool that not only predicts the onset of weather anomalies – like the current heat wave – but also alerts farmers about what can be done with specific reference to the crops that they have chosen to cultivate.

Thanks to rapid progress in Artificial Intelligence (AI) this may soon be possible. A stepping stone in that direction is Aksara, an open-source micro language model launched by Bangalore-based agri-tech firm, Cropin Technology.

Aksara promises to enable farmers with the right kind of information, hyper-tuned to local conditions and crops, so that they can make climate-smart

decisions. The existing large language model, which served as the base model for Aksara, is fed with more generic data, which are biased towards the Global North, said Krishna Kumar, founder and CEO of Cropin.

"What we have done with Aksara is that we fine-tuned contextual data on nine kinds of crops – paddy, wheat, maize, sorghum, barley, cotton, sugarcane, soybean and millets – with particular reference to countries in the Indian subcontinent," added Kumar.

The knowledge domain of the model is specific to the agricultural best practices, including climate-smart agricultural practices and regenerative agricultural practices, said Kumar. "AI has the potential to trans-



form agriculture, but challenges like access to large-scale structured data, expertise, and storage/compute infrastructure limit its adoption. Open-source projects like Aksara are crucial for wider AI use and speeding up innovation," said Praveen Pankajakshan, head of Cropin AI Labs.

Eventually, Cropin plans to build a version of Aksara, which will not only monitor, but also alert the farmers about possible interventions to mitigate the problem at hand.

"Anybody can download the model. With more people downloading and building on it, it is

possible in the near future for Aksara to process real-time information and suggest interventions that are beneficial," said Kumar.

According to him, for now Aksara is programmed to provide responses on focus crops and countries. The model is trained on a database containing information from seed sowing to harvesting, covering every phenological stage of the crop growth cycle and different aspects like crop health management, soil management, disease control, and others, said Kumar.

More geographies and crops will be added later and by leveraging multiple modalities of data, it will be possible to get intelligent climate data, added Pankajakshan.



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Varanasi, April 18: Six more products from Uttar Pradesh have been given the Geographical Indication (GI) tag.

These include the famous "Tirangi Barfi" of Kashi, a tricoloured sweet that was sold to prove a point by freedom fighters during the Quit India Movement. The GI Registry awarded the certification to the Banaras Tirangi Barfi and the five other Uttar Pradesh products Tuesday.

With these six new additions, Uttar Pradesh retains its position as the state with the most GI-tagged products in India, reaching a total of 75.

Tamil Nadu follows behind with 58 GI products.

The other products that received the certification in Uttar Pradesh include Banaras Metal Casting Craft, Lakhimpur Kheri Tharu Embroidery, Bareilly Cane

and Bamboo Craft, Bareilly Zardozi Craft, and Pilkhuwa Hand Block Print Textile.

"Two renowned products from Varanasi, the Tirangi Barfi and Metal Casting Craft, were granted GI certification Tuesday," said Padma Shri Rajnikant, a GI expert.

He is the general secretary of the Human Welfare Association and has played a crucial role in securing GI tags for 148 producers across 14 states and Union Territories, including those in the Northeast, Jammu & Kashmir, and Ladakh.

Rajnikant said, "These six GI tags were supported by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) Uttar Pradesh Lucknow office. This achievement solidifies UP's position as the leading state in GI products." In 2008-09, the state had only one GI product, the 'Allahabad Surkha Amrood'.

YOUTUBER ARRESTED FOR RECORDING VIDEO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, April 18: A 23-year-old Youtuber was arrested for allegedly entering the Kempegowda International Airport here, recording a video and later falsely claiming that he spent an entire day there, police said Thursday.

Vikas Gowda, a resident of Yelahanka here, entered the airport with a ticket of Chennai-bound Air India flight April 7 at around 12 pm, they said. According to the police, he did not board the flight 'deliberately' and, instead, was roaming around the airport recording a video on his mobile phone.

April 12, he uploaded the alleged video on his YouTube channel, which has nearly 1.13 lakh subscribers, falsely claiming that he had spent an entire day at the airport and had ventured into many areas of the airport premises hoodwinking security. The alleged video was later on deleted by him.

"He entered the airport and

cleared the security check at Terminal-2 of the Kempegowda International Airport and headed towards the boarding lounge. But instead of boarding the plane, he was roaming around in the airport premises and spent nearly six hours at the airport," a senior police officer said.

After recording the video, he left the airport claiming to the security personnel that he had missed his flight. Since he had a valid ticket and boarding pass, the security personnel did not suspect him, he said.

Preliminary investigation said he did it for publicity and also his claims in the alleged video were an exaggeration, he added.

The matter came to the notice of the airport security personnel April 15 and, based on the complaint of a Central Industrial Security Force official, a case was registered against Gowda under Sections 505 (Statements conducing to public mischief) and 448 (house trespass) of the Indian Penal Code, and he was arrested, the officer said. Gowda was later released on bail, police said.



Ram idol replica for temple in Netherlands

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Varanasi (UP), April 18: A Kashi-based sculptor has crafted a replica of the idol of Ram Lalla consecrated at the Ayodhya temple. This replicated idol will be enshrined in a Hanuman temple in the Netherlands.

Before its overseas journey, the idol will be brought to Ayodhya for rituals. The EterBliss Foundation, dedicated to promoting Sanatan Dharma, commissioned this replica idol. Moreover, the Foundation intends to install replicas of Ram Lalla idols in various other European countries.

Rahul Mukherjee, the director of the Foundation, said: "Swami



Akhand Samrat Anandji Maharaj, founder of EterBliss, is working on dispelling misconceptions about Sanatan

Dharma, which he says is an eternal philosophy, not merely a religion. Swami Maharaj plans to establish Ram temples around the world. We decided to install an idol of Ram Lalla in black stone at Hanuman Temple in Amsterdam."

Kashi-based sculptor, Kanhaiya Lal Sharma, who collaborated two decades ago with a European artist on a pink stone statue of Princess Diana, was selected to carve the replica.

Sharma said: "The foundation contacted me after the 'pran pratishtha' ceremony of Ram Lalla in Ayodhya, expressing their desire for a similar idol. I agreed, and we commenced work on Basant Panchami on February 24."

BEYOND THE PALACE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, April 18: The magnificence of Mysore's Amba Vilas Palace often overshadows other iconic buildings in the city that pay homage to the times gone by. To offset this, India Post has chosen five other Mysore marvels to highlight this World Heritage Day.

"Every year, to commemorate World Heritage Day, we try and shine the light on some hidden heritage gems. This year, we decided to present a Mysore that looks beyond its palace," S Rajendra Kumar, chief postmaster general, Bangalore HQ region, said.

According to Kumar, when Mysore-based architect, Sakshi Jain approached him with a set of her water colour sketches of other famous buildings – like the 19th century Devaraja Market with its ornate facade and courtyard; the colonial era bungalow

For World Heritage Day, India Post's nod to Mysore's lesser-known heritage



The Heritage House with its lofty windows and spacious verandah; Maistry Thimmaiah Choultry, a 1935 public rest house with a central courtyard in need of immediate restoration; 19th century Kukkarhalli Lake Tower; a blend of kiosk and light-

house; and Singer building, another 19th century specimen that was once rumoured to be a Freemason lodge – he decided to issue them as postcards.

Twenty-five-year-old Jain could hardly believe her luck. "This is all so serendipitous. When I

travel, I sketch the landmark buildings and when I was in Gujarat, I made my own postcard of my sketch of Neminath Jain Temple in Girnar. When I went to post it, one gentleman there told me that India Post commissions these kinds of

sketches as postcards," Jain said. When she came back to Mysore, Jain said she decided to try her luck and dropped in at the head post office of Mysore but was asked to go to the headquarters in Bangalore. The rest, as they say, is history. "I cannot really believe my luck. It has been my dream to become a conservation architect. In fact, that is one of the reasons why I document heritage buildings," said Jain.

Jain documents her heritage series, including those issued as postcards in her Instagram page (lakeerien_by_sakshi). The set of five postcards, titled 'Namma Ooru Tales -Mysuru', embedded with a QR code providing the history of the building, as well as the Special Cancellation on World Heritage Day will be available for sale at Philatelic Bureau, Bangalore GPO, Mysuru HO, Mangalore HO and Belagavi HO.



Hundreds of Congress leaders and workers along with Kandhamal BJP leader Kamalakanta Panda joined BJD at Sankha Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Thursday



Several BJD workers of Pandapur and Biswanathpur village under Angul Assembly constituency join BJP during a merger meeting under the leadership of state BJP OBC Morcha president Pratap Chandra Pradhan at Mishrapada in Angul, Thursday

Rahul slams Modi, wonders why Kerala CM targets him

AGENCIES

Kannur/Palakkad (Kerala), April 18: Intensifying the Congress' election campaign, senior leader Rahul Gandhi Thursday launched a scathing attack on BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi over various issues including unemployment and inflation and said the whole idea of the saffron party was to create instability and disharmony in India. However, he wondered why Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan is attacking him when his fight is with BJP. The Wayanad MP, who is also the Congress candidate from the hilly constituency in Kerala, attended three massive rallies in Kannur, Palakkad and Kottayam Lok Sabha segments and alleged certain media houses regularly abused him for criticising the policies and ideologies of BJP. Addressing an election rally in Kannur, Gandhi said his relentless criticism of BJP has resulted in the saffron party and their media houses tarnishing his image across the country. The entire idea of BJP is to create instability and disharmony in India and, in turn, harm millions of people in the country, he said. "I fight the BJP and the RSS. No matter what they do, I fight them every day. I have an ideological difference with them and I get up every day and think to myself, how am I gonna disturb them today? But there is a cost to this. Their media channels



The entire idea of BJP is to create instability and disharmony in India and, in turn, harm millions of people in the country
RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

abuse me 24 hours a day. My image is distorted across the country," Gandhi said. He also lashed out at Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and wondered why the Left leader is targeting him while he is fighting against BJP. The Congress leader said he was interrogated by the ED for 55 hours, his Lok Sabha membership and his official residence were taken away. He said two chief ministers are in jail, but none of these are happening to the Kerala Chief Minister. "Why is he (Vijayan) not being interrogated by the ED, CBI and all? Two CMs are in jail, but why is none of this happening to the Kerala CM? I have been attack-

ing the BJP 24x7 but the chief minister is attacking me. This is a bit puzzling," Gandhi said. "This is something the people of Kerala should think about," he said. The Congress leader in his attack on Modi said the PM and the BJP were dividing the country to distract the nation. "All they do is give away India's wealth to a few people. They divide the country to distract the nation and then all the wealth of the country goes to a few people who are close to the Prime Minister. Defence projects, infrastructure projects, agriculture, ports, airports, wherever you look you can see the name Adani," Gandhi claimed at a rally in Palakkad. He also attacked the media and said important issues like unemployment and inflation will never make it to the national headlines. "Farmers can block the highway to Delhi but it will not be visible in the national media. Because the national media is fully controlled by the same people Narendra Modi helps," Gandhi added. Praising the Kerala society, Gandhi said the southern state has shown the world how to live happily in diversity. Criticising Prime Minister Modi for not visiting violence-hit Manipur, he said that wherever the BJP people go, "they will divide people, make people fight with each other, and create problems."

Sitting MLA, aspirants trade barbs

POST NEWS NETWORK

Hatadihi, April 18: A fierce competition between new aspirants and old faces to grab the BJD ticket for Anandapur Assembly constituency under Keonjhar Lok Sabha segment was witnessed as the party is yet to announce a nominee. Disgruntled party leaders have held several meetings opposing any possible decision to announce the name of either the sitting MLA Bhagirathi Sethy or Mayadhar Jena. They have been demanding nomination of a new face for Anandapur. However, MLA Bhagirathi reportedly has been seething over the workers' protest against him. Sources said Bhagirathi in a phone call to former sarpanch of Panchugochhia panchayat and BJD worker Pyari Mohan Mallick used vulgar language and threatened him. He also challenged him to remove him as a candidate from the seat. An audio recording of the call has also gone viral on social media in which Bhagirathi can allegedly be heard uttering abuses. "I will see how you will remove me and how much strength you have," Bhagirathi is heard saying aloud in the audio. Many workers including senior BJD leaders Sanjay Rout, Rabindra Naik, Bimal Jena and Narayan Jena have raised strong objections to this and expressed displeasure. "Bhagirathi's high-handedness won't be tolerated and if he or Mayadhar becomes the candidate, the party will surely lose the seat," they said.

Ex-MLA Sipra Mallick joins Congress; Varsha in BJD



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, April 18: Amidst the ongoing trend of switching parties ahead of the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections in Odisha, former BJD MLA from Kendrapara Sipra Mallick joined the Congress, while Odia actor Varsha Priyadarshini joined the ruling regional party. Mallick was elected to the Assembly from Kendrapara in 2009, but was denied party ticket in 2014 and 2019. Though she had filed nomination as an independent candidate in 2019, she later withdrew it and supported the regional party. However, she decided to quit the party after getting indication that the BJD was likely to field Congress turncoat and former MLA Ganeswar Behera from the seat. Daughter of former Odisha minister Late Prahallad Mallick, Sipra joined the grand old party in the presence of senior Congress leaders, including former Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president

Prasad Harichandan Thursday. Sipra said it is an important day for her as she is set to start a new journey with the national party of which her late father was a member. In another development, actor Varsha Priyadarshini joined the BJD in presence of Rajya Sabha MP Sasmit Patra. She was inducted into the party almost three weeks after her ex-husband and sitting Kendrapara MP Anubhav Mohanty quit the BJD to join the BJP. Stating that Varsha is a great fan of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, Patra said, "She has been working for women empowerment, especially by creating awareness on menstrual hygiene. She had also helped women rebuild their lives during the Covid pandemic." Varsha said she felt honoured being part of Patnaik's party. "Sir (Patnaik) is a great gentleman who never speaks ill about anyone," the actor said, adding that she would function as a disciplined worker.



REPEAT DEPOSIT LOSER FILES PAPERS FOR 20TH TIME

AGENCIES

Indore, April 18: Parmanand Tolani, popular as 'Indori Dhartipakad' here due to his passion for contesting elections despite losing his deposit every time, Thursday filed his nomination from Indore Lok Sabha seat. The 63-year-old real estate businessman filed his nomination as an independent candidate, expressing confidence that someday he will emerge victorious and that poll losses do not bog him down. Polling will be held in Indore

The 63-year-old real estate businessman filed his nomination as an independent candidate, expressing confidence that someday he will emerge victorious and that poll losses do not bog him down

constituency in the fourth phase May 13. "I am going to contest elections for the 20th time. In the last 35 years, I have lost my deposit 19 times in different elections," Tolani told reporters. Election Commission regulations stipulate that every candidate contesting a parliamentary or Assembly election must deposit a certain security amount, which is now Rs 25,000 for the general category and Rs 12,500



for SC/ST. Those failing to secure a minimum of one-sixth of the total valid votes polled would lose their deposits, as per the

regulations. The veteran of contesting elections claimed he has contested Lok Sabha and Assembly elec-

tions eight times each besides trying his luck in civic polls for the post of mayor three times. He said he had once fielded his wife Laxmi Tolani in the civic polls for the mayor's post when it was reserved for women candidates. "I don't mind every time I lose my deposit in elections. I have full faith in the voters of Indore. If not today, then tomorrow they will definitely ensure my victory," he said.

According to Tolani, he has been carrying forward his family tradition of contesting elections. He said his father Metharam Tolani, who ran a printing press in the city, had contested different elections continuously for 30 years. Tolani said he started contesting elections in 1989 after his father passed away in 1988. In the 2019 general elections, Tolani had contested from the Indore seat as an independent candidate and polled 1,233 votes. The winner, BJP's Shankar Lalwani, had secured 10.6 lakh votes.

CPI(M) fields Panigrahy from Bhub LS seat

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 18: The Odisha unit of CPI(M) Thursday announced its candidates for one Lok Sabha and seven Assembly seats in the state. The party named senior leader Suresh Panigrahy for Bhubaneswar Lok Sabha constituency. It re-nominated sitting MLA Laxman Munda for Bonai Assembly seat in Sundargarh district. The party fielded Joganand Das from Nilagiri Assembly seat in Balasore district, youth leader Saroj Nayan from Ranapur seat in Nayagarh district and Girish Maharana from Khurda Assembly constituency. CPI (M) has given the ticket to Badri Narayan Das in Salipur, while peasant leader Mrutyunjay Behera has been fielded from Morada in Mayurbhanj district and tribal leader Raghunath Hantal from Chittrakonda Assembly seat in Malkangiri district. Party secretary Ali Kishore Patnaik said the CPI (M) will fight against both the BJD and the BJP, and support Congress candidate in Sundargarh Lok Sabha seat. In return, the Congress will support Laxman Munda in the Bonai Assembly segment, he said.



BJD organising secretary and candidate for Sambalpur Lok Sabha constituency Pranab Prakash Das addressing a workers meeting held at Dandasinga village under Athamallik Assembly constituency in Angul district, Thursday



Youth leader and Congress candidate for Simulia Assembly constituency Himanshu Shekhar Behera along with party leaders during a press meet in the party office at Khaira in Balasore district, Thursday

of the day quote

The BJP stands for faith, security, and prosperity. During the rule of SP, BSP and Congress, the state frequently saw curfews lasting for months. However, now there are no curfews in the state

This is a slap in the face to innocent students impacted by the scam. BJP leaders will go to any lengths for votes, blatantly ignoring the plight of those affected

Mizoram has a high literacy rate as compared to other states. People are aware of their rights and responsibilities. I hope people will come out in large numbers and participate in the voting process

SHORT TAKES

4 Nigerians held for running MDMA lab

Noida: Four Nigerian nationals living in Greater Noida have been arrested after 26 kg of MDMA drugs worth ₹100 crore were allegedly seized from their rented home, officials said Thursday. The police said they also seized raw material which could have been used to cook MDMA (methylenedioxymethamphetamine) worth ₹50 crore. Popularly known as Ecstasy or Molly, MDMA is illegally used as a recreational or party drug.

AAP fields Mahesh Khichi for mayor post

New Delhi: The Aam Aadmi Party Thursday declared its candidates for the April 26 Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) mayoral polls, fielding Mahesh Khichi for the post of mayor and Ravinder Bhardwaj for deputy mayor. Khichi, 45, who represents Dev Nagar ward number 84 in the MCD House, has been associated with the AAP since its inception in 2012. He was also a part of the 2011 India Against Corruption (IAC) movement that led to birth of the Arvind Kejriwal-party.

Fires break out at godown, shanties

Mumbai: Two incidents of fire were reported in Mumbai Thursday in which an industrial godown and more than a dozen of huts along a road were gutted, a civic official said. No person was injured in either incident, he said. A 'Level-3' (which denotes major) fire broke out at Devidayal Compound on Reay Road in south Mumbai around 10.30 am.

Four Bangladeshi nationals arrested

Bangalore: The Karnataka Police Friday arrested four Bangladeshi nationals, who had entered into the country and stayed illegally in the outskirts of Bangalore city, the police said. According to the police, the accused were staying in Bangalore for a long time and forged documents to show that they were Indian citizens.

Bird flu outbreak in Alappuzha

Alappuzha (Kerala): A bird flu outbreak has been reported in two places in this district, officials said here Thursday. The bird flu was confirmed in ducks reared in an area of ward 1 of Edathva Grama Panchayat and another area in ward 3 of Cheruthana Grama Panchayat, they said.



The thing to understand is that India has never been as unfair as it is today. Wealth has never been distributed as unequally as it is today. So the next (Congress-led) government has to aggressively support poor people

RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

NESTLE UNDER GOVT SCANNER

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) Thursday asked the Food Safety and Standards Authority (FSSAI) to take a "comprehensive review" of the sugar content in Nestle's baby food products, after a report showed violation of health guidelines



Huge conspiracy to kill Kejriwal: Atishi

ED accuses Kejriwal of deliberately consuming sugary items to create medical emergency for court sympathy, while AAP leader Atishi alleges BJP-ED conspiracy to harm his health

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 18: Delhi Cabinet minister Atishi Thursday claimed there was a "huge conspiracy" to kill Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who has been arrested by the Enforcement Directorate in the Delhi excise policy case, by denying him home-cooked food in the jail.

Her allegations came hours after the ED claimed before a court here that Kejriwal is eating high sugar foods like mangoes and sweets every day despite having type 2 diabetes to create grounds for medical bail or shift to a hospital.

Atishi told a press conference the Chief Minister's requests for insulin have been denied by the Tihar jail administration, and attempts to arrange a video conference with his doctor are facing Opposition from the ED and the prisons officials.

Earlier in the day, the ED made the claims about Kejriwal's dietary choices before special judge for CBI and ED cases, Kaveri Baweja, who directed the Tihar jail authorities to file a report in the matter, including Kejriwal's diet chart.

Responding to the claims made by Atishi at her press conference, the Tihar jail administration asserted that what she said about Kejriwal's health issues are incorrect. His fasting sugar level was fine and never reached 300, the jail authorities said. "As per the court orders, he has been served home-cooked food and medicines. His health is being watched and looked



after by two doctors in the jail," a jail official, who did not wish to be named, said. There was no immediate reaction from ED.

Delhi BJP Chief Virendra Sachdeva challenged Atishi to produce even a single medical prescription "wherein a doctor has advised oily pooris, spicy food, sweets, banana and mangoes for Kejriwal".

At her press conference, Atishi said Kejriwal is a severe diabetic and accused the ED of lying about his diet. Delhi BJP MP Manoj Tiwari said it was "shocking" to see Kejriwal taking a diet "totally harmful for a diabetic person". "Kejriwal needs to be transferred to a jail not under jurisdiction of the AAP government," she added.

Meanwhile, Delhi Lt Governor V K Saxena asked the director general of prisons to submit a factual report into the Aam Aadmi Party's allegations that Kejriwal was not being provided insulin in Tihar jail. The Raj Niwas

80 Naxals killed, 150 surrendered in last 4 months

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 18: At least 80 Naxals have been killed and more than 125 arrested while 150 have surrendered in this year so far in Chhattisgarh, where 29 ultras were gunned down two days ago in a fierce encounter with security forces, officials said Thursday. Left Wing Extremism-related violence has declined in the country by 52 per cent and the number of deaths by 69 per cent from 6,035 to 1,868 in 2014-23 compared to 2004-14, according to Union home ministry data.

Since the formation of the Vishnu Deo Sai government in Chhattisgarh in December 2023, pro-active operations have been carried out and, as a result, at least 80 Naxals have been eliminated and more than 125 arrested while 150 have surrendered since January, an official said. Late last year, following a detailed review of the security situation in Naxal-affected states, Union Home Minister Amit Shah had directed security forces to carry out operations against Maoists pro-actively.

Shah's direction led to the formation of a high-powered committee, the members of which included director generals of police, director generals of the Central Reserve Police Force, the Border Security Forces, the Indo-Tibetan Border Police and the Intelligence Bureau, and other officials of the anti-Maoist grid.

The result of the pro-active action against Naxals is now visible on the ground, the official said.

Amanatullah Khan appears before ED

New Delhi: AAP MLA Amanatullah Khan Thursday appeared before the Enforcement Directorate for questioning in a money laundering case linked to alleged irregularities in the Delhi Waqf Board, officials said. The deposition of the 50-year-old legislator from the Okhla Assembly seat comes after the Supreme Court last week refused to entertain his anticipatory bail application in the case related to alleged irregularities in the Delhi Waqf Board during his chairmanship. The apex court directed him to join the investigation April 18.

said, "Shri VK Saxena @LtGovDelhi has expressed grave concern over reports based on statements by Ministers & AAP leaders alleging non provision of insulin to Hon'ble CM Shri Arvind Kejriwal who is in jail & purported "conspiracies" against him.

'Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Katha' organised by Patanjali concludes

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 18: The nine-day long 'Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Katha', organised at Patanjali University in Haridwar concluded Wednesday.

The 'katha' was organised on the occasion of the 30th 'Sannyas Diwas' of Yoga guru Baba Ramdev, in the new premises of 'Patanjali Gurukulam', under the auspices of Swami Govind Dev Giri Ji Maharaj.

On the concluding day, the prominent speakers, including Govind Dev, Baba Ramdev and Acharya Balkrishna, exhorted all those present to imbibe the values Lord Ram's life displayed and transform themselves to usher in true 'Ram Rajya' in the country.

Govind Dev said that Shivaji was the personification of all the sterling qualities found in Ramayana and Mahabharata. "After slavery of more than 1,000 years, Shivaji was the first Hindu ruler who enlightened the people of this country and dreamed about the Akhand Bharat," he said. Baba Ramdev said that the programme was aimed at igniting the patriotic passion which kept burning in



the legendary warrior, in every Indian heart. "We must pledge on this occasion to give all we have for the cause of protecting mother cow and the unity and integrity of Mother India," Ramdev pointed out. Acharya Balkrishna said that 'Patanjali' has been fostering the 'Rishi' tradition silently with utmost care.

After the 'katha' session, the coronation of Shivaji Maharaj took place. A theatrical presentation based on the character of Shivaji Maharaj was performed by the students of Patanjali

'Power of states to regulate industrial alcohol plenary'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 18: The power of the states to regulate industrial alcohol is plenary and can't be trampled by the Centre, the Uttar Pradesh government told the Supreme Court Thursday while emphasising that the term "intoxicating liquor" should be given a wider meaning to include industrial alcohol and should be brought within the ambit of the states' law-making power.

Senior advocate Dinesh Dwivedi, appearing in the court on behalf of the Uttar Pradesh government, told a nine-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud that all liquors containing alcohol come within the ambit of "intoxicating liquor".

"The legislative history clearly shows that the words 'intoxicating liquor' are wide enough to include industrial alcohol and all the liquors consisting of alcohol.

"The word 'intoxicating' can mean both (a) capable of causing intoxication or has the potentiality for it and (b) causes intoxication when had as it is, namely as beverage. Both the aspects should fall under Entry 8 to include 'all liquors containing alcohols'," Dwivedi told the bench, which reserved its verdict in the matter after hearing the submissions for six days.

The bench, also comprising Justices Hrishikesh Roy, Abhay



S Oka, B V Nagarathna, J B Pardiwala, Manoj Misra, Ujjal Bhuyan, Satish Chandra Sharma and Augustine George Masih, heard arguments from Attorney General R Venkataramani, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, senior advocates Dwivedi and Arvind P Datar, who appeared in the court on behalf of the Uttar Pradesh government, and other lawyers representing different states.

Industrial alcohol is not meant for human consumption. While Entry 8 in the State List under the 7th Schedule of the Constitution gives the states the power to legislate on the manufacture, possession, transport, purchase and sale of "intoxicating liquors", Entry 52 of the Union List and Entry 33 of the Concurrent List mention industries whose control is "declared by Parliament by law to be expedient in public interest".

While both Parliament and state legislatures can enact laws on the subjects mentioned in the Concurrent List, a central law will have primacy over the state law.

Kwatra's visit to B'desh likely to be postponed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 18: A planned visit to Bangladesh by Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra April 20 is likely to be postponed, people familiar with the matter said Thursday.

Kwatra was to travel to Bangladesh mainly to prepare the grounds for a likely visit to India by Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in June, they said.

The reasons for the postponement of the visit were not immediately clear.

In Dhaka, Kwatra was scheduled to hold wide-ranging talks with his Bangladeshi counterpart Masud Bin Momen on the entire gamut of bilateral relations and ways to further expand the ties.

Kwatra's visit was aimed at preparing grounds for PM Hasina's planned trip to India in June, the people cited above said.

Bangladesh Foreign Minister Mahmud visited India in February.

It was his first bilateral foreign trip after Hasina came to power for a fifth term after a landslide victory in the parliamentary elections in January.

Climate change could cut global income: Study

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 18: The global economy is expected to lose about 19 per cent income in the next 25 years due to climate change, with countries least responsible for the problem and having minimum resources to adapt to impacts suffering the most, according to a new study.

The study by scientists at Germany's Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research said climate impacts could cost the global economy around \$38 trillion a year by 2049.

"Our analysis shows climate change will cause massive economic damages within the next 25 years in almost all countries around the world, also in highly developed ones such as Germany, France, and the United States," said scientist Leonie Wenz who led the study published in the

journal Nature. South Asia and Africa will be strongly affected, said Maximilian Kotz, another researcher.

The researchers looked at detailed weather and economic data from over 1,600 regions globally, covering the last 40 years.

They said global income loss could vary between 11 per cent and 29 per cent, depending on different climate scenarios and uncertainties in the data.

While most regions in the world are expected to suffer economically due to these changes, they said regions near the poles might see some benefits due to less temperature variability.

On the other hand, the hardest-hit regions will likely be those closer to the equator, which historically have contributed less to global emissions and currently have lower incomes. "Our study highlights the con-



siderable inequity of climate impacts: We find damages almost everywhere, but countries in the tropics will suffer the most because they are already warmer. Further temperature increases will therefore be most harmful there," said Anders Levermann, head of Research Department Complexity Science

at the Potsdam Institute and co-author of the study.

The countries least responsible for climate change are predicted to suffer income loss that is 60 per cent greater than the higher-income countries and 40 per cent greater than higher-emission countries. They are also the ones with the

THE PREDICTED LOSS IS MASSIVE AND ALREADY ABOUT SIX TIMES MORE THAN WHAT IT WOULD COST TO REDUCE CARBON EMISSIONS ENOUGH TO KEEP THE AVERAGE TEMPERATURE RISE BELOW TWO DEGREES CELSIUS, THE RESEARCHERS SAID. THESE ECONOMIC DAMAGES ARE MOSTLY DUE TO RISING AVERAGE TEMPERATURES. RESEARCHERS ALSO CONSIDERED OTHER FACTORS LIKE RAINS AND STORMS, THE PREDICTED ECONOMIC DAMAGES INCREASED BY ABOUT 50 PER CENT AND VARIED MORE FROM ONE REGION TO ANOTHER

with 2023 being the hottest on record. The greenhouse gases spewed into the atmosphere, largely due to the burning of fossil fuels since the start of the Industrial Revolution, is closely tied to it.

According to the World Meteorological Organization's "State of the Global Climate 2023" report, greenhouse gas levels, surface temperatures, ocean heat and acidification, and sea level rise all reached record highs in 2023.

Climate science says the world needs to slash CO2 emissions by 43 per cent by 2030 to limit the average temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius, the guardrail to prevent worsening of climate impacts. The business-as-usual scenario will take the world to a temperature rise of around three degrees Celsius by the end of the century, scientists have warned.

international



Dismantling the agency known as UNRWA would deepen Gaza's humanitarian crisis and speed up the onset of famine
PHILIPPE LAZZARINI | COMMISSIONER GENERAL OF UNRWA

AUSTIN HAILS TIES

The India-US deal to jointly produce fighter jet engines for the Indian Air Force is revolutionary, US defence secretary Lloyd Austin has told lawmakers, as he hailed the 'great relationship' with India



of the day quote

Without more Patriot air defence missile systems to guard against incoming Russian strikes, the electricity system of Ukraine will be destroyed. And no country can fight without having electricity at home, in the factories, in the front line
JOSEP BORRELL | EU FOREIGN POLICY CHIEF

There's no reason to be concerned. China is offering to assist with the hosting of the foreign leaders' meeting
SIAOSI SOVALENI | TONGA'S PM

The reality is that sustainability has to be the anchor for development in the 21st century. Since we are talking about prioritising people and the planet, the sustainability dimension of things lies at the very heart of everything we are seeking to do developmentally in the UN
DENNIS FRANCIS | UNGA PRESIDENT

US, UK issue new sanctions on Iran



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, April 18: The US and UK Thursday imposed a new round of sanctions on Iran as concern grows that Tehran's unprecedented attack on Israel could fuel a wider war in the Middle East. Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control targeted 16 people and two entities in Iran that produce engines that power the drones used in the April 13 attack on Israel. Additionally, the UK is targeting several Iranian military organizations, individuals and entities involved in Iran's drone and ballistic missile industries.

Secretary Janet Yellen said in a statement. The action comes after US officials earlier this week warned that they were reading new sanctions in response to Iran's activity in the region and to prevent future attacks. Lawmakers on Capitol Hill also have been quickly pushing forward legislation that would financially punish the Islamic Republic and its leaders. Iran's attack on Israel early Sunday came in response to what it says was an Israeli strike on Iran's consulate in Syria earlier this month. Israel's military chief said Monday that his coun-

We will continue to deploy our sanctions authority to counter Iran with further actions in the days and weeks ahead

JANET YELLEN | US TREASURY SECRETARY

try will respond to the Iranian attack, while world leaders caution against retaliation, trying to avoid a spiral of violence. European Union leaders also vowed Wednesday to ramp up sanctions on Iran, targeting its drone and missile deliveries to proxies in Gaza, Yemen and Lebanon. EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said the existing EU sanctions regime would be strengthened and expanded to punish Tehran and help prevent future attacks on Israel. At the same time, he said, Israel needed to exercise restraint. "I don't want to exaggerate, but we are on the edge of a war, a regional war in the Middle East, which will be sending shockwaves to the rest of the world, and in particular to Europe," he warned. "So stop it."

SHORT TAKES

Germany arrests 2

Berlin: Two German-Russian men have been arrested in Germany on suspicion of espionage, one of them accused of agreeing to carry out attacks on potential targets including US military facilities in hopes of sabotaging aid for Ukraine, prosecutors said Thursday. The two, identified only as Dieter S and Alexander J in line with German privacy rules, were arrested Wednesday in the Bavarian city of Bayreuth, federal prosecutors said. Prosecutors allege Dieter S had been discussing possible acts of sabotage in Germany with a person linked to Russian intelligence since October, and that the main aim was to undermine military support given by Germany to Ukraine.

Retd SL Army officer held

Colombo: Police have arrested a retired Sri Lankan Army officer for being behind a scam to send former military personnel to serve in the Russian army amidst the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war. The former major and a civilian were arrested by the police's criminal investigation department for taking money from individuals to send them to Russia for military service. It was reported last month that over a hundred former military men from Sri Lanka were serving on both sides of the Russia-Ukraine war.

Quake leaves nine injured

Tokyo: A strong earthquake that struck southwestern Japan late Wednesday left nine people with minor injuries and caused damages such as burst water pipes and small landslides, authorities said, but there was no danger of a tsunami. The quake was centred just off the western coast of the southwestern main island of Shikoku, in an area called the Bungo Channel, a strait separating Shikoku and the southern main island of Kyushu.

Russia downs 5 military balloons

Kyiv (Ukraine): Russian air defences downed what authorities described as five Ukrainian balloons overnight, the defense ministry in Moscow said Thursday, as the sides kept up long-range strikes that have featured heavily in what has largely become a war of attrition. Neither Russian nor Ukrainian officials have provided details about the secretive balloons, which Moscow authorities and media have reported on the battlefield in recent weeks.

Croatia ruling party races to form coalition



REUTERS

Zagreb, April 18: Croatia's long-dominant ruling HDZ party prepared Thursday for difficult talks to form a coalition after winning Wednesday's parliamentary election without a majority, and with a far-right party as potential kingmakers. The conservative pro-EU HDZ (Croatian Democratic Union) won 61 seats in the European Union member state's 151-seat parliament, the latest preliminary results showed, after 99.79% of polling stations had been counted. A coalition led by the opposition Social Democratic Party (SDP) came in second with 42 seats, a poorer result than expected after President Zoran Milanovic said he would run for the SDP as Prime Minister in a surprise move. The HDZ took credit for Croatia entering the EU's

Schengen free travel area and the Eurozone last year and denied opposition allegations of authoritarianism and graft after dominating politics since Socialist Yugoslavia broke up in 1991. The far-right Homeland Movement took the third place with 14 seats, giving it a decisive role since the HDZ has ruled out working with the main opposition SDP. Homeland has yet to come out with a clear choice which bloc it will join. "I hope that we shall tailor the fate of Croatia in the days ahead," Homeland Movement Ivan Penava said, adding the party has pledged not to join either bloc but will consider options. The party's main condition is not to join a government that would include the Serb minority party SDSS, and the coalition with green Mozemo party is a "mission impossible", Penava said.

Reuters photographer wins World Press Photo award

The photograph, taken in Khan Younis just days after Salem's own child was born, shows 36-year-old Inas Abu Maamar holding five-year-old Saly, who was killed along with her mother and sister when an Israeli missile struck their home

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Paris, April 18: Reuters photographer Mohammed Salem captured this year's prestigious World Press Photo of the Year award Thursday with a depiction of loss and sorrow in Gaza, a heartrending photo of a Palestinian woman cradling the body of her young niece. The photograph, taken in Khan Younis just days after Salem's own child was born, shows 36-year-old Inas Abu Maamar holding five-year-old Saly, who was killed along with her mother and sister when an Israeli missile struck their home. Salem, who is Palestinian, described this photo filed November 2 last year, as a "powerful and sad moment that sums up the broader sense of what was happening in the Gaza Strip." The image "truly encapsulates this sense of impact," said global

TOP HONOUR



jury chair Fiona Shields, The Guardian newspaper's head of photography. "It is incredibly moving to view and at the same time an argument for peace, which is extremely powerful when peace can sometimes feel like an unlikely fantasy," she added. The World Press Photo jury praised the shot's sense of care and respect and its offering of a "metaphorical and literal glimpse into unimaginable loss." This is not the first time Salem has been recognized for his work on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; he received a World Press Photo

High-level panel to probe allegations against ex-ISI chief

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, April 18: The Pakistan Army has constituted a high-level inquiry committee headed by a major general to look into the allegations against Lt-Gen (ret'd) Faiz Hameed that he as the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) director-general misused his authority, according to a media report on Thursday. The inquiry has been ordered according to the orders of the Supreme Court and in the light of the directives of the Ministry of Defence, The Express Tribune newspaper reported. This is the first formal inquiry ordered against Gen Faiz, who resigned in November 2022, four months before his retirement. Faiz served as the Director-General Counter Intelligence in the ISI and later headed the same spy agency. His name surfaced in many controversies, including the Faizabad Dharna case. Three-time former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif named him and former army chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa as the main characters behind his removal through a Supreme Court order. While Faiz was given a clean chit in the Faizabad Dharna case by an inquiry commission, the army decided to investigate him months after an owner of a housing society accused him of illegally raiding his residence and stealing valuables.

STRUGGLE TO RECOVER

REUTERS

Dubai, April 18: Emergency workers tried to clear water-clogged roads and people assessed the damage to homes and businesses Thursday after a rare and epic rainstorm swamped the United Arab Emirates. Dubai International Airport, a major travel hub, struggled to clear a backlog of flights and many roads were still flooded in the aftermath of Tuesday's deluge. The rains were the heaviest experienced by the Gulf state in the 75 years that records have been kept. They brought much of the country to a standstill and caused significant damage. Flooding trapped residents in traffic, offices and homes. Many reported leaks at their homes, while footage circulated on social

Flooded UAE counts cost of epic rainstorm

media showed malls overrun with water pouring from roofs. Traffic remained heavily disrupted. A highway through Dubai was reduced to a single lane in one direction, bringing traffic to a standstill, while the main road that connects Dubai with Abu Dhabi was closed in the Abu Dhabi direction. In Dubai, some vehicles, including buses, were almost entirely submerged in water. Long queues formed at petrol stations. Emergency workers used a fire truck to pump water from a road flooded in nearly waist-deep water as drivers tried to pass, navigating around abandoned vehicles. Operations at Dubai airport remain disrupted after the storm flooded the runway, resulting in flight diversions, delays and cancellations. The airport said



Thursday morning it had resumed receiving inbound flights at Terminal 1, used by foreign carriers, but that flights continue to be delayed and disrupted. It later said check-in was open at Terminal 3 for Emirates and

President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan said in a statement he had ordered authorities to assess the damage and provide support to families impacted by the storm. A UAE government agency that oversees cloud seeding - a process of manipulating clouds to increase rainfall - denied that any such operations took place before the storm.

largest carrier at the airport, had stopped all check-in procedures Wednesday. The airport struggled to get food to stranded passengers with nearby roads blocked by flood waters, and because overcrowding limited access to those who had confirmed bookings. The storm, which hit neigh-

bouring Oman Sunday, pounded the UAE Tuesday, flooding roads and causing hours-long gridlock as rainwater inundated homes. One person was reported dead in the UAE and 20 in Oman. Authorities have also told government employees and students to stay home while waterlogged roads are cleared. As roadways into hard-hit communities remain flooded, many groceries and shopping malls stayed closed and those that were open had largely empty shelves. Delivery services across Dubai, where residents are used to ordering everything at the click of a button, remained largely out of service. Rainfall is rare in the UAE and elsewhere on the Arabian Peninsula, which is typically known for its dry desert climate. Summer air temperatures can soar above 50 degrees Celsius.

business

of the day quote

HMSI aims to boost its export capabilities, reaching new heights in market expansion and adherence to global quality standards

TSUTSUMI OTANI | MD, PRESIDENT & CEO, HONDA MOTORCYCLE AND SCOOTER INDIA

Strong selling by F&S of ₹15763 crore in the last three days due to the uncertain global environment also dampened the sentiments

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

We see significant potential for growth within the ₹1-10 lakh business loan sector, recognising the substantial gap in credit availability for micro-enterprises and the limited number of specialised providers in this field

MAYUR MODI | CO-FOUNDER, MONEYBOX

Q4 RESULTS

Infosys profit jumps

New Delhi: IT company Infosys Thursday said its consolidated profit jumped 30 per cent to ₹7,969 crore in the fourth quarter ended March 2024. The company posted a profit of ₹6,128 crore in the same period a year ago, according to a regulatory filing. The consolidated revenue of Infosys during the reported quarter increased by 1.3 per cent to ₹37,923 crore from ₹37,441 crore in the same quarter a year ago. The company expects a revenue growth of 1-3 per cent in constant currency for financial year 2025.

HDFC Life rises 15%

New Delhi: HDFC Life Insurance Thursday reported a 14.7 per cent rise in net profit at ₹412 crore in the fourth quarter ended March 2024. The profit was ₹359 crore in the January-March quarter of the preceding fiscal, HDFC Life said in a regulatory filing. The insurer earned a total income of ₹27,893 crore in the quarter against ₹21,426 crore in the same period a year ago.

Bajaj Auto PAT up

New Delhi: Bajaj Auto Thursday reported a 35 per cent increase in standalone profit after tax at ₹1,936 crore in the fourth quarter ended March 31, 2024. The Pune-based company had reported a profit after tax (PAT) of ₹1,433 crore in the January-March quarter of 2022-23 fiscal. For the year ended March 31, 2024, the company posted a 33 per cent rise in PAT at ₹7,479 crore from ₹5,628 crore in the FY23 fiscal.



Electronics industry experts forecast the creation of 1 million jobs by FY26, and the market size is expected to reach \$400 billion by 2025.

LOHIT BHATIA | PRESIDENT (WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT), QUESS CORP

AIRTEL TO SELL LANKA BIZ

Telecom operator Bharti Airtel will merge its Sri Lanka operations with Dialog Axiata in an equity swap deal, a joint statement said Thursday. Airtel Lanka's turnover in financial year 2023 was Rs 294 crore and it contributed 0.21 per cent to Bharti Airtel's overall business



HZL now third largest silver producer globally

Hindustan Zinc, a Vedanta Group company in zinc, lead and silver businesses, is the world's second largest integrated zinc producer and now the third largest silver producer

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 18: Vedanta group firm Hindustan Zinc Limited (HZL) Thursday said it has become the third largest producer of silver globally. As per a survey, its Sindesar

Khurd Mine in Rajasthan now stands as the world's second largest silver-producing mine, moving up from last year's fourth spot, the company said in a statement.

Priya Agarwal Hebbur, Chairperson of Hindustan Zinc, said, "Silver plays a pivotal role in the global energy transition and our recent record silver production of 746 MT paves the way for Atmanirbhar Bharat. Hindustan Zinc's production growth of 5 per cent year-on-year is attributed to increased ore production and enhanced grades, reinforcing its status as a key player in the global silver market."

Additionally, the recognition of its Pantnagar silver refinery



by the London Bullion Market Association (LBMA) and inclusion in the 'London Good Delivery' list reaffirms the refinery's adherence to international quality standards, marked by LBMA certification of 99.99 per cent pure silver. Operating on 100 per cent re-

This remarkable feat has been achieved using innovative technologies and sustainable mining practices, which helped us in optimizing the production process while reducing the environmental impact

PRIYA AGARWAL HEBBUR | CHAIRPERSON, HINDUSTAN ZINC

newable power, Hindustan Zinc said, its silver refinery at Pantnagar Metal Plant aligns seamlessly with the company's pledge towards achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 or sooner. Anticipating a modest 4 per cent recovery in jewellery fabrication in 2024, India is expected

to be the biggest contributor, in part as restocking by retailers resumes. The silverware demand is projected to rise by 7 per cent, predominantly driven by India's economic growth and escalating disposable incomes.

Hindustan Zinc has a market share of 75 per cent of the growing zinc market in India with its headquarters in Udaipur along with zinc, lead mines and smelting complexes spread across Rajasthan.

The surge in demand, propelled by the rapid expansion of the silver sector and the proliferation of electronic devices, underscores the strategic importance of Hindustan Zinc's silver production.

\$2.5bn GST loss from offshore illegal betting cos

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 18: The gaming industry body AIGF estimates that offshore illegal betting and gambling entities are causing a national exchequer loss of \$2.5 billion per annum and demanded immediate action from the government to curb such platforms.



All India Gaming Federation (AIGF) CEO, Roland Landers said the offshore entities club various games along with illegal betting and gambling due to which users fail to differentiate between legitimate gaming and illegal games.

He said that illegal offshore entities lead to user harm and those experiences can in turn harm the legitimate industry in India.

"Offshore illegal betting and gambling platforms are collecting deposits worth \$12 billion in a year which implies loss of at least \$2.5 billion in GST revenues to the government," Landers said.

He said offshore entities have increased advertisements during the ongoing IPL season to lure users and some of them have gone to the extent of boldly advertising that there is no GST or TDS levied on their platforms.

"Offshore entities often harm users and users get confused between illegal and legal games. There should be a strict curb on the menace of illegal offshore betting and gambling platforms," Landers said.

He said that models like the Self Regulatory Organisation (SRO) should be expedited by the government to help curb the menace of illegal platforms.

"Offshore entities don't have any official in India. They claim to be illegal but scrutiny by SRO like body can help in differentiating between legitimate and illegitimate platforms," Landers added.

MIDDLE EAST ESCALATION

Investors' wealth erodes

Four days of market crash wipes out ₹9.30 lakh crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 18: Investors' wealth eroded by Rs 9.30 lakh crore in four days of a sharp correction in the markets amid concerns over fading rate cut hopes, foreign fund outflows and the ongoing conflict in the Middle East.

The 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 454.69 points or 0.62 per cent to settle at 72,488.99 Thursday. In four days, the benchmark has lost 2,549.16 points or 3.39 per cent.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies diminished by ₹9,30,304.76 crore to ₹3,92,89,048.31 crore (\$4.70 trillion) in four days.

"Markets witnessed frenzied selling towards the closing stages in a highly volatile trading session, as concerns over fading rate cut hopes and persisting FII fund exodus from local stocks dampened investors' sentiment," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP at Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

The BSE Sensex hit its all-time peak of 75,124.28 April 9. The index breached the historic 75,000 mark for the first time on the same day.

On April 10, the 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex ended above the 75,000 mark for the first time.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies went past the coveted ₹400 lakh crore mark for the first time April 8.



Even as the Indian economy has been resilient and managed to dodge global worries, worries of stubborn inflation, rising instances of geopolitical tensions and delay in interest rate cut have fuelled profit-taking

PRASHANTH TAPSE | SENIOR VP (RESEARCH), MEHTA EQUITIES LTD

However, from April 12 onwards the markets have been falling. From the Sensex basket, Nestle declined the most by over 3 per cent amid reports that the global FMCG major sold infant milk products with more sugar content in less developed countries.

Titan Company, Axis Bank, NTPC, Tata Motors, ITC, Tech Mahindra, Bajaj Finserv, ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank and Bajaj Finance were the other laggards.

Bharti Airtel, Power Grid, Infosys and Larsen & Toubro were among the gainers.

New zonal office of BoB

BHUBANESWAR: Bank of Baroda (BoB) has formed a new Zonal Office at Bhubaneswar with effect from April 1 under Project "Vistar" of Bank of Baroda. Bank of Baroda, the second largest nationalised bank, with a wide network of branches across the country including state of Odisha has made significant contributions to the socio-economic upliftment of the state populace by extending banking facilities, especially in the agriculture and MSME sectors. General Manager Swapna Bandopadhyay has taken over the charge as the first Zonal Head of this zone. Prior to this, she served as General Manager, Operations and Services at Head Office, Vadodra. Bandopadhyay commenced her career in 1996 and during her successful journey of over 28 years, she has held various positions within the bank in different zones/regions/verticals across different geographies - West Bengal, Delhi, Maharashtra and Gujarat. The Bhubaneswar Zonal Office is the controlling office for two states i.e. Odisha and Jharkhand having five regions namely Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Sambalpur, Ranchi and Jamshedpur with 303 branches and business mix of ₹36,056 crore under its command area.



Market access to India has improved, says USTR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, April 18: India has opened up its market to the American farming industry in as many as 12 different categories which will provide a growing opportunity for US exporters, the top trade official has told lawmakers as she defended the Biden administration's policies after some influential senators raised the issue of unfair practices by foreign countries.

US Trade Representative (USTR) Katherine Tai, responding to a series of questions from the senators during a congressional hearing on trade convened by the US Finance Committee, said that the Biden administration has secured \$21 billion in market access over the last three years.

"That includes the 12 tariff categories with India, a growing market, growing opportu-

nity for US exporters," she said Wednesday. "We are opening markets for hard-working American families and communities, especially our rural communities," she said.

"For example, after the US and India terminated seven WTO (World Trade Organisation) disputes, India agreed to remove retaliatory tariffs on several US products. This means improved access for chickpeas, lentils, almonds, walnuts and apples, benefiting farmers across our country, including in Michigan, Oregon, California and Washington," Tai said.

This means more market access for turkey, duck, blueberries and cranberries benefiting the farmers in North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Massachusetts and Minnesota, she added.

"Trade should work for all Americans. Our goal is to stop



putting Americans against each other in our trade policy and this is why we are taking unprecedented steps to incorporate more voices into trade policymaking," Tai said.

Tai said enforcing trade rules continues to be a priority this year for the administration.

"We will continue to level the playing field for American workers and businesses. We are vigorously enforcing our trade agreements, defending American

jobs, and making sure more people enjoy the benefits of trade," she said.

Responding to a question from Senator Bill Cassidy on a whistleblower's allegations of forced labour in the Indian shrimp industry, Tai said she has raised this issue with her Indian counterpart.

"It's not an easy conversation. We will continue to champion this particular issue," she said. India has dismissed allega-

tions of poor working conditions and safety standards in the shrimp industry, with a commerce ministry official saying India's 548 seafood units are regularly inspected and monitored by various government agencies.

Indian shrimp exporters follow a robust regulatory and safety regime, as it helps them to ship quality marine products to developed regions like the US and Europe, the official said in New Delhi earlier this month.

Cassidy also raised the issue of rice subsidy by India.

"There's also a concern from our rice people who say if it were not for Indian subsidies of rice, they would have roughly \$850 million more in export," he said. Senator Ron Wyden, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Finance, alleged that India's wheat subsidies are distorting prices and directly hurting American farmers.

TIDBITS

Airtel Payments Bank, NPCI join hands

New Delhi: Airtel Payments Bank Thursday launched eco-friendly NCMC (national common mobility cards) enabled debit and prepaid cards in partnership with the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI). These interoperable cards are powered by RuPay for savings account customers and NCMC-enabled pre-paid cards for wallet customers. Both cards are being made from eco-friendly e-PVC material, certified for its environmental sustainability, Airtel Payments Bank said in a statement. Customers can use these cards to make contactless payments at all merchant establishments, online (e-commerce), as well as offline NCMC transit transactions at metros, buses, parking, etc across the country.



Swiggy expands Q-commerce slate

New Delhi: Food tech giant Swiggy Thursday said it will integrate Swiggy Mall with its quick commerce offering Instamart, to broaden the choice for consumers looking to purchase products other than groceries and staples. Swiggy Mall, which is currently operational in parts of Bangalore, marked the company's foray into online retail. The company said Swiggy Instamart is already present in more than 25 cities allowing Swiggy Mall to scale up over the coming months, starting with Bangalore. "This marks a significant milestone in our journey towards providing unparalleled convenience, ensuring our users have everything they need at their fingertips, faster than ever before," said Phani Kishan, Head of Swiggy Instamart.



VIL FPO sees tepid response on 1st day

New Delhi: Debt-saddled telecom operator Vodafone Idea Ltd's Rs 18,000 crore follow-on offering (FPO) opened to a modest response Thursday with just 26 per cent of shares on offer being sought by investors. Of the 1,260 crore shares on offer, 331.24 crore was subscribed Thursday, according to information on the BSE. Qualified institutional buyers picked up 61 per cent of their 360 crore shares reserved for them while non-institutional investors sought 28 per cent out of 270 crore shares earmarked for them. Response from retail investors, who have been offered the biggest chunk, was muted with just 6 per cent of 630 crore shares being picked up. The FPO, the largest ever, is to close April 22.



MUMBAI PIP PUNJAB KINGS

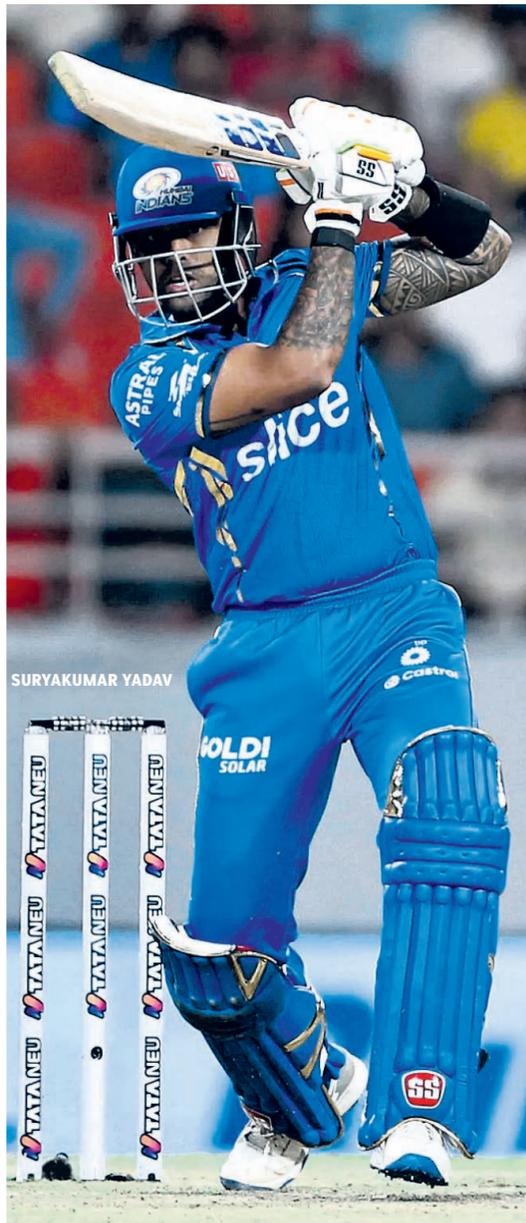
Super Giants face stern test against Super Kings



Jasprit Bumrah celebrates a wicket with Tilak Varma, Thursday



ASHUTOSH SHARMA



SURYAKUMAR YADAV



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mullanpur, April 18: Ashutosh Sharma gave Mumbai Indians a mighty scare with a sensational 61 (28b, 2x4, 7x6) before the five-time champions scraped through with a nine-run win over Punjab Kings in the IPL here Thursday. Ashutosh unleashed a flurry of sixes in his 28-ball knock which brought Punjab from the brink to near the finish line but his dismissal in the 18th over turned the game back in favour of Mumbai Indians. Punjab, who were left tottering at 17/4 in their chase of 193, came back roaring through Ashutosh and Shashank Singh (41, 25b, 2x4, 3x6) before ending at 183 all-out in 19.1 overs. Suryakumar Yadav (78, 53b, 7x4, 3x6) starred with the bat for Mumbai Indians to take them to 192/7. It was Mumbai's third win in seven games while Punjab's slide continued with their fifth loss in seven matches. Despite an early four-wicket burst from pacers Jasprit Bumrah (3/21) and Gerald Coetzee (3/32), MI once again paid a heavy price of being ordinary with the ball. Akash Madhwal gave away 46 for one

wicket in his 3.1 overs. Ashutosh produced a breathtaking knock after Shashank's counterattack brought Punjab back on track following early wickets. The right-handed Shashank smacked each of his three sixes off leg-spinner Shreyas Gopal (1/26). Ashutosh was adroit with his strokes particularly on the leg-side. Harpreet Brar proved he is no mug with the bat either, as the left-handed tailender unleashed lofted hits in his vital 20-ball 21 with two fours and a six. At the top of the order, Prabhsimran Singh's (0) poor run persisted when the right-hander edged one behind to be caught by a diving Ishan Kishan, with Coetzee redeeming himself after a poor start with the ball. Bumrah put Mumbai Indians in complete command with twin strikes in his opening over. On his fourth delivery, the ace pacer fired a vicious in-swinging yorker which left Rilee Rossouw (0) nearly toppling over with his off and middle stump uprooted. Later in the over, a smart review against an on-field call for a wide resulted in Bumrah bagging his second wicket off an innocuous delivery. This one,

fired down the leg, had the ball kissing Sam Curran's (6) bat before settling into Ishan Kishan's glove, which was confirmed by the DRS review. Coetzee then piled further misery on fallible Punjab as he bounced out Liam Livingstone (1). Earlier, Suryakumar and Tilak Varma (34 n o, 18b, 2x4, 2x6) produced gritty knocks on a sluggish wicket to fire Mumbai Indians to a competitive total. On a typically low and slow surface here, MI batters struggled for timing yet garnered the highest total so far at IPL's newest venue. Rohit (36, 25b, 2x4, 3x6) and Suryakumar provided the bedrock with a sturdy 81-run stand for the second wicket before Varma and Tim David (14) found their mojo. Playing in his 250th IPL match, Rohit brought up his 6,500 runs in the competition.

BRIEF SCORES
MI 192/7 (Suryakumar Yadav 78, Rohit Sharma 36, Tilak Varma 34 n o; Harshal Patel 3/31, Sam Curran 2/41) beat PBKS 183 (Ashutosh Sharma 61, Shashank Singh 41; Jasprit Bumrah 3/21, Gerald Coetzee 3/32) by 9 runs.

Lucknow, April 18: A set of probing questionnaires awaits the Lucknow Super Giants on their home turf as Chennai Super Kings' cerebral bowling unit will look to use its variation to the fullest on a two-paced Ekana Stadium track during their IPL clash here Friday. The two teams endured contrasting fortunes in their previous couple of matches. While Ruturaj Gaikwad's team, still 'marshalled' by the peerless MS Dhoni, is coming into the game with back-to-back victories, LSG under KL Rahul have endured a mini-slump with successive defeats. With LSG's batting unit not exactly inspiring the highest level of confidence despite its firepower, it remains to be seen how it tackles an attack where each bowler brings something different to the table. Matheesha Pathirana, with his yorkers, is literally unplayable at the death, while Mustafizur Rahman has at least three variations of cutters, including one with scrambled seam. Ravindra Jadeja, on tracks where the ball grips like it often happens at the Ekana, could be more than a handful. At Lucknow, it could be an option to play the extra spinner in Maheesh Theekshana to make full use of the conditions. The average first innings score in Lucknow this season has been 175, which is at least 15 sub-par

compared to some of the other grounds, and this is exactly the kind of total where Dhoni, like the seasoned 'Concert Master' of an orchestra team, controls the 'pitch and tune'. LSG, on the other hand, have had issues with injuries. Their 21-year-old pace sensation Mayank Yadav, who had to sit out of the last two games after suffering lower abdominal strain, has resumed training Wednesday. But there is still no clarity if Mayank will be playing Friday. In the spin department, Ravi Bishnoi has been bowling tight spells, but his one dimensional skill of bowling one googly after another has been found out as he got only four wickets in the six game so far. The batting is a bigger issue for LSG as one of their mainstays - Quinton de Kock, after consecutive half-tons, has hit a rough patch in the previous three games. Even skipper KL Rahul (204 runs at 138 SR) hasn't been at his best and his safe starts have been more damaging than beneficial. While CSK will look to consolidate their place in the points table with what could be their fifth win, a defeat would further push LSG southwards.

MATCHDAY
Indian Premier League
LSG vs CSK
Time: 07:30 pm
Telecast: Star Sports Network
Stream: Jio Cinema

Indian troika fails to impress

Odisha FC favourites against Blasters



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Toronto, April 18: Grandmaster D Gukesh played out a creditable draw against top seed Fabiano Caruana but slipped a rung to the joint second position on a day when two other Indians endured frustrating losses in the Candidates Chess Tournament's 11th round here. Nerves finally came into play as R Praggnanandhaa and Vidit Gujrathi lost their way against American Hikaru Nakamura and Russian Ian Nepomniachtchi respectively.

But 17-year-old Gukesh held his own against Caruana. In the other encounter, Frenchman Firouzja Alireza proved superior to Nijat Abasov of Azerbaijan. With just three rounds remaining, the die seems to be cast in favour of Nepomniachtchi, who is gunning for his third straight Candidates title. The Russian, who has to compete under the FIDE flag here owing to his country's international suspension, shot back to sole lead on seven points out of a possible 11 and it would be dif-

ficult for other contestants to get past him. Caruana, Nakamura and Gukesh are in pursuit of the leader half a point behind in the standings. Praggnanandhaa and Gujrathi have fallen apart with 5.5 and five points respectively. Coming back from behind is Alireza, who probably has no contest from Abasov in the bottom half. In the women's competition, the Chinese continued to dominate as Zhongyi Tan scored over Kateryna Lagno of Russia to regain sole lead ahead of compatriot Tingjie Lei, who played out a draw with Anna Muzychuk of Ukraine. R Vaishali came back roaring, albeit a bit late, to beat top-seeded Russian Aleksandra Goryachkina while Koneru Humpy proved too good to avenge her early loss at the hands of Nurgyul Salimova of Bulgaria. Tan continued to reign supreme with seven points. Lei stood half a point behind, and the Russian duo of Lagno and Goryachkina were virtually out of the race along with a resurgent Humpy, who has warmed up towards the close, with 5.5 points.

Bhubaneswar, April 18: Odisha FC would be hoping that their luck at the Kalinga Stadium here remains the same like it has been throughout the season when they face Kerala Blasters in the Indian Super League (ISL) playoffs, Friday. Both these teams are heading into the knockouts with identical forms, losing thrice along with drawing and winning once each in their previous five games. As far as their home record in ISL this season is concerned, the Juggernauts have eight wins and three draws in their 11 matches, accumulating 27 points. This was only the third instance where a team remained unbeaten at home in ISL league round as Delhi Dynamos, later known as Odisha FC, in 2016 and Bengaluru FC in 2018-19 had achieved the feat. Odisha FC, who were leading the standing in most part of the second half of the competition, had an unbeaten streak of 13 matches and another win will lead them into two-legged semifinals. Odisha FC finished fourth in the points table with 39 points, whereas Blasters ended up fifth with 33 points. They



were the first team this season to qualify for the playoffs with five matches in hand. Odisha FC have emerged victorious only twice in

their last seven games against Blasters, winning by 2-1 in their latest meeting at the Kalinga Stadium February 2. This is set to be the first game between the two sides in the playoffs history. However, the Lobera-coached team have lost both of their games coming into this match conceding multiple goals in the process. The last time they were defeated more times on a bounce was three matches in February 2021.

WHAT THEY SAY

The season has gone well and the team have improved a lot compared to last season. We've been fighting for the titles until the last moment. Playing at the Kalinga Stadium is a motivation for us. Our fans give us all the strength we need and they are part of the success of our team
CARLOS DELGADO / ODISHA FC CAPTAIN

We're ambitious and professional ...always aiming for the win. Despite some ups and downs, we see our season as a success. We're excited about the ISL Cup opportunity. I'm proud of our players competing at the highest level in three different competitions and playing many games in short periods. We topped the AFC Cup table, reached the Kalinga Super Cup final and fought for the League Shield until the end. I believe our club is growing and I thank our fans for their support throughout the season. We aim to finish the season strongly
SERGIO LOBERA / ODISHA FC HEAD COACH

FANS HOPE FOR OFC TRIUMPH

ANKAN MISHRA: This is one of the best season for Odisha FC under coach Sergio Lobera. Unbeaten at home, players have performed really well. I'm very much hopeful for the team to win the trophy this year

SOUMYA SITARA: A Juggernauts fan since 2021, my journey went from confused outsider to a passionate supporter. Home and away games feel electric. Coach Lobera's tactics have brought home dominance and a top-6 ISL spot. Now we dream of an OFC men's Championship win

SAIDATTA BISWAL: Since 2020-21, I've been closely following the club and this season stands out. Lobera has led us to break records, earning us a playoff spot. The team's unbeaten streak at home fills me with pride. I know there were ups and downs, our performance has dipped a bit in last few games, but I believe we'll bounce back and win the trophy

WFI obtains accreditation for Vinesh's coach, physio

Real pip City on penalties to reach CL semis

New Delhi, April 18: Star wrestler Vinesh Phogat will have access to her personal coach and physio at the Asia Olympic qualifier after the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) obtained their accreditation cards following a special request to the event organisers in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Phogat, a two-time Olympian, had last week accused the WFI of trying to stop her from competing in the Asia Olympic qualifiers by creating logistical hurdles for her support staff. However, WFI president Sanjay Singh Thursday told PTI that they have obtained the accreditation of the two officials. "We had put in a special request with the organisers to allow access to Vinesh's coach



and physio in the competition as it will make the athlete comfortable and they give them accreditation," Singh told PTI. The 29-year-old Phogat, who will be competing in the 50kg category at the Asia Qualifiers, had alleged that her personal coach and physio were being denied accreditation for the tournament, the second last qualifying event for the Paris Games.

Manchester, April 18: Real Madrid weathered the storm, silenced the crowd and ultimately ended Manchester City's brief hold on the Champions League. The all-time kings of Europe moved a step closer to a record-extending 15th title in the competition they have dominated after a 4-3 win Wednesday on penalties at Etihad Stadium. But not before being pushed to the limit by defending champion City. The game had gone to the uncertainty of a shootout after ending 1-1 on the night and 4-4 on aggregate. City dominated the chances after going behind to Rodrygo's goal in the 12th minute, but only had Kevin de Bruyne's leveler in the 76th to show for its superiority, which



Real Madrid players celebrate at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester after their win over Man City, Wednesday

included 64 per cent of possession and 18 corners to Madrid's one through extra time. That counted for little as Antonio Rudiger struck the decisive spot-kick after Bernardo Silva and Mateo Kovacic both saw their penalties saved.

Guardiola had few complaints. He accepted his team had failed to capitalise against a Madrid team that was forced to defend deep against wave after wave of attack. Erling Haaland hit the bar with one header in the first half De Bruyne sent an effort sailing over from inside the box in the second. Madrid dug deep, held on and now faces Bayern Munich in the semifinals after the Germans beat Arsenal 1-0 Wednesday and 3-2 on aggregate. The defeat ended City's bid to become the first English team to win back-to-back Champions League titles and its pursuit of successive trebles. It is still challenging for the Premier League title and FA Cup. Victory for Madrid saw the Spanish giant advance to the semifinals for the fourth year in row - denying City the chance to emulate that feat. Bayern up next for Real Joshua Kimmich's sole goal helped Bayern Munich progress into the UEFA Champions League last four after beating Arsenal 1-0 (3-2 on aggregate) in the second leg. The German giants caught a bright start in front of the home crowd as Harry Kane's volley went just wide in the opening stages before Noussair Mazraoui's deflected shot missed the target with 23 minutes gone. The Bavarians eventually broke the deadlock and shocked the visitors at the hour mark when Raphael Guerreiro's whipped cross into the box found German international Kimmich, whose diving header caught Arsenal goalkeeper David Raya flatfooted.