



Fitness mantra

Actress Raashii Khanna, who's awaiting her Tamil film *Aranmanai 4*, shares secrets behind her perfect look

LEISURE | P2



US military aid to Taiwan

China says US military assistance to Taiwan is pushing the self-governing island republic into a "dangerous situation"

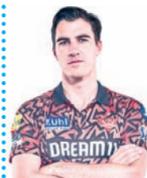
INTERNATIONAL | P10



M&A deal value soars

Merger and acquisition deal value rises by 60% to \$19.6 bn in Jan-March 2024, while that of private equity experiences a slight dip

BUSINESS | P11



SRH face RCB today

Fans would expect another run-fest when rampant Sunrisers Hyderabad host struggling Royal Challengers Bengaluru in IPL

SPORTS | P12

Naveen vows to make Odisha No-1 by 2036

POST NEWS NETWORK

Hinjili, April 24: With simultaneous polls in the state commencing May 13, BJD president and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, who is aiming for his sixth term, Wednesday flagged off the campaign for the party and highlighted the strong investment potential of the state. Pitching for involvement of youths in the development process of the state, Patnaik hinted at introduction of 'Youth Budget' in coming days. He said the decade 2024-34 will be the decade of Odisha, which would become the number one state in the country by 2036.

In the election campaign from his home turf here, Patnaik targeted the opposition parties and accused them of "obstructing" developmental works in the state.

"Development is our identity. However, it is unfortunate that opposition parties are obstructing it. Be it Srimandir Parikrama project or Ekamra project or Samalei project, the opposition parties have been politicising everything. Opposition is engaged in anti-development propaganda. The people of Odisha know their true nature," Patnaik told a huge gathering here.

Noting that none has become

BJP's corruption charge against BJD

Bhubaneswar: The BJP Wednesday unveiled a 'chargesheet' against the nearly 25-year-old BJD government in the state, accusing it of being involved in corruption and irregularities. Senior BJP leader and Union minister Bhupender Yadav released the 50-page 'chargesheet' and alleged that the BJD could not provide drinking water supply, set up more cold storages and increase farmers' income despite ruling the state for over two decades.

successful by opposing development, Patnaik called upon the people to make the coming 10 years as the 'decade of Odisha'. The BJD president said Odisha as a separate state would complete 100 years in 2036. Therefore, the coming decade from 2024 to 2034 is crucial for the state as during this period the state has to make its foundation strong in order to become number one in all sectors.

Patnaik also highlighted his government's transformational initiatives and said that around 70 lakh women have become drivers of transformation in the state.



FESTIVAL OF DEMOCRACY: Students take a pledge to exercise their franchise during the upcoming simultaneous elections in Odisha at a voters' awareness programme organised by Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation on the premises of RD Women's University, Wednesday

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Do not lie! How can any party take my Mangalsutra? I sold it after you announced Notebandi

Campaign ends for second phase polls

NEW DELHI: Curtains came down Wednesday evening on a high-voltage campaigning for the second phase of Lok Sabha polls in 89 seats across 13 states April 26. Staggered over seven stages, the first phase of the elections held last Friday saw a voter turnout of around 65.20 per cent. Polling is scheduled in all 20 seats of Kerala, 14 of the 28 seats in Karnataka, 13 seats in Rajasthan, eight seats each in Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, seven seats in Madhya Pradesh, five seats each in Assam and Bihar, three seats each in Chhattisgarh and West Bengal, and one seat each in Manipur, Tripura and Jammu and Kashmir.

Property common to community

Amid raging controversy over Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's speech that his party would conduct a census of backward castes and minorities, and undertake a financial survey before taking up the historic assignment of distributing the nation's wealth to these sections and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's jibe at Congress, which, he said, would distribute nation's wealth to 'infiltrators', the Supreme Court observed that "socialist concept of property is the mirror image which attributes to property, a notion of commonality, and nothing is exclusive to the individual"

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 24: The Supreme Court Wednesday said the Constitution intended to bring about a "sense of social transformation" and it would be "dangerous" to say that the private property of an individual cannot be regarded as material resources of community and taken over by state authorities to subservise "common good".

The observations were made by a nine-judge bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud, examining whether privately-owned resources can be considered "material resources of the community", when the counsel for



CAN'T DICTATE EC: SC

The Supreme Court Wednesday said it cannot "control the elections" or issue directions simply because doubts have been raised about the efficacy of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), as it reserved its judgement on a clutch of petitions claiming the polling devices can be tinkered with to manipulate the results. The court said it cannot change the thought process of those doubting the advantages of polling machines and advocating going back to ballot papers.

parties including Property Owners' Association (POA) of Mumbai made vehement submissions that the private properties cannot be taken over by state authorities under the garb of constitutional schemes of Articles 39 (b) and 31 C of the Constitution.

The bench is considering the vexed legal question arising from the petitions whether private properties can be considered "material resources of the community" under Article 39 (b) of the Constitution, which is part of the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP).

"It may be a little extreme to suggest that 'material resources of the community' only means public resources and we do not have their origin in the private property of an individual. I will tell you why it would be dangerous to take that view. Take sim-

ple things like mines and even private forests. For instance, for us to say that the governmental policy will not apply to the private forests under Article 39 (b)... therefore keep the hands off. It will be extremely dangerous as a proposition," said the bench which also comprised justices Hrishikesh Roy, BV Nagarathna, Sudhanshu Dhulia, JB Pardiwala, Manoj Misra, Rajesh Bindal, Satish Chandra Sharma and Augustine George Masih.

Referring to social and other prevalent situations in the 1950s when the Constitution was made, the bench said, "The Constitution was intended to bring about social transformation and we cannot say that Article 39 (b) has no application once the property is privately held."

It said whether the Maharashtra law, empowering authorities to take over dilapi-

dated buildings, was valid or not was a completely different issue and would be decided independently.

The bench asked can it be said Article 39 (b) will have no application once properties are privately held ones because the society demands welfare measures and there was a need for redistribution of wealth as well.

The CJ referred to the abolition of 'Zamindari' and the purely capitalist concept of property also and said it attributed a sense of "exclusiveness" to property.

"The socialist concept of property is the mirror image which attributes to property, a notion of commonality. Nothing is exclusive to the individual. All property is common to the community. That's the extreme socialist view," the CJ said, adding that the DPSPs have their foundation in the Gandhian ethos.

RBI flags data leak risks in Kotak Mahindra Bank

BARS BANK FROM ONBOARDING NEW CUSTOMERS VIA ONLINE AND ISSUING FRESH CREDIT CARDS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 24: Cracking down on repeated non-compliance of IT norms, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Wednesday barred Kotak Mahindra Bank from onboarding new customers through its online and mobile banking channels and issuing fresh credit cards with immediate effect after the regulator found "serious deficiencies" in the lender's IT risk management.

These actions, the RBI said, are necessitated based on significant concerns arising out of Reserve Bank's IT examination of the bank for years 2022 and 2023 and continued failure on part of the bank to address these concerns in a comprehensive and timely manner.

In a statement, the RBI said: "Serious deficiencies and non-compliances were observed in the areas of IT inventory management, patch and change management, user access management, vendor risk management, data security and data leak prevention strategy, business continuity and disaster recovery rigour and drill, etc."

The Kotak Mahindra Bank

has been directed "to cease and desist", with immediate effect, from onboarding of new customers through its online and mobile banking channels and issuing fresh credit cards. The bank shall, however, continue to provide services to its existing customers, including its credit card customers.

For two consecutive years, the bank was assessed to be deficient in its IT Risk and Information Security Governance, contrary to requirements under Regulatory guidelines, the RBI added.

"During the subsequent assessments, the bank was found to be significantly non-compliant with the Corrective Action Plans issued by the RBI for 2022 and 2023, as the compliances submitted by the bank were found to be either inadequate, incorrect or not sustained," it said.

In the absence of a robust IT infrastructure and IT Risk Management framework, the RBI said the bank's Core Banking System and its online and digital banking channels have suffered frequent and significant outages in the last two years, the recent one being a service disruption April 15, 2024.

Restaurants, hospitals offer 'Democracy Discount'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Noida, April 24: With Uttar Pradesh gearing up for the Lok Sabha elections, restaurants and hospitals here are offering discounts on their services to citizens who go out to ink their fingers April 26. The initiative called 'Democracy Discount' allows the citizens to avail 20 per cent discount in restaurants in Noida and Greater Noida by showing their finger with voter ink April 26 and April 27.

National Restaurants' Association of India (NRAI) has exhorted member companies for the initiative, which has seen about two dozen restaurants in the constituency coming on board till Wednesday.

Among restaurants offering the discount are Desi Vibes, Kaffiia, I Sacked Newton, De Valentino Caf , Noida Social, Getafix, Osteria, Chica Loca, F Bar Noida, Xero Courtyard Gardens Galleria, Dirty Rabbit, Baby Dragon, Trippy Tequila, Cafe Delhi heights, Ching Singh, Paso Noida, Moire Cafe & Lounge, The Beer Caf , Sky by Swagath, Imperfecto and The Patiala Kkitchen, according to NRAI.

"The idea is to encourage citizens for more voter turnout," Varun Khara, the Uttar Pradesh unit head of NRAI, told PTI.

Naresh Madan, owner of Imperfecto, said it's a "win-win situation" for citizens, they can participate in the election voting and also have meals at discounts



While restaurants are offering 20 per cent discount, some of the hospitals are offering a whopping 100 per cent on full body check-ups to voters

at their three restaurants in the constituency. "All the customers have to do is show their fingers marked with voting ink and they'll get the discount. We won't even ask for other ID proofs, just the voting ink is proof enough," Madan said.

Gautam Buddh Nagar, comprising the twin cities of Noida and Greater Noida, in western

Uttar Pradesh goes to polls April 26 in the second phase of Lok Sabha elections with over 26 lakh registered voters.

Meanwhile, hospitals are offering free full body check-ups to voters.

Felix Hospital in Noida's Sector 137 is also offering a 100 per cent discount on full body check-ups to voters under its initiative

'Vote for Healthy India'.

"Citizens can come to the hospital and show the indelible ink mark on their fingers to avail full body check-ups worth ₹6,500 free of cost. The offer will be available from April 26 to 30," Felix Hospitals CEO and Chairman Dr D K Gupta told PTI.

Gautam Buddh Nagar recorded a voter turnout of 60.47 per cent in the 2019 Lok Sabha election, 60.38 per cent in 2014 and an abysmal 48 per cent in 2009, according to Election Commission statistics.

The constituency has consistently recorded voter turnout lower than the national average of 67.40 per cent in 2019, 66 per cent in 2014 and 58 per cent in 2009, the data showed.

BIDEN SIGNS DEAL TO BAN TIKTOK

AGENCIES

Washington, April 24: President Joe Biden signed into law Wednesday a USD 95 billion war aid measure that includes aid for Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan and that also has a provision that would force social media site TikTok to be sold or be banned in the US.

The announcement marks an end to the long, painful battle with Republicans in Congress over urgently needed assistance for Ukraine.

"We rose to the moment, we came together, and we got it done," Biden said at White House event to announce the signing. "Now we need to move fast, and we are."

P10

leisure



GALITZINE'S TAKE ON RELATIONSHIPS

Nicholas Galitzine, who essays the role of a musician Hayes Campbell in the upcoming streaming film *The Idea of You*, has said that chemistry in a relationship transcends the age gap between people. *The Idea of You* promises a fresh take on the popular rom-com drama formula.

KIM CONFIRMS SLEEPING WITH HER EYES OPEN

Reality TV star Kim Kardashian revealed that some rumours about her doing the rounds on the Internet are true. She shared on *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* that it is true that she sleeps with her eyes slightly open. Kim said that she knows the fact because her sisters have taken videos and pictures of it.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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

ARIES
All eyes may be on you today – for your looks, skills, or even your funky bag! Make hay while the sun shines, and charge your batteries with all that attention. You can get some decent work done with that energy, says Ganesh.

TAURUS
You may have a tendency to feel frustrated when the results are not the way you expected, feels Ganesh. You must still work hard and finish whatever you undertake today. You will discuss some vital issues with a close friend and relive cherished secrets with your life partner.

GEMINI
You will lend your innovative and imaginative spark to your initiatives, which will be quite a few, says Ganesh. Love will bring you immense satisfaction. And you will develop a special bond with your spouse or beloved. You, however, are likely to be dragged into a conflict and will be forced to pick a side.

CANCER
Today, you will be trying new things in your style of work. You may come across as mad, but there will be a method in your madness. Your new strategy and innovative ideas will give a new lease of life to the projects you are working on.

LEO
The oath of friendship that you once took as a bunch of raggedy misfits still holds true, and your best buddies are the ones who will stand by your side through hell or high water. Ganesh sees in you the desire to cherish such friends and prove your appreciation by treating them with graceful munificence.

VIRGO
Today, you shall balance business and entertainment equally well. The day will be like an endless party, says Ganesh. The emptying of pockets will be proportional to the amount of time you spend doing nothing. But spend prudently, advises Ganesh, and let it not worry you.

LIBRA
Connect and Express – these are the two things you must aim for at work today. You tend to do both things supremely well, be it in a business dialogue on phone, in writing, or in meetings. Getting across to people is not an issue today. But all this work aside, the lingering feeling of wanting to chill out with your sweetheart may become more substantial towards the evening.

SCORPIO
Try adding an entirely new dimension to the way you approach relationships today, advises Ganesh. Being tractable will help iron out the creases in relationships with closed ones. But be wary of complete subjugation, warns Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS
Confidence-building measures will need to be taken up. Be the herald, and usher in new vigour and confidence in people around you. Your business is set to skyrocket and a fair share of profits are in the offing, says Ganesh.

CAPRICORN
Memories of the bygone days will flash through your mind, creating a wave of nostalgia and compelling you to get in touch with old pals. On the other hand, there may be a feeling that your loved ones are demanding more than you can give, says Ganesh. But enjoying some light moments with your beloved in the evening will unburden you and charge you up for the next day.

AQUARIUS
Today will be about pleasure and pain! Plumbing, cleaning, grocery shopping, cooking... you can expect anything to weigh you down. Later, you can relax in a hot soak by candlelight, or unwind with a soothing aromatic massage. Ganesh says you'll be grateful for the pleasures only after the pain.

PISCES
A day filled with socialising awaits you, says Ganesh. You will likely make contact with near and dear ones you haven't met in a while. New associations and friendships could also occur. It is a pleasant and joyous day, so make the most of it.

Raashii shares secrets behind her perfect look

Mumbai: Actress Raashii Khanna, who is awaiting the release of her Tamil film *Arammanai 4*, has shared how she achieved her look in the *Achacho* song from the film.

The actress shared that she banked on weight training, a healthy sleep cycle and perfect nutrition to get the perfectly toned frame for the song. She emphasised that there is no 'shortcut' to fitness and that she made some changes in her routine and sleep cycle.

Raashii said: "I work hard and I won't take that away from me. Even on a 12 to 16-hour shoot day, I take out time for my workouts. I wake up early, I

sleep early I put in the work. And I have been at it for many years now."

She further mentioned that a week prior to the shoot, she opted for an egg white and spinach diet though she wouldn't recommend it for the long run.

The actress stated that during the normal shoot days, she maintains a very healthy diet with 'cheat meals on Sundays'. The actress also has *The Sabarmati Report* in the pipeline, where she will be seen sharing the screen with Vikrant Massey. IANS



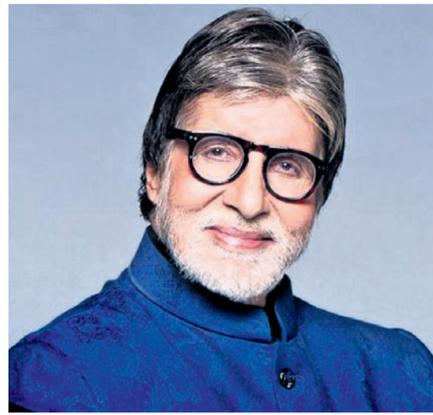
Lara shedding idea of being glamorous

Mumbai: Actress and former Miss Universe Lara Dutta, who is gearing up for her upcoming web series *Ranneeti: Balakot & Beyond*, has shared that with age, she is shedding the notion of being glamorous. Instead, she aims to focus on roles that make a lasting impression on the audience.

Elaborating on the same, Lara said: "As I grow older, I'm breaking free from the idea of being glamorous or just seen as a pageant winner. Instead, I'm finally delving into the kind of work I've desired for a while. It's important to recognise the women who came before us, making space for us to succeed. Nowadays, women are leading the way in all sorts of roles, from making movies to writing scripts."

The actress said: "I feel lucky to be part of an industry that's changing for the better. Personally, I'm interested in exploring the psychological crime genre, even if it means playing a negative character. It's an exciting direction for me, and I would love to do a slightly darker role on screen."

Ranneeti: Balakot & Beyond will be available on JioCinema.



Amitabh Bachchan receives Lata Deenanath Mangeshkar honour

Mumbai: Veteran actor Amitabh Bachchan was honoured with the Lata Deenanath Mangeshkar Award, Wednesday.

The family and the trust instituted the award in the memory of Lata Mangeshkar after the melody queen died in 2022. The 81-year-old star, in his

award acceptance speech, said, "I never really regarded myself worthy of such an award, but Hridayanath (Mangeshkar) ji tried hard so that I come here. He even invited me for this ceremony last year. Hridayanath ji, I apologise to you for last time. I had then told you I was unwell. I was healthy but didn't want to come here. This year I had no excuse, so I had to come here."

Singer Usha Mangeshkar, the third eldest Mangeshkar sibling, presented the award to Bachchan. The award is given every year to an individual who has made a path-breaking contribution towards the nation, its people and society. Prime Minister Narendra Modi was its first recipient, followed by Asha Bhosle in 2023.

Alizeh on her popularity as star kid

Mumbai: Unlike other industry kids, Alizeh Khan Agnihotri, Salman Khan's niece was never really the kid who won popularity before she made her debut with *Farrey*.

"I don't think I was that relevant enough for the paparazzi to follow me around everywhere," says Alizeh. She adds, "When you are a superstar's kid your life is monitored from when you are a baby. It is not that the paps didn't follow me around. But I think they would be more interested and curious about Taimur (Saif Ali Khan and Kareena Kapoor Khan's son as he is a child of two actors)." Post her debut with *Farrey*,

Alizeh upped her social media game and gave people an insight into her life.

She said, "I was rather prepared that once my film releases, I will start talking and open up. Otherwise, if I am out with my family and if I saw press around, I would run away. I was sure about what I would be asked about... my family and mamu Salman Khan. There was nothing more I

could contribute to a conversation than talking about family back then, and so I stayed away."

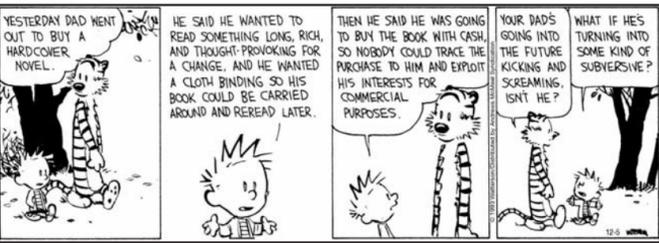
AGENCIES



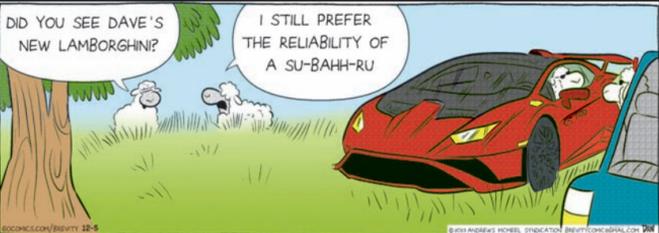
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

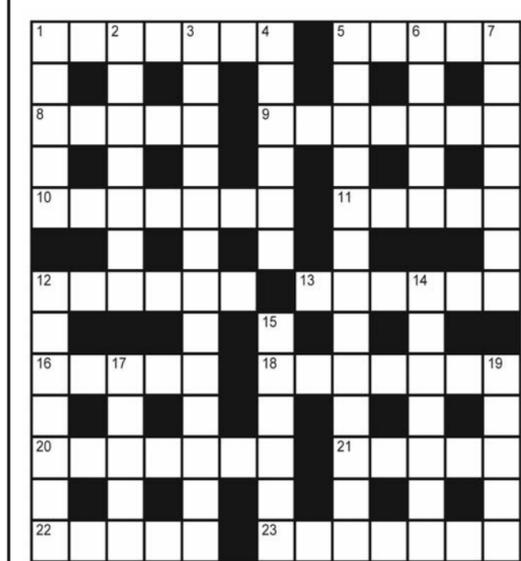


BREVITY



FUN post

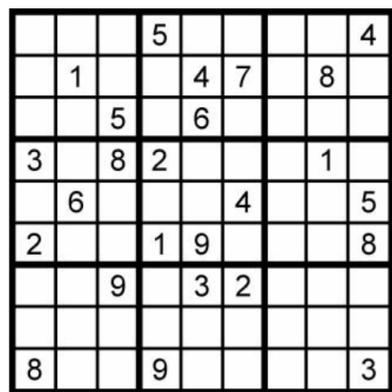
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Water source
 - 5 White heron
 - 8 Upright
 - 9 Like some ceilings
 - 10 Buzzard bait
 - 11 Type of feed
 - 12 Retaliate
 - 13 Hound dog
 - 16 Harness racer
 - 18 Harbour craft
 - 20 Italian table wine
- Down**
- 21 Master of ceremonies
 - 22 Brackish
 - 23 Analysed
 - 4 Gorge
 - 5 Estimate (8,5)
 - 6 Deserved
 - 7 Larval frog
 - 12 Andes' beasts
 - 14 Ill-natured
 - 15 The Scourge of God
 - 17 Recipe direction
 - 19 Thick woollen fabric

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD

SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

AT LORD'S ABODE

An artiste performs during Sahi Jata at Dolamandapa Sahi in Puri, Wednesday



'Lungi vs dhoti' politics

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, April 24: A 'lungi versus dhoti' debate emerged in Odisha politics after Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan hit out at Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik for appearing in a video message wearing a lungi.

While BJP leaders claimed dhoti was the culture of Odisha and not lungi, those of the BJD highlighted the importance of lungi and how weavers in Sambalpur would benefit from its promotion.

Patnaik, in a video message urging people to vote for the 'conch' symbol of his party in the simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly elections, was seen wearing a blood red lungi and a white tee shirt. The video was released by the BJD Monday night.



However, Pradhan, while addressing an election rally at Laikera in Jharsuguda district Tuesday, ridiculed Patnaik's clothing. "You (people) have all seen our Naveen babu, an elderly person, in lungi with 'joda sankha' (double conch) in his hand. There is a 'gumasta' (clerk) who gets these things done. At least he should have gotten an elderly person like Naveen babu dressed in pyjama and kurta. I have respect for Naveen babu. Should he have done this to an elderly person?" Pradhan, the BJP candidate for Sambalpur



Lok Sabha seat, questioned. BJD reacted sharply as Pradhan's election speech went viral on social media.

Wearing lungi, two BJD spokespersons, Sasmit Patra and Swayam Prakash Mohapatra, addressed a press conference Tuesday, highlighting the importance of lungi and how its promotion would help the weavers of Sambalpur.

The next day, Wednesday, Pradhan, during his election campaign, toured Athamallik area in Sambalpur Lok Sabha seat wearing dhoti and kurta.

"I received the blessings of Goddess Maheshwari, the presiding deity of Athamallik. Locals have deep devotion towards the Mother. I am praying to Mother Maheshwari, the all-powerful goddess of the local area, for the fulfillment of everyone's wishes," Pradhan wrote on X.

He also posted a photograph of him wearing a dhoti and kurta. Asked about the CM's attire, he told reporters, "It would have been better had he worn dhoti instead of lungi." Several other BJP leaders argued on social media about dhoti representing the culture of Odisha, and not lungi.

Former BJP state president Samir Mohanty shared three images of Pradhan clad in dhoti and kurta, wrote on X, "In Odisha's Shree Jagannath Culture, we wear dhoti and not lungi. Dhoti is the symbol of Odia pride, identity and culture."

BJP 'chargesheet' against BJD govt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, April 24: Ahead of elections, the BJP Wednesday unveiled a 'chargesheet' against the nearly 25-year-old BJD government in the state, accusing it of being involved in corruption and irregularities.

Accusing the BJP of levelling 'malicious and defamatory content without evidence', the BJD moved the Election Commission against the 'chargesheet' and claimed it violated the model code of conduct.

Senior BJP leader and Union Minister Bhupender Yadav released the 50-page 'chargesheet' and alleged that the BJD could not provide drinking water supply, set up more cold storages and increase farmers' income despite ruling the state for over two decades.

"The ruling party has failed miserably in making the state safe for women. The rise in the number of missing children is another area of concern," the union minister said. The Naveen Patnaik government has also failed to achieve its promised target of providing irrigation facilities to 35 per cent of land in every block of the state, Yadav claimed. He also alleged that it could not set up cold storages in all 314 blocks of Odisha.

The higher education system in the state is in a deplorable state as more than 4300 posts of lecturers are lying vacant, he said.

Similarly, he claimed, more than 6400 villages, most of which are in tribal areas, are yet to get road connectivity.

The BJP leader further said that the BJD government has failed to provide employment to the youths and because of that, people migrated to Mumbai, Gujarat and Chennai in search of livelihood. Over 40,000 labourers have moved out of Odisha in the past year, he claimed. The BJP leader said the authorities are selling power produced in Odisha to Tamil Nadu at ₹2.53 per unit whereas the people of Odisha are paying ₹2.83 per unit.

Reacting to the chargesheet of the BJP, senior BJP leader Swarup Das said the state government has taken several measures for the empowerment of women, farmers and youths. The BJD leader said the people of Odisha will reject the charge sheet and give a befitting reply to the BJP in the upcoming elections.

The BJD has submitted a petition to the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Rajiv Kumar demanding strong action against the BJP leaders who published the document.

CAMPAIGNING ENDS FOR PHASE 2 POLLS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 24: The curtains came down Wednesday evening on a high-voltage campaigning for the second phase of Lok Sabha polls in 89 seats across 13 states Friday (April 26).

Spread over seven stages, the first phase of the elections held last Friday for 102 seats across 21 states and Union Territories saw a voter turnout of around 65.5 per cent.

Polling is scheduled in all 20 seats of Kerala, 14 of the 28 seats in Karnataka, 13 seats in Rajasthan, eight seats each in Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, seven seats in Madhya Pradesh, five seats each in Assam and Bihar, three seats each in Chhattisgarh and West

THE FIRST PHASE OF POLLS HELD LAST FRIDAY FOR 102 SEATS ACROSS 21 STATES & UNION TERRITORIES SAW A VOTER TURNOUT OF AROUND 65.5 PER CENT

SECOND PHASE OF POLLING WILL BE HELD APRIL 26 FOR 89 LOK SABHA SEATS ACROSS 13 STATES

THE THIRD PHASE OF POLLING FOR 94 SEATS IN 12 STATES AND UNION TERRITORIES WILL BE HELD MAY 7

Bengal, and one seat each in Manipur, Tripura and Jammu and Kashmir.

Among the prominent contestants are Union Minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar (Thiruvananthapuram), BJP's Tejasvi Surya (Karnataka), Hema Malini and Arun Govil (both Uttar Pradesh), Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi (Wayanad) and Shashi Tharoor (Thiruvananthapuram),

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar's brother DK Suresh (Cong), former Karnataka chief minister HD Kumaraswamy (JDS).

After Friday's phase, polling will be over in Kerala, Rajasthan and Tripura. In the first phase April 19, polling was completed in all seats of Tamil Nadu (39), Uttarakhand (five), Arunachal Pradesh (two), Meghalaya (two),

Andaman and Nicobar Islands (one), Mizoram (one), Nagaland (one), Puducherry (one), Sikkim (one) and Lakshadweep (one).

In 2019, the NDA had won 56 of these 89 seats and the UPA 24. Six of these seats have been redrawn as part of the delimitation exercise.

Authorities in these constituencies have been directed to ensure that no outsider remains in these areas 48 hours before polling. Any form of electioneering, public meetings, press conferences by political parties, interviews and panel discussions in electronic or print media have been strictly prohibited.

The third phase of polling for 94 seats in 12 states and Union Territories will be held May 7.

Dharmendra, Pandian, Baijayant to get 'Z' scale security

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 24: The Odisha Police, following a review meeting here, has upgraded the security cover of some prominent political leaders of the state ahead of the elections.

While Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, 5T Chairman VK Pandian and BJP's national vice-president Baijayant Panda will get 'Z' scale security, BJP's state president Manmohan Samal, OPCC president Sarat Pattanayak and Kantabanji MLA Santosh Singh Saluja will be given 'Y' scale security keeping in view the threat perceptions during the polls.

ଅଂଶୁଘାତ ପ୍ରତି ସାବଧାନ!

ଜରୁରୀ ସୂଚନା

ଟାଣ ଖରାରେ ପଦାକୁ ବାହାରକୁ ନାହିଁ ।

ଖରାରେ କଠିନ ପରିଶ୍ରମ କରନ୍ତୁ ନାହିଁ ।

ଜରୁରୀ କାମରେ ବାହାରକୁ ଯିବାକୁ ହେଲେ କଳା ଚଷମା, ଚପଲ, ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ ଡେବା ଗାମୁଛା ଏବଂ ଛତା ବ୍ୟବହାର କରନ୍ତୁ ।

ବାହାରକୁ ଯିବା ସମୟରେ ପାଣି ବୋତଲ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ନିଅନ୍ତୁ ।

ହାଲୁକା ଏବଂ ଜିଲା ପୋଷାକ ପରିଧାନ କରନ୍ତୁ ।

ମାଦକ ଦ୍ରବ୍ୟ ସେବନ କରନ୍ତୁ ନାହିଁ ।

ଜଳ ଶୁଷ୍କତାରୁ ରକ୍ଷା ପାଇବା ପାଇଁ ଅଧିକ ପାଣି, ଡି.ଆର.ଏସ୍ ଦ୍ରବଣ, ପଣା, ତୋରାଣି, ଘୋଳଦହି ଓ ଆଖୁରସ ପିଅନ୍ତୁ ଏବଂ କାକୁଡ଼ି, ତରତୁଳ ଆଦି ଖାଆନ୍ତୁ ।

ଅଶୁଘାତରେ ଆକ୍ରାନ୍ତ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିଙ୍କୁ ଯଥା ଶୀଘ୍ର ଡାକ୍ତରଖାନାକୁ ନେଇ ଚିକିତ୍ସା କରାନ୍ତୁ ।

ଗୃହପାଳିତ ପଶୁପକ୍ଷୀମାନଙ୍କୁ ଛାଇରେ ରଖନ୍ତୁ ଏବଂ ପ୍ରଚୁର ପରିମାଣରେ ପାଣି ପିଇବାକୁ ଦିଅନ୍ତୁ ।

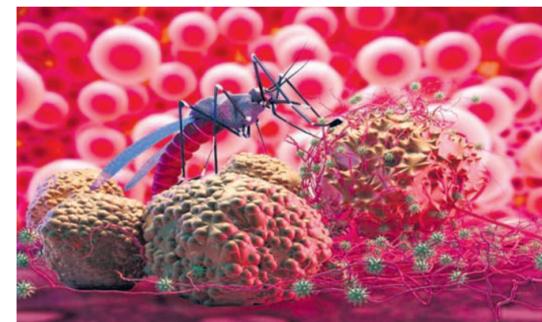
ଭାରତୀୟ ପାଣିପାଗବିଭାଗ ଦ୍ୱାରା ଗ୍ରୀଷ୍ମପ୍ରବାହ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧୀୟ ବିଆପାରଧିବା ସତର୍କ ସୂଚନା ପ୍ରତି ସର୍ବଦା ଧ୍ୟାନ ଦିଅନ୍ତୁ ।

ସଚେତନତା ଓ ସତର୍କତା ହିଁ ସୁରକ୍ଷା!

OIPR-24007/13/0001/2425

WORLD MALARIA DAY

WHO calls for equitable health access to prevent, treat malaria



proportionately affects the most vulnerable among us," she stated.

Infants and young children, especially those under five, are particularly affected, with disparities in access to education and financial resources compounding their risk, Wazed said, adding that pregnant women also face heightened risks as pregnancy reduces immunity to malaria, making them more susceptible to infection and severe disease.

She added that refugees, migrants, internally displaced people and indigenous people are also at heightened risk of malaria.

"Malaria remains a significant public health challenge in our region, affecting nine out of eleven countries and accounting for a third of the global burden outside Africa," Wazed said.

"Despite the formidable obstacles we face, I am heartened by the progress we have made in recent years. In recent years, our region witnessed a substantial decline in malaria cases and deaths, marking the most significant reduction among all WHO regions," she added.

Accelerate the fight against malaria for a more equitable world by ending discrimination and stigma, engaging communities in health decision-making and bringing healthcare close to where people live and work through primary health care, Wazed said.

inequities through both proven interventions and innovation in service delivery," Wazed said. "On World Malaria Day 2024, we unite under the theme 'Accelerating the fight against malaria for a more equitable world'," she said.

This theme is in sync with this year's World Health Day theme - 'My Health, My Right' - underscores the urgent need to address the stark inequities that persist in access to malaria prevention, detection and treatment services.

Wazed said in recent years, global efforts to reduce malaria have stagnated, posing a significant threat to public health and exacerbating inequalities within communities.

"Everyone has the right to quality, timely and affordable malaria services, yet this remains elusive for many, perpetuating a cycle of inequity that dis-



BUSY DAY: Passengers waiting at Netaji Subash Chandra Bose Bus Terminal in Cuttack, Wednesday

OP PHOTO

'Declining growth in population worrisome'

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 24: Expressing concern over the dwindling population growth in Odisha, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) state head Mohammad Nadeem Noor said that the demographic transition will have a toll on economic development of the state.

"The state's population growth rate has been constantly declining since 1971. Earlier, it was accounted for 4 per cent of country's total population which has come down to 3.5 per cent," he pointed out.

Noor was having a conversation with corporate and CSR heads



on demography and development, organised by the Centre for Youth and Social Development (CYSD) here Wednesday.

"While the 2.1 fertility rate

per woman indicates a stable socio-economic condition, the rate has been dropped to 1.8 and by 2036 it will further decrease to 1.2," he said.

Amidst a drop in fertility rate and a rise in life expectancy, the elderly population in the state is expanding. Projection indicates that population aged 60 and above is set to surge from 3.9 million in 2011 to 8 million by 2036, he warned.

CYSD co-founder Jagadananda stressed on the urgency of reviewing state policies to align with evolving demographics. "We require a collaborative effort involving private sectors, government bodies, civil society organisations (CSOs), corporations, corporate social responsibility (CSR) wings and academics to deliberate on the issue," he said.

Economy meals at 9 stations

Bhubaneswar: The East Coast Railways (ECOR) has decided to provide economy meals at nine important stations in its jurisdiction during summer," an official said Wednesday. "Economy meals are priced at ₹20 and snack meals are priced at ₹50. To ensure easy access, these meals will be available at counters conveniently located near general second class (GS) coaches on platforms" he added. Under ECOR jurisdiction, economy meals are available to passengers at Khurda Road station and Palasa in Khurda Road Division, Sambalpur, Titilagarh, Bolangir, Kantabari of Sambalpur Division and at Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram and Srikakulam railway stations in Waltair railway division.

Samanta conferred 'Doctorate of Science'



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, 24 April: Founder of KISS and KIIT educational institutions and social reformer Achyuta Samanta was conferred with the honorary 'Doctorate of Science' degree at the fourteenth convocation ceremony of JV Women's University, Jaipur Wednesday.

Expressing his gratitude to the university, Samanta dedicated the award to his mother Nilmarani and all the women faculties and administrative staffs of KISS and KIIT.

Samanta attended the event virtually. Retired IPS officer and former Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry Kiran Bedi was the chief guest on the occasion.

This recognition marks Samanta's 57th doctorate degree, acknowledging his significant contributions in the field of education, social service and women's empowerment.

Odisha Wonder Women's Convention by ILO, OASME

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 24: To address the issues faced by women entrepreneurs in procuring government tenders, Odisha Wonder Women's Convention 2024 was organised jointly by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the Odisha Assembly of Small and Medium Enterprises (OASME) here Wednesday.

OASME women wing chairperson Jyotirmayee Mohanty extended a warm welcome to all guests and dignitaries. The keynote address was delivered by ILO chief technical advisor Sudipta Bhadra.

A panel discussion on 'Public Procurement Policy - Opportunities for Women Entrepreneurs,' was moderated by public policy practitioner and ILO consultant Rita Mathur.

The convention provided a platform to empower women en-

trepreneurs in the state, offering valuable insights, resources and networking opportunities to thrive in the competitive business landscape. Focusing on sustainable enterprise and economic empowerment, the workshop addressed key challenges and opportunities for women-led businesses in the region.

The women entrepreneurs highlighted the issues faced by them in participating in the government tenders and demanded for a separate policy for the women in all procurement policies of the state and Central government.

Attendees engaged in panel discussions and interactive workshops featuring esteemed speakers and experts from diverse sectors on topics such as, public procurement policy, digital marketing and the role of technology in business growth.



KABIL inks MoU with CSIR-NGRI

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 24: With an aim to foster a long-term collaboration in the field of geophysical investigations and to bolster ongoing projects in critical and strategic minerals, KABIL signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research - National Geophysical Research Institute (CSIR-NGRI) Wednesday.

KABIL is a joint venture company between National Aluminium Company Limited (NALCO), Hindustan Copper Limited (HCL) and Mineral Exploration and Consultancy Limited (MECL), under the aegis of Ministry of Mines, Government of India.

The MoU was signed between NALCO commercial director and KABIL CEO Sadashiv Samantary and CSIR-NGRI director Prakash Kumar, in presence of Nalco CMD and KABIL chairman Sridhar Patra at its corporate office here.

On the occasion Patra said that the collaboration will pave the way forward driving innovation and actionable insights towards the ongoing projects.

SUM docs perform haplo-HSCT

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 24: In a first in the state, the department of Clinical Hematology at the Institute of Medical Sciences and SUM Hospital here performed a Haploidentical Hematopoietic Stem Cell Transplantation (haplo-HSCT) on a female patient suffering from Acute Myeloid Leukemia (AML).

The Haploidentical transplant is a type of allogeneic transplant in which healthy, blood forming cells are taken from a half-matched donor to replace the unhealthy ones in the patient, Priyanka Samal, Professor and Head of the department of Clinical Hematology, Hemato Oncology and Hematopoietic Stem Cell Transplant in the hospital, said Wednesday.

"The donor was the daughter of the 51-year-old patient

whose Human Leukocyte Antigens (HLA) matched half of her mother. The patient displayed signs of complications after the transplantation but the same were managed," she said.

Samal said, "We have been conducting fully matched sibling donor stem cell transplants but it's difficult to find a healthy Matched Sibling Donor (MSD) for every patient eligible for HSCT. There is only one in four or 25 per cent chance of a patient matching with his or her sibling."

"But Haploidentical HSCT provides almost 100 per cent possibility of getting a 50 per cent matched healthy donor for a patient," she said.

The chances of graft rejection, GvHD, transplant and non-transplant related mortality is relatively higher in Haploidentical HSCT as compared to MSD HSCT, she added.



OPID Court convicts 2 for cheating NBFC of ₹1.64cr

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 24: The Odisha Protection of Interests of Depositors (OPID) Court in Balasore has convicted two persons for cheating a non-banking financial company (NBFC) of ₹1.64 crore by disbursing 13 loans in favour of fictitious loanees by using forged documents, official sources said Wednesday.

While the court awarded seven years of rigorous imprisonment (RI) and slapped a penalty of ₹3 lakh on Sashikanta Sahoo under Sections 409, 420, 467, 468, 471, 472 and 120-B of the IPC, it held Sashikanta's brother Srikanta Sahoo guilty under Sections 409, 420, 471, 472 and 120-B of the IPC

and awarded him five years of RI apart from slapping ₹2 lakh penalty on him, Special Public Prosecutor Pranab Kumar Panda said.

"In case of failure to pay the fine, both the convicts will undergo further two years of imprisonment," the court ordered.

Panda said V Kishore Kumar, the territory manager of Sundaram Finance Limited approached the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) in November 2019 alleging that Sashikanta, an executive at the Balasore branch of the NBFC, his brother Srikanta, proprietor of M/s Hanumanjew Furniture and a few others have cheating the finance company to a tune of

₹1.64 crore by fraudulently disbursing loans in favour of fictitious loanees by using forged documents.

"During probe, it was found that 13 contracts against 11 customers worth of ₹1.64 crore were recommended by Sashikanta— executive (Customer Relation, Tractor Unit, Balasore) of Sundaram Finance to the credit authority, Head office of Sundaram Finance for approval of loan for purchase of KARTAR make Harvesters," Panda said.

The proposals were given in the name of dealer 'Utkal Agro Centre', Bhadrak, the authorised dealer of KARTAR Harvesters in Odisha.

On receipt of the approval from

the credit authority of Sundaram Finance Limited, Sashikanta falsely prepared the loan documents, procured KYC documents of the fictitious loanees and sent them to the payment department for disbursement of the loan amount.

In the documents of loanees, Sashikanta changed the name of the dealer from Utkal Agro Centre to M/s Hanumanjew Furniture and M/s Utkal Enterprises which are falsely created by Sashikanta in connivance with his brothers.

Accordingly, entire loan amount of ₹1.64 crore was disbursed in the accounts of dealer M/s Hanumanjew Furniture and M/s Utkal Enterprises which are owned by Sashikanta's brothers.

'Climate change should be major political issue'

Bhubaneswar: The Bakul Library recently organised a discussion on 'climate change a major issue in political discourse in the elections' here. Several experts helped formulate a climate manifesto on this occasion and agreed that it should be a major issue in political discourse. Founder of Bakul Foundation Sujit Mahapatra and Devjit Mitra of Socrates Foundation shared their views about creating a climate manifesto, which was subsequently given to the major political parties in the state. Mahapatra said, "We took this initiative because we realised that unless elections are fought over issues relating to climate change, whatever is done as 'climate action' will be too little and too late." "Hence, we created a ready-to-cook climate manifesto and presented it to the committees of BJD, BJP and the Congress," he said. Mitra gave a brief synopsis of the climate manifesto and showed how the manifesto appealed to different demographics of voters, such as youth, women and farmers through economic benefits for climate action. An expert on migration issues, Umi Daniel said that migration is not taking place only from western Odisha. Rather, it is happening from coastal regions thus being a major reason for climate change in the state. Debabrata Patra of Action Aid spoke about the need for a specific rehabilitation policy for climate refugees instead of using the existing one for industrial displacement.



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TB treatment goes for toss in Rayagada

Patients suffer due to scarcity of medicines for the last 3 months in the district



POST NEWS NETWORK

Rayagada, April 24: The Centre-sponsored 'Pradhan Mantri TB Mukta Bharat Abhiyan' has gone for a toss in this district. This is because of the unavailability of medicines for tuberculosis patients in the last three months, sources informed Wednesday.

In the last six months, 698 cases of tuberculosis have been reported from this district. A total of 152 patients are undergoing treatment at the DHH. The number of patients affected by the disease in different blocks stands at: Bissam Cuttack (118), Gunupur (87), Kashipur (55), Kolnara (49), Gudari (47), Muniguda (43), Kalyansingpur and Ramnaguda (both 38), Padmapur (37) and Chandrapur



(34). Most of the family members of the patients alleged that the Health department has failed to provide medicines needed for treatment.

ASHA workers in rural areas have also run out of stock of TB medicines. Moreover, the medicines are not available at local clinics and medicine shops as the government has imposed restrictions on its sale. Due to this,

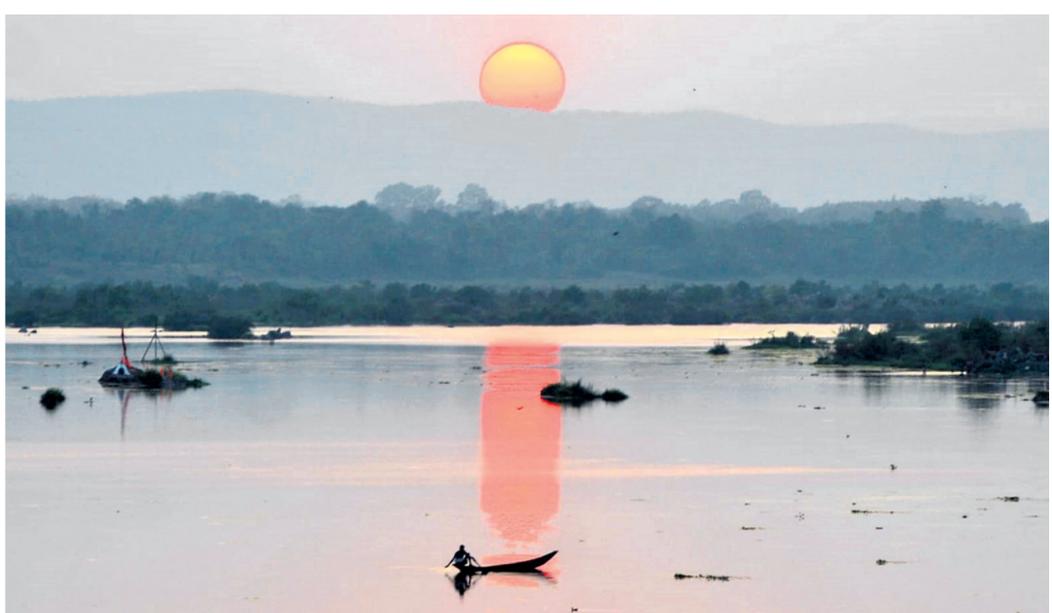
the conditions of many tuberculosis patients are deteriorating, locals said.

Dr DK Dev, an expert on the disease and working at the DHH here informed that timely administration of medicines to a TB patient is a must. He added that the treatment is long-term. "The state government is not supplying medicines required for TB patients due to which there is scarcity," said district CDMO Dr Lal Mohan Routray.

"We have apprised our higher authorities about the situation. They have directed us to acquire the medicines from other districts. We are trying to do that, but then the demand is growing," Routray added.

Rayagada being a tribal-dominated district, there is this affinity among people to take the help of quacks. Many TB patients are visiting quacks for treatment complicating the situation all the more, sources pointed out.

A vegetable vendor of Amalabaha village in this district requesting anonymity said that he tested positive for TB more than five weeks back. He visited a doctor who prescribed him medicines on a regular basis for six months. "I had visited a number of shops and even the DHH, but I did not get the medicines. I waited for a month, but to no avail. Ultimately I had to get the medicines from Berhampur through a relative," he informed. "This just goes to show how tuberculosis patients are suffering in this district," he added.



HOMEBOUND: A fisherman after finishing his day's catch returns home as the sun sets on the western horizon at Balibandha ghat of Mahanadi river in Sambalpur district, Wednesday

RGH's unused laparoscopy machine under probe

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, April 24: An unused laparoscopy machine lying at the Rourkela Government Hospital (RGH) here has prompted medical superintendent Dr Ganesh Das to look into the matter. He has ordered a probe as to why it is lying unused for close to a year now despite the presence of trained technicians in the hospital.

Since the machine was installed at RGH in July 2023, it has been used only once. The decision for buying the laparoscopy machine was taken by a three-member committee headed by the then director and medical superintendent of the hospital, Dr Santosh Swain.



The matter came to light after a technician from a private nursing home was called to assist in a surgery. This development attracted the attention of Dr Das. He did not permit the visiting technician to enter the operation theatre and initiated a probe as to why others were being called from outside when RGH has its own experts for using the machine.

Sources informed that the

Gynaecology department of RGH had raised the necessity of acquiring a laparoscopy machine. Accordingly a proposal to buy the machine at ₹1.5 crore was presented to the Power Grid Corporation of India and the machine was bought and installed in July 2023. It was used to conduct a surgery on the 18th of the same month. However, since then it has been gathering dust. Sources in-

formed that the one-year warranty of the machine will be over soon. Hence, it must be used on a regular basis to find out if there are any technical problems. Accordingly a decision to use the machine March 10 was taken.

On the scheduled date, when the technician identified as Bhagaban Maharana arrived, Dr Das denied him permission to enter the OT. He also issued a show cause to surgeon Dr TK Das, for inviting an outsider to assist in the surgery.

The question being now asked is why a three-member committee took the decision to buy such a costly laparoscopic machine. Dr Das informed that he has informed the state Health department on this issue.

Problems plague Joda's newly-built stadium



POST NEWS NETWORK

Joda, April 24: Hardly two months have elapsed since its inauguration. However, the walls of the newly-built multi-purpose indoor stadium here in Keonjhar district have developed cracks. Plasters are falling off the walls as well the beams and ceiling, sources informed Wednesday. The gymnasium has been the worst-affected with cracks appearing on many portions of the walls.

A visit to the stadium also exposed various other irregularities. Sports persons and kids training at the stadium informed that water supply to the venue has been disrupted for more than a week now. As a result, they are facing shortage of drinking water. They informed that they cannot train

properly as there are no other means to quench their thirst. They pointed out that the grass lawn in front of the stadium has dried up due to the lack of watering in a proper manner.

When contacted, PWD engineer of Joda, Ramdas Marndi said that the motor pump has been sent for repairing and water supply will resume after its installation. The walls that have developed cracks will also be repaired soon. He however, appeared evasive when questioned about the sub-standard work associated with the construction of the stadium.

It should be stated here that the indoor stadium built at an expenditure of ₹8 crore was inaugurated virtually by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik in March this year.

Valuables razed in Excise office fire

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, April 24: Many confiscated vehicles and seized items were reduced to ashes in a massive fire that broke out late Tuesday night on the premises of the Barbil Excise office in this district.

Officials said among the vehicles that were gutted were one Scorpio and two Bolero SUVs, one auto-rickshaw, and 11 two-wheelers. Many valuable documents and other seized articles were razed to ashes in the blaze that occurred at the office located on Kiriburua road. On receiving information, fire brigade teams rushed to the spot and doused the flames. Though the actual cause of the fire is not yet clear, suspicion remains that some miscreants



might have done it and it will come to light only after police investigation, sources said.

"Santosh Behera, an employee of the office, noticed the fire and informed me late in the night. Immediately I contacted the fire brigade of

officials. The cause of the fire is not yet clear. However, most of the important documents are safe. The cause behind the fire will be clear after investigation," said Janardan Palei, officer-in-charge of the local police station here.

Ailing tusker dies in Sundargarh

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sundargarh, April 24: An ailing tusker died Wednesday while undergoing treatment in Khesara forest of Banki range under K Balanga police limits in this district. Forest department officials informed that the tusker was found a few days back roaming aimlessly in the Koida forest range. Later on it fell sick after entering the Banki forest range and stopped moving around.

Getting information about the



ailing tusker, Forest department staff reached the spot. They tranquillised the elephant and administered medicines. However, the condition of the elephant deteriorated from Tuesday and

it breathed its last Wednesday morning. Officials stated that it had stopped eating and drinking water for the last two days and all attempts to revive the animal failed.

Forest department officials buried the tusker after conducting the post-mortem of the animal. They said that the exact cause behind the death of the elephant can only be ascertained after they get the post-mortem report. This incidentally is the second tusker death reported from the district since February.

Man gets 10 yrs RI for raping minor

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, April 24: A local court here sentenced a 32-year-old man to 10 years of rigorous imprisonment after convicting him for raping a 15-year-old girl. The convict was identified as Pintu Munda, 32 of Dhubapitana village under Ghatagaon police limits in this district. Fast Track Court Judge, Keonjhar, Bijay Kumar Mishra also slapped a fine of ₹10,000 on the convict apart from the prison sentence.

In case of non-payment of the amount, the convict has to undergo an additional six months of rigorous imprisonment, the judge ordered. The court also directed the district legal services authority to pay a compensation of ₹8 lakh to the survivor.

"The judge delivered the verdict after examining the statements of 20 witnesses and the police investigation report," public prosecutor Gyanendranath Jena said.

According to sources, the victim was invited by her sister-in-law to her house. After a few days, convict Pintu, then 24 years old and a cousin of the victim's sister-in-law, came and stayed in the house. He repeatedly raped her in the absence of other members. He also threatened to kill her if she disclosed the matter to other members of the family.

Later, the girl fell sick and the family members took her to the hospital for a medical check-up and she was found pregnant. During counselling the victim narrated the ordeal that she had to go through. Later, she delivered a baby girl in November 2018.

As the incident became public, Pintu went into hiding. On receiving a complaint from the family members of the victim, Gitanjali Mishra of 'Child Line' took up the matter. She lodged a written complaint at the Ghatagaon police station November 16, 2018. Police tracked down Pintu and arrested him the next day.



Demand grows for restoration of 'Amba Totas'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, April 24: People in this district have been suffering due to the scorching temperatures that are hovering around the 43-degree Celsius mark. Now they are also realising the utility of mango trees that were once found in large numbers in almost all the villages of this district. Lack of mango trees has made the lives of human beings, animals and birds miserable. There is chorus in almost all the villages of the district to restore the old glory of the mango trees.

Deforestation and lack of proper planning of plantations have led to the unnecessary felling of mango trees in many places. People have now realised the utility of mango orchards, locally known as 'Amba Totas'.



These 'Amba Totas' used to be the go to places for the residents of the villages. Now the mango orchards are being missed more as the elections draw near. Earlier political parties used to organise meetings under mango trees. Now with most villages not having a single mango tree, such meetings have become rare

occurrences. "Holding meetings in natural environment used to be a very good option. Now it is not there anymore," said Subrat Mohanty, a local BJP leader.

The 'Amba Totas' were venues for socialising in almost all the villages. People used to rest under the trees, meetings were organised, kids played under

them and at times feasted on both raw and ripe mangoes. In fact the mango trees used to be the conglomeration points in all the villages. Even fairs like 'Raja' used to be organised inside 'Amba Totas' as they provided relief from the hot weather.

Locals pointed out that natural calamities as well as urban-

isation has led to the rapid decrease in the number of mango orchards. Now however, people are realising the importance of the 'Amba Totas'.

"Mango orchards are a good method to protect the environment and get protection from the heat. The trees can also minimise pollution," said environmentalist Dr. Bimbadhar Behera.

Fakir Chandra Mishra, a senior citizen lamented the disappearance of mango orchards. "It used to be a good place to meet and talk. Now we hardly socialise and one of the reasons is the absence of mango trees," Mishra stated. "Concrete forests have become a huge problem in our lives. In our times there were no AC rooms or other facilities. However, we had our share of enjoyment under the shades of mango trees," he added.

2 get 30-yr RI each for raping 15-year-old girl

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur: A POCSO court in Ganjam district Wednesday sentenced two men to 30 years of rigorous imprisonment each for raping a 15-year-old girl last year. Prabhat Kumar Rajguru, Judge of a special POCSO Court here, also imposed a fine of ₹10,000 each on the two convicts, who hail from the same village as that of the survivor in Bhanjanagar police station area of Ganjam district.

EAST COAST RAILWAY
Tender Notice No.: MCSW-WM-PLANT-24-25-02, Dtd. 18.04.2024
Name of Work: OPERATION AND CAMC OF WASTE MANAGEMENT PLANT OF CAPACITY 500 KG PER BATCH AT CARRIAGE REPAIR WORKSHOP, MANCHESWAR.
Advised Value: ₹36,23,574/-, EMD: Rs.72,500/-
Completion Period: 12(Twelve) Month
Tender closing Date & Time: At 1500 hrs. on 10.05.2024
The Tender documents complete details available at www.ircps.gov.in
PR-45/P/24-25

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, RWS&S MECHANICAL DIVISION
D2/24, MANCHESWAR INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, BHUBANESWAR
E-Mail : eemrwsbs9@gmail.com
Cancellation of 'e' Procurement Notice No. SEMBBSR/01(3) of 2024-25
No. O-04:- Due to some technical problem, the 'e' Procurement Notice No. SEMBBSR/01(3) of 2024-25 is hereby cancelled.
Sd./- Superintending Engineer
OIPR-25041/11/0007/2425 RWS&S Mechanical Division, Bhubaneswar

The Divine Truth is greater than any religion or creed or scripture or idea or philosophy.

SRI AUROBINDO



Future of AI

Artificial intelligence and the threat that it poses to good jobs would seem to be an entirely new problem. But we can find useful ideas about how to respond in the work of David Ricardo, a founder of modern economics who observed the British Industrial Revolution firsthand. The evolution of his thinking, including some points that he missed, holds many helpful lessons for us today.

Private-sector tech leaders promise us a brighter future of less stress at work, fewer boring meetings, more leisure time, and perhaps even a universal basic income. But should we believe them? Many people may simply lose what they regarded as a good job – forcing them to find work at a lower wage. After all, algorithms are already taking over tasks that currently require people's time and attention.

In his seminal 1817 work, *On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*, Ricardo took a positive view of the machinery that had already transformed the spinning of cotton. Following the conventional wisdom of the time, he famously told the House of Commons that "machinery did not lessen the demand for labour."

Since the 1770s, the automation of spinning had reduced the price of spun cotton and increased demand for the complementary task of weaving spun cotton into finished cloth. And since almost all weaving was done by hand prior to the 1810s, this explosion in demand helped turn cotton handweaving into a high-paying artisanal job employing several hundred thousand British men (including many displaced, pre-industrial spinners). This early, positive experience with automation likely informed Ricardo's initially optimistic view.

But the development of large-scale machinery did not stop with spinning. Soon, steam-powered looms were being deployed in cotton-weaving factories. No longer would artisanal "hand weavers" be making good money working five days per week from their own cottages. Instead, they would struggle to feed their families while working much longer hours under strict discipline in factories.

As anxiety and protests spread across northern England, Ricardo changed his mind. In the third edition of his influential book, published in 1821, he added a new chapter, "On Machinery," where he hit the nail on the head: "If machinery could do all the work that labour now does, there would be no demand for labour." The same concern applies today: Algorithms' takeover of tasks previously performed by workers will not be good news for displaced workers unless they can find well-paid new tasks.

Most of the struggling handweaving artisans during the 1810s and 1820s did not go to work in the new weaving factories, because the machine looms did not need many workers. Whereas the automation of spinning had created opportunities for more people to work as weavers, the automation of weaving did not create compensatory labour demand in other sectors. The British economy overall did not create enough other well-paying new jobs, at least not until railways took off in the 1830s. With few other options, hundreds of thousands of hand weavers remained in the occupation, even as wages fell by more than half.

Another key problem, albeit not one that Ricardo himself dwelled upon, was that working in harsh factory conditions – becoming a small cog in the employer-controlled "satanic mills" of the early 1800s – was unappealing to handloom weavers. Many artisanal weavers had operated as independent businesspeople and entrepreneurs who bought spun cotton and then sold their woven products on the market. Obviously, they were not enthusiastic about submitting to longer hours, more discipline, less autonomy, and typically lower wages (at least compared to the heyday of handloom weaving). In testimony collected by various Royal Commissions, weavers spoke bitterly about their refusal to accept such working conditions, or about how horrible their lives became when they were forced (by the lack of other options) into such jobs.

Today's generative AI has huge potential and has already chalked up some impressive achievements, including in scientific research. It could well be used to help workers become more informed, more productive, more independent, and more versatile. Unfortunately, the tech industry seems to have other uses in mind. As we explain in *Power and Progress*, the big companies developing and deploying AI overwhelmingly favour automation (replacing people) over augmentation (making people more productive).

That means we face the risk of excessive automation: many workers will be displaced, and those who remain employed will be subjected to increasingly demeaning forms of surveillance and control. The principle of "automate first and ask questions later" requires – and thus further encourages – the collection of massive amounts of information in the workplace and across all parts of society, calling into question how much privacy will remain.

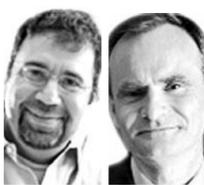
Such a future is not inevitable. Regulation of data collection would help protect privacy, and stronger workplace rules could prevent the worst aspects of AI-based surveillance. But the more fundamental task, Ricardo would remind us, is to change the overall narrative about AI. Arguably, the most important lesson from his life and work is that machines are not necessarily good or bad. Whether they destroy or create jobs depends on how we deploy them, and on who makes those choices. In Ricardo's time, a small cadre of factory owners decided, and those decisions centered on automation and squeezing workers as hard as possible.

Today, an even smaller cadre of tech leaders seems to be taking the same path. But focusing on creating new opportunities, new tasks for humans, and respect for all individuals would ensure much better outcomes. It is still possible to have pro-worker AI, but only if we can change the direction of innovation in the tech industry and introduce new regulations and institutions.

As in Ricardo's day, it would be naive to trust in the benevolence of business and tech leaders. It took major political reforms to create genuine democracy, to legalise trade unions, and to change the direction of technological progress in Britain during the Industrial Revolution. The same basic challenge confronts us today.

Daron Acemoglu is Institute Professor of Economics at MIT. Simon Johnson, a former chief economist at the IMF is a professor at the MIT Sloan School of Management.

PROJECT SYNDICATE



Daron Acemoglu & Simon Johnson

The big companies developing and deploying AI overwhelmingly favour automation (replacing people) over augmentation (making people more productive)



Bhabani Shankar Nayak

CHINA'S APPROACH CHALLENGES THE DOUBLE STANDARD OFTEN EMPLOYED BY WESTERN NATIONS REGARDING STATE SUBSIDIES

The Secretary of the US Department of the Treasury, Janet L. Yellen visited the People's Republic of China (PRC) from 3 April to 9 April, 2024, for bilateral meetings aimed at strengthening healthy economic relationships and engaging in other diplomatic discussions. During her visit, Yellen expressed concerns about Chinese state subsidies, stating in a press conference that they "pose significant risks to workers and businesses not only in the United States but also globally." While on a boat cruise along the Pearl River in the southern Chinese city of Guangzhou, Yellen further criticised China for its industrial overcapacity and unfair trade practices. These comments underscored the ongoing economic tensions between the two countries and highlighted the importance of addressing these issues through dialogue and cooperation.

Yellen goes further to say that "China is too large to export its way to rapid growth." European leaders have been echoing Yellen's views for a while now. So, she is not acting in isolation with her criticisms aimed at Chinese economic growth and human development. Her Sinophobic views are part of a broader political and economic campaign to undermine Chinese model of alternative post-colonial development. This perspective is influenced by long-standing colonial legacies and Eurocentric knowledge traditions that have shaped the worldviews of American and European policymakers. These traditions often guide the strategies of their governing bodies, which prioritise protecting their hegemonic interests even if it comes at the expense of people and the planet. The criticisms and concerns expressed by Yellen reflect a historical context where Western powers have sought to maintain their dominance in global economic and political affairs. Such colonial, imperialist, and hegemonic mindset often draws its justifications from Eurocentric knowledge traditions. These traditions have historically positioned themselves as the sole arbiters of scientific truth and morality, aiming to



This so-called free trade is often neither free nor fair, as it tends to favour the economic interests of the developed Western nations at the expense of developing countries

assert dominance globally. This perspective sometimes employs what can be perceived as half-baked philosophies and science, tailored to serve market forces to expand the pyramid of capitalist profits.

Historically, the US has benefited from state-led protectionist industrial and trade policies that played a significant role in its post-war economic growth. However, American policymakers and politicians have often urged countries like China and other post-colonial nations not to adopt similar strategies. Likewise, European nations have frequently employed discriminatory protectionist policies to safeguard their economic interests. While practicing protectionism themselves, both American and European leaders advocate for what they describe as "free trade" to post-colonial countries. This so-called free trade is often neither free nor fair, as it tends to favour the economic interests of the developed Western nations at the expense of developing countries. This double standard in trade policies highlights the complexities and contradictions inherent in global economic relations. It underscores the need for a more transparent, equitable, and mutually beneficial approach to international trade. Developing countries should be given the space to pursue policies that best suit their economic needs, rather than being pressured into adopting one-size-fits-all capitalist solutions that is not in the best interest of

people living around the globe. The colonial and imperialist plundering of people and their resources laid the foundation for European and American industrial overcapacity and capitalist development, leading to deindustrialisation and underdevelopment in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Similarly, Americans and Europeans provide different forms of subsidies and tax reliefs to their farmers, industrialists, bankers, corporates and even to fertiliser and defence manufacturers to be competitive in the global market. The European agricultural subsidies are destroying agriculture in Africa. The American federal government spends massive amounts on subsidies for farm businesses and agriculture. The corporate agriculture receives the lion's share of subsidies in the US. European and American policymakers often leverage institutions like the World Bank, IMF, and WTO to label subsidies as non-merit goods and oppose it, particularly when dealing with post-colonial countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This approach promotes unfair trade practices that benefit Western economies at the expense of developing nations. While European and American farmers and corporations receive subsidies to remain competitive in the global market, these same benefits are frequently denied to farmers in post-colonial countries. This selective application of subsidy policies

serves to protect and expand American and European food and agricultural markets, industrial and manufacturing sectors, while hindering the growth and competitiveness of agricultural and industrial sectors in developing countries.

China's approach challenges the double standard often employed by Western nations regarding state subsidies. China provides subsidies to promote the production of essential goods and services, aiming to support economic growth and human development while remaining competitive in the global market, much like American and European practices. However, this stance taken by China is often viewed as untenable by American and European policymakers. The capitalist insecurities stemming from China's rapid economic development and its challenge to Western economic dominance contribute to the emergence of Sinophobia, or a fear and hostility towards China. The Western narrative often portrays China's economic policies as a threat rather than a legitimate strategy for development. This portrayal overlooks the historical and ongoing subsidies provided by Western nations to their own industries and highlights the selective application of free-market principles. The reality is that state subsidies have been and continue to be an integral part of economic development strategies for many countries, including Western nations. China's use of subsidies to support key industries and promote economic growth should be understood within this broader context.

These two contradictory tales on subsidies, trade, industrialisation, and development define the hypocrisy of the capitalist Western nations and their governing elites. The post-colonial countries must unite and reject such a narrative, working together towards an egalitarian international economic order that benefits both people and the planet.

The writer teaches at the London Metropolitan University, UK. Views are personal.

SPECTRUM SOCIETY

Reaching for a Type-1 civilisation status

Humanity stands at a crossroads of its own making, poised between the inertia of the past and the promise of the future. In this pivotal moment, we are confronted with the urgent imperative of advancing towards a Type-1 civilisation. This aspiration, first articulated by Soviet astronomer Nikolai Kardashev, represents a stage of societal development where humanity harnesses and controls the entire energy resources of its home planet, Earth.

The journey towards a Type-1 civilisation is not merely a scientific or technological endeavour but a moral and existential imperative. It calls upon us to transcend the narrow confines of national borders, tribal affiliations, and short-term interests and embrace a global cooperation and stewardship vision. The responsible stewardship of our planet's resources is central to realising this vision. We must transition from finite and environmentally destructive energy sources to sustainable and renewable alternatives.

Investments in solar, wind, hydroelectric and other clean energy technologies are not just prudent economic decisions; they are essential steps towards securing the long-term viability of human civilisation on Earth. Moreover, achieving Type-1 civilisation status requires a fundamental reorientation of our priorities as a species. It demands that we prioritise education, innovation and the pursuit of knowledge over the perpetuation of ignorance and division. It requires us to confront the existential threats posed by climate change, resource depletion and nuclear proliferation with courage, foresight and collective action. Crucially, the journey towards a Type-1 civilisation is not a zero-sum game. It is not a competition to be won or lost but a shared destiny to be embraced. The benefits of achieving the status are abundant clean energy, enhanced global security and expanded opportunities for all, not limited to one nation or group. It is the birthright of

every human being, and it is incumbent upon us all to work tirelessly towards this realisation.

Yet, achieving Type-1 status is not without its challenges. It will require unprecedented cooperation, coordination and sacrifice for individuals, communities and nations. It will demand that we confront entrenched interests, overcome ideological divides, and transcend the limitations of our imagination. But the stakes could not be higher: The fate of our species, and indeed, the fate of life on Earth, hangs in balance. If we fail to rise to the challenge of achieving Type-1 status, we risk consigning ourselves to a future of stagnation, strife and eventual extinction. Technological hurdles represent a significant barrier to achieving this status. Transitioning to this advanced stage of societal development necessitates developing and deploying cutting-edge technologies for harnessing and managing energy resources. Infrastructure overhaul is another critical challenge on the path to this civilisation status. Building the infrastructure required to support such a status entails significant investments in upgrading existing systems and developing new ones capable of efficiently distributing energy globally.

The journey towards a Type-1 civilisation is not just about harnessing the power of the cosmos; it is about realising the full potential of the human spirit. It is about transcending the limitations of our past and embracing the boundless possibilities of our future. It is about daring to dream and working tirelessly to make it a reality. Let us harness our species' collective ingenuity, determination, and compassion to build a future worthy of our highest aspiration. Together, let us embark on the most incredible adventure in the history of our species: the journey towards a Type-1 civilisation.

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Ashyashree Prahara

WE MUST TRANSITION FROM FINITE AND ENVIRONMENTALLY DESTRUCTIVE ENERGY SOURCES TO SUSTAINABLE AND RENEWABLE ALTERNATIVES

Fascinating language

Sir, I read with great interest Mevin Durai's column, "Expand your vocabulary with new words" (April 24). The new English words with their meanings listed by him are truly fascinating, and I never came across these words before. The English language is constantly changing with new words being 'invented' or 'created' all the time. Some of the new words come from cultural trends, others are combinations of two existing words, and others are new meanings for old words. Consider these new words: "facepalm": Hitting your face with your hand as an expression of embarrassment, frustration or disgust. This expression is typically used on the internet. "Aha moment": When a solution to a problem becomes instantly clear, or when you suddenly realise or understand something that you didn't understand before. "Cougar": A middle-aged woman looking for a romantic relationship with a younger man. There is little doubt that William Shakespeare's works contributed in a gargantuan manner to the standardisation of the grammar, spelling and vocabulary of the English language. The beauty of the English language lies in its flexibility, allowing for the creation of new words constantly and reflecting the changing times and global culture.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

Combating malaria

Sir, World Malaria Day, observed annually on 25 April, serves as both a reminder of the ongoing global battle against malaria and a platform for individuals to advocate for and educate others about efforts to prevent the disease worldwide. Despite advancements, access to malaria services remains a challenge for many vulnerable populations, exacerbated by factors like climate change and humanitarian crises. This year's theme, "Accelerating the fight against malaria for a more equitable world," highlights the necessity of addressing health disparities and promoting gender equality to achieve malaria control. India aims to eradicate malaria by 2030, achieving a remarkable 60% decrease in reported cases since 2017. Despite challenges like conflict and insecticide resistance, targeted prevention, testing, and treatment methods provide optimism for advancement. Ongoing assistance for countries' malaria control endeavours remains vital in overcoming present obstacles and maintaining progress towards eliminating malaria entirely.

Krishna Kumar Vepakomma, HYDERABAD

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
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WISDOM CORNER

I was obliged to be industrious. Whoever is equally industrious will succeed equally well. JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

Never lose an opportunity of seeing anything beautiful, for beauty is God's handwriting. RALPH WALDO EMERSON

There is a wisdom of the head, and a wisdom of the heart. CHARLES DICKENS



TEACHER RECRUITMENT ROW

WB GOVT MOVES TOP COURT

The Mamata-led govt moves Supreme Court against HC order cancelling appointment of over 25K teachers, non-teaching staff

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 24: The West Bengal government has moved the Supreme Court against the Calcutta High Court order invalidating the appointment of 25,753 teachers and non-teaching staff made by the state's School Service Commission (SSC) in state-run and state-aided schools.

Challenging the high court order, the state government, in its appeal filed before the top court, said the HC cancelled the appointments "arbitrarily".

"The high court failed to appreciate the ramification of cancelling the entire selection process leading to straightway termination of teaching and non-teaching staff from service with immediate effect, without giving sufficient time to the petitioner state to deal with such an exigency, rendering the education system at a stand-still," the plea said.

The Calcutta High Court had Monday declared the selection process as "null and void" and directed the CBI to probe the appointment process. It had also asked the central agency to submit a report within three months.

The high court said those appointed outside the officially available 24,640 vacancies, appointed after the expiry of the official date of recruitment, and those who submitted blank Optical Mark Recognition (OMR) sheets but obtained appointment to return all remunerations and benefits received by them with 12 per cent interest per annum within four weeks.

Observing that it has given "anxious consideration to the passionate plea" that persons who had obtained the appointments legally would be pre-



judged if the entire selection process is cancelled, the bench said it hardly had any choice left.

The high court held that all appointments involved were violative of Articles 14 (equality before law) and 16 (prohibiting discrimination in employment in any government office) of the Constitution.

"It is shocking that, at the level of the cabinet of the State Government, a decision is taken to protect employment obtained

fraudulently in a selection process conducted by SSC for state-funded schools, knowing fully well that, such appointments were obtained beyond the panel and after expiry of the panel, at the bare minimum," the high court had said.

It said unless "there is a deep connection between the persons perpetuating the fraud and the beneficiaries" with persons involved in the decision-making process, such action to create

supernumerary posts to protect illegal appointments is "inconceivable".

The division bench had also rejected a prayer by some appellants, including the West Bengal School Service Commission (SSC), for a stay on the order and asked the commission to initiate a fresh appointment process within a fortnight from the date of the results of the ongoing Lok Sabha elections.

The bench, constituted by the Chief Justice of the high court on a direction of the Supreme Court, had heard 350 petitions and appeals relating to the selection of candidates for appointment by the SSC in the categories of teachers of classes 9, 10, 11 and 12 and group-C and D staffers through the SLST-2016.

In its 282-page judgment, the high court had said retaining appointees selected through "such a dubious process" would be contrary to public interest.

Over 4K demonstrate

Around 4,000 people, whose teaching appointments have been declared null and void by the Calcutta High Court due to irregularities in the recruitment process, demonstrated at Shahid Minar Ground in Kolkata. A five-member delegation of those who lost their jobs also met officials of the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education at its headquarters and discussed the situation. A board official said, "The meeting lasted for over two hours. We heard their issues. We are sympathetic to their situation. But we have to abide by the high court's decision."



Azharuddin Rocky, a spokesperson of the retrenched teachers, told reporters, "We lost our jobs for no fault of ours. We had qualified for the exams based on our merit and cleared the written test and viva voce. After appointment, we have taken classes and no fingers were raised at us at our workplace all these years." "If around 5,000 candidates had allegedly taken recourse to unfair means as stated in the CBI probe, why should we be victimised?" he asked. Rocky, who had joined a secondary school in southern West Bengal in 2018, said the retrenched teachers were separately moving the Supreme Court seeking justice. Soma Barik, another retrenched teacher from Purba Bardhaman district, said, "I had left my job at a private English-medium school in 2017 after qualifying for the government job in a secondary school in my district. I did not have money to bribe anyone... I had prepared hard for the exam. Now, I don't know what will happen to me and my family. I have three mouths to feed, including my elderly parents and teenage brother." She, however, added, "We have full faith in the court to start the process afresh. But it is gruelling to go through the entire process again. Also, will there be justice if I repeat my success again? Also, I am not getting any younger."

TMC fights sick industry, civic apathy perceptions in 'swinging' Serampore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, April 24: Voters in West Bengal may have a knack for maintaining status quo in state politics but in the Serampore Lok Sabha constituency, which surprises pollsters every once in a while, incumbent TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee may find himself at the receiving end of electors' choice this time around.

Banerjee, though, rubbished any such possibility and called himself an "exception" to the trend where voters have swung among five Left, three Congress and two Trinamool MPs in the past few decades.

A senior, albeit maverick, leader and a lawyer in his own right, Banerjee is seeking a re-election from the seat for the fourth consecutive term when the constituency goes to polls on May 20 during the fifth phase with its 16-lakh odd electorate.

Unlike in previous editions of the polls, where the battle remained largely bipolar, Serampore is bracing for a triangular contest in the ensuing elections, a feature that's likely to add to Banerjee's discomfiture in terms of a vote swing away from his kitty.

With Banerjee being pitted against his former son-in-law Kabir Shankar Bose of the BJP and CPI-M young Turk Dipsita Dhar, the battle for political supremacy in this former Danish-

turned-British colony, which falls largely in the state's Hooghly district while also encapsulating parts of neighbouring Howrah, is likely to go down to the wire.

Banerjee differs from the perception of anti-incumbency staring at him.

"My USP is that I am well known in national politics as one of the most prominent opposition faces to PM Narendra Modi," he told PTI.

"There is no anti-incumbency in Bengal. People have their complete faith and trust in Mamata Banerjee. As far as Serampore is concerned, I seem to be an exception to the trend to elect MPs from par-

ties who are in opposition to the one in state power," he said.

Seated on the banks of the river Hooghly some 40 kilometres away from Kolkata, Serampore offers a mix of three rural and four urban-industrial assembly segments.

It also throws up a host of issues that have taken prominence in poll campaigns, including workforce migration, unauthorised real estate developments along river banks, filling up water bodies and drinking water crisis in the rural belts.

Once a hub for jute mills, Serampore also witnessed a sad decline in the industries where a significant number of units turned sick or shut down on account of alleged workers' problems.



Guwahati, April 24: Popularly known as 'Elephant Girl' (Hasti Kanya) in Assam, 67-year-old Parbati Baruah is India's first woman mahout (elephant keeper) who was conferred the Padma Shri award Monday in recognition of her work in animal conservation and dispelling pre-conceptions to make a name for woman in a field that has historically been dominated by men.



BJP candidate Bijuli Medhi Kalita during her campaign for Lok Sabha elections, in Guwahati, Wednesday

PTI PHOTO

INDIA'S FIRST WOMAN 'MAHOUT'

'Elephant Girl' breaks the glass ceiling to win Padma Shri

'Queen of the Elephants' is the title of a book written about Parbati Baruah by British travel writer and naturalist Mark Roland Shand, published in 1996

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Guwahati, April 24: Popularly known as 'Elephant Girl' (Hasti Kanya) in Assam, 67-year-old Parbati Baruah is India's first woman mahout (elephant keeper) who was conferred the Padma Shri award Monday in recognition of her work in animal conservation and dispelling pre-conceptions to make a name for woman in a field that has historically been dominated by men.

She was handed over the Padma award in a ceremony held at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi.

Born into the Gauripur royal family in the Goalpara district of Assam, Parbati and her father Prakritesh Barua caught their first elephant together when Parbati was 14-years-old in the Kachugaon woods of Kokrajhar district.

Parbati spent 40 years reducing human-elephant conflicts and fighting against gender stereotypes in this field.

Human-elephant confrontations have a long history in Assam, and Parbati was instrumental in developing government regulations to keep them under control.

She became a master at taming wild elephants.



Her expertise on the behaviour of elephants made her well-known not just in Assam but also in nearby states like West Bengal and Odisha.

Parbati also assisted the forest authorities in driving troublemakers back into the forests from agricultural fields. 'Queen of the Elephants' is

Ajmal to move SC against closure of madrasas in Assam

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, April 24: AIUDF chief Badruddin Ajmal has said he will move the Supreme Court against the Assam government's decision to close the state-run madrasas. The sitting Dhubri MP expressed hope that the apex court will order reopening of all closed madrasas in Assam.

"UP government announced the closure of madrasas and later, the Supreme Court condemned them. With this reference, we will go to the Supreme Court and will get the order from there," Ajmal told reporters on the sidelines of an election campaign meeting Tuesday.

In December last year, 1,281 Upper Primary Middle English (ME) Madrasas were converted into general ME schools across Assam.

Earlier in April 2021, all the 610 state-run madrasas under the Madrasa Board were converted into upper primary, high and higher secondary schools with no change of status, pay, allowances and service conditions of teaching and non-teaching staff.

'Doubtful' voters major poll plank in Assam's Barak valley

THE CONCEPT OF 'D' VOTERS WAS INTRODUCED IN ASSAM IN 1997 BY THE ELECTION COMMISSION. IT DOES NOT EXIST ANYWHERE ELSE IN INDIA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Silchar, April 24: Despite the Foreigners' Tribunal declaring her a bona fide citizen of India in 2015, Anjali Roy of Saidpur village in Assam's Cachar district is unable to exercise her franchise as 'doubtful' voter mark against her name on electors' list is yet to be removed.

Roy got the 'D' voter tag in 2012.

Similar is the case of Banesa Begum, a resident of Chaitakandi village in the district, who had spent two years in the Silchar detention camp after being declared a foreigner.

Though all other members of her family have found their names in the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and have the right to vote, Banesa will not be able to go to a polling station April 26 to exercise her franchise in the Silchar Lok Sabha constituency.

Anjali and Banesa are among many people, who will not be able to cast their votes due to the 'D' voter tag in Karimganj and Silchar constituencies in Barak valley which shares a 129-km-long boundary with Bangladesh.

Displaced from the neighbouring country, Hindu Bengalis in large numbers had settled in the valley over the years, and all political parties and contestants have made issues concerning their citizenship and 'D' voter tag a poll plank in the Lok Sabha polls.

There are 96,987 'D' or doubtful voters in the state, as stated in the assembly by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

During the ongoing election campaign in the two constituencies in Barak Valley, Sarma announced that the citi-



I can assure that the issue of 'D' voters and other problems related to the citizenship of Bengali Hindus will be resolved within six months

HIMANTA BISWA SARMA | CM, ASSAM

zenship issue of the Bengali Hindus and the 'D' voter tag would be removed within six months after the polls.

Countering the chief minister's statement, Karimganj Congress nominee Hafiz Ahmed Rashid Choudhury, a prominent advocate who has legally fought many citizenship-related cases, told PTI that the government cannot do anything about it as 'D' voter was introduced according to an Election Commission guideline.

"The government cannot withdraw it or do anything on their own. It can ask the commission that the guideline issued in 1997 should be withdrawn," he said.

"One can be a citizen or not but there is no provision for doubtful citizen. A case is still pending in the Supreme Court on whether the 'D' voter should be

completely removed or not," he said.

Social activist Kamal Chakraborty, who has been working for the removal of the foreigner tag on many people in the Barak valley and also for the release of those detained, said there are around 3,500 'doubtful' voters in the Barak valley and most of them are below the poverty line.

"When they were sent to detention centres, their lives were ruined to meet legal costs and most of them suffered from health issues. However, no one is now in the Silchar detention centre," he told PTI.

Prominent lawyer Aman Wadud, who fights cases in the Gauhati High Court for those trying to prove their citizenship, told PTI that people were marked as 'D' voters in an "arbitrary manner and without any investigation".

"The 'D' voter issue is not unsolvable but the BJP does not want to solve the citizenship issue, rather they want to make it more complex so that there is more fear and insecurity among the people," he alleged.



Union minister and BJP's Sambalpur Lok Sabha candidate Dharmendra Pradhan campaigning at Athamallik in Angul district, Wednesday

BJD gives tickets to Marndi couple; BJP picks Singhdeos



Bhubaneswar, April 24: The ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) has given ticket to the Marndi couple to contest from the tribal-dominated Mayurbhanj district while the opposition BJP has fielded the Singhdeo couple from western Odisha's Bolangir district for the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections.

State Revenue Minister Sudam Marndi has been fielded by the BJD from the Mayurbhanj Lok Sabha seat while his wife Ranjita Marndi will be the regional outfit's nominee from the Bangiriposi Assembly segment.

The 56-year-old tribal leader's Assembly seat Bangiriposi has been given to his wife, who took voluntary retirement from government service two months ago to contest from the seat on the BJD ticket. Sudam Marndi has been elected to the Assembly for five times and once to the Lok Sabha.

On Monday, BJD president Naveen Patnaik named Marndi's wife Ranjita Marndi as the party candidate from the Bangiriposi Assembly segment which is presently represented by her husband.

The BJD president has mostly adopted the 'one family one ticket' policy while distributing tickets among aspirants, but the Marndis are the lone exception. They were given tickets under certain political compulsion, a party leader said.

Sources in the BJD said that there were as many as 10,000 aspirants for 168 party tickets (147 for Assembly and 21 for Lok Sabha) for the Lok Sabha and Assembly polls.

The opposition BJP has also given party ticket to the Singhdeo couple from Bolangir district. The saffron party has re-nominated its Bolangir MP Sangeeta Kumari Singhdeo for the same Lok Sabha seat while her husband and senior party leader KV Singhdeo has been fielded from the Patnagarh Assembly segment. Sangeeta has been elected from the Bolangir Lok Sabha seat four times in the past. The Singhdeos hail from the Bolangir royal family.

Though Congress has not given party tickets to any couple, the party has given ticket to a father and son and a father and daughter to contest the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections in the state.

While Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee campaign committee chairman and senior leader Bhakta Charan Das has been nominated from the Narla Assembly segment, his son Sagar is the Congress candidate from the Bhawanipatna Assembly seat.

The Congress has nominated Bhujabal Majhi as the party candidate from the Nabarangpur Lok Sabha constituency and his daughter Lipika Majhi from the Dabugam Assembly segment.

Modi makes hay as Pitroda's remark opens Pandora's box

'CONG'S LOOT... ZINDAGI KE BAAD BHI', SAYS MODI AS PITRODA'S INHERITANCE TAX REMARKS FUEL FRESH ATTACK; OPPN PARTY DISTANCES ITSELF



Ambikapur/New Delhi, April 24: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Wednesday seized on Congress leader Sam Pitroda's remarks on inheritance tax to step up the ruling BJP's blistering attack on the issue of wealth redistribution, saying "zindagi ke saath bhi, zindagi ke baad bhi" is the opposition party's mantra to loot people.

In his poll rallies, Modi framed Pitroda's comments in his wider onslaught against the Congress, asserting that they have exposed its hidden agenda and that the party has become so removed from the country's social and family values that it wants to legally rob people of their assets and lifelong savings they want to bequeath to their children.

The Congress swung into damage control, distancing itself from the comments of the US-based president of its overseas wing.

Its general secretary and communication department head Jairam Ramesh said on X, "Sensationalising his comments now and tearing them out of context are deliberate and desperate

attempts at diverting attention away from Mr. Narendra Modi's malicious and mischievous election campaign; that is anchored only in lies and more lies."

Pitroda had spoken about inheritance tax in the US while delving into the issue of redistribution of wealth.

At an election rally in Chhattisgarh's Ambikapur, Modi said the dangerous intentions of the Congress are coming to the fore one by one and now it says it will impose inheritance tax.

The advisor of 'shehzada' of the 'shahi parivar', who was also the advisor to the shehzada's father, said that more tax should be imposed on the middle class and those who earn by toiling hard, Modi said, apparently referring to Rahul Gandhi and Pitroda.

The Congress will impose a tax on the assets inherited by people from their parents, he said, claiming that the 'panja' (Congress' poll symbol) will snatch the assets from their children.

"Congress ka mantra hei, Congress ki loot 'zindagi ke saath bhi, zindagi ke baad bhi' (Congress' mantra is looting people when they are alive and afterwards too)," he said im-

proving on the iconic tagline of state-run Life Insurance Corporation (LIC).

Till you are alive, the Congress will impose more tax and after your life ends, it will impose the burden of inheritance tax on you. They (Congress) want to snatch your assets and rights of your children, the prime minister alleged. He spoke on similar lines in his rallies in Madhya Pradesh.

Pitroda, however, sought to clear the air saying it is unfortunate that what he said as an individual on inheritance tax in the US is twisted by godi media to divert attention from the lies Modi is spreading about the Congress manifesto. Modi's comments on Mangal Sutra and gold snatching are simply unreal, he added.

"I mentioned US inheritance tax in the US only as an example in my normal conversation on TV. Can I not mention facts? I said these are the kinds of issues people will have to discuss and debate. This has nothing to do with the policy of any party including Congress," he said on X.

Amid the fierce attack from the BJP, the Congress has been in-

Modi govt favoured inheritance tax: Cong

In a post on X, Congress general secretary in-charge of communications Jairam Ramesh said the Congress has no plan whatsoever to introduce an inheritance tax. In fact, former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi had abolished Estate Duty in 1985, he said, adding that it is the Modi government that has wanted to do so. He said, "Fact One: Jayant Sinha, then Minister of State for Finance, publicly stated that he wanted to introduce Inheritance Tax in 2014. Fact Two: In 2017, reports emerged that the Modi Sarkar was going to re-introduce inheritance tax. Fact Three: In 2018, the Finance Minister Arun Jaitley praised Inheritance Taxes for spurring large endowments to hospitals, universities in the West. Fact Four: News reports emerged that Modi Sarkar would introduce an Inheritance Tax in Union Budget 2019," Ramesh said in the post.

"Over to you Prime Minister Modi - what is your party's stance on this issue?" he said, and shared media reports on former minister of state for finance Jayant Sinha and former finance minister Arun Jaitley's remarks "in favour" of an inheritance tax.

sisting that its manifesto does not talk about redistribution and that it favours a comprehensive socio-economic caste census.

As Pitroda's comments provided fresh fodder to the BJP, its leaders latched onto them to target the principal opposition party ahead of the second phase of Lok Sabha elections April 26.

SHAH TO BLOW POLL BUGLE IN SONEPUR TODAY

Bhubaneswar, April 24: Union Home Minister Amit Shah is all set to blow the poll bugle in state Thursday by addressing a public gathering at Sonepur town of Subarnapur district in western Odisha.

He will later hold meetings with saffron party leaders in Bhubaneswar to devise a strategy for the upcoming simultaneous elections in state.

"Bharatiya Janata Party will fight on the issue of Maa (Mother), Mati (Motherland) and Matr Bhasha (Mother Tongue) and the dignity of Odias. The party has started a war for the pride of Odia and against the oppression of Odias, distortion of its language and forcing the youths of Odisha to become bonded labourers. The fight will kick start from Sonepur," Golak Mohapatra, state BJP vice president, had said Sunday.

BJP party workers in the state expect Home Minister Amit Shah to finally break the silence and launch a direct attack against the ruling BJD and its leaders over various issues.

Rahul vows to form farmers' commission

Amravati (Maha), April 24: In a major announcement, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi here Wednesday assured of setting up a special farmers commission to tackle the problems of agriculture loans and set up a mechanism to ease the financial burden of the land-tillers, and ensure 'nyay' (justice) to various sections of the society.

Addressing an election rally in the Amravati (SC) Lok Sabha constituency, Rahul Gandhi said that if elected, the INDIA bloc-Congress government will immediately write off the loans of all farmers in the country.

"Not only this, we shall also set up a farmers' commission which would advise the government whenever a loan waiver is required, and it will be done, as many times as required," the Wayanad MP said.

In a speech punctuated with huge rounds of applause and

cheers from the gathering, Rahul Gandhi claimed that in the last 10 years of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) rule, the peasants' loans have not been waived off.

Promising to uplift crores of families and make them millionaires, the Congress leader said that the Mahalakshmi Scheme will be first implemented as mentioned in the party's election manifesto.

"We shall prepare a list of all the poor families in the country and one woman shall be selected per household, and the INDIA bloc government will deposit ₹1 lakh into their bank accounts, or ₹8,500 per month. The entire family would benefit from this amount. They (BJP) made 25 billionaires, we shall make crores as millionaires," Rahul Gandhi said, to a deafening roar of applause.

On the question of Anganwadi workers, he said that the salaries of these women shall be doubled, and women shall be entitled to reservations in government and public sector jobs.

BIRAMITRAPUR ASSEMBLY SEAT

Poll battle gets interesting as Nihar Surin joins JMM

Rourkela, April 24: The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) got a shot in the arm when Nihar Surin, its former winning candidate from Biramitrapur Assembly segment, returned to its fold after long 14 years. Surin joined the JMM in Ranchi at the residence of the party supremo Sibhu Soren.

This development may affect the existing political equation in Biramitrapur Assembly segment. Surin had twice fought on the ticket of JMM. He won the seat in 2004; whereas in 2009 he lost to George Tirkey, who was fighting independently. Since then, Surin has remained dormant. Besides, he joined BJD and stayed in the party for over eight years. This time around, though there was a buzz earlier that he would be joining Congress, he finally joined JMM.

Both JMM and Congress are part of the INDIA bloc. Congress, in all probability, was waiting for this development because it has not declared its candidate so far. This combination, if Surin gets the ticket to fight, will definitely be a disturbing factor for



both BJD and BJP. With the entry of the two parties unitedly, the field is wide open now. Followers of Surin say that in a day or two he will get the green signal to fight. After joining, Surin had told the mediapersons, "Leaving JMM and joining BJD was a big mistake. And now I have got another chance to fight for the causes of the tribals."

Speaking over the phone, he said, "I am happy that I am back with JMM. Congress and JMM are part of the INDIA bloc. Congress is yet to declare its candidate from here." Explaining about the ground situation, he said, "The situation that was prevailing in 2004 is the same today. At that time JMM and Congress had an alliance and I won. And now the situation is the same again, by God's grace."

However, he was tight-lipped about his candidature.

The statistics says the combination of Congress and JMM will be a formidable force. In 2009, the alliance had broken and Surin as JMM candidate had got 24,321 votes and Congress' Serophina Tapno garnered 12,431 votes, while George Tirkey as an independent got 45,132 votes. In 2014 George again became victorious as he pooled 46,114 votes as a candidate of Samata Kranti Dal. Sebyan Aind of JMM and INC's Rajesh Kerketta individually pooled 27,849 and 13,006 votes while BJP's Shankar Oram got 34,164 votes. Finally, in 2019, Shankar won with 60,937 votes while Congress' Rohit Joseph Tirkey, now in BJD, received 44,212 votes and BJD's Makhlu Ekka got 44,586 votes.

However, experts say whenever the duo has come together, they have become formidable because apart from their own pocket votes they have the ability to garner a few thousand more votes, which otherwise remain dormant. Besides, among the tribals the symbol of JMM has a sentimental attachment and carries a lot of importance.



Hundreds of Congress supporting families joined BJD in the presence of Aul's sitting MLA and state Energy Minister Pratap Keshari Deb on Aul royal palace premises in Kendrapara district, Wednesday



Hrushikesh Bhoi, who plays the role of Kansa Maharaj in Bargharh Dhanuyatra, participating in a voter awareness programme in Bargarh, Wednesday

of the day quote

Even the Chief Minister of Kerala only attacks Rahul Gandhi. He doesn't attack the BJP. When a man fights for what is right, then all the forces of wrong gather together against him

The INDI Alliance is ghamandiya gathbandhan (group of arrogant parties) and all leaders in it only want to work for the betterment of their families. They shelter corrupt politicians and practise dynastic politics. Majority of the leaders of the INDI Alliance are either in jail or on bail

For elections, Modi ji is lying to the people that their mangalsutra shall not be safe. Congress governed this country for 55 years. Has that even happened once?

SHORT TAKES

Bridge damaged in Manipur blast

Imphal: A powerful IED blast damaged a key bridge along the NH 2 in Manipur, leaving over 150 trucks taking essential commodities to the state capital Imphal stranded in Senapati district Wednesday. Unidentified miscreants triggered the powerful IED explosion which damaged the bridge between Koubrou Leikha and Saparmeina in Kangpokpi district at around 12.45 am, an officer said. No casualties were reported in the blast which formed three craters in the middle portion of the bridge in the ethnic violence-affected state.

Five of family killed in Raj road mishap

Jaipur: Five members of a family, including three children, died and as many were injured when their car collided with a dumper truck in Rajasthan's Nagaur city Wednesday, police said. The victims -- Bhanwari Devi (60), Divyanshi (5), Kherajram (25), Vinita (3) and Dimple (3) -- were on their way to the Ranibai temple in Harsaur with five others in the car. Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Rameshwar Lal said. The car collided with the dumper truck at the Kisan intersection in Harsaur town under the Degana police station area, the DSP said. A case has been registered against the driver of the dumper truck, who managed to flee, Lal said.

18 Naxalites surrender

Dantewada: As many as 18 Naxalites, including a militia platoon section commander and three women, surrendered Wednesday in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada, a senior police officer said. Hidma Oyam (34) was working as the Hurrepal Panchayat Militia Platoon (HPMP) section commander, said Dantewada Superintendent of Police Gaurav Rai.

Minor raped, murdered

Gondia (Maharashtra): A 12-year-old tribal girl has been allegedly raped and murdered in Maharashtra's Gondia district, police said Wednesday. The incident took place April 19, they said, adding that efforts were on to nab the unidentified culprit. Some tribal organisations staged a demonstration Tuesday and Wednesday outside the Deori sub-divisional magistrate's office and warned of intensifying the stir if the culprit was not arrested at the earliest.



Your hard earned savings have been taken by BJP leaders. It shouldn't have happened

D K SHIVAKUMAR | KARNATAKA DEPUTY CM

BIRD FLU ALERT IN JHARKHAND

The Jharkhand government sounded an alert after bird flu cases were reported in a state-run poultry farm in Ranchi, an official said Wednesday. As many as 2,196 birds including 1,745 chickens were culled at the Regional Poultry Farm, Hotwar, an official told PTI



Can't dictate EC: Top court

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 24: The Supreme Court Wednesday said it cannot "control the elections" or issue directions simply because doubts have been raised about the efficacy of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), as it reserved its judgement on a clutch of petitions claiming the polling devices can be tinkered with to manipulate the results.

The court said it cannot change the thought process of those doubting the advantages of polling machines and advocating going back to ballot papers.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta reserved its verdict on a batch of pleas seeking complete cross-verification of votes cast using EVMs with Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT), after taking note of the answers to queries it had posed to the Election Commission.

It sought answers from an official of the poll panel to five questions related to the functioning of EVMs including whether the microcontrollers fitted in them are reprogrammable. Senior Deputy Election Commissioner Nitesh Kumar Vyas, who had earlier made a presentation to the court on the functioning of EVMs, was summoned by the bench to appear at 2pm to answer the queries.

Vyas, while responding to the question about microcontrollers, said they are one-time programmable at the time of man-



ufacture and installed in all the three units of EVMs—the ballotting unit, VVPAT and the control unit. They cannot be reprogrammed thereafter, he asserted. Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for petitioner NGO Association for Democratic Reforms, claimed the EC official's statement was not fully correct. He cited a report by a private body to back his contention. "The report says that the kind of memory used in these three units can be reprogrammed. A malicious programme can easily be uploaded at the time of symbol loading," he claimed, adding efforts should be made to remove the doubts about the transparency of EVMs.

Justice Khanna told Bhushan that the court has to rely on the data and information provided by the EC, a constitutional body, which says the programme in the memory of an EVM can be written only once. "If you are prejudiced or predisposed about something, then we cannot help

it. We cannot change your thought process," the bench told Bhushan. Justice Datta said, "Can we issue a mandamus (directions) on the basis of a suspicion? The report you (Bhushan) are relying on goes on to say that there is no incident of manipulation yet. We can't control the elections. We are not the controlling authority of another constitutional authority."

The bench recalled that the top court had in the past issued two orders on VVPAT which enables electors to see whether their votes have been recorded correctly. "One order was passed when the court ordered the use of VVPAT during elections and the other order was when the court directed that the use of VVPAT should be increased from one to five booths. Now, you all want us to issue directions for going back to ballot papers," the bench said, adding all it can do is pass directions to strengthen the existing EVM system, if

Akhilesh Yadav to contest from Kannauj

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, April 24: Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav will contest the Lok Sabha elections from Kannauj, the party announced Wednesday, two days after it had declared another candidate for the Uttar Pradesh seat.

The party said Akhilesh Yadav will now file his papers Thursday, when nominations begin. "National president Akhilesh Yadav will file his nomination papers from the Kannauj Lok Sabha seat at 12 pm tomorrow as Samajwadi Party candidate," the party posted in Hindi on X in the evening.

The SP Monday had declared his nephew Tej Pratap Yadav as its candidate from the Kannauj parliamentary seat. Earlier in the day, when reporters asked Akhilesh about his plans, he said, "It will be clear before the nominations."

Akhilesh had won the Kannauj parliamentary seat first in 2000 and later represented it in 2004 and 2009. He vacated the seat after he became the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister in 2012, and his wife Dimple Yadav won the by-election unopposed. Dimple also won in 2014 but lost the seat to BJP's Subrat Pathak in 2019. Akhilesh, an MLA from the Karhal assembly seat in Mainpuri, is the Leader of Opposition in the UP assembly.

Voting on Kannauj seat will be held May 13 in the fourth phase of the ongoing Lok Sabha elections.



JOVIAL MOOD: TMC candidate Mahua Moitra during her campaign for Lok Sabha elections in Krishnanagar, West Bengal

'Tihar administration cancelled Atishi's meeting with Kejriwal'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 24: Alleging the Tihar Jail administration cancelled Delhi Minister Atishi's meeting with Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal at the last moment, AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh Wednesday said "even the British rule did not see this kind of behaviour".

According to Tihar official sources, Atishi's name was added after Delhi Health Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj's name into the list of visitors for Kejriwal. She will be meeting him April 29. Sources said that Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot's name will also be added to the list of visitors and he will be meeting Kejriwal soon.

Addressing a press conference, Singh said that Bharadwaj and Atishi were supposed to meet the Chief Minister in Tihar. "But Atishi's meeting was not

confirmed yesterday. Delhi Education Minister Atishi applied for the meeting and at the last moment her meeting was cancelled," Singh said.

"After her meeting was cancelled, party national general secretary (organisation) Sandeep Pathak was supposed to accompany Bharadwaj, but he was informed around 9.30 am today that even his meeting was cancelled," he added. Tihar sources said that Pathak himself did not come.

Singh questioned the reasons behind the move and feared that Kejriwal might not even be allowed to meet his wife in future.

Delhi court grants time to Kejriwal to file response

New Delhi: A Delhi court Wednesday granted time to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to file response to the replies filed by the ED on his two petitions seeking revision against an order on allegedly evading the agency's summonses in the excise policy case. Kejriwal had approached the special court against an order passed by a magisterial court summoning him on a complaint filed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for allegedly evading the agency's summonses in the case. Special Judge Rakesh Syal Wednesday granted two weeks to Kejriwal to file rejoinder on the ED's reply on the AAP convener's appeals.

CAA IMPLEMENTATION REMARK

Mamata hits out at Rajnath



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ausgram/Galsi (WB), April 24: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Wednesday criticised Defence Minister Rajnath Singh for asserting that nobody in the world can stop the implementation of the CAA. She also remarked that Singh now appeared reliant on PM Narendra Modi's favour.

"You are surviving at the mercy of Modi. You are saluting Modi daily to save your chair. You or Nitin Gadhkar could have been the PM today. There would have been no problem... at least there would have been a gentleman in the chair

who knows minimum courtesy," she said.

Singh while addressing an election rally in Murshidabad Sunday had said no power in the world would be able to stop the implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).

"We have made a law to give citizenship to those who have been persecuted in countries like Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan for their religion. But Mamata Banerjee is not allowing it to be implemented. We will introduce the citizenship act. No power in the world can stop its implementation," Singh had said.

Banerjee vowed to resist the CAA, NRC, and UCC. "With due respect to you, I am telling you that we (TMC) will resist the implementation of CAA, NRC and the UCC. We will see how powerful you are," she said.

Banerjee was speaking at an election rally for the party's candidate for Durgapur-Bardhaman Lok Sabha constituency Kirti Azad.

She emphasised that Singh and others in the BJP were making contentious remarks solely for publicity.

Banerjee stressed the need to defeat the BJP in the upcoming elections and urged people to conserve water amidst a crisis in some areas of the state.

Addressing another election rally for TMC's Bolpur candidate Asit Mal earlier in the day, Banerjee asked why the polls were being conducted in seven phases amid severe heatwave across the country and alleged that the schedule for the general elections was designed to "satisfy the BJP".

"Earlier, the poll process used to be over by May 2 or 3, but this year they have stretched it for three months, amid severe weather conditions. The Election Commission has planned the polls for three months to satisfy the BJP," Banerjee said.

Hemant Soren moves apex court



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 24: Former Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren Wednesday moved the Supreme Court, saying the high court is not pronouncing verdict on his plea challenging arrest by the Enforcement Directorate in a money laundering case.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta was told by senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for Soren, that the high court had reserved its verdict February 28 on his plea but still no decision has been delivered.

Sibal said they had approached the top court against his arrest February 2 but the bench had asked them to move the high court for relief.

"We have moved the Article 32 petition in the Hemant Soren matter. Your lordship said go to the high court. We went to the high court February 4 and then the matter was finally heard February 27-28. Now, the judgement has not been rendered in the plea till date," he said.

The senior lawyer said, "We again went to the high court and said we cannot move forward or backward unless the judgement is rendered. The judge said nothing. Now, the man will be inside and the elections will be over. Then where do we go?"

Justice Khanna asked whether a petition has been filed and if filed, then he can move an email to the secretariat of Chief Justice of India for listing. Sibal said, "If we say something, then they will say, we are attacking the judiciary" and sought listing of the petition Friday.

Justice Khanna said he cannot say anything on the listing of the petition and the Chief Justice of India secretariat will give the date for listing of the plea. "Just give the details, it will be done. Today or tomorrow, you will get the date for listing of the matter," the bench said.

Sibal submitted that on their plea this court will direct the high court to pronounce the verdict and then the judgement will be rendered.

STRAY DOG MENACE

Some NGOs and individual petitioners have moved the apex court against the decisions of some high courts, including the high courts of Bombay and Kerala, to allow municipal authorities to deal with the menace of stray dogs as per the rules

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 24: Dealing with pleas including those on culling stray dogs, the Supreme Court said Wednesday it was not shying away from handling issues related to orders passed by various civic bodies regarding untamed canines, especially in Kerala and Mumbai, but will not allow the scope of the matter under consideration to be expanded.

The apex court is considering a batch of petitions, including those relating to the provisions of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, the Animal Birth Control (Dogs) Rules, 2001 and the Kerala Municipality Act, 1994.

While one of the pleas has raised the issue of culling of stray dogs in Kerala, some other



petitions pertain to the Bombay High Court's 2022 observation about those interested in their protection and welfare, including feeding them, putting them up in dog shelter homes and bearing expenses for their maintenance. During the hearing Wednesday,

the top court observed that the parties before it should go through the Animal Birth Control Rules, 2023 as many of the issues raised before it may get resolved by a simple perusal. "Let us also clarify one thing. We are not shying away from dealing with the issue but we

- During the previous hearings, the apex court had asked the AWBI to file an affidavit enclosing data on incidents of dog bites during the last few years in different states and prominent cities
- The top court had said a balance has to be maintained between the safety of people and animal rights

will not allow the scope to be expanded," a bench of justices J K Maheshwari and Sanjay Karol said.

When one of the lawyers said the bench may give them some time to go through the 2023 rules before they get back to the court, the bench said, "Kindly see, that is the crux of the matter."

Another lawyer referred to a recent advisory issued by the Animal Welfare Board of India

(AWBI) for implementation of the 2023 rules and said, "If we all go through it, I can say 90 per cent problem will be resolved." "... after going through these 2023 rules, if maximum problems are being resolved, then we can say in some limited words that looking into the 2023 rules, the authorities may examine the issues and deal with the problems according to law."

"And if any cause arises even thereafter, the parties are at liberty to go and take recourse before the high courts..." the apex court said and posted the matter for further hearing May 8. While hearing the pleas in September last year, the apex court had refused to give any interim direction in the matter and said it would take a call after going through the relevant statutes, rules and their implementation.

international

of the day quote

The government is open to holding one-on-one discussions with the medical community, including the emergency committee of medical professors, and will continue making efforts to seek communication

PARK MIN-SOO | SECOND VICE HEALTH MINISTER OF S KOREA

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

ANTÓNIO GUTERRES | SECRETARY-GENERAL OF UN

Today, in relations with Russia, the bloc (NATO) has returned to Cold War settings

MARIA ZAKHAROVA | FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESWOMAN, RUSSIA

SHORT TAKES

Military horses run loose in central UK

London: Several military horses bolted during routine exercises Wednesday and ran loose through central London, injuring four people and damaging vehicles during the morning rush hour. A spokesperson for the London Ambulance Service said it was called at 8:25 am to reports of a person being thrown from a horse in Buckingham Palace Road, and the first paramedic was on the scene within five minutes. Pictures and videos of two of the animals, one white and the other black, circulated widely across social media.

Nepal, Qatar to boost ties

Kathmandu: The governments of Nepal and Qatar Wednesday reached agreements on bilateral cooperation in various sectors. The two countries sealed the deals, two agreements and six memorandums of understanding, after an hour-long meeting between the delegations led by Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and Nepali Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal, according to Amrit Bahadur Rai, spokesperson for Nepal's Foreign Ministry. Media, business, culture and arts, education, scientific research and youth and sports are the areas on which the two countries agreed to focus their cooperation, Xinhua news agency reported. The emir arrived in Kathmandu Tuesday for a two-day state visit.

Russia detains ally of Defence Minister

Moscow: A Russian court Wednesday ordered one of Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu's deputies be kept in custody on suspicion of taking bribes, the highest-profile corruption case since President Vladimir Putin sent troops into Ukraine in 2022. Deputy Defence Minister Timur Ivanov was detained Tuesday at work by the Federal Security Service (FSB), the main successor to the Soviet-era KGB, for accepting large bribes. Moscow's Basmanny District Court ordered Ivanov be kept in custody until June 23.

Boeing posts \$355mn loss

Arlington (USA): Boeing said Wednesday that it lost \$355 million on falling revenue in the first quarter, another sign of the crisis gripping the aircraft manufacturer as it faces increasing scrutiny over the safety of its planes and accusations of shoddy work from a growing number of whistleblowers.

TikTok CEO expects to defeat US restrictions

REUTERS

Washington, April 24: TikTok's chief executive said Wednesday that the company expects to win a legal challenge to block legislation signed into law by President Joe Biden that he said would ban the popular short video app used by 170 million Americans. "Rest assured - we aren't going anywhere," CEO Shou Zi Chew said in a video posted moments after Biden signed the Bill that gives China-based ByteDance 270 days to divest TikTok's US assets or face a ban. "The facts and the Constitution are on our side and we expect to prevail again." Biden's signing sets a January 19 deadline for a sale-

one day before his term is set to expire - but he could extend the deadline by three months if he determines ByteDance is making progress. Biden is seeking a second term against former President Donald Trump. In 2020, Trump was blocked by the courts in his bid to ban TikTok and Chinese-owned WeChat, a unit of Tencent, in the United States. Chew added: "Make no mistake - this is a ban on TikTok." He emphasised that TikTok would continue to operate as the company challenges the restrictions. Driven by widespread worries among US lawmakers that China could access Americans' data or surveil them with the app, the Bill was over-



whelmingly passed late Tuesday by the US Senate. The US House of Representatives approved it Saturday. The four-year battle over TikTok is a significant front in a war over the internet and technology between Washington and Beijing. Last week, Apple said China had ordered it to remove Meta Platforms' WhatsApp and Threads from its App Store in China over Chinese

national security concerns. TikTok is set to challenge the bill on First Amendment grounds and TikTok users are also expected to again take legal action. The American Civil Liberties Union said banning or requiring divestiture of TikTok would "set an alarming global precedent for excessive government control over social media platforms." However, the new legislation is likely to give the Biden administration a stronger legal footing to ban TikTok if ByteDance fails to divest the app, experts say. If ByteDance failed to divest TikTok, app stores operated by Apple, Alphabet's Google and others could not legally offer

TikTok or provide Web hosting services to ByteDance-controlled applications or TikTok's website. The Bill would also give the White House new tools to ban or force the sale of other foreign-owned apps it deems to be security threats. Democratic Senator Ron Wyden said he was concerned the Bill "provides broad authority that could be abused by a future administration to violate Americans' First Amendment rights." Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump said Monday that President Joe Biden was "pushing" for a ban on TikTok and would be the one responsible if a ban were imposed, urging voters to take notice.



India will continue cooperation for countering misuse of information and communication technologies by terrorists and criminals
AIT DOVAL | NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER

STADIUM BAN FOR WOMEN

A stadium ban for women is to be reintroduced in Iran, multiple local news reports said Wednesday. The reports said that the Iranian FA has ordered the ban to be imposed in the north-western city of Tabriz in the wake of "repulsive incidents" at a home game of local top flight club Tractor-Sazi



Pak, Iran agree to focus on ways to combat terrorism

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, April 24: Pakistan and Iran have recognised the need to focus on combating terrorism and the need to develop a "united front" against the menace, the two countries said Wednesday as Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi wrapped up his three-day maiden trip to the neighbouring nation. Raisi's visit to Pakistan was the first by any head of state to Islamabad after the February 8 general election.

"Recognising that terrorism posed a common threat to regional peace and stability and presented a major impediment to the development of the region," the two neighbours agreed to "adopt a collaborative approach to confront this menace ... while fully upholding the principles of the UN Charter," a joint statement issued by the two countries said.

The Pakistan government has complained regularly to Iran and Afghanistan, with which it shares a border, to rein in the militants belonging to the outlawed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and other splinter groups who cross the border and carry out strikes in Pakistan.

The joint statement said, both sides "reaffirmed their commitment to the development of Afghanistan as a peaceful, united, sovereign and independent state, free from the threats of terrorism and drug trafficking."

Noting the relevance of coordinating regional and international efforts to ensure security and stability in the region, both Pakistan and Iran "recognised that increasing participation of all strata of Afghans in basic decision-making will lead to the strengthening of peace and stability in this country."

US warns of sanctions risk on anyone over trade deal with Iran



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, April 24: The US has warned of a "potential risk of sanctions" for anyone considering a business deal with Iran, a day after Pakistan and Iran inked several agreements during Iranian President Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi's maiden visit to Islamabad to boost bilateral cooperation.

The latest warning comes days after the US imposed sanctions on suppliers to Pakistan's ballistic missile programme, including three companies from China even as the US also said it maintains good relations with Pakistan and described it as "an important security partner in the region."

During Raisi's three-day visit that concluded Wednesday, Iran and Pakistan signed eight MoUs while vowing to increase trade to \$10 billion in the coming years.

Vedant Patel, Deputy Spokesperson of the US State Department, was asked about the agreements signed during Raisi's visit and Pakistan government spokesperson's assertion that it does not need a waiver from US sanctions to build its portion of a Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline. "Just let me say broadly ... We advise anyone considering business deals with Iran to be aware of the potential risk of sanctions. But ultimately, the Government of Pakistan can speak to their own foreign policy pursuits," Patel told the briefing Tuesday.

According to Iranwire.com, Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, the

Pakistani Foreign Ministry spokesperson, had told a press conference March 21: "It is a segment of the pipeline which is being built inside Pakistani territory. So, we do not believe that at this point there is room for any discussion or waiver from a third party."

However, March 25, Pakistan's Minister for Petroleum Dr Musadik Malik said the government would seek exemption from US sanctions for the multi-billion-dollar Iran-Pakistan (IP) gas pipeline project and decided to plead "vigorously."

"We will seek exemption from US sanctions. Pakistan cannot afford sanctions in the gas pipeline project," he had said days after US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Donald Lu said at a congressional hearing that Pakistan had so far not sought exemption for the 1,150-kilometre gas pipeline. The proposed 2,775-km pipeline plans to link Pakistan's energy supply directly to Iran's abundant gas reserves.

However, the project has faced significant delays due to geopolitical pressures, sanctions on Iran and financial hurdles within Pakistan.

In February this year, the caretaker government in Pakistan decided to dust off the 2009 agreement, approving the construction of the first phase or 80-km stretch (of the total 780-km pipeline) from the Iranian border to Gwadar in Balochistan, the Dawn newspaper reported last week.

Columbia extends protest deadline

New York: Columbia University students agreed to take down "a significant number" of the dozens of tents set up on the school's main campus as part of a protest against Israel's incursion into Gaza, the New York school said Wednesday. The concession by protesters was part of a deal under which Columbia agreed to extend by 48 hours a midnight deadline for the entire encampment to come down, it said in a statement, pointing to "significant progress" in the talks. A representative of the protesters, who have occupied a lawn at the center of the upper Manhattan campus for days, could not be reached immediately for comment. The university Tuesday threatened to invite law enforcement to dismantle the encampment if students had not done so by midnight. New York police Friday arrested more than 100 protesters at the encampment at the behest of administrators.

Smoke seen coming from flight carrying 213 people

Tokyo: Oil sprayed from an All Nippon Airways plane as it landed Wednesday at Shin Chitose airport in northern Japan, but none of the 213 people on board was injured, officials said. The nonflammable oil from a control system evaporated as it contacted a hot engine, giving the appearance of smoke, ANA officials said. The leakage did not jeopardise the safety of those on board, they said. The leak triggered a warning in the cockpit and its cause was being investigated. ANA flight 71 from Tokyo's Haneda Airport was carrying 204 passengers and nine crew members, the airline said. It landed safely and was later towed to the arrival terminal. All passengers and crew disembarked safely, the airline said. The Chitose city fire department said it mobilised several fire engines.

Ukraine uses long-range missiles secretly provided by US to hit Russian-held areas

Washington: Ukraine for the first time has begun using long-range ballistic missiles provided secretly by the United States, bombing a Russian military airfield in Crimea last week and Russian forces in another occupied area overnight, American officials said Wednesday. Long sought by Ukrainian leaders, the new missiles give Ukraine nearly double the striking distance - up to 300 kilometers (190 miles) - that it had with the mid-range version of the weapon that it received from the US last October. One of the officials said the US is providing more of these missiles in a new military aid package signed by President Joe Biden Wednesday. Biden approved delivery of the long-range Army Tactical Missile System, known as ATACMS, in early March, and the US included a "significant" number of them in a \$300 million aid package announced at the time, one official said.

China blasts US military aid to Taiwan

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Beijing, April 24: China Wednesday blasted the latest package of US military assistance to Taiwan Wednesday, saying that such funding was pushing the self-governing island republic into a "dangerous situation."

The mainland's Taiwan Affairs Office said the aid "seriously violates" US commitments to China and "sends a wrong signal to the Taiwan independence separatist forces."

Office spokesperson Zhu Fenglian added that Taiwan's ruling pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party, which won a third four-year presidential term in January, is willing to "become a pawn for external forces to use Taiwan to contain China, bringing Taiwan into a dangerous situation."

On Tuesday, Taiwan's President-elect Lai Ching-te told a visiting US Congressional delegation that the aid package would "strengthen the deterrence against authoritarianism in the West Pacific ally chain" and "help ensure peace and sta-



bility across the Taiwan Strait and also boost confidence in the region."

The package has had broad congressional support since Biden first requested the money last summer. But congressional conservatives who question US involvement in foreign wars and argue that Congress should be focused instead on the surge of migration at the US-Mexico border.

The package covers a wide range of parts and services aimed at maintaining and up-grading Taiwan's military hardware. Separately, Taiwan has signed billions in contracts with the US for latest-generation F-16V

fighter jets, M1 Abrams main battle tanks and the HIMARS rocket system, which the US has also supplied to Ukraine.

Taiwan has also been expanding its own defence industry, building submarines and trainer jets. Next month, it plans to commission its third and fourth domestically designed and built stealth corvettes to counter the Chinese navy as part of a strategy of asymmetrical warfare, in which a smaller force counters its larger opponent by using cutting edge or nonconventional tactics and weaponry.

China launches daily incursions into waters and airspace around Taiwan by navy ships and warplanes. It has also sought to

The US Senate late Tuesday passed \$95 billion in war aid to Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan after months of delays and contentious debate over how involved the United States should be in foreign wars

China claims the entire island of Taiwan as its own territory and has threatened to take it by force if necessary

pick away Taiwan's few remaining formal diplomatic partners.

However, only two People's Liberation Army Air Force planes and seven navy vessels were found operating in areas around Taiwan between Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday morning, possibly as a result of heavy rainstorms and low visibility overnight along the island's west coast facing China.

At times of heightened tensions, China has launched dozens of such missions over a 24 hour period, many of them crossing the center line in the Taiwan Strait dividing the sides or entering Taiwan's air defense identification zone.

Trump 2.0: How US allies are preparing for a second term

REUTERS

Berlin/Mexico City/Washington, April 24: Germany is waging a charm offensive inside the Republican Party. Japan is lining up its own Trump whisperer. Mexican government officials are talking to Camp Trump, and Australia is busy making laws to help Trump-proof its US defense ties.

Everywhere, US allies are taking steps to defend or advance their interests in the event former President Donald Trump, returns to power in November elections, an even chance based on recent opinion polls in swing states.

They want to avoid the cold slap that Trump's "America First" policies dealt them last time around, which included trade wars, a shakeup of security alliances, an immigration crackdown and the withdrawal from a global climate accord.

Reuters spoke to diplomats and government officials in five continents about preparations for Trump 2.0.

It uncovered Mexican deliberations over a new, Trump-savvy foreign minister, an Australian envoy's role in rushing to protect a submarine deal, and a German official's talks with Republican state governors.

Some foreign leaders have contacted Trump directly despite the risk of irking his election rival, Democratic President Joe Biden. Saudi's crown prince recently phoned Trump, a source with knowledge of the conversation said; while Hungary's Prime Minister and Poland's president met him in person in recent weeks.

British Foreign Minister David Cameron also held talks with Trump this month at his Florida resort. He told reporters, opens new tab in Washington afterwards that his meeting was

a private dinner where they discussed Ukraine, the Israel-Gaza war, and the future of NATO.

The White House referred Reuters to comments by spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre in which she said meetings such as the one held by Cameron were not uncommon. She declined to answer questions about Trump's meeting with Orban or the Saudi call, which was first reported by the New York Times.

The Saudi government's media

office and the Trump campaign did not respond to requests for comment about the call.

The campaign said he discussed security issues with each of the European leaders, including a proposal by Polish President Andrzej Duda

that NATO members spend at least 3% of gross domestic product on defense. Currently, they aim to spend 2%.

Jeremi Suri, a presidential historian at the University of Texas, said meet-



LEADERS, FORMER LEADERS AND DIPLOMATS MEET TRUMP

SAUDI ARABIA'S CROWN PRINCE CALLED HIM, SOURCE SAYS

WORRIED ABOUT TARIFFS, GERMANY MET REPUBLICAN GOVERNORS

MEXICAN CANDIDATE TO TAILOR ENVOY CHOICE IF TRUMP WINS, SOURCES

RUDD PUSHED CANBERRA TO TRUMP-PROOF SUBMARINE DEAL

sworn in as the 47th President of the United States, the world will be more secure and America will be more prosperous."

Germany's "bypass diplomacy" Much of the Trump outreach has been less direct than meetings with the candidate.

Germany has been building bridges with Trump's Republican base at a state level, reminding party officials that it invests heavily in US industry.

Mindful that Trump threatened punitive tariffs on Germany's car industry while president, and now wants to slap a minimum 10% tariff on all imports if returned to office, Germany is using a transatlantic coordinator to ready for Trump 2.0. As coordinator, Michael Link is leading what Berlin calls "bypass diplomacy", crisscrossing the union, targeting swing states where Germany is a heavy investor.

business

of the day quote

Small-scale LNG serves as the cornerstone for our gas-based economy, enabling us to expand our reach beyond traditional pipelines

It is true that India was a bit late in allowing REITs, yet in the last couple of years it has gathered momentum particularly from HNIs.

After a prolonged downturn, the demand for premium housing has surged all over the country in the last couple of years. Apart from first time home buyers, a significant percentage of demand is coming from people who want to upgrade to newer and better homes

Q4 RESULTS

Axis Bank profit up

Mumbai: Private sector lender Axis Bank Wednesday reported a net profit of Rs 7,129 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 31, 2024. The bank had reported a net loss of Rs 5,728 crore in the March quarter of 2022-23 fiscal. Total income rose to Rs 35,990 crore in the March quarter of 2023-24 fiscal, from Rs 28,758 crore in the year-ago period. The bank's Net Interest Income (NII) grew 11 per cent Year-on-Year (YoY) to Rs 13,089 crore. For 2023-24 fiscal, the net profit jumped 160 per cent to Rs 24,861 crore.

HUL profit drops

New Delhi: FMCG major Hindustan Unilever Wednesday reported a 1.53 per cent decline in consolidated net profit to Rs 2,561 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 31. The company had posted a net profit of Rs 2,601 crore in the year-ago period. Total income during the quarter under review stood at Rs 15,441 crore in the fourth quarter as against Rs 15,375 crore in the corresponding period a year ago, Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL) said.

ESFB PAT surges

Chennai: Equitas Small Finance Bank Ltd (ESFB) has registered a net profit after tax at Rs 207.62 crore for the January-March 2024 quarter, the bank said Wednesday. The private sector lender had registered a profit after tax at Rs 190.03 crore during the corresponding quarter of last financial year. For the year ending March 31, 2024 the net profit after tax stood at Rs 798.96 crore, as against Rs 573.59 crore registered year ago, the bank said.

Nippon Life jumps

New Delhi: Nippon Life India Asset Management Ltd Wednesday reported its highest-ever quarterly profit after tax (PAT) at Rs 343 crore for the March quarter, marking a 73 per cent jump from the year-ago period. The company had posted a PAT of Rs 198 crore in the year-ago period, the asset management firm said. Total income rose to Rs 560.57 crore during the fourth quarter of FY24 from Rs 388.03 crore in the year-ago period.

CPCL profit falls

New Delhi: Chennai Petroleum Corporation Ltd, a subsidiary of Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Wednesday reported 39 per cent drop in March quarter net profit on lower prices and foreign exchange loss. Consolidated net profit of Rs 627.89 crore in January-March FY24 was lower than Rs 1,012.81 crore earning in the same period last year.



The bilateral trade has increased almost 15 per cent since the CEPA entered into force on 1 May 2022. Our two countries (UAE-India) are on track to far surpass the goal of achieving \$100 billion in non-oil trade by 2030

AHMED ALINIBI | CEPA COUNCIL DIRECTOR, UAE

RAPIDO'S BID FOR ELECTIONS

Ride-hailing platform Rapido Wednesday pledged to offer free bike taxi, auto, and cab rides to differently-abled and senior citizen voters in Karnataka as part of its "SawaariZimmedariki" initiative. Voters in Bangalore, Mysuru, and Mangaluru would be able to avail free rides to and fro voting points April 26 by using the code 'VOTENOW'



BULL RUN

Markets maintain momentum

Sensex nears 74k as indices rise for fourth day in a row

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 24: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ticked higher for the fourth straight session Wednesday, helped by buying in metal and commodity stocks amid a positive trend in global equities. However, intense selling pressure on telecom, IT and tech counters capped the upside, traders said.

IN THE LAST FOUR DAYS, THE BSE BENCHMARK CLIMBED 1,363.95 POINTS OR 1.88%



Investors richer by ₹8.48 lakh cr

Investors' wealth surged Rs 8.48 lakh crore in four days of market rally where the BSE benchmark has climbed nearly 2 per cent amid firm global trends. The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies jumped by Rs 8,48,328.9 crore to Rs 4,01,37,377.21 crore (\$4.84 trillion) in four days.

advanced 0.92 per cent. Among the indices, metal climbed 2.83 per cent, commodities (1.62 per cent), industrials (1.13 per cent) and oil & gas (0.96 per cent) were the major gainers. IT, telecommunication and tech were the laggards.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled in the positive territory. European markets were trading mostly with gains. Wall Street ended with gains Tuesday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.35 per cent to \$88.11 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 3,044.54 crore Tuesday, according to exchange data.

On Tuesday The BSE benchmark ended 89.83 points or 0.12 per cent higher at 73,738.45. Trimming most of its early gains, the NSE Nifty ended 31.60 points or 0.14 per cent up at 22,368.

Global markets turned positive as geopolitical tension in the Middle East eased off, and investors focus now on the earning season. Following its global peers, healthy domestic macro data and in-line Q4 results led to an up-move in the Nifty against March's final reading of 61.8. From the Sensex basket, JSW Steel, Tata Steel, Power Grid, Kotak Mahindra Bank, UltraTech Cement, NTPC and Bajaj Finance were the major gainers. Tata Consultancy Services, Tech Mahindra, Maruti, Reliance Industries and Titan were among the laggards. In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.79 per cent and midcap index

Pharma exports rise 10% in FY24

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 24: The country's drugs and pharmaceuticals exports increased 9.67 per cent year-on-year to \$27.9 billion in 2023-24, even as the total exports dipped by 3 per cent in the last fiscal.

According to the commerce ministry data, pharma exports in March grew by 12.73 per cent to \$2.8 billion.

In 2022-23, the exports stood at \$25.4 billion.

The top five export markets, for the sector during the last fiscal, are the US, the UK, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, South Africa and Brazil.

The US accounts for over 31 per cent of India's total pharma exports, followed by the UK and Netherlands (about 3 per cent each).

In 2023-24, the outbound shipments also entered new geographies like Montenegro, South Sudan, Chad, Comoros, Brunei, Latvia, Ireland, Chad, Sweden, Haiti and Ethiopia.

An industry expert said that increasing market opportunities and healthy demand in countries like the US are helping exports to record healthy growth rates month after month.

2ND YEAR IN A ROW

IT sector staring at muted growth

The overall industry size is pegged at \$250bn and it creates over 50L direct jobs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 24: The Indian IT services sector is staring at a second consecutive year of muted revenue growth due to modest increase in tech spends in Europe and the US, a domestic rating agency said Wednesday.

Crisil Ratings said it expects the sector to grow at 5-7 per cent in FY25, after a growth of 6 per cent estimated to have been achieved in FY24.

"The slowdown in technology spend will continue this fiscal, weighing on the revenue growth of IT service providers," said Aditya Jhaver, director at Crisil.

The industry is, however, expected to sustain in the key metric of profitability, as the operating profit margins will be stable at 22-23 per cent, the agency said, attributing it to prudent management of employee costs.

Crisil said the sectoral revenues achieved a compounded annual growth rate of 12 per cent



for the decade through FY24.

High interest rates and economic slowdown in client markets led to a modest single-digit growth in tech spends by companies in the banking, financial services and insurance (BFSI), retail, technology and communications sectors in FY24, the agency said.

It said these four sectors account for nearly two-thirds of the industry's revenues.

Jhaver said revenue from BFSI and retail segments will continue to be a drag with subdued growth of 4-5 per cent in FY25. Manufacturing and healthcare, which contribute a tenth of the revenue, were the only bright spots and continued double-digit growth in tech spend given the focus on process automation and research and development-based

analytics, especially in healthcare.

As revenue growth remained subdued, IT service companies pulled back on addition of fresh talent, resulting in headcount reductions by 4 per cent in 2023 by top 12 companies.

This, along with the decline in attrition to 13 per cent as of December 2023 from the high of 20 per cent in FY23 provided a breather by limiting higher-cost replacement hiring during FY24, it said.

Associate director Joanne Gonsalves said the ratings company expects IT service providers to remain "cautious" on fresh hiring in FY25 too, which will maintain employee utilisation at a healthy level of ~85 per cent.

Continued healthy cash generation, strong balance sheets and sizeable cash surplus will keep the credit quality of IT service providers stable, the rating agency said.

Players will continue to eye acquisitions, especially small and mid-sized opportunities that could enhance their product baskets and increase digital capabilities, it said.

New outlets, cheaper options fail to revive fast-food earnings in India

Pizza franchisees such as Jubilant Foodworks, Devyani International and Sapphire Foods India struggled throughout 2023 due to heightened competition, with burger chains also joining the struggle later in the year due to inflation

REUTERS

Bangalore, April 24: Top fast-food franchises in India are likely to report a slump in quarterly earnings as cash-strapped consumers continued to cut back on dining out and ordering in, analysts said, spurning the hundreds of new restaurants that operators opened in 2023.

Pizza franchisees such as Jubilant Foodworks, Devyani International and Sapphire Foods India struggled throughout 2023 due to heightened competition, with burger chains also joining the struggle later in the year due to inflation.

Even new affordable menu items, such as Burger King's Rs 99 combination of burger, beverage, and fries, introduced last year, failed to lure customers as India's monthly inflation rate remained above the target rate so far this year.



Earlier you might be visiting (fast-food chains) three or four times monthly. Now everyone is restricting to once or twice

KRANTHI BATHINI | EQUITY STRATEGIST, WEALTHMILLS SECURITIES

"Earlier you might be visiting (fast-food chains) three or four times monthly. Now everyone is restricting to once or twice," said Kranthi Bathini, equity strategist at WealthMills Securities.

Analysts polled by LSEG estimate net income slumping between 54% and 97% in the March quarter for Devyani and Sapphire, which run the Pizza Hut chain of restaurants, and McDonald's operator Westlife Foodworld.

They expect a net loss at Burger King operator Restaurant Brands Asia to widen sequentially, also marking at least a 12th consecutive quarterly loss.

Same-store sales are also likely to fall across the board, analysts say, with the decline expected to be more pronounced at Pizza Hut stores at more than 10%.

However, this has not deterred franchisees - including Sapphire and Devyani, which also run KFC stores, - from opening new restaurants nationwide, from opening new restaurants in West Bengal to Shoalagiri village in Tamil Nadu.

While restaurant operators and analysts expect the aggressive store opening plans to drive long-term growth, it has not immediately translated to earnings growth, also squeezed by stiff competition from local rivals.

April biz growth at 14-yr high

India is well placed to remain the fastest growing major economy this year after posting strong expansion over the past few quarters

REUTERS

Bangalore, April 24: India's business activity expanded at its fastest pace in nearly 14 years this month thanks to robust demand, according to a survey released Tuesday that also showed easing input inflation and positive jobs growth.

That suggests India is well placed to remain the fastest growing major economy this year after posting strong expansion over the past few quarters.

HSBC's flash India Composite purchasing managers' Index, compiled by S&P Global, rose to 62.2 this month from March's final reading of 61.8.

The reading has been consistently above the 50-mark separating expansion from contraction since August 2021.

"Strong performance in both the manufacturing and service sectors, led by increased new orders, resulted in the highest composite output index since June 2010," noted Pranjul Bhandari, chief India economist at HSBC.

M&A deal value rises 60% in Q1 2024: PwC

AS PER THE REPORT, THERE WERE 143 DOMESTIC M&A DEALS, WITH THE LARGEST ONE TOUCHING \$4.5BN



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 24: Merger and acquisition (M&A) deal value soared by 60 per cent to \$19.6 billion in January-March 2024, while that of private equity (PE) experienced a slight dip, according to a PwC India report.

With 455 deals amounting to \$25.6 billion disclosed value, the first quarter of 2024 showcases a 24 per cent rise in deal volume compared to the fourth quarter of calendar year 2023 - marking a notable resurgence, as per PwC India report 'Deals at a glance'.

"This signals a shift from the declining trend observed throughout 2023," it added. As per the report, there were 143 domestic M&A deals, with the largest one touching \$4.5 billion. The overall deal value for the first quarter of 2024 stands at \$25.6 billion, a significant increase from the previous quarter and the corresponding period last year.

Sector-wise, traditional sectors took the lead, drawing significant investments in the changing deal-making scenario. The media and entertainment sector topped the charts in terms of value, while the retail and consumer sectors continue to lead in terms of deal volume.

Dinesh Arora, Partner & Leader - Deals, PwC India, said that amid a landscape ripe with opportunities, the Indian economy emerges as a beacon of resilience.

"The first quarter of 2024 showcases the best figures in the last six quarters, owing to the momentum of the market and large-ticket deals, hinting at a bold appetite for strategic expansion and market dominance. The quarter also heralds a promising horizon for capital markets and embodies an unyielding optimism. As dealmakers, businesses, and investors look towards the future, the energy is palpable," Arora said.

According to the report, in the first quarter of 2024, the market activity in terms of volume shows a significant uptick compared to the last two quarters.

In the first quarter of 2024, the market activity in terms of volume shows a significant rise compared to the last two quarters. M&A deals and PE investments rose by 23 per cent and 24 per cent, respectively.

"The total deal value exhibits a significant rise this quarter, led by M&A deals, where deal value soared from \$12.2 billion in Q4 CY23 to \$19.6 billion in Q1 CY24 - marking a 60 per cent increase," the report said.

Despite a slight dip in PE deal value from \$7 billion to \$6.1 billion in the first quarter, the total deal value for January-March 2024 stands at \$25.6 billion - 33 per cent higher than the last quarter of 2023.

This quarter witnessed 14 deals with value over \$500 million compared to just nine such deals in Q4 CY23, of which 12 are M&A transactions, the PwC India report said.

The average ticket size for M&A remained unchanged, while the same for PE investments saw a decline of 39 per cent, indicating that although the number of deals increased, the majority of these deals had smaller ticket sizes. Most deals with disclosed values were in the lower- and mid-market segment, with around 80 per cent of the total deals below \$50 million.

Sectors like media and entertainment, power, pharmaceuticals, retail and consumer, and financial services saw high deal values, showcasing substantial investment in traditional sectors.

Moreover, the retail and consumer sectors continued to display a high deal volume, with 81 transactions in the first quarter, followed by the technology sector at 49 deals.

The largest deal of the quarter comes from the media and entertainment sector, where Reliance Industries signed a binding agreement with Disney to form a joint venture, combining the businesses of Viacom 18 and Star India. This is expected to create a media behemoth across TV broadcasting, streaming, movies and sports.

Bharti Airtel holds 47.95 per cent stake in Indus Towers.

"...we wish to clarify that the Bharti Airtel is not in any discussion with Vodafone Group to acquire such stake in Indus Towers Limited," Airtel said, refuting reports that the Sunil Mittal-led telco was eyeing Vodafone's 21.05 per cent stake in Indus.

Indus is a provider of critical infrastructure services to the telecom industry and Airtel relies heavily on it.



Manufacturing margins improved in April as firms were able to pass on higher prices to customers due to strong demand conditions

PRANJUL BHANDARI | CHIEF INDIA ECONOMIST, HSBC

index rising to a three-month high at 61.7 from March's 61.2, thanks to new business - a key gauge for demand - accelerating.

Pant, Axar shine in DC win

Sunrisers eye another run-fest against RCB

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 24: Rishabh Pant virtually sealed his spot as India's first choice wicket-keeper for the T20 World Cup with a belligerent unbeaten half century in Delhi Capitals' narrow four-run win over Gujarat Titans in the IPL here Wednesday.

Skipper Pant (88 n.o, 43b, 5x4, 8x6) and Axar Patel (66, 43b, 5x4, 4x6) forged a blistering stand of 113 runs off 68 balls en route to quickfire individual half centuries to power DC to 224/4 in their must-win game.

In reply, Sai Sudarshan (65, 39b, 7x4, 2x6) and David Miller (55, 23b, 6x4, 3x6) scored fifties, while Rashid Khan hit a 11-ball 21 not out but still couldn't take GT over the line, finishing at 20/8.

Sent in to bat, Pant led from the front with his innings proving to be a timely reminder to the national selectors, who are likely to pick him in India squad for the World T20, barring fitness issues. Pant's maturity showed as he paced his innings brilliantly in company of Axar, who was promoted to No.3.

Chasing 225, GT lost skipper Shubman Gill in the second over but Wriddhiman Saha (39, 25b, 5x4, 1x6) played some delightful shots and together with Impact Sub Sudharsan shared 82 runs for the second wicket to keep GT in the hunt.

But once Saha departed, Azmatullah Omarzai too was brilliantly caught by Jake Fraser-McGurk at deep midwicket off Axar soon. But Sudharsan, who got a reprieve in the fifth over, used his long handle to great effect to notch up his fifty off 29 balls.

But with the asking rate constantly creeping up, Sudharsan had to go for his shots which eventually led to his downfall as he was caught by Axar off Rasikh Salam (3/44) at long-off.

Miller then put up a show to take them closer to the target and once he was out, Rashid gave GT hope with a cameo. Needing 19 runs off the last over,



Rishabh Pant gets a fist-bump from Axar Patel during the pair's crucial partnership against GT, Wednesday

Rashid hit Mukesh Kumar for two consecutive fours in the first two balls and then sent the pacer

over the fence in the penultimate ball to reduce the deficit to 5 off the last ball. But Mukesh

kept his calm as Rashid failed to clear the fence as GT fell short. But Wednesday's game was

all about Pant as he squashed all doubts about his World T20 Cup chances with a magnificent innings. The flamboyant keeper batter was also brilliant behind the stumps grabbing two sharp catches.

Earlier, Jake Fraser-McGurk and Prithvi Shaw got DC off to a flying start, racing to 34 in 3 overs. Fraser-McGurk looked at his ominous best as he elegantly pulled GT bowlers over the fence but his knock was cut short by Sandeep Warrier (3/15).

It was double blow for DC in the fourth over as Shaw was caught by Noor Ahmad off Warrier two balls later. DC's problems were further compounded when Warrier accounted for Shai Hope as DC slumped to 44/3 in the powerplay.

With three wickets down, Pant and Axar initially played sensibly and tried to forge a partnership but once they were set, they unleashed their brutal attack. Pant started slowly but gained in confidence as time progressed and unleashed his trademark pick up shots of his legs, cuts and pulls to score his runs.

Pant attacked anything which was pitched on his legs propping up DC's run rate. Axar matched his skipper stroke-for-stroke. But in search of one too many, Axar perished in the next ball, caught by Sai Kishore at long-on.

Pant brought up his fifty with a hit over the long-on fence off Mohit. Tristan Stubbs' late seven-ball 26-run cameo and Pant's pyrotechnics towards the end took DC beyond the 200-run mark. Pant unleashed havoc on Mohit in the last over, hitting the veteran bowler for four sixes and a four to pick up 31 runs.

BRIEF SCORES: DC 224/4 (Rishabh Pant 88 n.o, Axar Patel 66, Tristan Stubbs 26 n.o; Sandeep Warrier 3/15) beat GT 220/8 (Sai Sudharsan 65, David Miller 55, Wriddhiman Saha 39; Rasikh Salam 3/44, Kuldeep Yadav 2/29) by four runs.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hyderabad, April 24: Sunrisers Hyderabad will look to unleash their brute batting power on struggling Royal Challengers Bengaluru when the two teams face off in their return-leg fixture of the IPL here Thursday.

Having breached the 250-run mark thrice in this IPL edition itself, Sunrisers Hyderabad are pushing the boundaries of T20 batting with their no holds barred approach.

While Mumbai Indians were the first victim of SRH's new-found batting strength this season, RCB bore the maximum brunt when the Travis Head-led batting line-up powered the 2016 winners to IPL's highest-ever total of 287/3 in Bangalore.

If this was not enough, SRH's carnage against Delhi Capitals — which included a record 125/0 being scored in the powerplay — brought forth the possibility of the 300-run mark being breached for the first time ever in the IPL.

And it won't be surprising if SRH manage to do the unthinkable and that too against a bowling attack as frail as RCB's, whose struggles with in the bowling department could be gauged with the fact that their best bowler, Yash Dayal, is at 24th spot in the overall list with seven wickets.

Placed at the bottom of the pool, RCB have conceded at least 180 in their last five matches. In

the last two games, the opponents have raked up totals in excess of 200.

RCB batters have worked hard to make up for their severe shortcomings in bowling, but for such a lopsided squad in terms of balance, the task to produce an all-round performance looks nearly impossible.

To their credit, RCB fought incredibly hard with the bat but were unfortunate to have lost to Kolkata Knight Riders by a mere one run after conceding 222/6. Moreover, a collective batting effort must have pleased the RCB management to a large extent.

He was a victim of a contentious call but Virat Kohli remains RCB's best batter in the tournament so far, having scored 379 runs to keep the Orange Cap in possession.

SRH are placed comfortably at the third position in the table with 10 points from seven matches. While the journey so far has been fuelled by the batters' fire, SRH would know their bowling would be tested along the way and Cummins' men could do well to watch out against a hurting RCB side.

MATCHDAY

Indian Premier League

SRH vs RCB

Time: 07:30 pm

Telecast: Star Sports Network

Stream: Jio Cinema

ICC ROPES IN USAIN BOLT AS T20 WC AMBASSADOR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, April 24: The International Cricket Council (ICC) Wednesday named sprint legend Usain Bolt as the ambassador of the upcoming T20 World Cup to be played in the West Indies and USA from June 1 to 29.

Jamaica-born Bolt had created history at the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing where he won the 100m, 200m and 4x100m races in world record times. Bolt currently holds world records in the 100m, 200m and 4x100m with times of 9.58 secs, 19.19 secs and 36.84 secs.

Bolt was delighted about his new role as the World Cup comes to his home. "I am thrilled to be an ambassador for the upcoming ICC Men's T20 World Cup. Coming from the Caribbean where cricket is a part of life, the sport has always held a special place in my heart," Bolt said in an ICC media release.

Bolt said it will be massive for cricket to find a market in the USA. "While I will be supporting West Indies at the WC, getting the sport into the US is big for cricket. It's the biggest sports market in



the world. The energy that we will bring for the T20 World Cup is a huge opportunity leading towards cricket's inclusion in the LA Olympics in 2028," he said.

As an ambassador, Bolt will play a key role in promoting the event, starting with a cameo appearance in next week's release of the event's official anthem alongside iconic artists Sean Paul and Kes.

ICC Chief Executive Officer, Geoff Allardice said: "Usain Bolt is a global icon, we are thrilled to have him on board as an Ambassador for the T20 World Cup. His passion for cricket is well known, making him the perfect fit for this role."

India to have camp in Bhub ahead of FIFA WC Qualifiers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 24: The Indian football team will have a four-week preparatory camp in Bhubaneswar starting May 10, ahead of its crucial second round FIFA World Cup 2026 qualifiers matches against Kuwait and Qatar.

The final squad will move to Kolkata June 2 ahead of the Blue Tigers clash against Kuwait at Salt Lake Stadium June 6. "India Sr men's national team will have a 4-week preparatory camp in Bhubaneswar, Odisha starting 10 May, 2024," the All India Football Federation (AIFF) tweeted Wednesday.

"The final squad will move to Kolkata, June 2, ahead of the FIFA World Cup qualifiers against Kuwait!" it added. The Blue Tigers currently stand second in the group with four points from as many games, ahead of the third-placed Afghanistan only on goal difference. Two teams will progress to the third round after six matches. After facing Kuwait, India will travel to Qatar for the final group stage game against the hosts June 11.

Chhangte gives MCFC edge over Gaurs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Margao, April 24: Mumbai City FC (MCFC) scripted a sensational late resurgence, scoring three goals in the second-half stoppage time, to snatch a 3-2 win from FC Goa in the first leg of their Indian Super League semifinal here Wednesday.

The Gaurs, powered by strikes from Boris Singh and Brandon Fernandes, looked like they would be sealing off a key win in the last-four match as they maintained a comfortable 2-0 lead until the 90th minute of the match.

But the Islanders pulled off the absolute unthinkable, scoring thrice in the final six-odd minutes of the match to grab a hold of this crucial victory, thanks to a brace by Lallianzuala Chhangte accompanied by a goal by Vikram Partap Singh.

Boris opened the floodgates in the 16th minute by tapping in a straightforward square delivery by attacking midfielder Mohammed Yasir. Receiving a long ball on the left flank, Yasir sprinted into the box and sliced in a low cross that was converted into a goal with ease by Boris.

Their second goal came in the



Lallianzuala Chhangte (No.7) wheels away in celebration after scoring, leaving the FC Goa goalkeeper in agony

56th minute, with Brandon breaking free with the ball and depositing the ball into the top corner of the net for the second game running.

It appeared that the result had been cast over the game even before the final whistle had blown, as the Gaurs profes-

sionally managed proceedings until the 90th minute mark.

The first one came amidst a quick break where Chhangte picked the ball from the left side of the six yard box to slide it into the bottom right corner after a precise through ball from Jayesh Rane.

Vikram's strike two minutes later was through a rebound, with the attacker perfectly placed on the run to collect and hammer the ball in to equalise the scores. Finally, Chhangte capped off the game a few minutes later with a goal fairly identical to his first one of the night.

Narsingh elected WFI athletes' panel chief

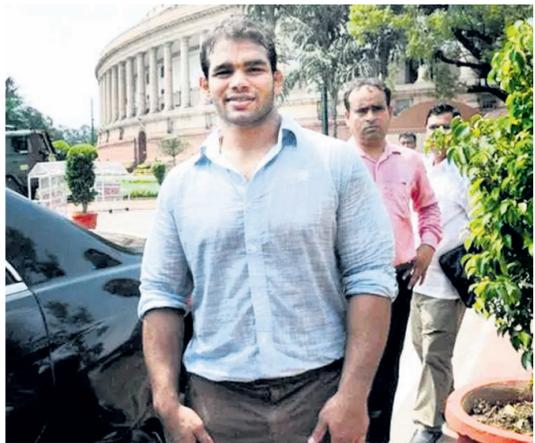
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Varanasi, April 24: Former Commonwealth Games gold-medallist Narsingh Panchar Yadav was elected chairman of the Wrestling Federation of India's Athletes' Commission here on Wednesday, completing a process that was mandated by the sport's world governing body.

A total of eight candidates were in fray for the seven positions and after polling, conducted on ballot paper, seven members got elected. They then chose Narsingh as chairman of the commission.

Ahead of the 2016 Olympics, the Games-bound Narsingh had grabbed headlines when two-time Olympic medallist Sushil Kumar, who missed the qualification event due to an injury, requested for a trial bout against him.

Sushil moved the Delhi High



Court and only after his appeal was rejected, it was confirmed that Narsingh would go to Rio Olympics.

However, in a shocking turn

of events, Narsingh failed two dope tests prior to the Games and was banned for four years by the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) even though the

National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) had cleared him on the plea that his failed test was the result of sabotage.

The CAS decision came a day before his opening bout, forcing him to leave Rio de Janeiro without competing. The ban came to an end in July 2020 and he has maintained that the entire episode was a case of sabotage.

The other elected members of the athletes commission were Sahil (Delhi), Smitha AS (Kerala), Bharti Bhaghei (UP), Khushboo S Pawar (Gujarat), Nikki (Haryana), and Sweta Dubey (Bengal).

United World Wrestling (UWW), the international body for the sport, while lifting suspension of WFI had stated that the move was subject to the Sanjay Singh-led national federation constituting an athletes' commission to resolve the grievances of the grapplers.

Stoinis looks to extend int'l white-ball career

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, April 24: Despite missing out on Cricket Australia's central contract for the 2024-25 season, all-rounder Marcus Stoinis wants to use the impact hundred against Chennai Super Kings as a leverage to extend his white ball career beyond the upcoming T20 World Cup.

Stoinis, who was not included in the 23-player central contract list, made an unbeaten 124 off 63 balls for Lucknow Super Giants here Tuesday. However, Stoinis didn't read much into him missing the CA contract which was announced March 28.

"I've got a great relationship with the (Australia) coach (Andrew McDonald). Me not getting a contract, I knew that a while ago.

"I think it is great to give younger kids a crack and let them take my spot. I'm absolutely fine with that on the contract



list," Stoinis said after guiding LSG to a six-wicket win over CSK.

But the 34-year-old was firm in thoughts about his career with the national team. "But on the playing front, obviously, I want to make sure that I'm there and that's also why it's so lucky for us and for me particularly to

have this competition (IPL), that's why I love it so much," he said.

The Perth-born player was omitted from Australia's ODIs against the West Indies in January, but he is set to be part of the country's T20 World Cup campaign in the West Indies and the USA in June.

Stoinis is most likely to be slotted into No.5 in the Australian line-up during the marquee event. Stoinis is eligible for Australian selection for the tournament because his current contract for the 2023-24 season will run its course only June 30.

However, Stoinis was clear that he wanted to play for Australia in the white ball series against England (away) in September and against Pakistan at home in November. Stoinis along with Ashton Agar, Andrew Tye and Jason Behrendorff had recently decided to go freelance while turning down Western Australian contracts.